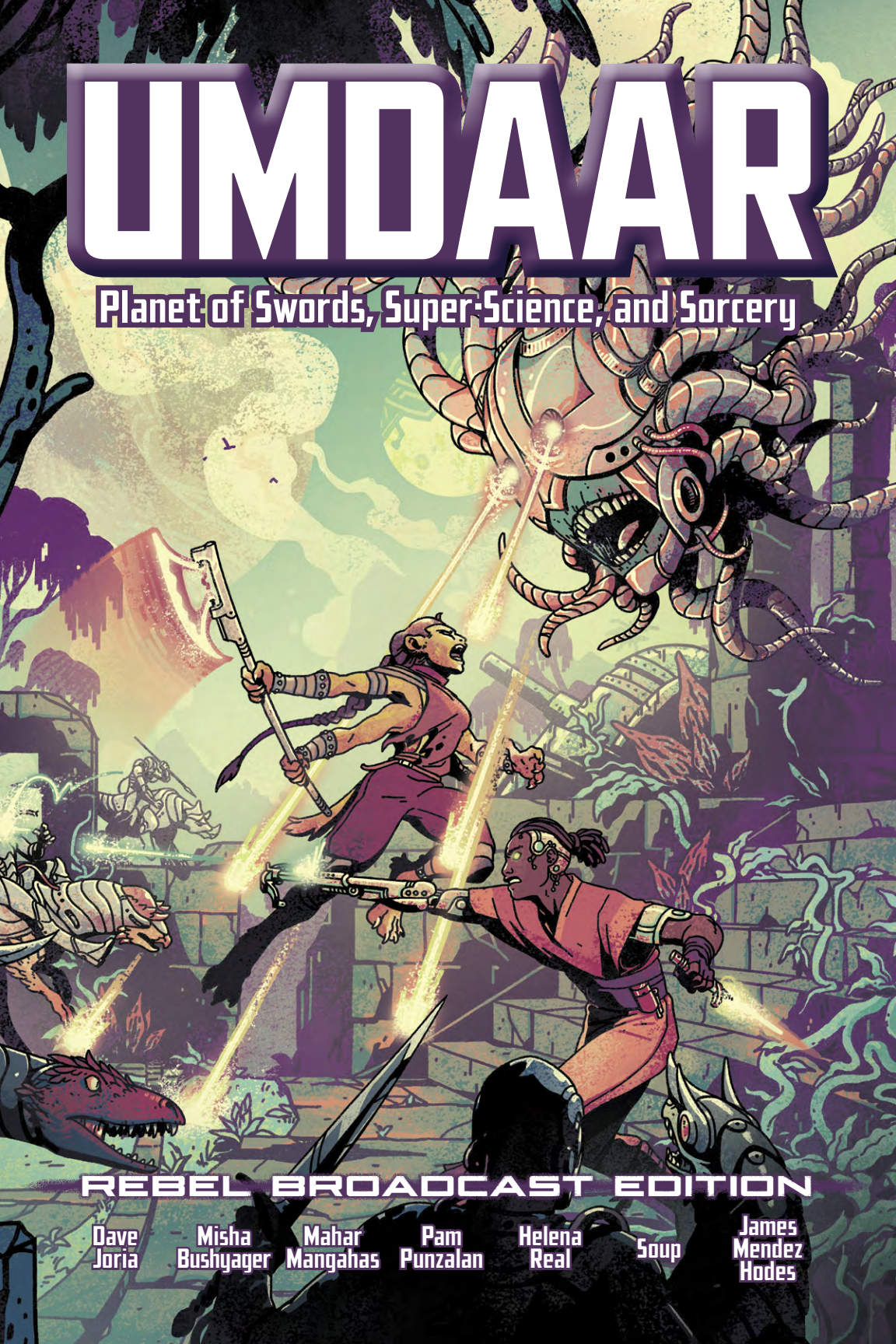

UMDAAR
Planet of Swords, Super-Science, and Sorcery
REBEL BROADCAST EDITION
Dave Joria
Misha Bushyager
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This is a game where people make up stories about wonderful, terrible, impossible, glorious things. All the characters and events portrayed in this work are fictional. Any resemblance to real people, princesses, glowbots, mutants, wolves with or without lazers, sentient fungi, cyborgs, oozes, hypermuscular action figures, or weekday cartoons is purely coincidental, but kinda hilarious.

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INTRODUCTION

The planet Umdaar is a world of swords, super-science, and sorcery.

The tyrannical **Masters** reign over the scattered kingdoms, oppressing and terrorizing their subjects. They scour the planet for ancient technology, which they use to extend their reign and grow their empires. You are a noble **Champion**, using the strength of your body, mind, and heart to thwart the Masters at every turn.

Can you keep your people safe? Can you spark the fires of rebellion? Can you survive the dangerous **Wildernexuses** to seek the forgotten knowledge you crave? Can you and your companions change the fate of Umdaar?

TUNE IN TO THE REBEL BROADCAST EDITION

*Attention all Rebels monitoring this freq—*****bzzt***** ...is Naba Turbosmith broadcasting from the southern fringe of the Lazerzone! We *****crrzzzt***** ...a swarm of skeledrones. Losing altitu—*****frrrrrmmm***** ...cannot allow Necrokadnezzar to *****PZHSS***** ... beginning encoded transmission NOW!*

In 2015 ***Masters of Umdaar*** became one of Evil Hat's most popular releases in the Fate Worlds and Adventures line. We spoke to creator Dave Joria about building it out into a full standalone game alongside other Fate titles like ***Fate of Cthulhu*** and ***Shadow of the Century***. That journey took several twists and turns as the size of the project expanded and the direction changed. Unfortunately, at this point our investment in Umdaar outstrips our confidence that a standard commercial release would be profitable.

However, we know there's a dedicated fanbase waiting for this game and frankly we refuse to let all the incredible work that went into Umdaar go to waste. So we are pleased to present ***Umdaar: The Rebel Broadcast Edition***—a 400+ page pay-what-you-want PDF.

We're proud of the efforts made here by the many contributors to Umdaar, but keep in mind that this *rebel broadcast* may be accompanied by some static. Keen-eyed fans will notice we've repurposed some existing art and, in compiling the final 400+ pages, some typographical errors may have slipped through. If you spot one, feel free to let us know at **https://evilh.at/umdaar-corrections**.

While Umdaar is unlikely to see a full print release, if there is sufficient interest—*and your download of the game is certainly a sign of that!*—we may create a print-on-demand (POD) offering after we've collected and corrected those pesky typos. Stay tuned.

Thanks for your support. ***Now go:*** *The fate of Umdaar rests in* ***your hands!***



A BRIEF HISTORY OF UMDAAR

Long ago, the Demiurge came to the planet Umdaar. No one knows who or what they were. For countless millennia, they tamed the wild biomes, steered the course of evolution, and built tools so advanced that it's impossible to tell whether they're science or sorcery.

But then the Demiurge disappeared. Why did they come here? Where did they go?

To this day, the elders hand down stories about them, portraying them as gods or demons—and there's nothing to suggest that they weren't.

THE SPLINTERING

After the Demiurge disappeared, the hundreds of civilizations they had fostered crumbled into chaos. The primeval night swallowed the flame of wisdom. Millions died in extreme droughts and cold snaps, brought about by a rapidly shifting planet and runaway terraforming machines. The great nations splintered into tiny communities, each fending for themselves.

Over time, these communities reached out to each other to trade or to band together against pillagers. They formed micro-nations, each with their own customs and practices, but sharing a common goal: survival.

THE MASTERS' TRIUMPH

Over several thousand years, a new order arose, crafting nations and empires from the scattered clans. They did what no one else dared: unearth ancient Demiurge technology and pervert it for petty gain. These despots, known as the **Masters of Umdaar**, rule the present day. Only the foolish or the brave dare oppose them.

Some Masters are coarse warlords, ruling through brute force; others are cunning warlocks, maintaining their nations through sorcery and deception. The Masters strip their fiefdoms of natural resources, reducing them to smog-shrouded wastelands known as the Dread Domains. The Masters have no love for each other and constantly clash over the resource-rich borderlands.

Life is brutal and short for the unfortunate souls living in the Dread Domains. The subjects try to hold onto their ancient traditions and beliefs, practicing them secretly. They are always fearful of the Masters' ever-watchful spies. The Masters permit no history without propaganda, no virtue except industriousness, and no worship save blind obedience to the Master. Small **Rebel** cells exist in the shadows, but they must act quickly and quietly to survive.

THE FREELANDS

Yet hope endures through the few small nations holding out against the Masters, daring to keep the flame of freedom alive. These are the **Freelands**: allied states that refuse to bow to the Masters' demands. They're run by benevolent matriarchs, groups of elders, collectivist communities, or responsibility-sharing syndicalists, who rule for the good of their community. In the spirit of cooperation, they send dignitaries to the other Freelands.

Leaders in the Freelands often harbor learned **Runekeepers**—techno-priests dedicated to studying the relics of the past to unlock the wisdom and power of the Demiurge. More radical communities might be home to **Artihackers**—scientists who experiment with ancient tech with wild abandon and a blasphemous lack of reverence.

Citizens of the Freelands don't suffer as thoroughly as those in the Dread Domains. They work hard and tighten their belts in the winter, but also have moments of joy amongst their hardships. These happy times seem increasingly rare now, as the howling hordes at the gates grow bolder and the untameable wilds creep closer every year. Their only chance of survival lies in the lost artifacts of the Demiurge.

THE ARTIFACTS

Deep within the ruins of Umdaar are rare Demiurge artifacts, too complex to be fully understood by mere mortals. The right tools in the right hands could heal the planet. They could drain the radioactive poisons from the Glowing Sands. They could purify the bogs of the Sludge Swamps, making them flow with life once more.

In addition to tools, the Demiurge created numerous weapons. A warrior wielding a Demiurge weapon could guard a besieged castle single-handedly. A dozen skilled fighters with Demiurge weapons might even topple a Master from their throne.

The Masters know of the artifacts and constantly scour the planet for lost relics. They lend Demiurge armaments to their lieutenants and kidnap Runekeepers and Artihackers to build crude replica weapons for their armories. The Masters care nothing about improving the planet—they seek only to widen their borders and fill their coffers.

THE WILDERNEXUSES

The artifacts aren't easy to reach. They lie hidden in forgotten Demiurge structures, nestled in the heart of the **Wildernexuses**—mysterious deserts, jungles, and other harsh biomes that only specially trained **Pathfinders** can traverse safely. These lands are filled with feral beasts enhanced by mutation and cybernetics. Worse yet are the overgrown ruins filled with deadly traps, but they also hold ancient Demiurge secrets and powerful artifacts. When a community finds an ancient temple too dangerous to search by themselves, they call on the aid of trained **Archaeonauts** to explore and recover the lost secrets inside—hopefully before a covetous Master encroaches and takes everything for themselves.

CHAMPIONS

You are a Champion of Umdaar. You can choose many paths—ambassador, revolutionary, explorer, researcher. You are the last defense against the dying light. This may be your final chance to save the world of Umdaar before the twin suns of hope set forever.

MAGIC

On the planet Umdaar, an unusually large amount of thaumic energy drifts in the atmosphere, ground, and even in life forms. The thaumic energy may be the result of Demiurge experiments, or perhaps the excess of thaumic power attracted the Demiurge to Umdaar in the first place.

The Demiurge used this energy to power most of their machines and artifacts. They developed techniques to bind the energy, forging a nearly indestructible metal **Astrolanium**.

In the current age, magic is generally used in several ways:

- **Elementalists:** An elementalist is a psychic-mage who can control the latent thaumic energy of a specific type, like fire, air, metal, sound, etc. This also includes psychics or mind elementalists.
- **Summoners:** A summoner calls upon spirits of the dead who remember the long lost history of Umdaar and have powers that can pierce the veil of life and death. Spirits can be powerful allies, but a summoner must take care not to be overwhelmed by their anger, fear, or sorrow.
- **Rune Users:** The Demiurge were so advanced that even their language and alphabet were charged with power. A scholar who has studied Demiurge runes can invoke spells by writing, typing, or speaking these runes at the right time, channeling them through some device or artifact such as a rod, tablet, Demiurge instrument, or holy symbol. Runekeepers engage in deliberate study while Artihackers push experimental boundaries.

RUNEKEEPERS VS. ARTIHACKERS

In the Freelands, you tend to find more devout Runekeepers, gathered in religious cloisters and dusty libraries. They have more free time, ancient texts, and the luxury for moral high ground.

In the rebel cells of the Dread Domains, you're more likely to find Artihackers—their experience with runes is more hands-on, like learning how to hack into a Master's Demiurge-tech fortress in life-or-death situations. Masters also tend to abduct Runekeepers and force them to make Replitech weapons, turning the scholars into Artihackers against their will.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK?

Umdaar is a full standalone Fate game set in Umdaar that expands on the World of Adventure ***Masters of Umdaar*** (2015). No knowledge of the original is required.

The book includes a full setting and series of adventures, as well as tools for creating your own science fantasy and planetary romance Fate games, including rules for archetypes, bio-forms, team playbooks called banners, and guidance on creating stunts and extras for your games.

WHAT DO I NEED TO PLAY?

To play ***Umdaar***, you need two to six friends with one acting as **Game Master (GM)**, some dice (a few six-sided dice as well as sets of **fate dice**), some tokens, writing implements, paper, and something to write short notes on (e.g., small "sticky notes").

The GM is the player who runs the adventure. The other players each control a **player character (PC)**, often called a **Champion** in ***Umdaar***. The collected band of PCs is the party, unified under a **banner** that defines their role on Umdaar.

Umdaar uses the Fate Condensed system, which uses Fate Dice™ when characters take action. Fate dice are six-sided dice with two ■ sides, two ⊞ sides, and two ⊟ sides. One set of four dice works fine, but one set per player is ideal. Other alternatives exist, such as using standard six-sided dice (1-2 = ⊟, 3-4 = ■, 5-6 = ⊞), or the Deck of Fate, which uses cards instead of dice. We use the word "roll" throughout the text for simplicity.

Character sheets, banner sheets, and other ***Umdaar*** downloads can be found at **evilhat.com/product/umdaar**

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PLANETARY ROMANCE?

Planetary romance is a subgenre and mashup of sci-fi, fantasy, and adventure. Like science-fiction stories, it often features a far-off planet with futuristic technology, although it usually focuses on a single strange world rather than hopping through space to multiple planets. Planetary romance overlaps with the sword & planet subgenre—adventures involving medieval technology like swords alongside futuristic flying ships and laser rifles. Many futuristic devices parallel ancient technology, granting a retro sci-fi flavor. ***Star Wars***, for example, has Jedi as samurai who wield plasma katana, and pod-racers are chariots that hover.

The term "romance" refers to the Romantic movement, with its appreciation of imagination and beauty; therefore, the story focuses less on the logical and more on the emotional—the joy of exploring a new frontier, the suspense of an unopened treasure chest, and the fear of a strange creature emerging from the shadows. Through this lens, your planetary romance adventures resemble fantasy more than sci-fi.

A SHORT HISTORY OF PLANETARY ROMANCE

Planetary romance first appeared in early pulp stories during the 1910s-1930s, the most famous being the ***John Carter of Mars*** series and the ***Flash Gordon*** serials.

In the 1970s and 1980s, planetary romance enjoyed a revival as comic artist and writer Jack Kirby created the sci-fi mythical ***Fourth World*** comics and the post-apocalyptic adventure series ***Kamandi the Last Boy on Earth***. ***Star Wars*** re-injected pulp and fantasy back into sci-fi, and everyone was eager to get a piece of the action. Honorable mention to ***Krull***, which started as a straight-up fantasy movie but had sci-fi elements added later to cash in on the ***Star Wars*** frenzy—it's a bit of a hot mess, but it's definitely fun.

Planetary romance popped up in Saturday morning cartoons like ***He-Man and the Masters of the Universe***, ***She-Ra: Princess of Power***, ***Thundercats***, ***Thundarr the Barbarian*** (also with Jack Kirby), and ***Blackstar***. These cartoon adventures created a banquet of strange juxtapositions. Violent worlds where no one dies. Brash, lawless barbarians paired with schoolroom morals. And dinosaurs. And lasers. And dinosaurs with lasers.

A NEW NARRATIVE: A ROCKY START

We love old-fashioned sci-fi and fantasy pulp adventure stories, and ***Umdaar*** is our attempt to pay homage to many great moments and to help players recreate some of them at their tables.

However, to be brutally honest, some of the sci-fi and fantasy pulp stories that established the genre are built on a foundation of Earth-bound pulp stories that glorify colonial harm. It's pretty obvious how easily the adventures of "white, male European explorers fighting 'savage headhunters' in the jungles of Africa" transition into the adventures of "white, male American astronauts fighting 'savage aliens' of Mars." Likewise, adventure pulp villains based on Asian stereotypes, like Dr. Fu Manchu of China, undoubtedly inspired Asian-coded aliens such as Emperor Ming of the planet Mongo (ouch). These pulps inevitably starred a macho, white, heteronormative, competent man who possesses an impossible number of skills and always single-handedly saves the effeminate damsel in distress.

These tropes have often been watered-down and sometimes subverted in the last few decades, but they haven't been eliminated. All too often adventure literature and games still feature evil warlike races, princesses being kidnapped, and "heroes" stealing mystic relics from their rightful owners.

We aren't exempt from this. When we—the author, Dave Joria, along with Evil Hat—made the first edition of ***Masters of Umdaar***, we consciously worked to avoid some negative tropes. However, we unconsciously perpetuated others, like temple raiding. For that, we apologize.

Among the reasons we're eager to release a new Umdaar book is to provide new material for your planetary romances and refurbish and recenter the old material. We've taken special care to build a story about rich communities and deep relationships, while minimizing, removing, or subverting every colonialist, racist, sexist, toxic, ableist, exclusive, or homophobic trope we can think of.

Throughout the book, there are sections marked with "A New Narrative"; these offer alternatives to the traditional, harmful narratives. We invite you to read these sections, ponder the ideas they propose, and try them out in your games.

No work is ever perfect. If you have any suggestions for making your visit to the planet Umdaar even more positive, please share them with us by emailing **feedback@evilhat.com**.

FOUNDATION

Every game of ***Umdaar*** starts by laying the foundation; as a group, determine the tone, theme, and type of adventures you're playing together. This may take up the first twenty minutes of a session or it could fill an entire evening, depending on the personality of your group, how familiar you are with each other, and the scope of the campaign you intend to play.

- **Designing Your Play Space:** Establish norms outside of the game, like how to handle scheduling or where games take place.
- **The Social Contract:** Set ground rules for taking care of each other during and after the game.
- **Game Worksheet:** A record of the elements and inspirations for your game to keep everyone on the same page.

Laying the foundation continues in the *Banners* chapter (page 25).

DESIGNING YOUR PLAY SPACE

These general suggestions and guidelines on establishing the space for you and the other players may be useful when participating in a session of any roleplaying game. It's especially important to consciously go through these steps whenever you have a new mix of people at the table, but it's also a good idea to check in occasionally even with people you game with regularly.

GROUP EXPECTATIONS

If you're bringing a new group together, it's a good idea to lay down some guidelines for table etiquette that suit your playgroup. This might include things like good times and venues for meeting up, food allergies or preferences, and rules about using technology like phones or laptops during a session. Establishing a simple and recognizable way for the GM to signal the start or restart of gameplay may also be useful.

DELEGATING TASKS

It can be helpful to assign some out-of-game roles to make your experience together better. For example, decide who's in charge of scheduling games, who does time checks to keep everyone focused, who handles session recaps and note taking for the party and the GM, and who reminds everyone when it's time to take a break or get some food. Splitting these roles among yourselves rather than leaving it to just one person (usually the GM) may make your game sessions run more smoothly by preventing one or two of you from becoming fatigued with extraneous but essential matters.

WHO'S IN CHARGE OF WHAT?

The Players: A player's first job is to create a capable and motivated Champion, starting with a core concept and fleshing it out as the game progresses.

Talk with your GM and group about what you'd like to see in the game for your character: deeper connections with people in your life, addressing your troubles, pursuing action and adventure, or anything else that excites you about the world of Umddar. See the *Champions* chapter on page 45 for more.

The GM: You're in charge of bringing Umdaar to life for your players, naming the faces and places around their characters, ensuring that everyone's characters fit with each other and in the chosen setting, arbitrating dice rolls, and managing the flow of the campaign.

Be a fan of the Champions and pay attention to how their actions affect the world. Look for opportunities to present them with challenges and encourage them to be creative when addressing them. For more, see *Being a Game Master* on page 124.

Everyone: Read the *Banners* (page 25) and *The Shape of the World* (page 144) chapters to inspire you and help you create your world together. You don't need to understand everything immediately; you can always refer back to stuff as you play, whenever you need to.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

When you gather a new group of players, start by ensuring everyone at the table—whether virtual or physical—is committed to keeping the game fun, rewarding, and welcoming to everyone *else* at the table. We're all agreeing to a social contract that everyone—the players and the GM—will watch out for each other and prioritize the people at the table over the game itself.

Here's a version of how that might look at your table.

> Thanks, everyone, for playing ***Umdaar*** with me. This game tackles real world issues in over-the-top, action-packed adventures. Like science fiction and fantasy, it provides an opportunity to explore issues in our own lives through a layer of abstraction, making them fun to play with, fight against, and interrogate. Before we start it's important to remember that the fun and wellbeing of everyone at the table is more important than anything that happens in the game.
>
> *You pause for a moment to get consensus.*
>
> To that end, if anything comes up in the game that makes it unfun or uncomfortable for you, let us know and we'll change it. There are plenty of safety tools you can use, but they're all optional. Any way that works best for you to communicate will be honored. We care more about the real people at this table than we do about the fictional Champions we're about to play!

SAFETY TOOLS

Here are four safety tools we recommend. Pick ones that work best for you and your group, whether or not they're ones we suggest.

X-CARD

The **X-Card** by John Stavropoulos is a tool for players to flag content they don't want in the game as it comes up in play. A player referring to the X-Card prompts the group to edit out the X-Carded content. It's a short hand way to indicate the game has gone in a direction that makes it uncomfortable or unenjoyable for you. You can find more on the X-Card at tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg

LINES AND VEILS

This is a tool to use before and during play where everyone at the table indicates content they want to avoid (**Lines**) or that they want to handle with care, or feature "off-screen" (**Veils**). Subjects can also be flagged as **Ask First**, indicating it might be acceptable depending on context; check in with your group before introducing that content to the game. Lines and Veils were first developed by Ron Edwards for the game ***Sorcerer***.

STARS AND WISHES

At the end of every session, players share what they loved about the game (**Stars**) and what they hope for in the future (**Wishes**). Integrating this feedback helps groups guide games towards the best experiences they can.

OPEN DOOR

An open door means that players are welcomed and encouraged to take breaks or leave the game anytime they need or want to. This might be a short break to use the facilities or get food, or it might mean leaving the game if you're having a bad night or something comes up that you need to attend to. The open door means you're always welcome back to the table.

To find out more about these and other safety tools, we recommend checking out ttrpgsafetytoolkit.com, ttrpguniversity.com/stars-wishes, or searching online for TTRPG Safety Tools.

GAME WORKSHEET

The Game Worksheet is a tool for collecting notes on what the players want—and don't want—to appear in game. Its sections include:

- Inspirations
- Elements
- World Aspects

As you fill out the game worksheet we recommend noting who suggested what, so you can ensure that every player ends up with something they're excited about.

INSPIRATIONS

As a group, brainstorm a list of ideas that engage the players, including the GM, and write them in the Inspirations box. There are no bad suggestions at this point! This can be as specific as existing stories (movies, comics, books) or extremely vague (themes, moods, tropes, topics).

> Tiffany (the GM) and the other players write down the following inspirations for their group: ***The Vision of Escaflowne***, ***John Carter***, ***Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild***, world-building, mythology, feel-good, SMASH!

OUR INSPIRATIONS

Having trouble thinking of good inspirations? Here are some of ours:

She-Ra and the Princesses of Power. The show proves that characters with real emotional dilemmas can still have fun adventures where they save the world and smash robots. ***She-Ra*** is particularly good at focusing on how relationships are built and betrayed, and how some relationships are positive and others are toxic.

Avatar: The Last Airbender, Avatar: The Legend of Korra, Steven Universe. Although they aren't planetary romance, these shows are huge inspirations in their message and tone. They successfully fuse fantastic adventure with realistic drama, telling the stories of individuals who can grow and change with the help of others.

Green Lantern: Mosaic. A short-lived DC comic about different lifeforms transplanted to a tiny shared planet and forced to coexist.

Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts. In a post-apocalyptic world, a group of friends explores a vast, dangerous, mutated environment using a combination of grit, courage, and diplomacy to survive and make new allies.

ELEMENTS

As a group, go through the inspirations, weed out any redundant ones, and pick the parts that excite all of you the most. Perhaps most importantly, identify things that anyone—including the GM—would rather not encounter in the adventure.

Elements are broken into three parts:

- Keepers
- Deal Breakers
- Conditional

KEEPERS

Keepers are elements that most of you want to see, and that no one strongly objects to. If an inspiration is a theme or a trope (e.g., feel-good), you can port it over directly. If an inspiration is an existing work of fiction, discuss it as a group to determine what specific parts of it are interesting and easy to recreate.

> Tiffany, the GM, and the other players discuss some of their inspiring fiction, looking for tropes and patterns. ***The Vision of Escaflowne*** has grand wars with giant magic-powered mechs, ***John Carter*** is action-packed adventure on a dying planet, and ***Zelda: Breath of the Wild*** is about ancient tech, exploration, and dangerous, trap-filled temples.

DEAL BREAKERS

These are elements you want to avoid in your stories, which could include anything you brought up earlier when talking about safety tools or new ideas that come to mind as you're discussing the elements. If one player suggests something as a deal breaker, the rest of you don't need to feel the same—the GM and all the other players agree to keep that element out of the story. You don't need to make an exhaustive list; things like "cruelty" or "real world injustices" get the point across pretty clearly and can be clarified as needed with a bit of discussion.

This is an ideal time to introduce or review the safety tools (page 18) so your group has established ways to signal objections if a deal breaker is violated.

> The players want a story that's light in tone, not a grimdark adventure such as ***A Game of Thrones***, so they settle on adding "cruel, violent themes" and "depictions of human atrocities" to the deal breakers list. GM Tiffany likes ***A Game of Thrones***, but she'll intentionally avoid these topics for the comfort of the table.

CONDITIONAL

Conditional elements are the middle ground between deal breakers and keepers. These elements can be allowed, but under certain conditions. Your group should talk about what you all feel comfortable with, provided specific lines aren't crossed.

For example, maybe you're okay with NPCs dying, but don't want a lot of gore (see *Lines & Veils*). Or perhaps you're okay with stories that include slavery, provided it's only done by the bad guys in the Dread Domains, and not in the Freelands (framing it as a wicked institution to destroy).

Conditional elements can also be meta-game things that might kill the fun, such as PC death. So you might say, "PC death is off the table, unless the player suggests it." Then a player's suggestion to sacrifice their character to save the party is both a dynamic way to stop the bomb in the story and a fulfillment of the conditional element.

WORLD ASPECTS

For the last part of the Game Worksheet, distill the inspirations and elements into 3-5 **world aspects**. That's the goal, but if you can only think of 1 or 2, you can write more down later. Or if you're overflowing with creativity, write them all down—you might find them useful later. Or not, and that's fine too.

WHAT'S AN ASPECT?

An **aspect** is a short sentence or phrase that establishes a fact and can be invoked to help you influence the story. Something the length of an idiom or a short song lyric is ideal. For more on aspects, see page 117.

Here are some example world aspects for your use or inspiration:

- The Awesome Power of the Demiurge
- Frequent Peril and Daring Escapes
- Nobody Dies Today
- Fresh and Familiar Faces
- Desperate Times Yet Hope Springs Eternal
- Seekers of the Truth on a Planet of Riddles
- Let's Get Dangerous
- Low Tech, Primeval World
- High Fantasy Dystopia

WHAT DOES A WORLD ASPECT DO?

We get into mechanics later, but for now, think of a world aspect as a hint about what rules apply in the movie of your minds. For example, let's look at the world aspect **Frequent Peril and Daring Escapes**.

Frequent Peril and Daring Escapes: Planetary romance can be an endless chain of hazards and cliffhangers. The GM should invoke this aspect often to add danger to any scene. If a scene is getting boring or the Champions are too complacent, throw in a challenge or threat to keep things exciting, even if they are in a "safe" place like the Freelands. Maybe a Master sent an assassin or a flying squadron of attack drones. Or maybe there is a runaway pack animal, or a spunky child climbing a precarious drainpipe. Is it realistic? No, but it makes for an exciting story.

As the word "cliffhanger" implies, the Champions are surprisingly good at surviving these dangers, hanging on to the figurative (or literal) cliff by a few fingers. Players should invoke this aspect to help them stay alive in situations that would otherwise mean their certain doom. It's also great for games where PC death is off the table—there's always an option to escape, even if it trades a quick, certain death in a temple trap for the slow possibility of death at the hands of an enemy.

USING THE WORKSHEET

Check between sessions to make sure the content of the game is working for everyone at the table. What felt right last session might not work for your players today.

We recommend that you:

- **Review the Elements:** Before the session, run through the deal breakers, conditionals, and keepers that the group established previously.
- **Summarize your Themes:** Give the players an overview of the adventure elements you planned for this session. *Do they have feedback or concerns about dealing with any of those topics right now?*
- **Monitor the Action:** During the game, watch for signs of discomfort and for times when you might want a quick vibe check. Consider giving a heads up before things get intense.

REVIEW THE ELEMENTS

It usually falls to the GM to lead this part of the conversation.

> "These are the keepers, deal breakers, and conditionals we've agreed on so far. Is there anything we'd like to change? Is there anything we'd like to avoid just for this session?"

The distinction between "Is there anything we'd like to change" and "Is there anything we'd like to avoid just for this session" acknowledges that real-life circumstances can have an impact on play. It reinforces the idea that, to keep your Umdaar adventures engaging and immersive, you're all willing to be responsive to each other.

Be careful not to pressure a player into explaining why they'd like to avoid any particular topic. If they want to share with the rest of the table, they're welcome to, but putting somebody on the spot can be overwhelming at best, and unintentionally hostile at worst.

Opening this discussion may change some plans you had in mind for the session. If so, take a moment to share that you're shifting the direction of your adventure in response to your table's feedback.

> "I was planning to lean hard into the tension between the Freelands commune and the Glowbots you met last session. But since we're ready for a break from prejudice, I think I'll set that aside for now."

Consider opening the floor for your players to suggest what they'd like to do and offer prompts based on any current running plotlines your players have.

SUMMARIZE YOUR THEMES

Especially if issues come up while going over the Game Worksheet, it's helpful to quickly summarize the themes you plan to explore during the session. Give your players a chance to provide feedback so you can change your approach if they aren't up for dealing with deeper issues at the moment.

> "My intention is to make this next adventure about how racism is wicked, by digging into the issues of the Glowbot commune you met last session. You've already seen how Kalika, your ranger friend, was off put by how you're all so nice to the Glowbots. The truth is, she doesn't think of them as human the way she thinks of all of you."

Consider this a final check of sorts, given that now you're getting into specific details. It's easy for people to agree to or veto something when it's couched under the realm of the theoretical ("Racism bad! Sexism sucks!"), but the nuances of storytelling and roleplay shift something that's abstract into concrete experiences.

Here are some good rules of thumb to consider when you're pitching your plans:

Be upfront about your focus for the adventure: *"My intention is to make this next adventure about how racism is wicked..."*

List the ways you're planning to do this: *"...by digging into the issues of the Glowbot commune you met last session."*

Add other details that you plan to include in service of your focus: *"You've already seen how Kalika, your ranger friend, was put off by how you're all so nice to the Glowbots. The truth is, she doesn't think of them as human the way she thinks of all of you."*

MONITOR THE ACTION

From time to time, take a moment to do a quick check-in. This is especially true when your group includes players who may not know each other well. For example:

> "Before we continue, how's everyone doing?"

Presume that enthusiastic excitement is the ideal response. It could also be a good time to let everyone sit up, stretch, and do whatever real life thing they have to do before diving right back into things.

If you have doubts about the vibe at your table, don't be shy about pausing the action before you do something with potentially high consequences or engage with a scene that delves deep into something touchy, even if it isn't on the list of deal breakers and conditions your group established beforehand.

You don't need to spoil things by going into detail; a simple warning may suffice.

> "Okay. Just so you know, if you attack that camp, there will be consequences. It'll also be a tough fight."

If your players prompt you, offer more information on this. Otherwise, if a fair warning has been given and your players want to proceed, carry on!

BANNERS

Banners unite Champions under a common cause: to defend Freelands, to break the Masters' control of Dread Domains, to explore the Wildernexus and ruins within, or any other purpose your characters may share.

CHOOSE YOUR BANNER

Your banner signifies the sub-genre of planetary romance you want to play with, the style and tone of your game, the approach your Champions often take towards solving their problems, and likely where most of your adventures take place. While a banner doesn't define the details of your Champion, it's an important part of their motivation.

- **Dignitaries:** Royal ambassadors, council members, magical princesses, and knights who employ diplomacy, planning, and strength of arms to protect the Freelands.
- **Rebels:** Insurgents who live in the Dread Domains and practice sabotage, spycraft, and theft to recruit allies and foment rebellion against the Masters.
- **Pathfinders:** Explorers trained in navigation, survival, and exploring the unknown who travel into the Wildernexuses to map the regions and connect the divided communities.
- **Archaeonauts:** Relic hunters who study lore and travel into the various regions to find Demiurge artifacts and investigate mysterious ruins.

All banners share the same general categories:

- Region
- Base of Operations
- Core Community
- Contact
- Local Villain
- Party Name & Reputation
- Stunts

REGION

Region is an umbrella term for wherever the things that matter most to the Champions are happening. It likely contains their base of operations, core community, and is where most of their closest friends and family live—but not necessarily. Regardless, for whatever reason, it's of the highest importance to them and it's where the action of the game takes place. Regions can vary widely in size.

- Pick an region from your banner or create your own
- Pick one of the issue aspects or create one of your own

ISSUE ASPECTS

An **issue aspect** is a short phrase that describes a current threat or foreshadows a threat that's about to appear. Here's an example:

> CONQUEROR WORM: A new invasive organism is creeping across the continent, a mass of writhing tendrils called the Sea of Worms that devours any biome it touches. As the indestructible mass encroaches ever closer, Masters and Freeland rulers grow desperate and dangerous.

BASE & COMMUNITY

The **base of operations** is where the Champions work out of and most likely call home. The base itself is probably a single building or structure, like an abbey or fort. The location is controlled by the Champions or their trusted allies. They are safe there, barring some calamity.

The **core community** is a region that houses the base of operations. More importantly, it's also a vibrant community of people (or living things) that you care about. It contains allies, but it's not in the PCs' control—perhaps it's too big, is ruled democratically, or has an enemy ruling it. The safety of the PCs and their families can vary based on the location.

It doesn't matter whether you create the base or the core community first. Start with whichever one inspires you more.

> Let's cite an example from legend. Robin Hood's base is Sherwood Forest, while his core community might be the various villages of Nottinghamshire. Nottinghamshire is officially controlled by the evil sheriff, but it's full of secret sympathizers and collaborators.

BASE

- Pick or create a name and high concept aspect describing it
- Pick or create an aspect with something positive about it

CORE COMMUNITY

- Pick or create a name and high concept aspect describing it
- Pick or create the values of the community

The *Campaign* section also has optional rules for your community, including Power and assigning a skill attribute. See page 238 for more details.

CONTACT

The **contact** is the NPC that the Champions most routinely interact with—they might be a secretary working under your banner delivering messages, a spy giving you leads, or a superior handing out orders. They live in your core community or travel through it frequently.

- Pick or create a contact name
- Pick or create a high concept aspect
- Assign one relevant skill at Fair (+2) or higher.

DIGNITARIES

BANNER NAME Sapphire Sentinels

REPUTATION
Choose one or create your own.
BRASH YOUNG UPSTARTS

GROUP DYNAMIC
Choose one or create your own.
GATHERED TO SAVE THE FREELANDS (NO PRESSURE!)

REGION
An alliance of Freelands, struggling to fight off invaders.
Pick one Freeland and one issue (or create your own).
The Former Freelands of Arrn
Issue: CRACKS IN THE PERFECT KNIGHTLY ORDER

CONTACT
Choose one or create one of your own.
Hierophant Ternella, DE FACTO ALLIANCE LEADER. Fair (+2) Contacts.

CORE COMMUNITY
A symbol of safety in an unsafe world.
Pick one or create a Community with a High Concept and Value of your own.
The Freehold of Insafarai
High Concept: BUSTLING CITY OF REFUGEES
Values: MERCY OVER JUSTICE—ALL ARE WELCOME AND FORGIVEN

BASE OF OPERATIONS
A well sheltered location; likely a fort, royal court, or temple.
Choose one or create one of your own.
The Blackstone Barracks
High Concept: A WAR ROOM OF OLD ADVENTURERS AND GENERALS
Aspect: KNIGHTS STUDYING FROM ANCIENT SCROLLS

LOCAL VILLAIN
Choose one or create one of your own.
Ruby Ruler, SMOGSTONE ENGINEER

SAPPHIRE ASPECTS
Special rules for this particular
As a member of the Sapp
bearing a rune-inscribe
Sapphire aspect.

BACKGROUND
Ages ago, the Goddess
torques, each bearing a
of strong will, who bel
powerful weapon; this w
on a unique shape, dep

The Hierophant Ternella
facto leader of an allian
ance is close to splinter
manipulation. But the
together the disparat
granted them the statu
The hieorophant has c
the Sapphire Sentinels
strike force, in hopes th
Masters.

Can the Sapphire Ser
will they be claimed
princesses act in the
individual kingdoms'

LOCAL VILLAIN

Every good pulp adventure needs a good villain. Create an adversary that your Champions have skirmished with before. The **local villain** is a mid-level boss—think of the mostly-competent Sheriff of Nottingham, who is more dangerous than the bumbling Guy of Gisborne, but less powerful than Prince John. The PCs and local villain spend most of the time in a deadlock, but both are looking for a new ally or artifact that can break the status quo.

To do:

- Pick or create the villain's name
- Pick or create a high concept aspect
- Pick or create a motivation

NAME AND REPUTATION

Assume that this party of Champions has been together for several adventures, securing at least one victory and suffering at least one failure. Create a name for the party and reputation they have gained. Maybe they named themselves, or the name might have been chosen by their sponsor or by an enemy.

News travels fast, but not accurately. What are people saying about you? How is their opinion skewed by bias or propaganda?

To do:

- Create a name for your banner
- Pick or create a reputation aspect

Suggestion: If you intend to play a longer campaign, start with a reputation that's mixed or negative—it gives you room to improve it over time.

CHAMPIONS FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS

Banners often have Champions from different backgrounds. A variety of backgrounds can give the group some versatility. However, it's a good idea to give your Champion at least one aspect or stunt that connects them to the party's banner.

> Tiffany's group decides to start a campaign under the Dignitary banner; most of the characters are pampered princesses, but Sophie wants to play a penniless Rebel who wound up in their company. Tiffany recommends including a Teamwork stunt to reflect how well the Rebel is making friends (or struggling to).

STUNTS

Each banner has a list of stunts associated with it. When you create your characters, each player selects or creates a banner stunt for their Champion. If your Champion hails from another banner, select a banner stunt from that list instead!

DIGNITARIES

A Dignitary banner has prominent members of Freeland communities charged with protecting the people from invasion by the Masters. Dignitaries are the loyal servants of the leader of a Freeland, acting as their ambassadors on missions of diplomacy, and their strike team on missions of war. They may fight off monsters in the morning, plan to allocate community resources in the afternoon, and host a ball in the evening.

THE FREELANDS

Although the shadow of the tyrannical Masters may appear inescapable, it is not so. There's not only one but many surviving nations who oppose the Masters' reign of terror, scattered throughout the vast and varied landscape known as The Freelands.

No two Freelands are identical, but they often have some noble figure or respected council in charge—typically an elder, monarch, hierophant, or prime minister.

For more information, see the *Freelands* section on page 151.

A NEW NARRATIVE: WORLDS WITHOUT MASTERS

If you don't want a a game with dynasties, royal bloodlines, and hereditary rulers, here are some alternatives:

- The Freelands might have constitutional monarchies—you may be royal, but the Freeland respects democracy.
- The Monarch ceremonially "adopts" the greatest Champions of the realm, making them all "princesses," regardless of family ties.
- Your Freeland chooses its leader communally. Your "Princess" is the child of the elected official (like the "First Daughter" of a President).You might be the elected Queen of your community, like Queen Amidala of Naboo in ***Star Wars: Phantom Menace***.

PRINCESS MARIPOSA AND HER ROYAL FRIENDS® SAHARA, WREN, KAHALE, AND HAIMI!
THESE POSABLE TOYETIC™ ACTION FIGURES COME WITH DETACHABLE ACCESSORIES LIKE MARIPOSA'S WAND OF TRUTH, WREN'S CLOAK, AND HAIMI'S TWISTABLE VINES. EACH SOLD SEPARATELY.

PLAYING A DIGNITARY

The Dignitary banner ties in directly to a very popular trope—the magical heroine or princess. As in our inspiration, ***She-Ra and the Princesses of Power***, the number of princesses in your group isn't limited by heredity or gender. Any player who wants a princess Champion should play one.

Sometimes, a party of princesses includes a few other Champions because of the desires of the Freeland leader. These are likely to be professionals with a long history with the princesses—royal bodyguards, army scouts, court magicians, and scholars. However, sometimes a recent arrival to court, such as an Archaeonaut or Rebel from the Dread Domains, can make such an impact that they're immediately welcomed and trusted (for now). These newcomers are lifted to the rank of Dignitaries—promoted to generals, advisors, and ambassadors who carry the word of the ruling body and the weight of the Freeland on their shoulders.

SAPPHIRE SENTINELS

If you are interested in a quick start, we recommend playing Champions chosen to be Sapphire Sentinels—honorary princesses, destined to bear the magical sapphire torcs. Some of the Champions start with the magical item, some will have to find lost ones during the campaign.

See the *Sapphire Sentinels* on page 100 for more.

REGION

In a Dignitary campaign, the region is an alliance of Freelands, struggling to fight off invaders. Examples:

The Six Nations: Six democratic tribes that live along the coastline, formed of both long-time residents and new refugees.

- Issue: If We Don't Unite Before the Masters Do, Divided We Shall Fall
- Issue: The Alliance Leader Is Dead

The Luminators Alliance: A union of magic users, rune-priests, and scholars who run their nations from their universities.

- Issue: The Alliance's Reluctance to Act
- Issue: The Ritual Book of N'xa Is Stolen!

The Former Freelands of Arrn: Princesses and knights joined to protect or reclaim their sovereignty.

- Issue: Cracks in the Perfect Knightly Order
- Issue: Occupying force of heartless Godmechs

BASE OF OPERATIONS

The base is likely to be a secured location, such as a fort, royal court, or temple. It's not uncommon for it to be an ancient Demiurge structure that's been repurposed by the locals. Dignitary campaigns often involve a lot of time in their core community, so it's worth taking the time to develop one you're all happy with.

Parliament of Outcasts

High Concept: Royal Court of the Queens in Exile
Aspect: Wisdom, Power, and Grace Together

Castle Lazersword

High Concept: Ancient Demiurge Fort, Seat of Sleeping Power
Aspect: Mystic Advisers Consult on the Everchanging Landscapes

The Blackstone Barracks

High Concept: A War Room of Old Adventurers and Generals
Aspect: Knights Studying from Ancient Scrolls

CORE COMMUNITY

The core community is likely some place that's important to the entire alliance—the symbol of safety in an unsafe world.

The Freehold of Insafarai

High Concept: Bustling City of Refugees
Values: Mercy over Justice—All Are Welcome and Forgiven

The Burrow Builders

High Concept: Underground City Hub of Earth-singers
Values: Self-Reliance over Interdependence—The Underground Has Everything You Need

For additional info, see page 158.

The Wood Watchers

High Concept: The Forest Guardians of the Woodland Pact
Values: Tradition over Innovation—The Natural Order is Better than Any Invention

For additional info, see page 154.

CONTACT

Here are some example contacts that you can use either as-is or modify for your own game.

- Matriarch Menala, **Bunny-Eared Alliance Leader**. Fair (+2) Will.
- Scribbles, **Cuttlefishoid Royal Secretary and Page**. Fair (+2) Contacts.

LOCAL VILLAIN

The local villain is likely constantly invading your realm—always building towards their doomsday plans, but too strong or slippery to be easily captured. Be sure to include a Dread Domain that they control.

Example Motivation: **None Shall Oppose Me; Exiled Noble Taking Birthright by Force; There Shall Be Blood and Anarchy!; You Will Be Assimilated**

- Cudgelord of the North, **Vicious Marauder** (see page 166)
- Feromoaner, **Seductive Cyborg Master** (see page 287)
- An example from the popular media ***He-Man*** would be Skeletor.

NAME AND REPUTATION

The reputation of a Dignitary banner is often tied to the respect for the ruling power of the Freelands and the social class of the Champions. For example, a group of princesses will certainly find little opposition from lower class subjects, but might find little love. Likewise, some street rats recruited by the Quing, a respected leader, might have few friends in the Royal Court.

> **Respected Agents of the Crown; The Layde's Lapdogs; Those Nosy Little Nobs; Rowdy Upstarts; Saving Angels; Undisciplined Youngsters; Malicious Marauders.**

Dignitary campaigns place an extra emphasis on interpersonal and intra-personal relationships, so a group under the Dignitary banner has a second party aspect describing the Group Dynamic.

> **Polite Strangers; Warring Egos Held Together by a Thread (and Captain S'rah); Found Family.**

STUNTS

The Dignitary stunts are in the *Stunts* on page 82. When you create a Dignitary Champion, select a stunt from the list or create a new one (see page 90 for guidance on creating stunts).



REBELS

Active insurgents working to undermine and eventually overthrow Masters and their control over the Dread Domains. The life of a rebel is violent and uncertain, often questioning their means and their ends.

DREAD DOMAINS

Far from the cities and farmlands of the heart of the Freelands, past even the waving grasses and whispering jungles of the Wildernexuses, lie the Dread Domains. In enclaves carved from the inhospitable wastelands surrounding the former strongholds of the Demiurge, the Masters draw followers, even worshipers, who see them as the rightful heirs to the power left by the fall of the Demiurge. Some Masters find a way to use the artifacts left behind to dazzle or cow their disciples and minions. Others glean knowledge from the ruins themselves, building small, twisted societies in the half-remembered image that remains of the Demiurge. Some pull every drop of life from the land, leaving it barren or hostile. Some use pure charisma to build a world of lies and half-truths to swindle their followers.

But there are some within the Dread Domains that refuse to obey—they reject the propaganda fed to them, and overcome all fear. These are the Rebels—fighters who have pledged to wage a guerrilla war against their oppressors until their homeland, and every conquered land, is free from tyranny.

For more information, see *The Dread Domains* section on page 165.

PLAYING A REBEL

The Dread Domains and their Masters leave little room for dissent among their populace. If you want to bring down the system, you're going to need to be as devious as they are, or you might be caught before your plans come to fruition.

In one sense, you may view your characters as guerrilla fighters in the Dread Domains. Whether you want to be the next Robin Hood and rob from the rich to give to the poor, or the next Kalani'ōpu'u-a-Kaiamamao defending your home from invading colonizers, or the next Toussaint Louverture throwing off the shackles of tyranny, you're going to need a plan.

REGION

In a Rebel campaign, the region is controlled by one or more Masters, and the Champions are fighting to liberate the people who live there. Examples:

The Council of Nightmares: A loose confederacy of treacherous Masters and the various fiefdoms they control.

- Issue: **Losing Against a United Front**
- Issue: **Which New Cult Is Pulling the Strings?**

The Lazerzone: The northern half of the continent, which is a constant war zone between rival Masters.

- Issue: **Caught in the Crosshairs**
- Issue: **Who's Sowing the Discord, and Why?**

The Haunterlands: A region with several lesser Masters, all serving under one Overmaster: Necrokadnezzar, the Corpse King (see page 181).

- Issue: **The Inevitable March of the Silent Throng**
- Issue: **The Time of the Dark Ritual Approaches**

BASE OF OPERATIONS

The Rebel base is likely quite small and hidden—all the better to escape detection, as your Champions are considered wanted criminals! It should offer some degree of protection, giving them a safe place to operate. At least until they start ruffling a few feathers.

The Caves of Chitin

High Concept: Maze of Tunnels Carved by Scarabasauruses
Aspect: Crisscrosses the Entire Continent

The Workshop

High Concept: Repurposed Massive Laboratory
Aspect: Protected by Ingenious Traps

The Cloud-Raptor

High Concept: Stolen Replitech Airship, Modded for Stealth
Aspect: Fast Getaway

CORE COMMUNITY

These are the people that your Champions care most strongly about—a Dread Domain they're trying to liberate, dominated by a Master they're trying to dethrone. Even though there are spies and enemy soldiers everywhere, this is their home, and they have a network of sympathizers in their corner.

The values of a Dread Domain might be those of the oppressor rather than those of the oppressed. If the Master rose from within the community, the Master may have twisted existing values to a dangerous extreme.

The Icequake Tundra

High Concept: A Tundra of Dangerous Terrain and Desperate Survivors

Values: Strength over Mercy—Survival of the Fittest

Hekaton States

High Concept: Hundred Tiny Kingdoms, Tangled in a Knot of Politics and Intrigue

Values: Security over Freedom—Spies Everywhere, Trust No One

Factoryona

High Concept: A Lush, Peaceful Farmland Turned into a Toxin-spewing Factory Town

Values: Innovation over Tradition—Before We Rested, Now We Toil

CONTACT

Here are some example contacts that you can use either as-is or modify for your own game.

> Naba Turbosmith, **Snake-dog Rebel Leader & Artihacker**. Fair (+2) Burglary.
>
> The Ghost Scribe, **Mysterious Deep-cover Spy**. Fair (+2) Deceive.



LOCAL VILLAIN

The local villain is likely the direct leader of the core community. They haven't been able to capture you so far, but don't underestimate them!

Example Motivation: I Must Bring Order from Chaos; I Must Be the Strongest; I will prove my worth to the Overmaster; I Must Get Them Before They Get Me!

- Sparklaw, **Hyenan Tyrant** (see page 263)
- Queen of Hearts, **Gamester and Master Manipulator** (see page 177)
- An example from the popular media ***She-Ra*** is Hordak .

NAME AND REPUTATION

With a Rebel party, the reputation varies wildly based on who's perceiving it—the loyal forces of the Masters or the downtrodden serfs of the Dread Domains. Groups with a Rebel banner have two reputation aspects to reflect both sides.

> **Dangerous Rabble Rousers; Foolish Dreamers; Shady Grifters; Merciless Butchers; Urban Legends.**

STUNTS

The Rebel stunts are in the *Stunts* on page 84. When you create a Rebel Champion, select a stunt from the list or create a new one (see page 90 for guidance on creating stunts).

PATHFINDERS

Explorers, wanderers, and scouts who map the Wildernexus in search of connections to other communities. Pathfinders encounter all manner of threats from locals that don't take kindly to their tresspassing, agents of the Masters who are looking to expand their domains, and environmental hazards!

WILDERNEXUSES

Outside the confines of the biggest Freeland cities lies the Wildernexuses, a complex system of teeming jungles and sprawling plains that have sprung up over the millennia to cover vast amounts of Umdaar. Nested within its diverse folds are countless inexplicable creatures and phenomena that have grown unrecognizable and strange, even to those that see the Demiurge's touch. Coiled cybernetics breathe with the rhythm of an organic heartbeat, the weather seems precariously balanced on a knife's edge, and dotted throughout the land are the remnants of the Demiurge, locked deep within the earth for eternity. Perhaps this was all according to their designs—a world that grows and changes of its own accord. Or perhaps it was their very pursuit of control that caused their disappearance. Regardless, their power is needed to protect that which exists today, to protect the majesty of the Wildernexus from the Masters' creeping grasp.

For more information, see *The Wildernexuses* section on page 193.

PLAYING A PATHFINDER

A Pathfinder is a special classification of explorer who are sanctioned to move within the Wildernexuses and are charged with its protection. The Wardens of a Wildernexus community only hand these titles to those worthy. The process is different for each representative, with many employing traditional trials of strength and character. However, it is not unheard of for individuals who have performed great feats of bravery in defense of others to be cleared without the need for a formal trial.

Pathfinders also act as unofficial liaisons between these rugged communities. They often carry important messages, deliver medicine, and act as a guide to travelers. The flora and fauna of a Wildernexus may be sacred and sinless, but does not mean it's not extremely dangerous to the unprepared.

As you've likely heard before: *"Take only memories, leave only footprints."*

REGION

In a Pathfinder campaign, the region is a frontier region with multiple Wildernexuses to explore. Examples:

The Obsidian Road: A vast trade route that once ran through the Wildernexuses, connecting the communities. Now, the road is overgrown and impassable.

- Issue: **The Invasive Sea of Worms Devours All**
- Issue: **Will Connecting the Communities Lead to Peace or War?**

The Archipelago of Mystery: A string of wondrous isles, separated by time, magical mists, and piracy.

- Issue: **Who Dares Seek the Starblades of Su'ul?** (see page 233)
- Issue: **Kaiju of the Deep**

The Hidden Canyon: An idyllic valley is targeted by colonizers and plunderers, and only the PCs can keep them in check.

- Issue: **The Discovery of Wondarium, a Mysterious Element**
- Issue: **Dread Domains Invade, Freelands Encroach!**

BASE OF OPERATIONS

The base of a Pathfinder campaign is likely a small frontier outpost at the crossroads of the continent, giving the PCs easy access to all sorts of unique locations.

Obelisk Outpost

High Concept: A Bunker Outpost on the Frontier Built Upon Ancient Henges
Aspect: Robust Shelter Against the Elements

Castleblanca

High Concept: Neutral Town of Traders and Runaways
Aspect: Hub of Trade and News

The Skydog

High Concept: Hover-galleon That Sails and Flies
Aspect: Slow and Sturdy Vessel

CORE COMMUNITY

The core community is a Wildernexus that the Champions are particularly attached to. You should assign a community value aspect to the Wildernexus, but what that means can vary wildly—it might be the value of the warden community, but it may also be the general trend for the lifeforms living there.

Pathfinder campaigns spend a lot of time traveling, so the core community might only feature in a few adventures in a long campaign, or they might be a migratory community that moves alongside the Champions.

The Infinite Green

High Concept: A Primordial Forest of Colossal Insects

Values: Faith vs. Knowledge—You May Not Find Knowledge, But You May Yet Understand

For additional info, see page 196.

The Midnight Plains

High Concept: A Savannah of Eternal Twilight

Values: Truth over Beauty—Blunt Words And Sharp Arrows Are Necessary

For additional info, see page 195.

The Glowing Sands

High Concept:A Desert of Radioactive Dust

Values: Unity over Individualism—Stick Together And You Might Survive

For additional info, see page 196.

Waste Walkers

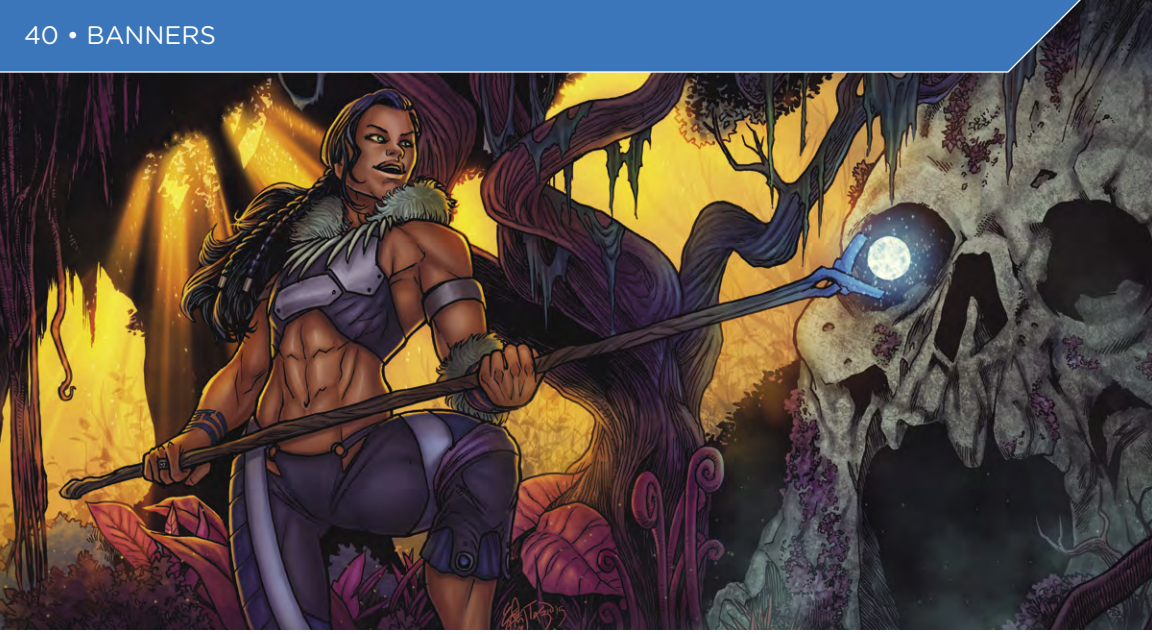
High Concept: Wandering the Glowing Sands in Search of a Home

Values: Leave No One Behind—Even if it Means We All Suffer

CONTACT

Here are some example contacts that you can use either as-is or modify for your own game. As a group of Pathfinders, you have two contacts instead of one.

> Kyla Kloudsurfer, **Space-Dwarf Junior-Pathfinder and Courier**. Fair (+2) Drive.
>
> Djamila Starsong, **Humanoid Head of the Caravan Library**. Fair (+2) Lore.



LOCAL VILLAIN

In Pathfinder games, the local villain may be from a neighboring Dread Domain or a nomadic war-horde you encounter many times in your various travels. Some are focused on the ruins and artifacts hidden inside the Wildernexuses, while others direct their energies at the Wildernexuses themselves and the resources they hold.

Motivation: **The Wilderness Must Be Exploited; Nature's Imperfections Must Be Corrected; They Come, They Eat, They Leave; Some People Want to Watch the World Burn**

- Ked the Krusher, **Mutated Orangutanian** (see page 273)
- Sorpentra, **Scientist Turned Serpent Sorceress** (see page 173)
- An example from the popular media ***Captain Planet*** would be the Eco-Villains .

STUNTS

The Pathfinder stunts are in the *Stunts* on page 83. When you create a Pathfinder Champion, select a stunt from the list or create a new one (see page 90 for guidance on creating stunts).

NAME & REPUTATION

For a party under the Pathfinder banner, the reputation is likely based on your reputation among wardens—and probably says more about your intentions than your results.

> **Vagabond Troublemakers; Headstrong Youths; Bumbling Tourists; Trusted Envoys.**

ARCHAEONAUTS

Relic hunters who travel into all regions of Umdaar to find Demiurge artifacts and investigate mysterious ruins. Some are reverent Runekeepers that want to preserve the history and lore of the lost civilization. Some are brash Artihackers looking for new formulas to create Replitech. Still others hunt the ruins for answers to mysteries personal and profound.

RUINS

Of important note to Umdaar are the sites of Demiurge provenance called **ruins**. Labeling these sites as ruins is a bit of a misnomer, as many of them are functional and often commandeered by new residents. Still, "ruins" has reached common usage, and generally describes the structures left in the Demiurge's wake. Archaeonauts are experts at exploring, understanding, and most importantly, surviving these ancient structures. There are many documented "ruins" that have become Freeland temples and Dread Domain fortresses, but there are countless more untouched in the Wildernexuses, buried in the undergrowth or hidden underground.

Ruins are covered in more depth in *The Ruins* section on page 209.

RUIN EXPLORING

It is simple to point to the lasting structures and influence of the Demiurge and assume they were god-like beings beyond understanding. However, some Runekeepers say that if you closely inspect their writings, they reveal that many of their hopes, fears, and mundane day-to-day life must have been a close reflection of ours today. The Demiurge left tools, locked away so as not to be abused, but they surely left them for future generations. That isn't to say that all Demiurge technology lies buried underneath the ground. Many of the communities bordering the Wildernexus, or nestled within it, exist thanks to these inventions. Micro-climate regulators create safety pockets that ward settlements from extreme weather and hungry predators that stalk the emerald foliage.

PLAYING AN ARCHAEONAUT

An Archaeonaut is a special classification of researcher that is familiar with the useful technology of the Demiurge, and trusted with its recovery and safe handling. They can be learned scholars and Runekeepers who know the history of the artifacts by heart. Alternatively, they can be plucky thrill seekers who just know their way around ancient temples.

The selection process is rather exclusive, as one requires approval by several representatives from both the learning centers of Freelands and from the Wardens Wildernexus, whose lands often contain the lost treasure.

An Achaeonaut is a special title within Umdaar and can easily be revoked, especially if one abuses their position by looting or otherwise exploiting the Wildernexus or their ruins for profit or power. Of course, it's not unheard of for a party of Archaeonauts to include a disgraced Archaeonaut hoping to redeem themselves, or a novice Artihacker seeking to earn their stripes.

REGION

In an Archaeonaut campaign, the region is a broken realm full of forgotten ruins. Examples:

The Land of Sleeping Giants: The realm is dotted with ancient temples that lie sleeping. But they have begun to pop up like mushrooms, or open hidden sub-levels full of secrets.

- Issue: **Why Do the Temples Rise?**
- Issue: **Those Who Would Abuse the Power of the Demiurge**

The Valley of Spires: A collection of strange Wildernexus biomes, with little in common except the crumbling spires that touch the sky

- Issue: **Ancient Quantum-Dragons Awaken**
- Issue: **The Truth of the Demiurge**

Infernia's Shadow: The continent is swept with religious revivalism, and once-forgotten ruins now become living temples (or fortresses).

- Issue: **The Cult of Infernia Topples Freelands and Dread Domains Alike**
- Issue: **Heretical Hackers: Exposing Truths or Undermining Hope?**

BASE OF OPERATIONS

As groups under the Archaeonaut banner are devoted to temples and artifacts, their base is likely established in a ruin or a place of learning, helping the PCs solve ancient mysteries.

The Tourmaline Tower

High Concept: Warden Community & Place of Pilgrimage
Aspect: The Siblings' Healing Powers

For additional info, see page 213.

The Perplexolis

High Concept: Ancient Ruin Filled with Hard-light Holograms
Aspect: The Producer, a Powerful Story-Obsessed Trickster AI

For additional info, see page 275.

Scrap Station

High Concept: A Massive Scrapyard and Research Lab
Aspect: Eager Lab Assistants Everywhere

CORE COMMUNITY

The core community is the area around the base—this can be a Freeland, a Wildernexus, or a Dread Domain. The community value aspect may reflect the personality of the people currently living there, the Demiurge who built the ruins millennia ago, or both. Alternatively, the current community and the ancient one might have opposite values, resulting in rising tension.

The Gale Gliders

High Concept: The Flying Magi-Tech Citadels of Nimbusinia
Values: Individualism over Unity—Individual Freedom at All Costs

For additional info, see page 152.

Libratopolis

High Concept: Antique Ruins Turned Great Library City
Values: Reflection over Action—Always Looking before Leaping

For additional info, see page 309.

Gildport

High Concept: Port Town of Sea and Sky, Filled with Stolen Treasures
Values: Joy Over Temperance—It's All for Me Grog!

CONTACT

Here are some example contacts that you can use either as-is or modify for your own game.

> Sv3n, **Trainer of Heroes, Glowbot and Retired Archaeonaut**. Fair (+2) Contacts.
>
> Mida Tonguewagger, **Raptorborg Black Market Smuggler**. Fair (+2) Resources.

LOCAL VILLAIN

The local villain has its own Dread Domain; however, like a Pathfinder villain, they search far and wide for what they want. Create a domain they have as well.

Motivation: **Find Me My Riches!; The Ruins Hold the Final Key; The Super-weapon Will Be Complete; Hoarder of Knowledge**

- The Skynarch, **Cult Leader of the Floating Island** (see page 170)
- Rag-Nator, **Ruler of the Blitzborgs** (see page 312)
- An example from popular media would be Captain Bloth from ***Pirates of Dark Water***.

NAME AND REPUTATION

With a party under the Archaeonaut banner, the reputation is likely based on your reputation among Runekeepers, as well as communities whose artifacts you've recovered (or failed to).

> **Seasoned Ruin Runners; Blasphemous Hackers; So-Called Penitent Pirates; Wild Conspiracy Hunters.**

STUNTS

The Archaeonaut stunts are in the *Stunts* on page 80. When you create an Archaeonaut Champion, select a stunt from the list or create a new one (see page 90 for guidance on creating stunts).

CHAMPIONS

Each player creates a player character (PC) for themselves, called a **Champion**. Someone who reaches out to the downtrodden, unseats the tyrannical, explores the unknown, and strengthens the bonds within your community. Champions are proactive, capable, and lead dramatic lives.

A NEW NARRATIVE: DEFINING "CAPABLE"

We want to clarify that "capable" does *not* mean "an abled person." Much like in our world, Umdaarian Champions with visible and invisible disabilities are common. They are defined not by their limitations, but by their actions and compassion. If you want to play a character that is disabled like yourself, go ahead!

If you feel that you can respectfully play a character with a disability you don't have, ask the group if they feel comfortable with the idea. For some advice on the subject, we recommend referencing the ***Fate Accessibility Toolkit***.

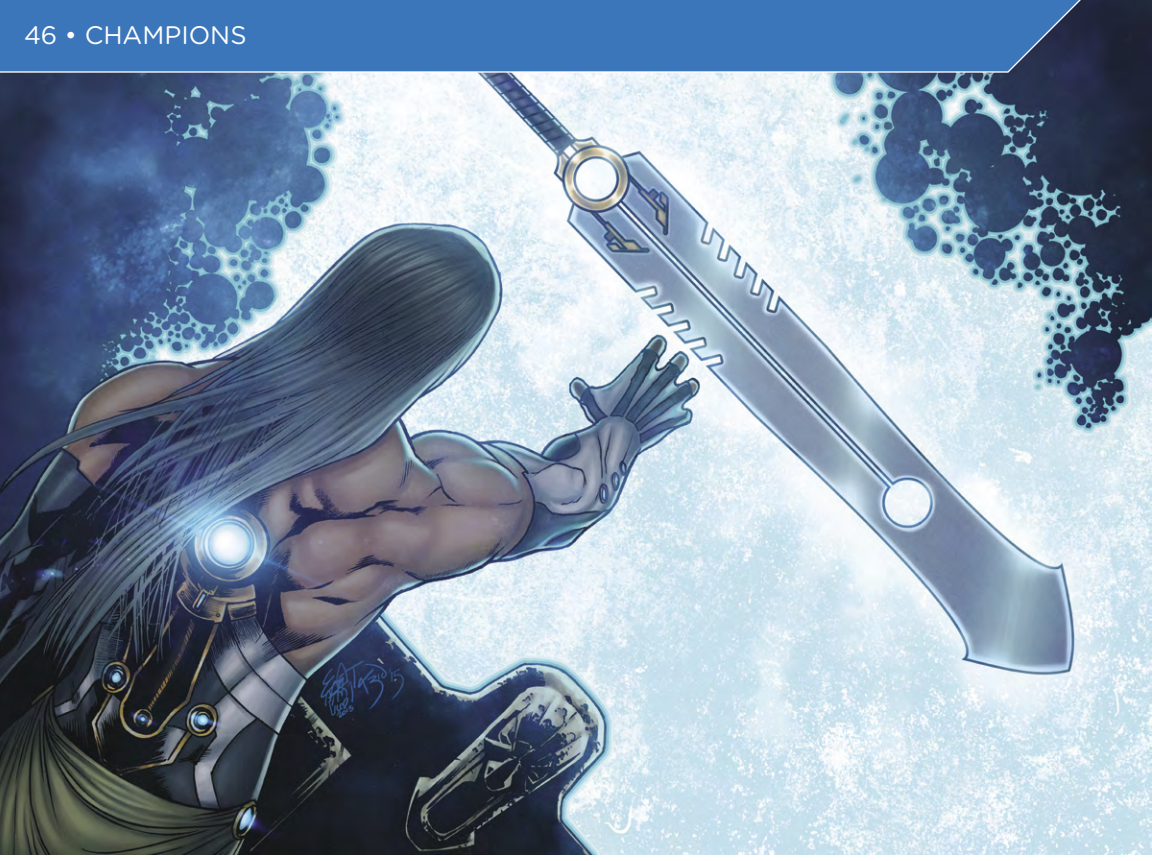
WHAT IS A CHAMPION?

This section includes questions and ideas you might find useful when creating your Champion. If you'd like to jump right into character creation, go to *Creating Your Champion* on page 50.

A Champion can be many things—a warrior, a researcher, a diplomat. However, the biggest thing uniting them is protecting the innocent from the Masters. Consider:

- What excites your character?
- What is your character good at?
- What does your character struggle with or require help from others with?
- Why is your character motivated to help others?
- You either trust or feel a friendly bond to another Champion or member of your community. Who are they, and how did they help you?
- There is some line you won't cross. What would you never/hardly ever do?

Your answers to these questions won't affect your character directly, but they may inspire some of the character aspects you'll create later, such as the motivation aspect on page 61.



CHOOSING VIOLENCE

Old planetary romance books are full of violent characters and physical combat. If that excites you, there's no shame in playing it! However, there's also room for Champions that use their skills to solve puzzles, unite kingdoms, and heal wounds. As long as your character is interested in something positive and dynamic, you should play what excites you. Share your preferences with the GM, so they can include scenes and challenges built to your character's strength.

Here are some suggestions to consider when creating your Champions:

- **A Champion Tries to Do What's Right:** In this regard, they may be closer to superheroes than hired swords. Don't feel you have to justify compassion!
- **Power of Friendship and Family:** What bonds tie you to other PCs and NPCs? These connections inspire you, not make you weaker.
- **Champions Go Where They Are Needed:** A team of Champions will have friends all over the world, and these friends will ask for your help. In this sense, you're an extended member of the community helping from the inside.

CONNECTING TO YOUR BANNER

When creating your PC, consider your Champion's relationship to the group's banner and the reason they work with their companions. Is the banner intrinsic to your Champion's identity or are they working with this group for this specific mission?

The personal importance of the banner can be reflected most explicitly in your aspects and stunts, but it may also affect the other choices you make while creating your Champion. On the next several pages are some questions for each banner that you might want to consider when creating your Champion.

DIGNITARY QUESTIONS

Consider the following when creating your Dignitary:

- How are you connected to a court or government? Are you a princess? A knight? An ambassador of peace? A High Runekeeper? A lowly bard or jester?
- What is your opinion of politics? Of responsibilities and duties? Do you overburden yourself or try to throw off the yoke of duty whenever possible?
- Do you have a magical weapon or armor? Is it inherited? Gifted? Loaned? Stolen? If so, from whom?
- Did you take a leadership role because no one else would lead? Or were you pressured into it by others? Do you love the attention or detest it?
- When leading, have you met resistance from others? If so, is it because of your opinions, or because of something you can't control (such as your age, gender, or class)? Or have you spent your life surrounded by sycophants who are too eager to agree with you?
- Do you stand out in a crowd? If so, is it because of something you acquired, like a skill or expertise? Or because of something innate, like talent, mutation, or pedigree? Do you share this gift out of pride, or responsibility? Do you resent it?
- Do you challenge the norms established by the society they grew up in? If so, have you always been rebellious, or is this a recent change? Was there a teammate or incident that inspired you or served as a catalyst?
- If you are new to the world of princesses, what amazing feat did you do to win their trust? How does the noble style compare to your expectations? How do you feel about your new promotion?
- Do you feel like an outsider? If so, why, and do you enjoy or hate this? If not, which person/people make you feel included? Are there any abilities the princesses have that make you jealous?

See page 87 for magical item stunts. For Dignitary-themed stunts, see page 82.

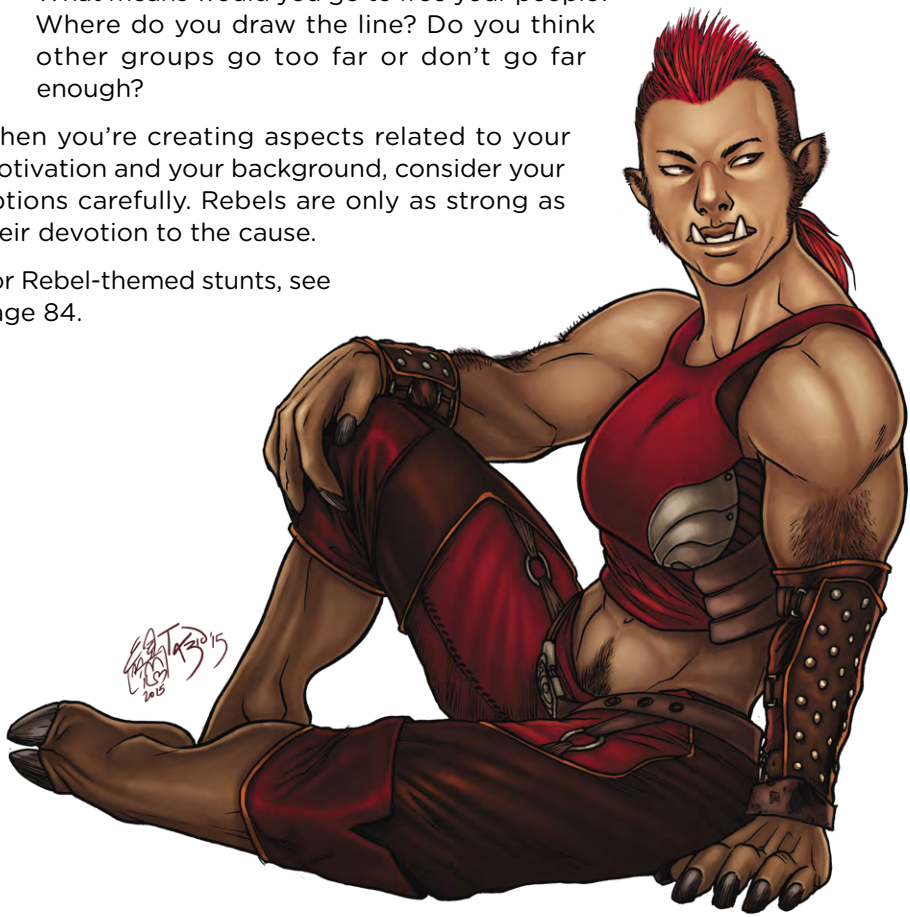
REBEL QUESTIONS

Consider the following when creating your Rebel:

- What region are you from? Is that region newly conquered? Was it so long ago that your people don't remember a time without a Master?
- Before you were a Rebel, did you serve a Master? Did magic, propaganda, or fear sway you? How did you break free? Did someone else help you?
- How do you feel about the people in your region who willingly serve the Masters? Do they disgust you? Do you pity them or fear them?
- Are you from the same regions or different Dread Domains as your fellow Rebels? Did you already liberate your people and are helping others? Or are you helping others now, so they can help you free it later?
- Who's still left behind? Family? Friends? Are they left behind by necessity, or are they secretly Rebels too?
- What means would you go to free your people? Where do you draw the line? Do you think other groups go too far or don't go far enough?

When you're creating aspects related to your motivation and your background, consider your options carefully. Rebels are only as strong as their devotion to the cause.

For Rebel-themed stunts, see page 84.



PATHFINDER QUESTIONS

Consider the following when creating your Pathfinder:

- Do you enjoy the journey or the destination? Do you hate to stay in cities, or do you just enjoy contrast?
- How does your character feel when encountering new people? Do you put on a facade? Do you try to charm them? Intimidate them? Silently observe them? Do you try to avoid notice?
- Do you make friends easily? Do you have a friend in every town? Do you make enemies just as easily?
- What is your relationship to nature? Do you love it? Hate it? Fear it? Does it confuse you? Would you change it if you could?
- What is your relationship with animals? Are you a hunter who eats meat to survive? A vegetarian with a symbiotic relationship with animals? A vegan who thinks animals should be left in peace?
- What motivates you to explore the uncharted wilds? Do you want to find a place without society? Make history? Are you looking for a specific thing or person?
- What was an episode in a Wildernexus that nearly killed you? What, or who saved you (maybe a member of your team)? How did the experience change you? Are you eager to avoid that Wildernexus again or eager to face it once more?
- Consider using your free aspect or a skill to create your gear, as its presence or absence can make or break a bad situation.

For Pathfinder-themed stunts, see page 83. Animal companion stunts are also a colorful way to add flavor to your Pathfinder; see page 86.

ARCHAEONAUT QUESTIONS

While picking aspects and stunts you like is important, with Archaeonaut campaigns, you'll often switch them at milestones. So, think of the characters' attributes less as permanent and more as, "What they're like at this moment in time."

Consider the following when creating your Archaeonaut:

- What motivates you to explore ruins? Science? Religion? Fame? Treasure? Thrills? A means to an end?
- What was the first treasure you found? Did you recover it? Steal it from a Master? Do you still carry it? Was it stolen or lost again under your watch (the one that got away)?
- What is your opinion of the Demiurge? Were they faultless gods? Cruel demons? Flawed and curious beings? Do you harbor heretical thoughts about them and, if so, are you reluctant to share them? Do you tend to think about religion or avoid it?
- Are there any encounters in the ruins that nearly killed you? What was it? What, or who saved you (maybe a member of your team)? How did the experience change you?
- What mysterious encounter or story changed your life? Was it a bedtime story from an elder? A personal encounter with something unknown? Who have you shared this private unsolved mystery with?
- Are you a member of an Archaeonaut team who is **not** motivated by curiosity? If so, why do you accompany the others? Is there a close bond or debt owed to one of your teammates? Or are you motivated by the power of the artifacts themselves (for proper use or to prevent abuse)?

For Archaeonaut-themed stunts, see page 80.

CREATING YOUR CHAMPION

Your Champion is made up of several elements:

- **Archetype:** the core skills, training, and outlook of your Champion
- **Bio-form:** your biological or bionic makeup
- **Aspects:** phrases describing your Champion
- **Skills:** your Champion's areas of relative expertise
- **Refresh:** a measure of your Champion's narrative agency
- **Stunts:** remarkable things your Champion does
- **Stress:** your Champion's ability to keep calm and carry on
- **Consequences:** physical and mental wounds your Champion can endure

ARCHETYPE

Character creation begins by selecting an archetype that defines your Champion's training, occupation, niche, or experience. Each archetype includes the following:

- **Important skills:** Three skills important to your archetype. When assigning your skills later on, a good practice is to make these some of your best skills.
- **Stunts:** Three stunts associated with your archetype, pick one now. To learn more, see the *Stunts* chapter starting on page 71.
- **Impact:** A unique way your character affects the world. Choose how they've changed the world already when you first create your character and again every time they reach a major milestone.

Pick an archetype (to create one of your own, see page 56).

ARTIHACKER

A scientist, hacker, and free-thinker who experiments with ancient tech to learn its secrets. **Runekeepers** chide you for your disregard for the past and safety, but Artihackers have achieved more developing **Replitech** in a generation than the Runekeepers have in centuries!

- **Important Skills:** Burglary, Crafts, and Shoot
- **Stunts:** Jamming Signal, QuickBot Gofers, Improvised Explosive
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a location to the map tied to your motivation. Does it hold an artifact you long to experiment with? The outcome of a past mistake? Or evidence that your work is worthwhile?

HOW TO HACK AN ARTIFACT

An Artihacker can use the Burglary Skill to hack an artifact—this includes turning it off or on, seeing how it ticks, and bypassing passwords and safeguards. Burglary can also be used to make small modifications. For example, they could supercharge a replitech laser-pointer into a crude laser rifle. However, they couldn't make bigger changes, such as a laser-pointer into a robot, unless they use Crafts (or have a stunt that lets them use a different skill.)

DAREDEVIL

A pilot, driver, racer, your need for speed has sent you across the many and varied lands of Umdaar. You might serve others by ferrying messages, precious cargo, or smuggling people out of Dread Domains controlled by Masters that would lock them up and throw away the key.

- **Important Skills:** Drive, Contacts, and Will
- **Stunts:** Pocket Mount, Chaaaarge!, Need a Lift?
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone create a connection between two locations. What path or history connects them? What physical and social obstacles separate them?

ELEMENTALIST

You are an expert in **thaumakinesis**, with an affinity for a type of energy or natural element. You have amazing power in short bursts, but the effects do not linger long. Were you a child prodigy or did you carefully craft your affinity through study and experimentation?

- **Important Skills:** Crafts, Shoot, and Will
- **Stunts:** Elemental Shaping, Resourceful, Element Force
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a location on the starting map where you draw your elemental affinity from. Must you protect this magical font or does it have its own defenses? Yes, this means that as you advance, you can control more than one element!
- **Suggested Elements:** Fire, Ice/Cold, Metal, Earth, Water, Air, Sand, Sound, Lightning, Plants, Animals, Telekinesis/Gravity, Nuclear, Telepathic, Precognition/Time, Shadow, Quantum, Emotions, Portals, Space

INFILTRATOR

You know keeping secrets may be the only thing preventing the Freelands from collapsing, or that finding them might reveal a weakness of the Masters. But can you tell which is which?

- **Important Skills:** Deceive, Investigate, and Burglary
- **Stunts:** Shadow Weaver, Quick Eye, Deft Hands
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add an object to the Starting Map that's tied to your motivation. Is it an artifact you're trying to recover? Top Secret blueprints? A secret symbol between Underground Ops?

POET

When the Masters prevail and all hope is lost, someone needs to rally the spirits of the downtrodden and the defeated. That someone is you. Through song or storytelling, dance or dreaming, you know how to rally others to believe in themselves. What do you do with your fears?

- **Important Skills:** Rapport, Empathy, and Lore.
- **Stunts:** Cheer On, Read the Room, Magical Resonance
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a Core Community (or an aspect to the current one). Are you considered a hero there, or a troublemaker?

PRINCESS

Bold, brave, and kind, you are always there to help your friends with compassion and encouragement. You may be spoiled sometimes, but when you recognize the disparity, you do all that you can to share your fortune.

- **Important Skills:** Contacts, Rapport, Resources
- **Stunts:** Best that Money Can Buy, Ambassadors, The Noble Peerage
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a region (or an aspect to an existing one). What work have you done to help, and what still must be accomplished?

A NOTE ON GENDER

This archetype is inspired by popular princesses in fiction. We encourage any player who is similarly inspired to play a princess regardless of their gender. If you're looking for alternative titles for a princess or noble that is nonbinary, trans, male, gender-fluid, intersex, or otherwise not a cis-woman there are some great alternate gender titles at **genderqueeries.tumblr.com/titles**. Play a Princet, Pontiff, Liege, Hierophant, or any other amazing title you come up with!

We also encourage GMs to be inclusive and diverse with their NPCs. However, be careful to ensure that the players' virtuous allies are just as diverse as your villains. For example, if the Confederacy of Masters includes two genderfluid characters, and your friendly NPCs have none, then you risk demonizing minority identities rather than embracing them.

RANGER

Your forays into the Wildernexus have marked safe (and unsafe) trails for countless others. You brave the wilds so that others can cross them safely. Do you long for a place to call home or never feel at ease unless on the road?

- **Important Skills:** Athletics, Burglary, Notice
- **Stunts:** Something's Wrong, Precision Work, Temple Runner
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a location to the Starting Map that's tied to your motivation. Is it a legendary hidden temple? A Wildernexus you defend? A master who has wronged you?

RUFFIAN

Big, tough, and not afraid to scrap, you are the brute squad. But your strength can also be used to build and repair, if only given the chance. Where will you direct your brawn?

- **Important Skills:** Physique, Fight, Empathy
- **Stunts:** Unbridled Strength, Submission Hold, Plight of Others
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone create or pick a reputation aspect for the party (or create a second one). Who's responsible for spreading truths/lies about you? Do you care how people see you?

RUNEKEEPER

You are a priest who has studied the runic language of the Demiurge—the few words that have been translated are filled with power. You've been inducted into an honorable order that has existed since **the Splintering**, learning from the myths and legends of your forbearers. You use runes of power with care and reverence, unlike **Artihackers** who flagrantly tamper with ancient artifacts to create **Replitech**, their own faulty and dangerous simulacra.

- **Important Skills:** Investigate, Lore, and Will
- **Stunts:** Research Team, Indomitable, Rune of Protection.
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a ruin to the starting map that you are charged with protecting and repairing. Create a location aspect to represent the tremendous power that emanates from the artifacts within.

WHAT DO ELEMENTALISTS AND RUNE USERS HAVE IN COMMON?

They both have a limit. An Elementalist's power is limited to a specific niche. Rune Users need to input the runes into a focus artifact. Limits prevent you from having an all-powerful magic user who can do everything with a lift of a finger—that feels more "pure fantasy" than "sci-fantasy," but more importantly, having a character that can't do everything provides a healthy amount of challenge.

SCOUNDREL

A brigand, a bandit, or a wolfs-head, you go by many names and titles, all of them despised by the Masters. You undermine their efforts and turn their weapons against them. Do the people see you as their savior or a provocateur that only causes the Masters to punish them more?

- **Important Skills:** Stealth, Athletics, and Fight.
- **Stunts:** Shadow Spies, Ambush, That'll Come in Handy
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone pick or add a Master to the map who is your mortal enemy. What lengths would you go to stop them? How do they see you (if they even know you exist?)

SHARPSHOOTER

A crackshot of the Wildernexus, a sniper in the Dread Domains, or possibly a gunslinger who travels all of Umdaar. You solve problems with iron and gumption.

- **Important skills:** Shoot, Stealth, Notice
- **Stunts:** Trick Arrows, Save Your Skin, Weak Spot
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a rival NPC. One of you is obsessed with proving you're the best, and one of you just wants peace. You pick which one is which.

SUMMONER

Do you seek out the dead for knowledge, or do they harry you to be their voice? Spirits can be powerful allies, but they carry the sorrow, fear, anger, and sometimes joy of their own lives. How do you protect your own sense of self from being overwhelmed?

- **Important Skills:** Contacts, Lore, Provoke
- **Stunts:** Secret Signals, Spell of Binding, Mocking Imps
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a Face NPC to the Starting Map that's tied to you. Are they a mortal, or a spirit? Friend or foe?

VETERAN

A former soldier or marshall, you've traded down your badge and uniform for a community that looks to you for protection, perhaps from those you used to serve?

- **Important Skills:** Investigate, Shoot, Rapport
- **Stunts:** Modus Operandi, Let's Make a Deal, Dead to Rights
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone add a Base aspect to the Starting Map. Why is this a place you feel safe? What resources & connections do you have there?

WARRIOR

Some Champions help people by offering them shelter, by healing their wounds, soothing their souls, and working with them to build a better life. You do the other things. The hard, violent, and deadly things that make all the rest possible.

- **Important Skills:** Fight, Athletics, Notice
- **Stunts:** Been There Wrestled That, Friendly Foot Race, Look Out!
- **Impact:** During character creation and at each major milestone pick or add a Master to the map. How did you scar them? What forces have they marshalled to hunt you down?

MULTIPLE ARCHETYPES

While it's undeniably cool to play a Runekeeper or a Sharpshooter, wouldn't it also be cool to play a Princess Sharpshooter? Of course it would, and it's easy to do. Here's how:

- **Important Skills:** Select a base archetype such as Princess and copy over the important skills from the other archetype, like Shoot, Stealth, and Notice from Sharpshooter. When selecting skills, use the combined list as your guide.
- **Stunts:** When picking stunts, select one from each of your archetypes.
- **Impact:** At character creation and after each milestone, pick one of your archetypes and perform the impact action, such as creating a rival NPC (from your Sharpshooter archetype) or adding a region (from your Princess archetype).
- **Refresh:** Reduce your refresh by one. For more on *Refresh* see page 69.

CREATING YOUR OWN ARCHETYPE

The existing archetypes are just a starting place. You can create your own as well. Most archetypal characters from fantasy and sci-fi series are appropriate in ***Umdaar***. Every archetype has the following:

- **Name:** Something catchy that goes into a Champion's high concept. Keeping them simple—Deulist, Oracle, and Pirate are good examples.
- **Important Skills:** Pick three skills associated with the archetype. A Duelist might have Fight, Provoke, and Athletics, for instance.
- **Stunts:** Select or create three stunts tied to the archetype. An Oracle might have a stunt that allows them to predict the future by retroactively preparing for a challenge they encounter. When creating a Champion with this archetype, select one of the stunts as usual. See page 51.
- **Impact:** Select a part of the world that the archetype affects. This could be a location such as a Dread Domain, people such as helpful NPCs or Masters, or objects like Demiurge artifacts. A Pirate might have a contact they've met in their adventures.

BIOFORM

It is said that when the Demiurge disappeared, they left behind more strains of life than there are stars in the sky. Amongst these lifeforms are dozens of sentient beings—some of them the Demiurge uplifted the native lifeforms, while others were transplanted from far-off worlds. Some of these lifeforms are bestial, speaking in growls and barks. Others possess mental powers and speak through telepathy.

Umdaar is a planet of constant upheaval—as such, **bioforms** native to a specific region thousands of years ago have traveled to every corner of the globe. You can find bioforms of any type in any corner of the planet. A bioform is a character's basic species and biological characteristics. For example, ***Star Wars*** has humans, Wookiees, and droids. Meanwhile, ***Lord of the Rings*** has men, elves, dwarves, and hobbits. On Umdaar, they are a bit more...varied.

Pick a biofrom the list below (or to create one of your own, see page 59). Each bioform includes:

- **Stunts:** Two or more stunts associated with your bioform; pick one now.

ARACHNOID

A spider, scorpion, or mite-based creature. You contain deadly venom but that doesn't stop you from loving. Do you walk on two legs, four, eight, or more?

- **Stunts:** Poisonous, Webbing

AVIANOID

A bird, bat, flying frog or other creature capable of flight. Do you have arms and legs as well? Feathers, fur, or something else?

- **Stunts:** Wings, Tooth and Claw

CYBORG

A being with both organic and biomechatronic body parts. The organic base form can be human, another bioform with a physical body, or any mashup of human animal and machine such as **Cytaur**, a Cyborg Centaur. Unlike a mutabeast you were not born with cybernetic parts, how did you acquire them?

- **Stunts:** Energy Blast, Modular Body

DINOSAUROID

Rawr!

- **Stunts:** Tail Swipe, RAAAAAWR!

ENERGY BEING

You are an elemental force or natural element, such as lighting, sound, earth, ice, magnetism, fire, or shadow. How do you interact with the world?

- **Stunts:** Energy Blast, Elemental Travel

FUNGOID

Mushroom, toadstool, or mold, everyone likes you because you're such a fun-gi!

- **Stunts:** Regeneration, Spore Cloud

GLOWBOT

Sentient robots that are said to possess the Inner-glow. The tech for these machines, created by the Demiurge, is amazingly durable, except for the memory files, which are overloaded and reset every few hundred years.

- **Stunts:** Modular Body, Laser Proof

HUMAN

Two arms, two legs, two eyes? Where did you come from, Mars? Truthfully, there are many humans on Umdaar, what makes you stand out?

- **Stunts:** Curious, Reckless

INSECTOID

A beetle, firefly, bull ant, bumble bee, butterfly, or any other of the thousands of Insectoids that inhabit Umdaar. Are you a single human sized creature or a swarm?

- **Stunts:** Hive Mind, Compound Eyes

MUTABEAST

Millennia ago, the Demiurge successfully merged the organic and the inorganic—they created cybernetic lifeforms from uplifted animals, like the Lazer-wolves and Cyber Sheep. What mash up are you?

- **Stunts:** Unbridled Strength, Lasers and Feelings

MUTANT

A humanoid with a mash-up of physical features or strange powers. Were you born this way, or did some spectacular event change you?

- **Stunts:** Telekinesis, Extra Senses

NECROID

A cursed or undead humanoid with skeletal or zombie features. Are you the product of the Master's experiments or something even older?

- **Stunts:** Tough as Bones, Old as Dirt

OOZE

A polymorphic slime, goo, or jelly, you know how to spread yourself around. Do you age like other bioforms or are you nearly as ancient as the Demiurges?

- **Stunts:** Slip through the Cracks, Unknowable Anatomy.

SHAPESHIFTER

Through molecular manipulation you can change your form at will. Do you have a base form that you are most comfortable in or are you always changing?

- **Stunts:** Mimic, Slip through the Cracks

WEREBEAST

Part human (or humanoid) and part animal, you can shift back and forth between forms. Werejaguars, Werehippos, and Wereturtles are commonly seen on Umdaar.

- **Stunts:** Danger Instincts, Tooth and Claw

MULTIPLE BIOFORMS

Just like archetypes, it can be fun to play multiple bioforms. You might need to get creative determining how they go together, but if you want a Necro-Dinosauroid, who are we to stop you?

- **Stunts:** Select a base bioform such as Dinosauroid and then add the secondary bioform to the name. When you pick stunts, pick a stunt from each of your bioforms.
- **Refresh:** Reduce your refresh by one. For more on *Refresh* see page 69.

CREATING YOUR OWN BIOFORM

All sorts of beings inhabit Umdaar—you can play a garden-variety human being, a bipedal humanoid that resembles an animal, a Glowbot, or something completely alien. When you think about the sort of Champion you want to play, let your imagination roam wild. However, we recommend that your character have the ability to interact with the other characters in your group and influence the world around you.

- Make sure you communicate with the other characters in some way—a commonly spoken language, sign language, grunts, telepathy, or another method.
- Don't stray too far from typical human size. A character that is too big or too small can be difficult to play. We recommend a character no smaller than a human hand and no bigger than a car.
- Consider having some way of manipulating objects around you, whether limbs, cybernetic prosthetics, tentacles, or telekinesis.

All Bioforms have a name, description, and a few signature stunts you can select from the existing list or create your own.

Robots, Cyborgs, and Glowbots

Millennia ago, the Demiurge successfully merged the organic and the inorganic—they created cybernetic lifeforms, like the Lazer-wolves. They also created armies of robotic servants—some created for war, some to serve.

They also created a unique type of android, called the **Glowbot**—these enlightened sentient robots are said to possess the Inner-glow. The tech for these machines is amazingly durable, except for the memory files, which are overloaded and reset every few hundred years.

PLOT SEED

There are myths of Glowbots who still remember the Demiurge firsthand. None have ever been found.

In the current era, Runekeepers and Artihackers have built mechanical Replitech puppets. Some can even repair and "reawaken" Glowbots (which start as newborns with no knowledge of the past). However, no one has built a Glowbot from scratch without using Demiurge tech. In the Glowbot village of Sparkboro, a Glowbot "child" is only born when an older Glowbot passes away. The deceased glowbot's Demiurge-tech core is salvaged, built into a new frame, and the village celebrates a funeral and a birth at the same time.

What Is the Name of My Bioform?

Players can come up with any name for their Bioform they want. However, when in doubt, just use the base name of the core concept and add "-oid", or "-ian" to the end. For example, a fire-elemental might be a "Flameian", or a Tiger humanoid might be a "Tigeroid".

A NEW NARRATIVE: NURTURE OVER NATURE

Fantasy and sci-fi stories have a nasty habit of supporting behavioral genetics, which is the idea that a person's genetics define how they act. On Umdaar, as on Earth, the behavior of anyone (except for mindless robots) is defined by their upbringing and their choices. So, rather than using the reasoning, *"My character is angry all the time because Space Orcs are angry."* consider something along the lines of, *"My character is angry all the time because of the injustice in the world. She also happens to be a Space Orc."*

ASPECTS

Aspects are short phrases that describe your character or what is important to them. They can relate to your character's physical or mental qualities, history, beliefs, training, relationships, or even particularly important equipment.

The first thing to remember about aspects is that **they are true in the story you're telling**, and define who your character is. If you write that your character is an **Oracular Mermaid Archer**, then they are an oracular mermaid archer. You've told everyone that your character sees the future, can breathe underwater, and is a crack shot with a laser bow. Aspects that don't fit the themes of the game your group has agreed on may need to be reworded to fit.

In play, you use aspects in play to change the story. They give you permission to improve your dice rolls and establish facts about the world (we explain how later). Lastly, aspects can earn you fate points if they create complications for your character—so, to make the most versatile aspects, you should aim for ones that are double-edged, working both *for* you and *against* you.

You give your character five aspects: high concept, motivation, background, relationship, and a free aspect.

To learn more about aspects and what makes a good one, consider reading *Aspects and Fate Points* (page 117).

HIGH CONCEPT

Your **high concept** is a broad description of the character, covering the vital bits about them including their **archetypes**, **bioforms**, and any descriptors that go alongside them. It's how you would open your pitch for the character when telling a friend about it.

For example if you picked the archetype Elementalist and bioform Glowbot, you might choose **Fire-Breathing Glowbot Leader** as your high concept.

MOTIVATION

This aspect explains why your character acts as a Champion of Umdaar.

Often motivations are tied to your relationship with the group's banner and explains your goals, even if you rallied under the banner late in life. If you're a Veteran among Dignitaries, your motivation could reflect the beliefs they instilled upon you, your sense of duty or loyalty, or what you want to prove to others. If you're a Pathfinder who has joined a group of Rebels to help them find safe routes through a Dread Domain, motivation should explain why you've joined.

To inspire yourself, consider these questions:

- Is your motivation to protect the weak and defenseless? Do you **Put Others Before Myself** or **Can't Remain Silent About Injustice?** Are you simply **Warm and Compassionate**?
- Are you an artifact hunter? If so, do you have a selfless desire to **Restore What Was Taken** or is it because you **Must Find All the Shinies**?
- Do you seek revenge? Does it leave you cold, like you're **Half-Dead Inside** or are you **Burning for Vengeance**?
- Do you want to know more about the Demiurge? Is it **Insatiable Scientific Curiosity** or **Zealous Fervor**?
- Do you like the fame that comes from being **Most Admired Champion**? Or seek **the Thrill of Adventure** that breaks up the tedium of palace life?
- Does your approach to helping others clash with your companions? Do you **Rattle Every Cage**? Or do you get results **By Any Means Necessary**?

Example Motivations Tied to Banners

- Dignitary: **Unite the Six Nations of Freelands**; **Find the Seventh Nation, Lost in the Dread Domains**; **Restore the Luminators by Recovering their Stolen Artifacts**; **Become a Legendary Champion Like My Mother Before Me**
- Rebel: **Free the captives of the Lazerzone**; **Destroy the Council of Nightmares**; **Help the Rebels Forge Bonds with the Freelands**
- Pathfinder: **Travel to the End of the Obsidian Road**; **Learn the Secrets of the Archipelago of Mystery**; **Keep the Hidden Canyon... Hidden from the Masters**
- Archaeonaut: **Understand the Mechanisms that Govern the Land of Sleeping Giants**; **Repair the Ancient Quantum-Dragon Drive in the Valley of Spires**; **Discover How the Masters Control the Ruins in Infernia's Shadow**

For more guidance, look at the questions for your party banner (Dignitaries on page 47, Rebels on page 48, Pathfinders on page 49, and Archaeonauts on page 50) for questions that will help you decide your banner aspect.

FOR VETERANS: TROUBLE IS MY BUSINESS

For those experienced with ***Fate Core***, the motivation aspect is a proactive version of the trouble aspect. With this in mind, we recommend picking a motivation that's likely to force your character to do what they want or need to do, even if it results in bigger consequences later.

BACKGROUND

Next, flesh out your Champion's background. Pick a name for your character's community. This can include where they grew up, a place they once considered home but have been driven away from, or the place they now consider your home.

Here are some things to consider when creating it:

- Who is in control? Is it a Dread Domain? A Wildernexus, untouched by Masters? If you grew up in a Freeland, is it still free?
- What is the name of the village or the region? What type of environment is it?
- Did you have a special role in the community? Do you still have it?
- What values does your community regard highly? What virtues or fields do they ignore?

Examples:

- From the Wildernexus Gerto Forest, where people are **Down-to-Earth**.
- Exiled Poet of the former-Freeland Ctalia Savanna, where **Beauty Eclipses Truth**.
- Fled from the Dread Domain Skornio Gorge, **Because I Value Empathy and they Don't!**

If you're having trouble fitting all of the background info into a single aspect, you can use two aspects instead. Don't worry—we won't tell on you. If you want more tips and tools for building a community, see *Creating a Region* on page 318.

Apple from the Tree

Every community extols certain values or traits, but people in a community are not homogeneous. Just because your community values cleverness or deceitfulness does not mean you are either clever or deceitful. Here are a few ways a character can interact with their community's values:

- **Embrace:** You share the value of your community and try to embody it.
- **Reject:** You don't have any respect or passion for the community value and choose a different path. This may have made you an outsider in your community or you're hungry for peers.
- **Struggle:** Your relationship with your community and their values is complicated. Perhaps you feel guilty for not honoring or exemplifying their value. Maybe you're good at it but have doubts about embracing it. Maybe you think you're skilled at it when you're actually not.
- **Sheltered:** You are naive or sheltered enough to be ignorant of your community's values—you may reject their values without even knowing it.

RELATIONSHIP

This aspect represents your dynamic with another Champion. If you have an even number of players, we recommend linking them in pairs. If you have an odd number of PC's, then one Champion will be linked to two other PCs, granting them two shared aspects. You can create your own shared aspects or use the bonds below as inspiration:

- **Best Friends:** The two characters share a strong bond of friendship. How did you meet? Was your friendship formed by beliefs you have in common, struggles you've been through together, or something else?
- **Fraternal or Sororal:** The two characters share a bond similar to a bond of siblings. They can be blood brothers, adopted siblings, childhood friends, or just close companions. Of course, like real family members, it's possible that they often at odds even though they love each other.
- **Paternal or Maternal:** The two characters share a bond similar to a parent and child. One character might be a biological or adoptive parent—alternatively, there might be a large gap in age or maturity between the two.
- **Love or Love Triangle:** The two characters share a bond that is complicated by romance. They might be in a relationship or recently broken up, or one character might have a hidden or open crush on the other. It's possible that the Champions love the same person, souring their professional relationship—maybe one character stole the other's fiancé, or they are rivals for the affection of someone they both like.
- **Rivals:** The two characters share a bond of bitter rivalry, constantly trying to best each other physically or intellectually. Is one character or both envious of what the other has? Are they former enemies turned reluctant allies? Are they complete opposites or far too similar? Do they have overlapping or conflicting motivations?

Remember your social contract (page 17). If a player feels uncomfortable having another character crushing on them or having a bitter rivalry, there's no shame in them vetoing it.

Once two players have picked their characters' bond, discuss how each character interprets the bond. They might have completely different views of the situation. For example, a paternal or maternal bond may be positive (**Like a Daughter to Me** and **My Mother of Choice**), or it can be one-sided (**Reminds Me of the Daughter I've Lost** and **You're Not My REAL Dad!**). This difference of opinion can be particularly intense in a love bond, as one character can be head-over-heels in love while the object of their affection remains completely oblivious to it.

If you're not sure at first, you can wait to write down relationship aspects—let players play a few scenes or even sessions to see how they fit together.

FREE ASPECT

Lastly, create at least one free aspect. These can relate to your backstory, a favorite weapon or tool, a personality trait, your station, a physical attribute, or anything else you like.

> Examples: **Runaway Runekeeper; My Father's Book of Spellrunes; I'm Gorgeous (and I Know It); Rude Upstart Peasant; I'm the Last of the Serpentmen; You Wouldn't Like Me When I'm Angry**

Tip: If all of your aspects are generally positive, adding a negative or mixed free aspect is a good way to get some fate points back.

SUMMARY

Here's a checklist to confirm you have them all:

- ☐ High concept
- ☐ Motivation
- ☐ Background
- ☐ Relationship
- ☐ Free aspect



NAME _____ PLAYER _____

ARTIHACKER — **ARACHNOID**

Important skills include **Burglary**, **Crafts**, and **Shoot**

Aspects

High Concept (Archetype+Bioform):

Motivation:

Background:

Relationship:

Free:

Impact

During character creation and at each major milestone add a location to the map tied to your motivation. *Does it hold an artifact you long to experiment with? The outcome of a past mistake? Or evidence that your work is worthwhile?*

Location:

Skills

_____ ATHLETICS	_____ LORE
_____ BURGLARY	_____ NOTICE
_____ CONTACTS	_____ PHYSIQUE
_____ CRAFTS	_____ PROVOKE
_____ DECEIVE	_____ RAPPORT
_____ DRIVE	_____ RESOURCES
_____ EMPATHY	_____ SHOOT
_____ FIGHT	_____ STEALTH
_____ INVESTIGATE	_____ WILL

Fate Points

Starting refresh is 3.

Refresh:

Stress

Physical: 1 1 1 ☐ ☐ ☐

Mental: 1 1 1 ☐ ☐ ☐

Consequences

2 Mild:

4 Moderate:

6 Severe:

Stunts

ARCHETYPE STUNTS

Pick one stunt from your archetype.

☐ **Improvised Explosive (Shoot):** I may spend a fate point before making a Shoot attack. If I do, I may make a zone attack against every enemy in that zone.

☐ **Jamming Signal (Burglary):** At the start of any scene where I'm present, I may take a free action to use Burglary to create an advantage. If I'm successful, I create the situation aspect **Jamming Signal** with a free invoke, which can be invoked to block communication to bots, machines, or Replitech.

☐ **Quickbot Gofers (Crafts):** I may create an advantage with Craft to build quick robot assistants; the difficulty of this roll is based on the amount of scrap nearby, but is never less than Fair (+2). If successful, instead of an aspect, I create a number of NPC bots, equal to the shifts of success, that act as a mob. The bots have a unifying high concept, one stress box, and are Average (+1) at one skill of my choice. The bots go away if I create more or at the end of the scene, but I may pay a fate point to retain up to two bots for the next scene.

BIOFORM STUNTS

Pick one stunt from your bioform.

☐ **Poisonous (Fight):** Through a stinger, barb, or permeable membrane I can deliver a paralytic poison. I gain +2 when I use Fight to create a **Paralyzed** aspect using my poisonous appendage. Creatures with alien anatomy (or no anatomy at all) may be immune to these effects.

☐ **Webbing (Shoot):** I can cast webs from my spinnerets. By spending a fate point I can do one of the following: create a Good (+3) obstacle that blocks passage through a doorway or corridor—Gain +3 to use Shoot to create an **Ensnared** aspect—create a webbed path to a location up to one zone away that I can safely travel on.

BANNER STUNTS

Pick one stunt from your banner (Dignitary, Rebel, Pathfinder, or Archaeonaut).

SKILLS

While aspects define your character, **skills** show what they can do. Each skill describes a broad activity your character might have learned through study and practice or have an innate talent. A character with Burglary is capable, to some degree, in all manner of crime relating to the fine art of burgling and hacking—casing a joint, bypassing security, pick-pocketing, and safe-cracking.

Each skill has a rating. The higher the rating, the better the character is at the skill. Your character's skills show you what actions they're built for, which ones they can get by on, and which aren't their forte.

Choose your character's skill ratings, arranged in a pyramid with the highest-rated skill at Great (+4), as follows:

- One Great (+4) skill
- Two Good (+3) skills
- Three Fair (+2) skills
- Four Average (+1) skills
- All other skills at Mediocre (+0)

THE ADJECTIVE LADDER

In ***Umdaar***, and Fate in general, all ratings are organized into a ladder of adjectives, shown here.

Rating	Adjective
+8	Legendary
+7	Epic
+6	Fantastic
+5	Superb
+4	Great
+3	Good
+2	Fair
+1	Average
+0	Mediocre
-1	Poor
-2	Terrible
-3	Catastrophe
-4	Horrifying

In the unlikely event you go above +8, make up your own superlative descriptors.

SKILL LIST

Descriptions for these skills are found on the following pages.

- Athletics
- Burglary
- Contacts
- Crafts
- Deceive
- Drive
- Empathy
- Fight
- Investigate
- Lore
- Notice
- Physique
- Provoke
- Rapport
- Resources
- Shoot
- Stealth
- Will

Athletics: A measurement of physical potential. Athletics stunts focus on movement—running, jumping, parkour—and dodging physical attacks.

Burglary: Knowledge of and ability to bypass security systems, pick-pockets, and generally commit crimes. On Umdaar, Burglary is also the art of Artihackers: breaking into ancient databases and modifying ancient tech to suit your vision. Burglary stunts give bonuses to the various stages of committing a heist, from the planning to the execution and escape.

Contacts: Knowledge of current politics and connections to the right people to get you the help or information you need. Contacts stunts give you available allies and an information network wherever you go in the world.

Crafts: Ability to make or break machinery, build contraptions, and pull off MacGyver-esque feats of ingenuity. On Umdaar, this includes medieval machinery (e.g., catapults and ships) as well as the more cryptic machines using Demiurge tech (e.g., robots, lasers, transporters). Crafts stunts let you have the gizmo on hand, give bonuses to building and breaking things, and provide justification for using Crafts in place of skills like Burglary or Lore under certain circumstances.

Deceive: Ability to lie and cheat convincingly and with aplomb. Deceive stunts might improve your ability to tell a particular breed of lie or help invent false identities.

Drive: Controlling vehicles under the most grueling circumstances, pulling wicked maneuvers, and simply getting the most out of your ride. On Umdaar, this refers to animal mounts (e.g., horses, cyber-beetles), medievalish machines (e.g., carts, chariots), and operating Demiurge crafts (e.g., skyships, giant mechs). Drive stunts can be signature maneuvers, a special vehicle of your own, or the ability to use Drive in place of a skill like Athletics, Burglary, Crafts, or Lore under certain circumstances.

Also, think of "Drive" as operating any machine with large moving parts; for example, a crane machine might be affixed in one spot, but it still has a large mobile arm that the character "drives" around.

THE DRIVER

If Drive is a vital part of your character, consider creating a convenient transport that you can take with you everywhere: a small hoverchair or motorcycle, a hoverboard that straps to your back, an elemental mount you can summon, a mech or vehicle that dematerializes. See the Daredevil stunts for examples.

Empathy: Ability to accurately judge someone's mood and intentions. Empathy stunts can be about judging a crowd, picking up on lies, telepathic powers, or helping others recover from mental consequences.

Fight: Ability to excel at hand-to-hand combat, whether with weapons or fists. Fight stunts include signature weapons and special techniques.

Investigate: Deliberate, careful study and puzzling out mysteries. Use this to piece together clues or reconstruct a crime scene. Investigate normally takes time and controlled access to evidence, but there are stunts that help you form brilliant deductions or piece together information more quickly.

Lore: Ancient knowledge, including Demiurge myth, runes, and ancient tech. Lore stunts often support practical applications of your arcane knowledge, such as casting spells, sciences, and medicine.

Notice: Ability to pick up details in the moment, spot trouble before it happens, and generally be perceptive. It contrasts Investigate, which is for slow, deliberate observation. Notice stunts sharpen your senses, dodge traps, improve your reaction time, or make you harder to sneak up on.

Physique: Raw power and durability. Physique stunts let you perform superhuman feats of strength, throw your weight around while wrestling, and shrug off physical consequences. In addition, a high Physique rating gives you more physical stress or consequence slots (page 70).

Provoke: Ability to push people to act the way you want them to. It's coarse and manipulative, not a positive interaction. Provoke stunts let you push opponents into foolhardy action, draw aggression toward you, or scare enemies (assuming they can feel fear).

Rapport: Building connections with others and working together. Where Provoke is manipulation, Rapport is sincerity, trust, and goodwill. Rapport stunts let you sway the crowd, improve relationships, or build contacts.

Resources: Access to material things, not just money or direct ownership. It might reflect your ability to borrow from friends or dip into an organization's armory. A Champion may also use Resources to reflect a utility belt or backpack, allowing to pull out weapons and tools at a moment's notice. Resources stunts let you use Resources in place of Rapport or Contacts or give you extra free invokes when you pay for the best.

Shoot: All forms of ranged combat, whether laser rifles, throwing knives, or bow and arrow. Shoot stunts might represent a favorite weapon, let you make called shots, quick-draw, or always have a ranged weapon handy.

Stealth: Staying unseen or unheard and escaping when you need to hide. Stealth stunts let you vanish in plain sight, blend into crowds, or make deadly ambushes.

Will: Mental fortitude, the ability to overcome temptation and to withstand trauma. Will stunts let you ignore mental consequences, withstand the mental agony of strange powers, and hold steady against enemies who provoke you. In addition, a high Will rating gives you more mental stress or consequence slots (page 70).

REFRESH

Your **refresh** is the minimum number of fate points (page 117) your character begins with at the start of each session. Your character begins with a refresh of 3.

Each session, you start with fate points at least equal to your refresh. Be sure to keep track of the fate points you have left at the end of each session of play—if you have more fate points than your refresh, you'll start the next session with the fate points you ended this session.

> Tan'nat earned a lot of fate points during today's session, ending it with 5 fate points. Their refresh is 2, so Tan'nat will start the next session with 5 fate points. But Qwora ends the same session with just one fate point. Her refresh is 3, so she'll begin the next session with 3 fate points, replacing the one point she had leftover.

STUNTS

While every character has access to all the skills—even if they are Mediocre (+0) at most of them—your character has some unique stunts. **Stunts** are the cool techniques, mutations, or equipment that makes your character unique and interesting. Where skills are about a character's broad competencies, stunts are about specific areas of excellence; most of them give you a bonus in particular circumstances or let you do something that other characters simply can't.

In ***Umdaar***, your character begins with **three** stunts, one from each of the following:

- Banner
- Archetype
- Bioform

You may purchase more stunts any time by spending one refresh each, reducing it, to a minimum of one refresh.

Some stunts require justification or context before you can take them. For instance, it makes sense for an Elementalist or an Energy Being to fire Energy Blasts, but not so much a Fungoid with no magical abilities. This permission comes from your aspects; your high concept is the typical source but they all work. If there's a stunt you really want to take such as an animal companion, a magical item, a magical transformation, consider using your free aspect to explain it.

You can pick from the *Stunts* chapter on page 71 or create your own (see *Creating New Stunts* on page 90).

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Stress and **consequences** are how your character withstands their adventures' mental and physical toll. Characters have at least three one-point boxes for physical stress and three one-point boxes for mental stress. They also get one slot each for mild, moderate, and severe consequences.

Your rating in Physique affects how many total physical stress boxes you have. Will does the same for your mental stress. Refer to the following table:

Physique/Will	Physical/Mental Stress
Mediocre (+0)	1 1 1
Average (+1) or Fair (+2)	1 1 1 1
Good (+3) or Great (+4)	1 1 1 1 1 1
Superb (+5) or higher	1 1 1 1 1 1 and a second mild consequence slot specifically for physical or mental hits

We cover how stress and consequences work during play in *Taking Harm* (page 137).

NAME

Finally, create a name for your Champion!

It can be a long string of names and titles, like The Mighty Baron Grenfl Di'Rezzala III of the House of Luu, or a simple title like Falcon the Slayer. While you're at it, take a moment to write a few sentences about your character. Where do they come from? What do they look like?

You'll flesh this background out later, but start considering your Champion's relationship with the group; it might be a good motivation!

> Crystal names her Champion Princess Kraq; a dinosauroid princess whose throne was usurped a decade ago. Crystal describes her appearance as being squarely built dinosaurian, with leathery skin, and a crest of bright red feathers.

A HEROINE'S NAME

One of the most recognizable aspects of magical heroines is their over-the-top names. To generate one similar to those used in the sources that ***Umdaar*** drinks from, try taking a cool sounding noun like wolf or thunder and add a suffix like -a, -ia, -ma, -olia, or -va. You'll come up with some great names like Thunderva, Eagleolia, or Eartha.

STUNTS

Stunts are unique abilities that represent your Champion's cool techniques, tricks, or bits of equipment that stand out. Some stunts require an aspect to go along with them. For instance to Bend the Elements, you'll want an aspect like **The Last Earth Elementalist**.

This chapter includes sample stunts that you could use as is or modify to suit your Champion. You can find guidance on creating your own stunts in the *Creating New Stunts* section on page 90.

Some stunts have an **archetype**, **bioform**, or other character tag after them as suggestions (such as WARRIOR or MUTANT), but you can take any stunt that fits your character concept.

If a stunt lists two or more skills, pick one of them at the time you take the stunt unless otherwise indicated.



ARCHETYPE STUNTS

Ambassadors (Rapport): When an ally and I are working as representatives for an important figure and use Teamwork, we gain +3 (instead of the normal +1) to Rapport when creating an advantage. PRINCESS

Ambush (Fight/Shoot): If I started a round with a **HIDDEN** aspect, I get an extra free invoke on that aspect when I Shoot or Fight this turn, provided I remove it (i.e., I leap from cover to attack). SCOUNDREL

Backstab (Stealth): I can use Stealth instead of Fight to attack when the target isn't aware of me. INFILTRATOR

Been There, Wrestled That (Fight/Physique): Once per scene when in combat with dangerous flora or fauna, I may use Fight or Physique to create an advantage by discovering or creating an aspect about a weakness that foe has; the aspect gains an extra free invoke. WARRIOR

Bend to My Will! (Will): I can command my element to use its strength for me. Once per scene I may use Will as if it were Physique to overcome physical obstacles or restrain others. ELEMENTALIST

MAGIC AND HACKING STUNTS

Magic in ***Umdaar*** is most easily expressed with stunts, as magic is all about breaking physics, and magic stunts especially are all about creating personalized exceptions to the rules. You'll find these sorts of stunts throughout this chapter, often tied to one of the more magical archetypes like Elementalist or Runekeeper.

Best that Money Can Buy (Resources): Once per session, I can pull out an expensive device from my bag and describe how that device (i.e., a taser-glove that helps me fight) helps with an action and skill. I may use Resources as a skill for that action for the rest of the scene. PRINCESS

Chaaaarge! (Drive): Once per scene when riding, if I use Drive to overcome a physical obstacle and move a zone, I may immediately make an attack with Fight. DAREDEVIL

Cheer On (Rapport): When I use Rapport to create an advantage by calling out encouraging words, my teammates gain +3 when invoking the aspect instead of +2. POET

Copy-cat (Deceive): Once per session, I can make an action using a non-magical stunt another ally has as if it were mine; if that stunt requires a skill, for that roll my skill level becomes equal to theirs or equal to my Deceive (whichever is higher). SCOUNDREL

Dead to Rights (Shoot): When I threaten someone with a loaded weapon, I can intimidate them, using Shoot as if it were Provoke to create an advantage. VETERAN

Deft Hands (Burglary): My quick hands also let me parry attacks. I may use Burglary as if it were Athletics to block against Fight attacks (but not Shoot) from all but gigantic foes. INFILTRATOR

Divine Ward (Will): I may use Will to defend against offensive magical spells. ELEMENTALIST

Element Force (Shoot): Whenever I succeed with style on a Shoot attack with my element, instead of taking a boost, I may move the target up to three zones away from me. ELEMENTALIST

Elemental Shaping (Crafts): In places where my element is available, I may use it to create temporary objects. They can be used to attack a target using Crafts instead of Shoot. ELEMENTALIST

Friendly Foot Race (Athletics): When using Athletics, I gain +2 to overcome when racing or navigating obstacles. Once per session, I can grant this bonus to an ally as well. WARRIOR

Healing Hands (Lore): When tending to others, I gain +2 to Lore when healing physical consequences. POET

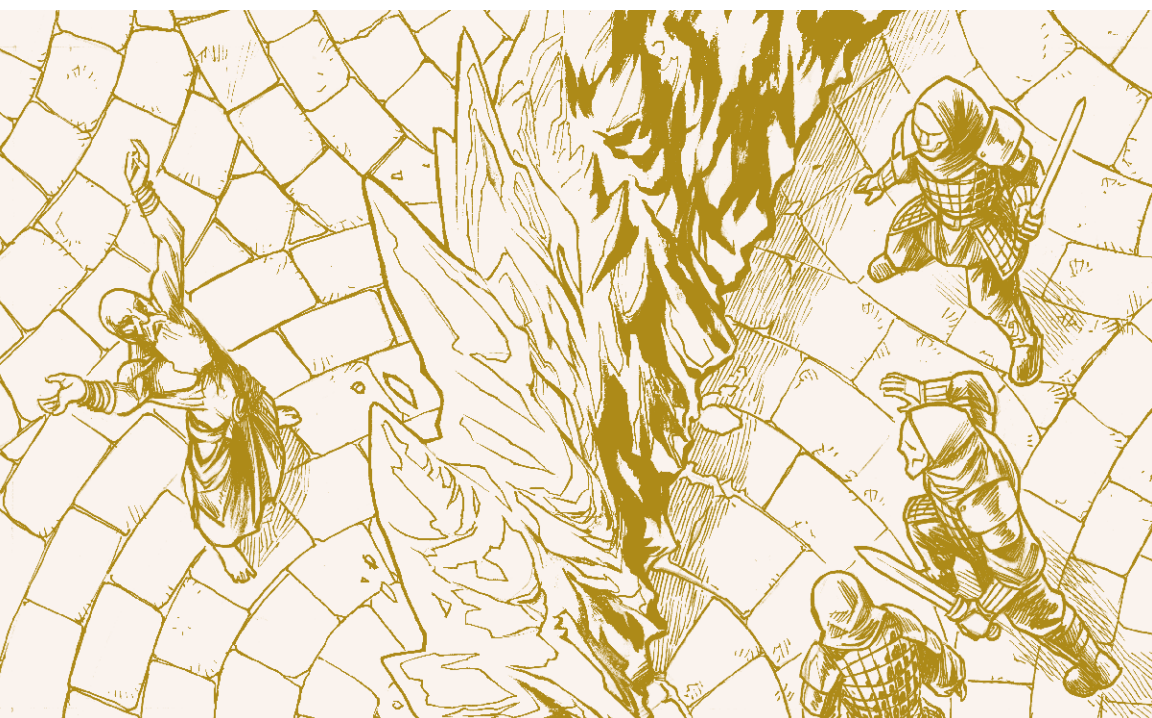
Illusionary Horrors (Deceive): I may use Deceive to make long-range mental attacks. The targets defend with Will. Once a target has succeeded on a defend roll against this attack, they are immune to it for the rest of the session. Doesn't work on targets who cannot experience fear (robots, undead, etc). SUMMONER

Improvised Explosive (Shoot): I may spend a fate point before making a Shoot attack. If I do, I may make a zone attack against every enemy in that zone (see page 441). ARTIHACKER

Improvised Projectile (Fight): If I create an advantage representing an improvised projectile invoking the aspect grants a +3 instead of a +2 and I may attack with that weapon using Fight instead of Shoot. The aspect goes away after being invoked. WARRIOR

Indomitable (Will): I gain +2 to Will to defend against Provoke attacks related to intimidation and fear. RUNEKEEPER

Inscrutable Demeanor (Deceive): I can use Deceive as though it were Rapport to make social attacks based on flattery or lies, until the truth is revealed. SCOUNDREL



Jamming Signal (Burglary): At the start of any scene where I'm present, I may take a free action to use Burglary to create an advantage. If I'm successful, I create the situation aspect **Jamming Signal** with a free invoke, which can be invoked to block communication to bots, machines, or Replitech. ARTIHACKER

Judo-Throw (Athletics): When trying to overcome or create an advantage to grapple or throw an opponent, I may use Athletics as if it were Physique. WARRIOR

Let's Make a Deal (Rapport): I gain +2 to Rapport when trying to get information or help from someone by honestly offering something they want in exchange for their cooperation. VETERAN

Like a Cat (Athletics): I always land on my feet; once per scene, I can make an Athletics roll with +2, treating any failure as a tie. SCOUNDREL

Look Out! (Notice): Once per session, if an ally near me is hurt by an ambush, projectile or a trap, they may reduce the stress equal to my Notice rating. WARRIOR

Magical Resonance (Lore): When using Lore to overcome, I gain +2 when recognizing if an object or a sound is magical or of Demiurge origin. POET

Make a Pact: Once per scene, before making a roll, I may create a promise aspect—that comes with one free invoke—with an opponent relating to some significant way I'll help them. (Note: the aspect lingers around, so it can be compelled to make me keep my promise) SUMMONER

Mind over Matter: Whenever I would suffer physical stress, I may take up to half of it as mental stress instead (rounded down). DAREDEVIL

Mocking Imps (Provoke): I can summon near-invisible spirits that mock and pester. I can create advantages with Provoke to spook and irritate a nearby target without any clear sign pointing to me. SUMMONER

Modus Operandi (Investigate): When analyzing a person's workplace or plans, even if the subject is not present, I may use Investigate as if it were Empathy to create an advantage or overcome. VETERAN

Monastic Scholar (Lore): Whenever I use Lore to search written records for information (i.e., searching a library), I gain +2 to actions if the location is quiet. RUNEKEEPER

Need a Lift?: Once per scene, when I move one or more zones, I may also move an ally with me. DAREDEVIL

Nimble Step (Athletics): Whenever I use Athletics to defend against an attack and succeed, I may move up to 1 zone. RANGER

The Noble Peerage (Contacts): I gain +2 to create an advantage with Contacts when dealing with the upper echelons of society. PRINCESS

Plight of Others (Empathy): If I am on a mission to save or avenge others, once per session, I may use Empathy as if it were Will for an entire scene. RUFFIAN

Pocket Dimension (Burglary): I can use Burglary to defend against Shoot attacks from projectiles (knives, bullets, etc) by catching them in a pocket dimension. If I succeed with style, on a future attack when I spend the boost, I can use Burglary to throw it back at them. SUMMONER

Pocket Mount (Will): I have a mount or riding device that I can summon and unsummon—e.g., dismiss spirits, shrink, or disguise at will. I can use Will as if it were Stealth to hide it away from anyone trying to take it off me. DAREDEVIL

Precision Work (Burglary): I gain +2 to overcome with Burglary when disabling alarms or handling an object without setting off security measures. RANGER

Quick Eye (Investigate): Once per scene, I may use Investigate as if it were Notice to defend against surprises or spot quick details. INFILTRATOR

QuickBot Gofers (Crafts): I may create an advantage with Crafts to build quick robot assistants; the difficulty of this roll is based on the amount of scrap nearby, but is never less than Fair (+2). If successful, instead of an aspect, I create a number of NPC bots, equal to the shifts of success, that act as a mob (see *Grouping Fillers*, page 360). The bots have a unifying high concept, one stress box, and are Average (+1) at one skill of my choice. The bots go away if I create more or at the end of the scene, but I may pay a fate point to retain up to two bots for the next scene. ARTIHACKER

KITBASHING ENCOURAGED!

It's very easy to take an Artihacker stunt and turn it into a magic user stunt and vice-versa; for example, using "Quickbot Gofers" for summoned spirits; just change the skill to match.

Read the Room (Empathy): I gain +2 on Empathy actions to discern the emotional state or general feelings of a group (i.e., a town, a mob). POET

Research Team (Investigate): Whenever an ally and I are using Teamwork to overcome or create an advantage to search for info or clues, we gain +3 to Investigate (instead of the normal +1). RUNEKEEPER

Resourceful: Once per roll, if I invoke an aspect related to my element, (e.g., a **Pool of Water**), I gain a +3 bonus instead of +2. ELEMENTALIST

Rune of Protection: I can spend one Fate Point to give myself or a companion Armor:1 against physical attacks till the end of the scene. RUNEKEEPER

Save Your Skin (Stealth): Once per conflict, I can use Stealth to Defend against an attack and hide at the same time (Foes need to exceed my stealth roll to find me). SHARPSHOOTER

Second Wind: Whenever I heal one of my own consequences, I gain a free invoke of the consequence aspect. WARRIOR

Secret Signals (Contacts): I can use Contacts to send messages through spirits instantly to and from other sorcerers and my teammates. In addition, once per session I can give the recipient a Boost in the form of spirit guardians to aid them. SUMMONER

Shadow Spies (Stealth): I can summon shadow helpers (such as elementals, nanobots, or trained roborats) to be my eyes and ears. I can use Stealth as if it were Investigate to discover or create aspects in any not brightly lit location. SCOUNDREL

Shadow Weaver (Deceive): I may use Deceive to create magical holograms or disguises for myself and my party. These silent illusions are convincing in low light but not in full light. INFILTRATOR

Something's Wrong (Notice): I gain +2 on Notice actions when spotting something or someone in a Wildernexus or ruin that is not supposed to be there (i.e., a Master's soldier hiding in the bush, an invasive species.) RANGER

Song of Power (Rapport): I may loudly proclaim ancient words of power that cause the air to explode. Once per session, I can use Rapport to make a zone attack with a +2 bonus against all enemies and allies in a zone (see *Multiple Targets* on page 441). POET

Speak with the Dead (Contacts): I may use Contacts to speak to the deceased. I gain a +2 to create an advantage if I have a personal item of theirs. SUMMONER

Spell of Binding (Lore): When I use Lore to create a magical trap, the first roll each round to overcome it has the opposition increased by +2. SUMMONER

Steering Algorithm (Burglary/Lore): If I used Burglary/Lore to hack into a mechanical vehicle, I may use Burglary/Lore as if it were Drive to steer it. ARTIHACKER

Submission Hold (Fight): Whenever I make a successful bare-handed attack and deal physical stress with Fight, I deal one mental stress as well. If an opponent would be taken out this way, treat it as if they conceded instead. This attack is non-lethal. RUFFIAN

Take Air (Drive): When riding my mount or device, I can move an extra zone as part of my free movement. Additionally I gain +2 on Drive to overcome obstacles that my mount can leap over. DAREDEVIL

That'll Come in Handy (Investigate/Notice): When I use Investigate or Notice to discover or create a scene aspect involving something that can be used as an improvised weapon—e.g., **Decorative Swords on the Wall, Branches on the Ground, Heavy Barstools**–it gains an extra free invoke. SCOUNDREL

Trick Arrows (Shoot): I may use Shoot as if it were Crafts to create trick arrows aspects, which represent specialized arrows I make on the spot or that I crafted earlier. Trick arrows created this way may have many functions (e.g., net arrow, flash arrow, data arrow) but can only be used to overcome or create an advantage. SHARPSHOOTER

Trusting Face (Deceive): I may use Deceive as if it were Empathy to discern secrets from my target, provided they are talking to me and believe I'm trying to help. SCOUNDREL

Unbridled Strength (Physique): Once per scene, when I use Physique to overcome a physical obstacle, I gain +2 to Physique, treating a failure as a tie. Treat this result as a create advantage roll to place a **Debris** or similar situation aspect on the scene. RUFFIAN

Weak Spot (Notice): I may create an advantage with Notice to place an **Aimed Shot** aspect on an opponent. If I succeed, my attack ignores all Armor Rating whenever I invoke that aspect, in addition to getting the normal invoke bonus. SHARPSHOOTER

BIOFORM STUNTS

Adapted Feet (Athletics): My feet have evolved for a specific environment. Pick a terrain type (ex. Sand, mud, rock/rubble, open plain, water); when moving in that terrain, I have +2 Athletics. CYTAUR

Compound Eyes: Because my eyes have multiple lenses and can process more information at once I can respond faster to movement around me. When a conflict begins, so long as I can see my foes, I gain a +2 to any defend roll I make before the first round of action ends. INSECTOID

Curious (Lore): Because of my inquisitive nature, I get +2 to use Lore when Overcoming obstacles to get Magic Items or Artifacts to work for the first time, even if Lore isn't normally the right skill to use for that effort. HUMAN

Danger Instincts: I may always roll to defend against a threat, even one I don't see coming. Once per scene, when I would otherwise fail a roll to defend, I may increase my roll by +2. WEREBEAST

Elemental Travel (Stealth): I can teleport between one site of my elemental affinity to another as part of my normal movement. I gain a boost when I travel through my elements this way. ELEMENTALIST • ENERGY BEING

Energy Blast (Physique/Will): I can attack targets using Will or Physique at range with energy blasts as though it were Shoot. Once per session I can supercharge my blast, gaining +2 on my attack or allowing me to attack all foes in a single zone. CYBORG • ENERGY BEING

Extra Senses (Notice): My unusual senses grant me +2 to overcome using Notice when searching for hidden persons and other creatures. MUTANT

Hive Mind: I am psychically linked to others of my bioform. Once per scene, I may increase the rating of one of my Mediocre (+0) skills for a single roll. Pick one: raise it to Fair (+2) or my Contacts rating, whichever is higher. ARACHNID • INSECTOID

Laser Proof (Physique): My chassis is tough and reflective. I may use Physique to defend against laser-based weapons and gain a +1 to the roll. If I defend with style, I may spend the boost to inflict 1 stress on the attacker by bouncing the beam back at them. GLOWBOT

Lasers and Feelings: Uplifted by Demiurge tech, I've learned to balance my emotional instincts with rational thought. Once per session I can demand attention, temporarily pausing a charged situation (even mid-combat) long enough to try to convince everyone who can hear me to stop what they are doing and try to talk it out one more time. During a conflict, this does not count as taking my turn and can happen at any time. MUTABEAST • CYBORG

Mimic (Deceive): I may morph my features to match another humanoid's. Once per session, I may pick a specific person I have touched. When creating advantages with Deceive to disguise myself as that person, I gain an additional free invoke on that aspect, even on a failure. SHAPESHIFTER

Modular Body (Crafts): Once per scene, as an action I may use Crafts to augment my body. Roll to create an advantage against a Fair (+2) difficulty. If successful, I may forgo the usual benefit and instead pick a free stunt from the EZ Stunts list. I can only have one modification at a time. CYBORG • GLOWBOT

Old as Dirt (Lore): I've been *not-quite* alive for ages. I gain +2 to Lore when Overcoming obstacles to remember ancient lore, lost languages, or forgotten myths. NECROID

Poisonous (Fight): Through a stinger, barb, or permeable membrane I can deliver a paralytic poison. I gain +2 when I use Fight to create a **Paralyzed** aspect using my poisonous appendage. Creatures with alien anatomy (or no anatomy at all) may be immune to these effects. ARACHNOID • INSECTOID

RAAAAAWR! (Provoke): My ferocious roar terrifies all. I can spend 1 fate point to use Provoke to attack all characters and creatures in my zone. This attack does not differentiate between friend and foe, and it cannot be used more than once on the same target in a single scene. DINOSAUROID

Reckless: Once per session, I can automatically create the aspect **A Danger To Everyone Around Me** with two free invokes on it for me, and one free invoke for the GM. The GM may not use theirs until I use at least one of mine. Once all free invokes are used, the aspect is removed. HUMAN

Regeneration (Physique): I can recover from physical consequences on my own without increased difficulty. I may roll Physique with an additional +2 to do so. FUNGOID

Slip through the Cracks: My body is gelatinous, so I gain +2 when escaping bonds, grappling, or being grappled by a foe. I may also ignore obstacles that I can squeeze through or past, if I have enough time (it's slow!). OOZE • SHAPESHIFTER

Spore Cloud (Physique): I can expel a cloud of blinding spores from my fungoid body. I gain +2 to use Physique to create a **Blinded** aspect on a defending target. This ability has no effect on creatures whose primary sense isn't vision. FUNGOID

Tail Swipe: Whenever I am fighting more than one enemy or a mob, I may use my tail to make an additional, unarmed attack against the mob or a second opponent. This extra attack may not use any weapon stunts and inflicts a maximum of two stress on a success. DINOSAUROID

Telekinesis (Will): I can move things with my mind, using Will instead of Physique to lift or move objects that are up to one zone away. MUTANT

Tooth and Claw: I have vicious claws, teeth or talons, giving me Weapon:2 when I hit with an unarmed attack. WEREBEAST • AVIANOID

Tough as Bones: My mild consequence box may absorb up to four points of physical stress like a moderate consequence box does. If I use it in this way, it must be healed in the same manner as a moderate consequence box. NECROID

Unbridled Strength (Physique): Once per scene, when I use Physique to overcome a physical obstacle, I gain +2 to Physique, treating a failure as a tie. Treat this result as a create advantage roll to place a **Debris** or similar situation aspect on the scene. MUTABEAST

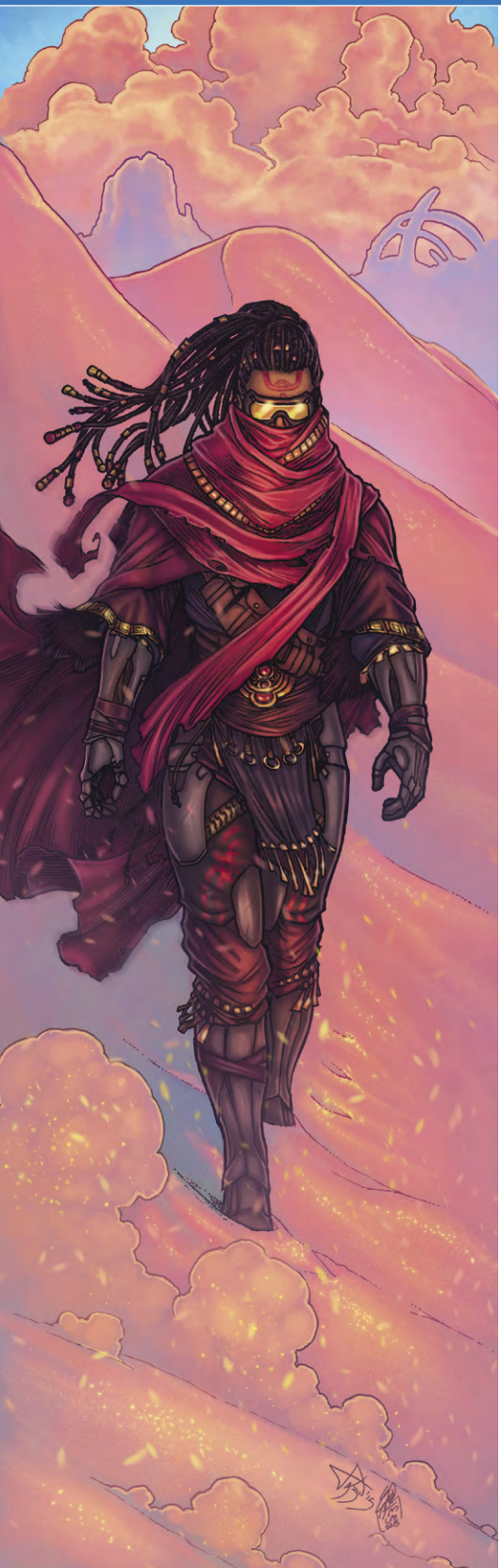
Unknowable Anatomy: I have a mutagenic body that can become temporarily immune to harm of various forms. Once per session, I can declare myself invulnerable to a particular attack and automatically succeed with style on a Defend action against that specific attack. OOZE

Water-lurker (Stealth): I have gills or oversized lungs. I gain +2 to Stealth when hiding in water or mud. I may also ignore obstacles that are water-based unless there's something dangerous in the water. MUTANT

Webbing (Shoot): I can cast webs from my spinnerets. By spending a fate point I can do one of the following: create a Good (+3) obstacle that blocks passage through a doorway or corridor—Gain +3 to use Shoot to create an **Ensnared** aspect—create a webbed path to a location up to one zone away that I can safely travel on. ARACHNOID

Wings (Athletics): I have wings that let me glide through the air. In safe circumstances, I may ignore obstacles that I can simply fly over. When it's dangerous, I gain +2 to Athletics to overcome such obstacles. AVIANOID





BANNER STUNTS

ARCHAEONAUT STUNTS

Bank Shot (Shoot): When using Shoot, I gain a +2 to attack when my target invokes an aspect representing cover and there is a hard surface nearby.

Camouflage (Stealth): When using Stealth in a location with plenty of cover I can blend into or shadows to hide in, I gain a +2 when defending against opposition who is trying to spot me visually.

Cartography Genius (Crafts): When I use Crafts to create an advantage by drawing a map, I gain a +2 to my roll when navigating through unfamiliar lands, mazes, and tunnels.

Disarming Blow (Fight): Once per scene when I succeed with style with a Fight attack against an armed opponent, I may forgo the boost to impose the aspect **DISARMED** on that opponent with one free invoke.

Explorer Kit: Once per session, I can create an aspect, with a free invoke, representing a common but useful item you might expect to find in an explorer's backpack.

Forger (Deceive): I can use Deceive as if it were Crafts to create an advantage whenever forging an object or document, and I get an extra free invoke on the resulting aspect.

Hacker's Hunch: When I don't know the path forward in a particular situation, I can offer the GM a fate point. If they accept, I gain a lead on a new opportunity.

I Know that Sign (Lore): When using Lore to overcome, I gain +2 when interpreting broad meaning and tones written in ancient Demiurge script.

Intuitive User (Drive): I can use Drive as if it were Lore for non-attack actions to operate any machine to perform its intended function, not just vehicles (e.g., Weapons, doors, very simple computers).

Local Spirits (Contacts): I can communicate with the local spirits to enlist their aid or get current info. Whenever I use Contacts to overcome, I gain +2 when I communicate with the local spirits to enlist their aid or get current info. SUMMONER

Myths and Legends (Rapport): I am a seasoned storyteller; I may use Rapport as if it were Lore on overcome actions attempting to remember ancient songs, folk tales, or legends relevant to my current activities.

Psychic Echoes: Once per session, I can sense the raw emotions of the last beings in a room or location (even from long ago). I cannot do this if I have ever previously done it in the same room or location.

Quick Fingers (Burglary): Whenever I use Burglary to overcome, I gain a +2 when picking a target's pocket.

Ruin Hack (Burglary): When I use Burglary to create an advantage, the aspect I create or discover gains an extra free invoke if the action occurs in a ruin, ancient temple, old castle, or similar location. ARTIHACKER

Temple Runner (Athletics): When using Athletics to overcome, I gain a +2 if the action is taking place in ruins, an ancient temple, an old castle, or similar location. RANGER

Trap-master (Crafts): When I use Crafts to construct a trap, I can give it extra effect. If the trap is represented by an aspect, it gains one free invoke. If the trap makes an attack, it gains a +2 to its attack.

What's Your Game? (Provoke): By goading another character into saying more than they should, I can use Provoke instead of Empathy on an overcome action attempting to discover their intentions.

Archaeonauts might have a magical item from a previous adventure, such as one of the magical weapon stunts (see page 87). Runekeeper & Artihacker stunts come in handy, and fit the tone. See page 72 for more.

DIGNITARY STUNTS

Down to Earth (Empathy): I gain +2 Empathy when using overcome to understand or help with working class people.

Fastball Special (Physique): Once per scene, as an action I can use overcome with Physique to safely throw a smaller ally into a distant zone. If that ally makes an attack from mid-air they gain +2.

I'll Cover You (Shoot): When I use Shoot to create the aspect **Suppressive Fire**, my allies gain an additional free invoke. SHARPSHOOTER

It Takes a Thief to Catch a Thief (Burglary): I can use Burglary as if it were Crafts to create anti-theft alarms and security measures.

Mental Shield: Once per scene, as an action I can create a **Mental Shield** with two free invokes, which can be used by anyone in my banner when defending against mental attacks.

Money Talks (Resources): After I roll Rapport against an NPC and fail, I can roll again, using Resources instead of Rapport against the same opposition (if the opposition was active, they use their original roll). No matter my result, it'll come with a cost even if I succeed with style. The PCs in my group can also use this stunt using my Resources. PRINCESS

Palace Defender: When I use full defense as an action, I can erect an elemental wall to protect myself and up to one ally near me, granting me +2 to defend against attacks on either of us. The elemental wall lasts until my next action. ELEMENTALIST

Problem Solving Session: When an ally and I face an opponent or obstacle that is immune to our weapons or approach, once per scene when we use Teamwork to create and advantage to overcome the defenses, it gains an extra free invoke.

Pull Aggro (Provoke): If I have placed an aspect on someone else with Provoke, I may spend an invoke or a fate point to have them act against me instead of another target or action. The first time I do this each scene, I gain +2 to Defend. RUFFIAN

Shadow Meld: If I am not locked in my current location or under surveillance (i.e., I have a plausible exit route and I'm not being directly observed), I may spend a fate point to join another PC in their location no matter how far off or remote. I appear standing in the shadows behind them (don't ask how I got there). SCOUNDREL

Study Buddy (Lore): Once per session, another party member can use Lore at my rating instead of their own even if I'm not there with them. Describe a flashback of studying the topic together.

They're With Me (Deceive): If someone catches me in someplace I'm not supposed to be and I succeed with style on my Deceive defense roll, I may forgo my bonus to allow another teammate to automatically pass as well and gain a **Fake ID** aspect with a free invoke. INFILTRATOR

To Serve and Protect: When a physical attack hits an ally or bystander in my zone, I can mark my own physical stress boxes or consequences to absorb shifts from the attack. VETERAN

Watch Out! (Notice): Whenever I succeed with style using Notice to defend against a trap or hidden attack, I may have another nearby person in harm's way also succeed in their defense roll (even if they already rolled) instead of a boost. RANGER

PATHFINDER STUNTS

Some Pathfinder stunts also interact with a special type of obstacle called Hazards; see page 374 for more.

Animal Bond (Notice): I may use Notice as if it were Empathy when sensing the emotions of animals. RANGER

Anti-poacher (Empathy): When in the Wildernexus and I use Empathy to overcome or create an advantage, I gain +2 to learn about someone not from the Wildernexus.

Assert Dominance (Provoke): When using Provoke to create an advantage, the aspect I create gains an extra free invoke if the target is a living creature. RUFFIAN

Camouflage (Stealth): When using Stealth in a location with plenty of cover I can blend into or shadows to hide in, I gain a +2 when defending against opposition who is trying to spot me visually.

Eye for Danger: Any time an aspect is created that takes us by surprise (e.g., ambush or landslide) I get a free invoke on that aspect.

False Trail (Deceive): Whenever I use Deceive to create an advantage intended to cover my trail, foil trackers trying to find me, or shake off a tail following me, the aspect I create or discover gains an extra free invoke. (e.g., **Failed Ambush**).

Familiar Faces (Lore): Once per scene, I can use Lore instead of Contacts to find allies to aid me, but the allies will be animal friends typical of the locale where I'm working. RUNEKEEPER

Friend to Beasts (Rapport): When using Rapport to create an advantage, the aspect I create or discover gains an extra free invoke if the target is an animal.

Friends Everywhere (Contacts): Once per scene, whenever I successfully use Contacts to create an NPC in a community, I get an extra free invoke. PRINCESS

I'm A Survivor: I gain an additional mild consequence slot.

The Informant: Once per session, I can declare that I know someone—usually some small-time criminal or double/triple agent—who has useful information. Represent the informant as a situation aspect, with one free invocation, that sticks around until the end of the session. VETERAN

Leap Before I Look (Athletics): Whenever I use Athletics to overcome a dangerous hazard or block, I gain +2 to my roll if I attempt to overcome it without hesitation, planning, or investigation .

Mythhunter (Lore): When I create an advantage with Lore, the aspect I create or discover gains an extra free invoke if the lore is related to a Demiurge myth, ruin, or artifact.. RUNEKEEPER

Rough Rider (Drive): Once per scene, when using Drive in a contest or challenge through a Wildernexus or through rough terrain, I can invoke an environmental aspect once for free.

Smuggler (Resources): When I create an advantage with Resources, the aspect I create or discover gains an extra free invoke if the action involves smuggled goods. INFILTRATOR

Sure-footed Guide (Athletics): When I use Athletics to create an advantage while crossing rough terrain, the aspect I create gains an extra free invoke.

Warming Reunion (Empathy): Once per scene when using Empathy I may invoke an aspect regarding a relationship I have with a PC or NPC for no cost.

Weathered (Physique): I gain +2 to Physique when defending against hazardous weather or terrain in the Wildernexuses (e.g., the sun, holding your breath underwater, lava, diamond-storms).

Wet & Wild: Once per scene, I may invoke a water-based environment aspect for free when I interact with water.

World Traveler (Athletics/Drive): Once per scene, I may invoke an environment aspect for free when using the Athletics or Drive skills. INFILTRATOR

REBEL STUNTS

Always Ready (Notice): Whenever a conflict starts, I may take an extra create advantage action with Notice to discover an aspect.

Blind Fighter (Fight): When I attack or defend with Fight in hand-to-hand combat while an aspect deprives one or more senses to both me and my opponent, I get a free invoke on the aspect and my opponent cannot invoke it on an attack against me. SCOUNDREL

Confident Forger (Crafts): If I have a counterfeit document or disguise I've created, I can use Crafts as if it were Deceive when defending against interrogators.

Crafty Deception (Deceive): I gain +2 to Deceive to create elemental duplicates and decoy aspects. ELEMENTALIST

Desperate Magic (Lore): When I have suffered a consequence during a conflict, I may spend a fate point to use Lore as Provoke, Shoot, Fight, or Athletics to attack or defend till the end of the conflict.

Disarming Charm: Once per session, while interacting with an NPC who has an aspect showing dislike or hostility toward me, I gain a free invoke on that aspect. Alternatively, I can remove a situation aspect that indicates broad dislike or hostility toward me. PRINCESS

Discretion over Valor: When faced with physical harm, you may choose to concede AFTER an opponent rolls an attack against your Champion, instead of before (however, you must choose before rolling for defense).

Find their Soft Spot (Empathy): Once per opponent, when I use Empathy to discover the hidden mental weakness, trouble, I gain an extra free invoke on it.

Half-Truths (Rapport): I may use Rapport as if it were Deceive when defending against efforts made with Empathy to discern my motives and emotions. INFILTRATOR

Improvised Weapon (Notice): Once per scene, whenever a conflict starts, I may take an action with Notice to search for an improvised weapon (with difficulty based on the surroundings). If successful, I gain a random appropriate weapon. If I succeed with style, I may pick a weapon of my choice from the list. I may use this weapon stunt, or pass it to another; the weapon lasts until the end of the scene.

Indomitable (Will): I gain +2 to Will to defend against Provoke attacks specifically related to intimidation and fear. RUNEKEEPER

Loot the Defeated (Resources): If the party has taken out one or more opponents wielding Replitech or Demiurge tech, I can scavenge their tech to receive a +2 to my next Resources roll. ARTIHACKER

Modular Limb (Crafts): Once per scene, I may use Crafts to augment my artificial limb. Roll to create an advantage against a Fair (+2) difficulty. If successful, I may forgo the usual benefit and instead pick a skill from this list (Athletics, Physique, Drive, Burglary, or Crafts). I gain +2 to overcome with the skill selected when using my limb.

No Pain, No Gain: Once per scene, whenever I suffer a consequence, I also gain a free invoke on the aspect (the opponent gains an invoke as normal).

Rabble-Rouser (Provoke): When I'm in a crowded place, I can use Provoke to create an advantage and create an **Angry Mob** aspect. If successful, treat it as an obstacle aspect in a zone that hinders Masters and their minions. POET

Ramming Speed! (Drive): When using Drive to attack another vehicle or rider, I ignore two shifts of damage. i.e., I ram and hit for four shifts; I only take two instead. Normally, when you use Drive to attack another vehicle or rider, taking the same shifts of harm you inflict. DAREDEVIL

Ransack (Investigate): I'm used to searching quickly. When using Investigate, I don't suffer penalties for working fast or in a chaotic environment; however, the process is noisy and messy.

Saboteur (Burglary): If I found the blueprints or notes to an enemy machine, I may use Burglary as if it were Crafts or Physique to subtly or catastrophically sabotage it. INFILTRATOR

Slippery (Athletics): I gain +2 to Athletics when overcoming to escape bonds or being grappled, provided I have at least a little wiggle room. MUTANT

Strike Back (Fight): If I have taken two or more stress or a consequence in this scene, I gain Weapon:2 when attacking with Fight for the rest of the scene.

Tear it Down! (Physique): I gain +2 to Physique when using overcome to destroy a machine created by a Master. WARRIOR

Terrors from Beyond (Provoke): I gain +2 to Provoke to attack when using spirits to terrify enemy mobs and other large groups. SUMMONER

There's a Way (Will): I may spend a fate point to use Will as if it were any skill when attempting an overcome roll. DAREDEVIL

Underground Connections (Contacts): Once per session, I can use Contacts to find a hidden or undercover agent in the Dread Domains, even in a place where it would seem improbable.

Whirlwind Attack (Fight): I may spend a fate point to make a Fight attack, multiplied against all enemies in the same zone as me (see *Multiple Targets* on page 441). RUFFIAN

X-Ray Vision (Investigate): I may use Investigate to peer through a barrier, seeing any dense objects (metal, bone) on the other side. When doing so I gain +2 to overcome (to see past barrier) or create an advantage (to discover aspects). MUTANT

You Better Watch Out (Deceive): I can use Deceive as though it were Provoke to make social attacks based on threats, as long as they sound credible

OTHER STUNTS

ANIMAL COMPANIONS

What's a Ranger without an animal companion? This can be a silent but smart creature or a very intelligent sentient being that talks. An animal companion can be a simple aspect, but you can choose to use it as an **extra** by taking a stunt.

Animal Companion: Requires a related character aspect. Pick one skill that is not my maximum skill; the animal companion is Fair (+2) in that skill. In any given round, I may take an action as normal or have the animal companion take an action instead. If we are together, I can provide a teamwork bonus to the animal companion and vice-versa (if I also have Average (+1) or better in that skill). The animal companion doesn't suffer stress, but it has a mild consequence, which can absorb stress for me.

The companion also gets its own high concept aspect (mark it on the Champion's character sheet) such as **Very Curious Monkey; Sassy Bird-Koala; Over-protective Cinderwolf**.

If your companion talks, decide who can understand it (only you, all dignitaries, everyone, etc).



MAGICAL ITEM AND DEMIURGE TECH STUNTS

To have a magical item stunt, you must have an aspect that justifies it, like **Sword of My Foremothers**. When you take one of these, rename it to something like *Scimitar of the Comet*—or see the *Artifact Name Generator* on page 341.

Focus Object: I have an object such as a tablet, device, or toy that helps me focus. As long as I use the device, I may use an appropriate skill (e.g., Crafts, Athletics, Lore) as if it was Will to defend against any attempt to distract or tempt me. CHARACTER WITH FOCUS ISSUES

Magic Key of Sight (Investigate): Once per scene, when I cry out [its name], I gain an +2 to overcome with Investigate, treating a failure as a tie. Further, if there is some invisible or otherwise unseen aspect to the target of my investigation, it becomes visible only to me, if just for a moment.

Magical Bracers (Athletics): Once per scene, when I cry out [its name], I may defend using Athletics with a +2, and gain Armor:1 until my next turn.

Magical Cloak (Stealth): Once per scene, when I cover myself completely in the cloak and make a magic sign with both hands, I gain +2 to defend with Stealth. If I succeed, I may immediately move to an accessible adjacent zone.

Magical Hammer (Physique): Once per scene, when I cry out [its name], I gain +2 to overcome an obstacle with Physique. On a success, I may treat the result as a create an advantage roll.

Magical Orb (Crafts): Once per scene, when I cry out [its name], I may take +2 to create an advantage with Crafts, treating a failure as a tie.

Magical Sandals/Hoverboard (Athletics): Once per scene, when I cry out [its name], I get a +2 to Athletics to overcome or create an advantage with Athletics, treating a failure as a tie. If I succeed with style, I can change my location to any other accessible zone in the same scene. CHARACTER WITH MOBILITY ISSUES

Magical Shield: Once per scene, when I cry out [its name], I may grant myself or a nearby ally Armor:2 against a physical attack.

Magical Staff of Healing (Lore): Once per session, when I cry out [its name], I gain +2 on my next attempt to overcome injuries with Lore, treating a failure as a tie. Wounds up to moderate may be instantly healed this way, instead being changed to a recovery aspect.

Magical Sword (Fight): Once per scene, I may call this weapon's name aloud to gain +2 to Fight on an attack.

Magical Throwing Tiara (Will): Once per session, when I cry out [its name], I may use Will as it were Shoot to make a ranged magical attack with Weapon:2. Other teammates may use Teamwork to add their willpower to it as a well, with each teammate adding +2 instead of +1.

Runereader (Investigate): I have a runic tablet that adapts any available text that I would be unable to read into a format I can perceive (e.g., convert into braille; magnify; turn to audio). The tablet grants me +2 to Investigate when looking for hidden texts and related visual details. CHARACTER WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT OR DYSLEXIA

Wand of the Ancestors (Lore): Once per scene, I may call upon the wisdom of my ancestors stored in my wand to gain +2 to Lore to overcome an obstacle, treating a failure as a tie.

MAGICAL TRANSFORMATION STUNTS

Of course, you can't have magical princesses without magical transformations! Here are a few ideas to consider.

Celestial Archer: Whenever my friends are in genuine danger, as an action I can hold my mystical bow aloft, cry out my mantra, and transform; my high concept has **Celestial Archer** added to it. In addition, my top two skill ratings are swapped out for Shoot and Notice, and I get one free invoke of my high concept. I remain that way for the rest of the scene. The first time I transform each session is free; however, to transform again or maintain the form for an additional scene, I must pay a fate point or a cost.

Inner Beast: Whenever I'm angry or hurt, as an action I can transform into a bestial form; my high concept has **Rage Beast** added to it. In addition, my top two skill ratings are swapped out for Fight and Physique, and I get one free invoke of my high concept. I remain that way for the rest of the scene; however, to maintain that way for longer than a scene, or transform into the Inner Beast again, I must pay a fate point.

Shifter: Whenever I focus my mind from all attachment, as an action I can transform into a Mystical Bird; my high concept has **Mystical Bird** added to it. In addition, my top two skill ratings are swapped out for Athletics and Will, and I can fly over grounded obstacles without difficulty. While I'm a bird, I can still communicate telepathically with my teammates, but otherwise have all of the physical limitations of a large bird. I remain that way for the rest of the scene; however, to maintain that way for longer than a scene, or transform into the Mystical Bird a subsequent time this session, I must pay a fate point or a cost.



EZ WEAPON AND ARMOR STUNTS

The following are some simple stunts ideal for someone looking for an easy stunt in a hurry, or for NPCs. EZ Weapon and Armor Stunts are great for giving to filler henchmen. They may use the stunt with any appropriate skill, even if the name of the skill doesn't match up exactly.

Axe or War Hammer (Fight): When wielding this weapon, I gain Weapon:1 on attacks using Fight. This increases to Weapon:3 if my target is an object or nonsentient construct.

Chain Mail: While wearing this armor, I gain Armor:1 against physical attacks.

Heavy Mail: While wearing this armor, I have Armor:2 against physical attacks. I also gain the aspect **Cumbersome Armor** while in the armor.

Lazooka (Shoot): I can shoot an intense laser shot. When using Shoot to attack, I can add +2 to the attack. Before I can shoot again, I must use an action to reload. *Note: Henchmen with Lazookas are great for using the optional multiple target rules (see page 441).*

Magic Staff (Lore/Will): While holding the magic staff, I may spend a turn using create advantage to **Gather Energy**. If successful, I may invoke it to use Lore or Will as if it were any skill during a future turn. Once **Gather Energy** is out of free invokes, the aspect is removed.

Poison Dagger (Fight): When I attack with this weapon using Fight, on a success I must convert one or more points of inflicted stress into a separate create advantage result placing a **Poisoned** aspect on the target.

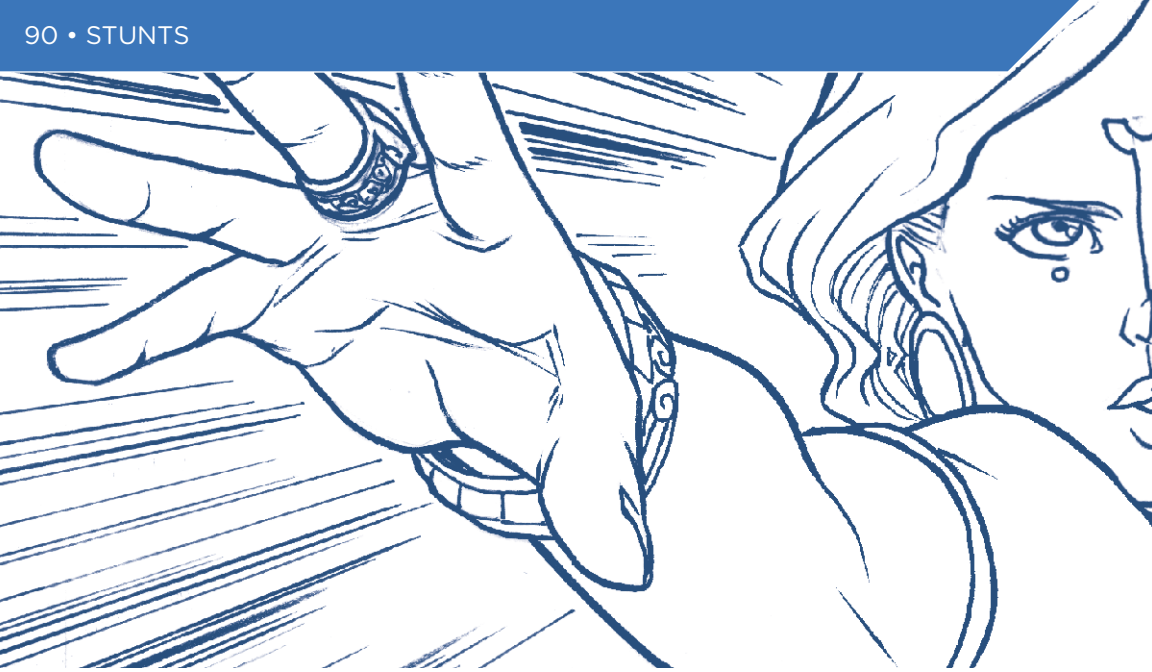
Shield (Fight/Physique): While holding this shield in a conflict, before anyone acts, I may immediately roll with a +2 to Fight/Physique to create an advantage, **Shielded**, treating any failure as a tie.

Spear or Whip (Fight): While wielding this spear or whip, I can use Fight to make attacks or create advantages against opponents up to one zone away from me.

Tank: I gain one extra mild physical consequence box, and gain Armor:1 against physical attacks after it gets marked.

Thrown Javelin/Dagger/Axe (Athletics/Fight/Physique): I may use Athletics, Fight, or Physique as if it were Shoot to throw a projectile with Weapon:1. (Note: I also have the aspect **Limited Ammo**, which may be compelled to have me run out after a throw).

War-Pick (Fight): When I attack with this weapon using Fight, I gain Weapon:2 against armored targets.



CREATING NEW STUNTS

You create stunts when building a character.

TYPES OF STUNTS

Broadly, there are two types of stunts: **bonus-granting** stunts and **rule-changing** stunts.

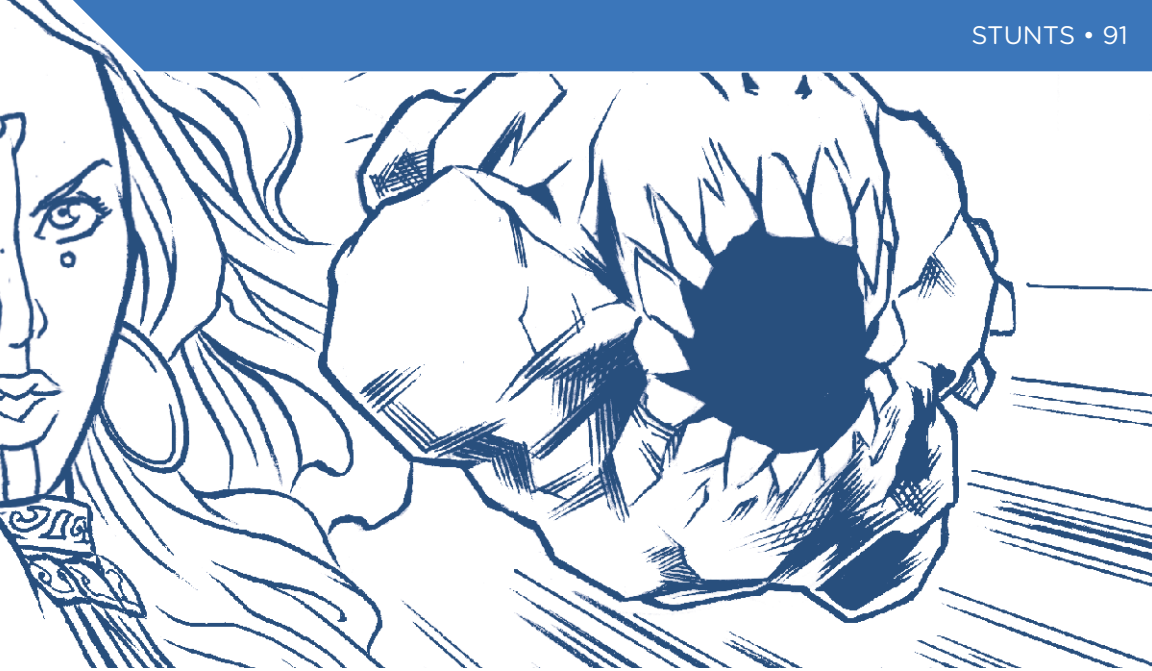
BONUS-GRANTING STUNTS

The first type of stunt gives you a mechanical boost (generally a +2 bonus) when you use a named skill within certain parameters, usually limited to a specific type of action (page 109) and type of narrative circumstance.

Write this type of stunt as a mad lib:

> Because I (describe how you are amazing or have a cool bit of gear), I get a +2 when I use (pick a skill) to (pick one: overcome, create an advantage, attack, defend) when (describe a circumstance).

Example Bonus-Granting Stunt: Because I am a tech-phobic berserker, I get a +2 when I use Physique to overcome when destroying machines.



RULE-CHANGING STUNTS

The second type of stunt changes the rules of the game. This is a broad category that includes, but is not limited to:

- Swapping which skills are used in a given situation. For instance, a Runekeeper might use Lore to hack into a database while anyone else would use Burglary.
- Using an action with a skill that isn't normally used with it. For instance, allowing a character to use Stealth to backstab an opponent from the shadows instead of Fight.
- Giving a character a different kind of bonus to skills that's roughly equivalent to a +2. For instance, a skilled orator creates an advantage with Rapport and gets an extra free invoke.
- Allowing a character to declare a minor fact is always true. For instance, a survivalist always has survival items like a tinder-box on their person, even under unlikely circumstances. This type of stunt establishes a story detail without paying a fate point to invoke it.
- Allowing a character to make a specific rules exception. For instance, a character might have two more stress boxes or another mild consequence slot.

You can write this type of stunt as follows.

> Because I (describe how you are amazing or have a cool bit of gear), I can (describe your amazing feat), but only (describe a circumstance or limitation).

> **Example Rule-changing Stunt:** Because I don't believe in magic, I can ignore the effects of a supernatural ability, but only once per game session.

SPECIFIC TYPES OF STUNTS

While there are two broad types of stunts, some varieties bear a deeper look!

WRITING MAGICAL ITEM STUNTS

Magical Weapons, armor, and other items can be an easy way to add flavor to your character.

> Magical (Item): Once per scene, I may (use a trigger) to gain +2 to (pick a skill) when I (pick an action).
>
> OR
>
> Magical (Item): Once per scene, I may (use a trigger) to gain +2 when using [skill] to (pick an action), treating a failure as a tie.

Trigger: The default trigger is "cry out the name of the artifact", which is wonderfully cartoony. However, it does allow a few weaknesses such as it can't be used and remain stealthy; or can't say if you're gagged, underwater, or in a vacuum. Other triggers could be: spill a drop of blood; call upon my ancestors; I and all of the other members of my team call aloud our names.Don't be afraid to deviate and use a similar, simple trigger to get a different result.

Pick a skill: Pick something that makes sense to you: Fight or Shoot for weapons; Fight, Athletics, Will, or Physique with armor; any number of skills for tools.



STUNTS FOR DISABLED CHARACTERS

If you are playing a disabled character, you may wish to have a stunt that acknowledges that. Disabled characters are not required to have stunts that "compensate" for their disability; however, this is a world of sci-fantasy, so if you want to have a character that has a device or adaptation that helps, much like a wheelchair or a hearing aid, you are welcome to include it. To paraphrase from the ***Fate Accessibility Toolkit***, "The most important piece of advice for playing disabled characters is to play a character rather than a disability."

Echolocation: I am immune to any sight-based obstacles (e.g., darkness, fog, blinding light). In addition, once per scene, I can create an aspect **Bouncing Screech** with a free invoke I can use against objects or opponents out in the open before making a Notice roll on my turn. CHARACTER WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Unshakable: Pick a specific type of debilitating attack (e.g., blinding light, sonic attack, psychic attack). I am immune to obstacles of that type, and no one can use create an advantage to add aspects to me. Likewise, if I am attacked with a weapon of that nature, any successful result is changed to a tie. (i.e., I am a character who is Deaf and thus immune to sound/sonic attacks). CHARACTER WITH SENSORY IMPAIRMENT

MAGICAL ARTIFACTS AND DISABILITY

Magical artifact stunts require the Champion to take an action, such as speak aloud or make a gesture with their hands. These limitations are meant to provide minor story complications (e.g., yelling loudly on a stealth mission), not to prohibit characters with disabilities from using them. You are strongly encouraged to rewrite any artifact stunts to involve another action that could be done in most (but not all) scenarios (i.e., knock it loudly against the ground; place it against your forehead). For more advice for making the game accessible for characters and for players, we recommend the ***Fate Accessibility Toolkit***.

WRITING DIGNITARY STUNTS

Here are some recommendations for crafting Dignitary stunts of your own.

Altruistic Stunts

Altruistic stunts selflessly help another character without needing their coordination.

> When I'm in (specific situation) with someone, they gain +2 to [skill] when using (specific action).

Mutualistic Stunts

Mutualistic stunts help you and another character. These can require some coordination, so plan ahead.

> Whenever an ally and I are using teamwork to (specific action) in (specific situation), we both gain +3 to (shared skill) instead of the usual +1.

A **shared skill** means that the character involved must be at least Average (+1) in that skill to help you.

Having two Champions **coordinate** can be tricky; the best way of thinking of it is: If Champion A decides to do action X, and Champion B agrees to work together, **they both gain the boost from the stunt** (regardless of which hero has the stunt); however, **Champion B must use the same action as their next action**, if applicable and able.

> Champion Brandfeather has a stunt that grants two Champions +1 when they both attempt to pick a lock. Champion Arianna is the first to attempt it, and the players agreed to use the mutualistic stunt; Arianna gets the +1 bonus for her action. If Arianna fails to pick the lock, then Brandfeather is committed to picking the lock as their next action; however, if Brandfeather is unable (ex. suddenly caught in a net), or the action becomes pointless (as Arianna successfully picked the lock), then Brandfeather may use their action however they like (with no retroactive penalty to Arianna).

SPECIAL THANKS

Mutualistic stunts are based on Cooperative Stunts from ***Behind the Walls*** by John Adamus. If you don't know this great, dramatic setting, check it out for yourself!

WRITING MAGICAL TRANSFORMATION STUNTS

Creating a magical transformation stunt is relatively easy! Use the following rules:

- Pick two skills. Whenever it is your turn to act, you may choose to transform, causing those two skills to swap places with your two highest-rated skills.
- When you create the stunt, create a new temporary high concept aspect that describes both how you've been supercharged and how others see you. Like **Brainy Human Technopriest** transforms into **Stacked Magical Barbarian with Gorgeous Hair**.
- Once you transform, you remain that way for the rest of the scene. Alternatively, you may stay transformed after the scene, but at a cost by spending a fate point, taking a minor consequence, gaining a negative aspect or circumstance. You can transform back at any time.
- You may transform into the magical state once per session for free. However, you may not voluntarily transform into the magical form any additional times without paying a fate point.
- We recommend every transformation have a weakness, a condition that must be met. Examples of Possible Weaknesses:
  - I must be holding the magical axe
  - I must be in a specific element (water, air)
  - I must be confident in myself
  - I must be free of emotions
  - I must be full of emotions
  - My loved ones must be in danger
  - I must be touching someone I care about

Flawed Final Form

If your transformed state is flawed, then the weakness is different. It might be an aspect that the GM can compel to force you to transform, whether you want it or not. Examples:

> A **Rampaging Rage-beast** can be compelled to transform when angry.
>
> A **Soulless Killing Machine** can transform for free; must pay a fate point to transform back.
>
> Someone with a **Ruthless Inner Demon** can be compelled to let the demon "take the wheel" when in self-doubt.

Magical Transformations & Milestones

During a campaign milestone, a player may wish to change one or more of the aspects related to their stunt. We encourage this! Perhaps the final form takes a different or mightier shape with experience. Maybe the condition is changed, to reflect how the character matures. If the condition is too easy, you might even compel the player: the condition is now secretly changed to something else! (Of course, don't fix the new condition in stone; wait until the player suggests something good, and use that.)

> At a milestone, Lydia wants to change their Magical Form from Magical Barbarian Swordwielder to Majestic Valkyrie Shieldbearer to reflect their character growing from a loner to being a part of the team. The GM agrees but encourages Lydia to change the stunt's current condition, "I must be full of rage." They decide to leave the new condition blank for now. Lydia's Champion, Thal'ma'a, is surprised she can't transform when angry during the adventure. After struggling with this power loss, in the middle of the next session, she gains the new condition: "I must feel loved."

WRITING REBEL STUNTS

There is no set formula for Rebel stunts. However, any stunt themed around espionage, combat, and destruction can be a good thing in the Dread Domains!

You may also want to consider stunts that trigger when Champions are hurt, or when they spend a fate point. These help create a feeling of desperation, and that stakes really are involved.

> If I have taken two or more stress or a condition in this scene, I gain +2 to (pick a skill) when (pick an action).
>
> In a conflict or high stakes scene, I may spend a fate point to use (pick a skill) as if it were any other skill, provided I can explain how this skill helps right now.

SPENDING FATE POINTS

Stunts powered by fate points can tend to be a little stronger than average, because you can do it so infrequently. A good frame to consider are stunts that let you pay a fate point to attack multiple targets at once (see page 441 for rules).

WRITING PATHFINDER STUNTS

Pathfinder stunts can be related to traveling, exploration, animals, the wilderness, and so on.

Alternatively, the stunts may help players establish new aspects; these encourage the players to get involved in making the world around them, on both the small scale and large.

> Once per session, I may introduce a story detail aspect related to (specific area) with a free invoke. If my (pick a skill) is Good (+3) or higher, it starts with an extra free invoke.

Alternatively, you may choose a stunt that allows you free invoke based on certain environmental aspects, should they crop up; or, in the case of dangerous limitations, may reduce the harm.

> Whenever in (specific circumstance), environmental aspects (of a specific type) invoked against me only increase the difficulty by +1 instead of +2.
>
> Whenever I invoke (specific environmental aspect) I gain a +3 bonus instead of +2.

WRITING ARCHAEONAUT STUNTS

Most Archaeonaut stunts can be related to the Demiurge, ruins, artifact recovery, etc.

We also recommend stunts that let a Champion discover new aspects related to mysteries, as well as rewarding them for using aspects.

> I gain +2 to [skill] whenever using create an advantage to discover (very specific field).
>
> Whenever I successfully discover an aspect with [skill] related to (specific field), I gain an extra invoke/detail.

It's also good to use stunts that interact with environment aspects, as it rewards the players for observing their surroundings. See *Pathfinder Stunts* (page 83) for inspiration.

WRITING BIOFORM STUNTS

Bioform stunts, because they reflect physical attributes, often provide a constant bonus for every roll, but only in specific scenarios.

> Because I have (specific adaptations), I gain +2 to (pick a skill) when taking (pick an action) when in (specific environment).
>
> Because I have (specific adaptations), I can ignore obstacles of (specific nature).

Note: if it's very niche, a stunt might have the benefits of both together.

MILESTONES AND ADVANCEMENT

As your Champions interact with the storyline, they grow and change. At the end of each session, you earn a **minor milestone**, which lets you move things around on your character sheet. As you conclude each story arc, you earn a **major milestone**, which lets you add things to your character sheet. Learn more about sessions and arcs on page 230.

Note: We recommend Archaeonaut banner campaigns be especially careful to devote time to milestones. The characters should grow and change with their revelations.

MINOR MILESTONES

Minor milestones happen at the end of a session, part of the way through dealing with a story arc. They are focused on adjusting your character laterally rather than advancing the character. You may not wish to use a minor milestone, which is fine. It doesn't always make sense to change your character. The opportunity is there if you need it.

During a minor milestone, you can do one of the following:

- Switch the ranks of any two skills, or replace one Average (+1) skill with one that isn't on your sheet.
- Rewrite one stunt.
- Purchase a new stunt by spending one refresh. (Remember, you can't go below one refresh.)
- Rewrite any one of your aspects, except your high concept.
- Clear any mild consequence completely.

MAJOR MILESTONES

Major milestones are more significant, letting your character grow in power. A major milestone lets you do one thing from the minor milestone list.

On top of that, you do all of the following:

- Rewrite your character's high concept, if applicable.
- If you have any moderate or severe consequences not yet in recovery, you can begin the recovery process and rename them. Any that were already in recovery may now be cleared (see *Ending a Conflict* on page 142).
- Increase a skill rating by one step—even from Mediocre (+0) to Average (+1). See Improving Skill ratings below.

If a major storyline has concluded it's time for the characters to "power up," the GM may also offer one or both of the following:

- Gain a point of refresh, which you can immediately spend to buy a new stunt if you like.
- Increase a second skill rating by one step. See Improving Skill ratings below.

A major plot development may also prompt the following changes to the campaign if the Champions have had a major impact or change of direction. Discuss these together as a group..

- Improve a Community's status aspect. See the Campaign section on page 239 for more.
- Change a world aspect
- Change the group's Banner

> After toppling most of the Masters on the continent, the Freelands have the advantage; they changed the world aspect, **Fragile Candle of Hope** to **The Rising Tide of Rebellion**.

IMPROVING SKILL RATINGS

When improving a skill rating, you must maintain a "column" structure. Each tier may not have more skills than the tier below it; that may mean you need to promote a few Mediocre (+0) skills first—or you may save up your skill points rather than spend them immediately, allowing big increases all at once.

> Meriander wants to increase her Lore from Average (+1) to Fair (+2), but this means she'd have four Fair (+2) skills and only three Average (+1)—that won't do. Luckily, she has saved a second skill point from an earlier milestone, so she also increases her Mediocre (+0) Empathy to Average (+1). Now she has one Great (+4), two Good (+3), four Fair (+2), and four Average (+1) skills.

Before	Not Valid	Valid	Also Valid
+4 ■	+4 ■	+4 ■	+4 ■
+3 ■■	+3 ■■	+3 ■■	+3 ■■■
+2 ■■■	+2 ■■■■	+2 ■■■■	+2 ■■■
+1 ■■■■	+1 ■■■	+1 ■■■■	+1 ■■■

SAPPHIRE SENTINELS

To help any groups that are interested in playing a game immediately, we have a sample team of Champions known as the Sapphire Sentinels.

- **Princess Galya:** Orange Sapphire Sentinel
- **Princess Charmella:** White Sapphire Sentinel
- **Princess Shitakai:** Green Sapphire Sentinel
- **Princex Alarcon:** Purple Sapphire Sentinel
- **Honorary-Princess Junkin37:** Yellow Sapphire Sentinel
- **Syr Boltane:** Blue Sapphire Sentinel

If running them with the Dignitary banner, we recommend *Freeland Adventure: Sand Dance* on page 285; they start with a shared reputation aspect **Brash Young Upstarts**.

You may also choose to use them to run another adventure. For example:

> Syr Boltane visiting her family in Halfdale and storming the fortress of its new Master (see *Dread Domain Adventure: Assault on Mount Muk* page 258).
>
> Ranger-Princess Shitakai defending the Mangroves of Laya against the ancient factory (see *Wildernexus Adventure: The Laya Factory* on page 266).
>
> Princess Charmella, as the newly crowned princess of Caelum, ensuring that the Warriors Three are able to restore the Cobalt Emblem (see *Feat Fit for a Wedding Gift* on page 297).

Copies of the Sapphire Sentinels character sheets can be downloaded from **evilhat.com/product/umdaar**

THE HISTORY OF THE SAPPHIRE SENTINELS

Ages ago, the Goddess of the Forge Sa'al'a created thirteen magical torques, each bearing a rune-inscribed sapphire. If it's worn by a warrior of strong will who believes their cause is just, it manifests as a powerful weapon; this weapon is made of solidified energy, and takes on a unique shape, depending on the wielder.

The Hierophant Ternella, of the Freehold of Insafarai, has become the de facto leader of an alliance known as the Freelands of Arrn; but the alliance is close to splintering, torn apart by petty in-fighting and outward manipulation. But the hierophant has a plan; they have summoned the disparate torc-wielding citizens around the continent and granted them the status of ambassadors for Insafarai and the alliance—the Sapphire Sentinels. The hierophant has convinced these princesses (real and honorary) to act as the alliance's diplomatic corp and elite strike force, in hopes that they may turn the tide against the encroaching Masters.

Can the Sapphire Sentinels find the missing Sapphires of Sa'al'a, or will they be claimed by the fallen Sentinel, the Ruby Ruler? Will the Princesses act in the best interest of all, or be pulled to protect their individual kingdoms first?

PRINCESS GALYA

Raised in the shelter of the Freehold of Insafarai, Princess Galya eagerly learned what she could about Umdaar, particularly the plight of some of its citizens. Though her petite frame made her more suited for high society than the front lines, this changed when she was gifted the Orange Sapphire, which not only manifests as a hefty battleaxe, but transforms Galya into a powerful muscular warrior. Currently the alliance leader, Hierophant Ternalla, is unaware that the Orange Sapphire Sentinel and their daughter Galya are one and the same!

PRINCESS CHARMELLA

As an infant, Charmella was secreted away from the palace for her safety, and left with the Holy Order of the Runespeakers where she learned not only the wisdom and language of the Demiurge, but also their stories. As Linguell, she traveled the land as a poet-priestess, only to have the White Sapphire reveal her true birthright to her. Now, she's faced with inheriting a kingdom from parents she never knew.

PATHFINDER PRINCESS SHITAKAI

Shitakai was raised by a village of Wardens in the Mangroves of Laya. Her job is a delicate one; she protects the animals from harm, while also protecting the villagers from the animals. When the Green Sapphire chose her as a worthy Princess, nothing changed—she and her community believe all living beings are equal and therefore she despises a forced hierarchy.

PRINCEX ALARCON

Tucked away in the Dread Domain known as the Smog Sea Isles, a small rebel village named Smoke Island lives undetected by the ruling Master. There, the villagers are trained to be skilled spies and assassins—including Princex Alarcon, the rightful heir of the Smog Sea Isles. They hope to topple the usurping Ruby Ruler, with the help of the Purple Sapphire and their new allies.

HONORARY-PRINCESS JUNKIN37

Junkin37 started with humble origins, but has grown to become the de facto leader of Scrap Station, a massive junkyard the size of a city. Over the years, multiple Masters have conquered Scrap Station, but they seldom hold it long; Junkin37 and her compatriots are highly skilled at hacking any invaders' tech and using it to strengthen their resistance. It's unclear if Junkin37 was chosen by the Yellow Sapphire, or if she reprogrammed it to accept her commands.

SYR BOLTANE

Raised in Halfdale, Boltane is now a proud knight of the Freehold of Insafarai and has patrolled both near the capital and its far peripheries. Her performance has been near flawless, except when she failed to protect a traveling prince from ambushers; the mortally wounded Prince bestowed the Blue Sapphire torc to Boltane to keep and wield, even though she is not a Princess. The sapphire manifests as both a glowing emu-stallion and as a spear. It reminds her of her duty and her shame.

TAKING ACTION, ROLLING THE DICE

In a game of ***Umdaar***, players control the actions of their character and contribute to the story you are all telling together. In general, the GM narrates the world and the actions of non-player characters (NPCs), and the other players narrate their individual PCs' actions.

To act, follow the principle of fiction first: say what your character is trying to do, then figure out how you'll do that in the system. Your character's aspects inform what they can attempt and help set the context for interpreting the results. Most people couldn't even try to perform emergency first aid on a mortally wounded ally, but you can try with an aspect establishing a medical background (i.e., **Runepriest Healer, Veteran Soldier**, or anyone who would arguably have first-aid training). Without that aspect, you might buy a few moments for some last words. When in doubt, check with your GM and the table.

How do you know if you're successful? Often, your character simply succeeds because the action isn't hard, and nobody's trying to stop you. But in difficult or unpredictable situations, you break out the dice to find out what happens.

When a character wants to take any action, the group should think about these questions:

- What's stopping this from happening?
- What could go wrong?
- How is it interesting when it does go wrong?

If no one has good answers to all of these questions, it simply happens. Driving a hovership through friendly skies to the sky-harbor doesn't require a roll of the dice. Racing down the road to a waiting skyship while being pursued by cybernetically enhanced beasts, on the other hand, is a perfect time to roll the dice.

Whenever you take action, follow these steps:

1. Fiction First: Describe what you're trying to do, then choose the skill and action that fits.
2. Roll four dice.
3. Add up the symbols on the dice: a ⊞ is +1, ⊟ is -1, and ■ is 0. This gives you a dice result from -4 to 4.
4. Add your skill rating to your dice result.
5. Modify the dice by invoking aspects (page 120) and using stunts (page 71).
6. Declare your total result, also called your **effort**.

DIFFICULTY AND OPPOSITION

If the character's action faces a fixed obstacle or otherwise tries to alter the world rather than a character or creature, their action faces a static **difficulty** rating. These actions include picking locks, barring doors, and tactically assessing an enemy camp. The GM may decide that the presence of certain aspects (on the character, the scene, or something else) justifies changing the difficulty.

At other times, an enemy will provide **opposition** against the character's action by using a **defend** action (page 113). In these cases, the GM also rolls the dice and follow the same rules in the previous section, using any skills, stunts, or aspects to set the difficulty. Any time you roll to attack an enemy or to create an advantage directly against them, the enemy rolls to defend against it.

Opposition can take many forms. Struggling with a Master over the legendary sword has a clear opponent and might be a conflict. Interrupting a sinister ancient ritual might be an overcome roll or a contest. Opening a locked vault in a Master's castle so you can access the Demiurge artifact is a challenge with risk of discovery. Still, it's up to the GM if you're rolling against opposition from the patrolling guards or the difficulty presented by the lock itself.

MODIFYING THE DICE

You may modify your dice by invoking aspects to get +2 to your roll or reroll the dice. Some stunts also give you a bonus. You may also invoke aspects (page 120) to support an ally or to increase the difficulty an enemy faces.

INVOKING ASPECTS

When you take action, but the dice come up short, you don't have to sit back and accept failure. (Though you totally can. That's fun too.) The aspects in play give you options and opportunities to succeed.

When an aspect could justifiably help your efforts, describe how it helps and spend a fate point to invoke it (or use a free invoke if available).

When you invoke an aspect, you can either gain a +2 bonus to your roll or reroll all four dice, or you can add 2 to the difficulty of someone else's roll. You can invoke multiple aspects on the same roll, but you can't spend multiple fate points to invoke the same aspect multiple times on the same roll. There is one exception: you can spend as many free invokes on an aspect as you like on the same roll.

You'll often invoke one of your character aspects, but sometimes you'll invoke a situation aspect or make a hostile invoke of another character's aspect (page 121).

VETOING INVOKES

Sometimes a player or GM invokes an aspect that is hard to imagine being applicable to the situation. If a Champion is the **Best Chef in the Night Hawk Wastes** it probably feels like a stretch to use that aspect to disarm a trap. When in doubt, anyone can ask the player who is invoking the aspect to describe how it affects the situation; if the group feels like it's not applicable, the player should retract the invoke (regaining any fate points spent or free invokes used). If they have a good justification for it, that's great. Maybe chefs in Night Hawk Wastes are famed for creating intricate meals assembled with tweezers and your steady hand will help disconnect the wires without letting them cross.

Just make sure that you aren't trying to make an aspect cover every situation. They lose their meaning if they're used without making sense in the world. As tempting as it can be to invoke a bunch of aspects to get a phenomenal result, stick to those that make sense in the fiction, and honor any vetoed by the group if they strain credulity. This applies to GMs and to players.

USING STUNTS

Stunts may give you a bonus to your roll, provided you meet the criteria written in the stunt, such as the circumstances, action, or skill used. You may wish to create an advantage (page 110) to introduce aspects that line up with those circumstances. Keep your stunts' circumstances in mind when you describe your actions too, and set yourself up for success.

Normally, stunts give you a +2 bonus in a narrow circumstance with no cost; you may use them anytime they apply. Some rare and exceptionally powerful stunts may require you to spend a fate point to use them.

OUTCOMES

Whenever you roll dice, the difference between your effort and the target difficulty or opposition is measured in shifts. There are four possible outcomes:

- ↓ If your effort is less than the target difficulty or opposition, you **fail**.
- ⇆ If your effort is equal to the target, you **tie**.
- ↑ If your effort is one or two shifts more than the target, you **succeed**.
- ⇈ If your effort is three or more shifts over the target, you **succeed with style**.

Some outcomes are better for you than others, but all of them should advance the story in interesting ways. You start with fiction first (page 103); make sure you end with it too. Maintain focus on the story and ensure you interpret the results in a way that fits the fiction.

> Qwora isn't an adept vault-cracker with the right tools at hand, and yet she's in a sinister cult's guarded secret headquarters, with a steel door between her and the book of rituals she desperately needs. Can she get in?

↓ FAILURE

If your effort is less than the target difficulty or opposition, you fail.

There are several ways this can play out: **simple failure, success at a major cost, or taking a hit**.

SIMPLE FAILURE

The first is the easiest to understand—simple failure. You don't accomplish your goal, don't make any progress, and are left wanting. Ensure this keeps the story moving—simply failing to crack the safe and maintaining the status quo is stagnant and boring.

> Qwora pulls the handle triumphantly, but the vault remains resolutely closed while the alarms begin to blare. Failure has changed the situation and driven the story forward—now there are guards on the way. Qwora is faced with a new choice—try another way of opening the vault now that subtlety is out the window, or cut her losses and run?

SUCCESS AT A MAJOR COST

The second is success at a major cost. You do what you set out to do, but there's a significant price to be paid—the situation gets worse or more complicated. GM, you can either declare this is the result or can offer it in place of failure. Both options are good and useful in different situations.

> Qwora fails her roll, and the GM says, "You hear the click of the last tumbler falling into place. It's quickly followed by the hum of a charging laser rifle and the bark of a guard telling you to put your hands in the air." The major cost here is the confrontation with a guard she'd hoped to avoid.

TAKE A HIT

Lastly, you may take a hit, which you'll need to absorb with stress or consequences or suffer some other drawback. This kind of failure is most common when defending against attacks or overcoming dangerous obstacles. This is different from a simple failure because the character alone is affected, not necessarily the whole group. It's also different from success at a major cost, in that success isn't necessarily on the table.

> Qwora is able to get the vault door open, but as she grasps the handle, she feels a jab in the back of her hand. She couldn't disable the trap! She writes down the mild consequence **Poisoned**.

You can mix these options: Harmful failure can be harsh but appropriate at the moment. Success at the cost of harm is certainly an option.

Note: Consequences are ideal for handing out harm outside of conflicts. You can also deal stress outside of conflicts, but it goes away at the end of the scene.

⇆ TIE

If your effort is equal to the target difficulty or opposition, you tie.

Like a failure, ties should move the story forward, and never hinder the action. Something interesting should happen. Similar to failure, this can play out a couple of ways: success at a minor cost or partial success.

SUCCESS AT A MINOR COST

The first is **success at a minor cost**—a few points of stress, story details about a difficulty or complication that aren't hindrances themselves, and a boost (page 118) to the enemy are all minor costs.

> Qwora's first few attempts all fail. By the time she gets the door open, dawn has broken, and escape under cover of darkness is impossible. She got what she needed, but her situation is worse now.

PARTIAL SUCCESS

The other way to handle a tie is a **partial success**—you succeeded but only got some of what you wanted.

> Qwora can only open the vault door a crack—if the door opens more than an inch, the alarm will sound, and she can't figure out how to disengage that. She manages to pull a couple of pages of the ritual out through the narrow gap, but she'll have to guess at the final steps.

↑ SUCCESS

If your effort is one or two more than the target, you succeed.

You get what you want at no additional cost.

> Opened! Qwora grabs the ritual and leaves before the guards notice her.

↑↑ SUCCESS WITH STYLE

If your effort is three or more than the target, you succeed with style.

You get what you want, and a bit more on top of that.

> Qwora is beyond lucky; the vault door opens almost instantly. Not only does she get the ritual, but she has enough time to poke through the vault. Amidst various minor treasures and artifacts, she finds a map with troop movement; it looks like an invasion plan!

APPLYING "FICTION FIRST" TO SUCCESS

The fiction defines what success looks like. What if Qwora didn't have the tools or experience needed to break into the safe? Perhaps that success is more like our "minor cost" example. Similarly, if Qwora was on the team because she built the vault, that success might resemble our "with style" example.

Similarly, success looks different based on the task. A successful rope trap might bind a wild beast for a few hours, but will only hold a kaiju for a few seconds.



ACTIONS

There are four actions you can roll, each with a specific purpose and effect on the story:

- **Overcome** to surmount obstacles with your skills.
- **Create an advantage** to change a situation to your benefit.
- **Attack** to harm the enemy.
- **Defend** to survive an attack, stop a foe from creating an advantage, or oppose an effort to overcome an obstacle.

OVERCOME

Overcome to surmount obstacles with your skills.

Every character will face untold challenges in the course of the story. The **overcome** action is how they face and surmount those obstacles.

A character good at Athletics can climb over walls and race through crowded streets. A detective with high Investigate can piece together clues others have missed. Someone skilled in Rapport finds it easier to avoid a fight in a hostile tavern.

Your outcomes when overcoming are:

- ↓ If you **fail**, discuss with the GM (and the defending player, if any) whether it's a failure or success at a major cost (page 106).
- ⇆ If you **tie**, it's success at a minor cost (page 107)—you're in a tough spot, the enemy gets a boost (page 118), or you may take a hit. Alternatively, you fail but gain a boost.
- ↑ If you **succeed**, you meet your goal and the story moves on without hiccups.
- ↑↑ If you **succeed with style**, it's a success and you also get a boost.

> Tan'nat has made their way to the icy Demiurge ruin, but the temple is destroyed, and the sacred artifact is missing! They want to search the wreckage for clues. The GM tells them to roll Investigate against Fair (+2) difficulty. Tan'naT gets ■■⊞⊞ on the dice, plus their Average (+1) Investigate, for a Good (+3) effort. A success! The GM describes the clue they find: "Footprints in the snow made by creatures walking on many thin, exoskeleton legs. Could it be the Scorpiotaur Squadron has double-crossed you?"

Overcome actions are often used to determine whether a character can access or notice a particular fact or clue. GM, keep a close eye on those success-at-a-cost options when that's the case. If missing a detail would cause your story to stall, take failure off the table, and focus on the cost instead.

Note: Sometimes an overcome roll to discover something will result in a hidden aspect being revealed; in which case, the GM may treat it as a create an advantage action.

CREATE AN ADVANTAGE

Create a situation aspect or gain a benefit from an existing aspect.

You can use the **create an advantage** action to change the course of the story. By using your skills to introduce new aspects or add invokes to existing aspects, you can stack the deck for yourself and your teammates. You might change the circumstances (e.g., barring a door or creating a plan), discover new information (e.g., learning a monster's weakness through research), or take advantage of something already known (e.g., a Master's famous love of music).

An aspect created (or discovered) by creating an advantage works like any other: it defines the narrative circumstances and can allow, prevent, or impede actions—for instance, if your Artihacker uses an artifact to create a **Sphere of Complete Silence** to help sneak past enemy guards, you also won't be able to hear warning shouts from your friends behind you. It can also be invoked (page 120) or compelled (page 122).

In addition, creating an advantage gives you one or more free invokes of the created aspect. As the name suggests, a free invoke lets you invoke an aspect without spending a fate point. You can even let your allies use free invokes you created.



When you roll to create an advantage, specify whether you're creating a new aspect or taking advantage of an existing one. If the former, are you attaching the aspect to an ally, opponent, or the environment? If you're attaching it to an opponent, they can take the defend action to oppose you. Otherwise, you'll usually roll against a difficulty, but the GM can decide if something or someone opposes your efforts with a defend roll instead.

Your outcomes when creating a new aspect are:

- ↓ If you **fail**, you either don't create the aspect; or you create it, but succeed at a cost, i.e., the enemy gets the free invoke and the final aspect may need to be rewritten to benefit the enemy. This option may still be worth it because aspects are always true (page 117).
- ⇆ If you **tie**, you don't create an aspect, but you do get a boost (page 118).
- ↑ If you **succeed**, you create a situation aspect with one free invoke on it.
- ↑↑ If you **succeed with style**, you create a situation aspect with two free invokes on it.

With an existing known or unknown aspect, the outcomes are:

- ↓ If you **fail**, and the aspect was known, the enemy gets a free invoke. If it was unknown, they may reveal it to get a free invoke.
- ⇆ If you **tie**, you gain a boost if the aspect is unknown; it stays unknown. You get a free invoke on it if the aspect is known instead.
- ↑ If you **succeed**, gain a free invoke on the aspect, revealing it if it was unknown.
- ↑↑ If you **succeed with style**, gain two free invokes, revealing it if the aspect was unknown.

> Qwora is face-to-something with a slug-like robeast that's the size of a house! She knows it's too powerful to attack directly, so she decides her best bet is to distract it: "I'd like to make an improvised incendiary grenade and set this thing on fire!" she announces.
>
> The GM decides that hitting the beast is trivial, so this is a Crafts roll—how quickly can she find and weaponize something flammable? The difficulty is set at Good (+3). Qwora has Average (+1) Crafts but rolls ■⊞⊞⊞, giving a Great (+4) effort.
>
> Qwora cobbles together the fire grenade and tosses it at the robeast. The robeast is now On Fire, and Qwora has one free invoke on that aspect. The robeast is distracted, and if it does try to chase her, Qwora can use that invoke to help herself get away.

ATTACK

Attack to remove an enemy or complex obstacle.

The attack action is how you try to take out an opponent—whether you're looking to kill a loathsome monster or knock out an innocent guard who doesn't know the truth about what they're guarding. An attack can be unloading with a laser rifle, throwing a solid punch, or casting a baleful spell. It can also represent chipping away at a complex obstacle that's preventing you from your goals, such as using Rapport in a drawn-out negotiation with an unfriendly village council, or racing against time using Crafts to get your fortifications ready before the Master's robot army arrives.

Keep in mind whether or not harming your target is even possible. Not every attack is equal. You can't just punch a kaiju and hope to hurt it. Determine whether the attack even has a chance of being successful before you start rolling the dice. Some powerful beings may have specific weaknesses that need to be exploited or some means of defense you must get through before you can even begin to hurt them.

Your outcomes when attacking are:

- ↓ If you **fail**, you fail to connect—the attack is parried, dodged, or maybe just absorbed by armor.
- ⇆ If you **tie**, maybe you barely connect, maybe you cause the defender to flinch. Either way, you get a boost (page 118).
- ↑ If you **succeed**, you deal a hit equal to the difference between your attack's total and the defense's effort. The defender must absorb this hit with stress or consequences or be taken out (page 140).
- ⇈ If you **succeed with style**, you deal a hit like a success, but you may reduce the shifts of the hit by one to get a boost.

> Korat the Paladin has stumbled across a skeledrone raised by arcane science to fulfill some dark purpose. She decides to smite it. She has Great (+4) Fight but rolls ▬▬■■, giving a Fair (+2) effort.

Attacks are primarily used in conflicts. See page 136 for the full rules.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Some stunts offer weapon or armor ratings. Many NPCs have weapons and armor as well.

Weapon:X: An attack with Weapon:X is successful, then it deals extra stress equal to X (i.e., a successful attack with Weapon:1 would deal +1 stress).

Armor:X: Whenever a character with Armor:X is attacked, they suffer X less stress (i.e., a successful attack that would deal two stress to a character with Armor:1 deals only one stress instead). Armor usually works for either physical or mental attacks, but not both.

See *Weapon Rating in Limitations* on page 367 for how weapon ratings work when used with Limitations.

DEFEND

Defend to survive an attack or interfere with a foe's action.

Is a trooper shooting lasers in your face? Is a foe pushing you out of the way as they flee your wrath? What about when that skeledrone tries to stab you in both kidneys? Defend, defend, defend.

Defend is the only reactive action in ***Umdaar***. You use it to stop something from happening outside your turn, so you're often facing an opposing roll rather than a set difficulty. Your enemy rolls and you immediately roll to defend, so long as you're the target or can justify your opposition—which often makes you the target. Aspects or stunts may justify a defend roll.

> Note: In a conflict a reactionary defense roll doesn't count as your one action for the round.

Your outcomes when defending are:

- ↓ If you **fail** against an attack, you take a hit, which you must absorb with stress or consequences (page 138). Regardless, the enemy succeeds as described for their action.
- ⇆ If you **tie**, proceed according to the tie result for the opposed action.
- ↑ If you **succeed**, you don't take a hit, or you deny the enemy's action.
- ⇈ If you **succeed with style**, you don't take a hit, you deny the enemy's action, and you even get a boost as you gain the upper hand for a moment.

> Continuing from the previous example, the skeledrone gets to defend itself against Korat. The GM rolls [−][ ][ ][+], which doesn't change the creature's Mediocre (+0) Athletics.
>
> Because Korat's effort was higher, her attack succeeds by two shifts, and the skeledrone is a little closer to being down for good. Had the skeledrone rolled better, then its defense would have succeeded, and the undead monstrosity would have avoided taking a hit.

FULL DEFENSE

Sometimes, a player or GM may want their character to go all-in on using defense until their next turn rather than taking an action. This is called full defense.

When declaring full defense, you must be clear about the focus of your efforts. By default, you are defending yourself (from attacks and efforts to create advantages on you). You may wish to specify someone you're protecting, or a defense against a particular group of aggressors, or a particular effort or outcome you wish to oppose.

While on full defense, you get a +2 to all defend rolls relevant to your declared focus.

If nothing comes of it and you haven't rolled to defend by the time your next turn comes around, you gain a boost (page 118) as you've got the opportunity to prepare for your next action. This offsets "losing a turn" because you focused your efforts on defending against something that didn't happen.

WHICH SKILLS CAN BE USED TO ATTACK AND DEFEND?

The following is a list of skills that can be used to attack and defend, based on the type of conflict and the actions taken. Though the word *attack* often makes us think of a violent action, in the context of a conflict an attack is any direct action taken to achieve a complex goal, or move closer to its resolution. This might be swinging your sword in a bloody battle to wound a foe or making an offer during a tense negotiation between Freelands that are desperately trying to put aside their differences to face a Master together.

ATTACKING

- **Fight:** Used to make physical attacks up close (against targets in the same zone). May not work against incorporeal targets or those with immunities to your attack.
- **Shoot:** Used to make physical attacks at a distance (against targets in any zone within range). May be more difficult up close, and may not work against incorporeal targets or those with immunities to your attack.
- **Provoke:** Used to make mental attacks aimed at intimidating, taunting, or enraging your target. May not work against unfeeling or unthinking targets.
- **Rapport:** Used to make mental attacks aimed at negotiating, convincing someone to aid you, or befriending a hostile target. May be more difficult or ineffective during a violent situation or against a target you have no former connection to. May not work against unfeeling or unthinking targets.
- **Deceive:** Used to make mental attacks to either improve your standing through flattery or false promises or to scare off an opponent through false threats. May no longer work once your lies are detected, or if the target does not trust you to begin with. May not work against unfeeling or unthinking targets.
- **Drive:** Used to make physical attacks against other vehicles or mounted foes while driving or piloting. May cause your vehicle to take harm as well.
- **Crafts and Lore:** Can be used with an appropriate stunt to make physical or mental attacks using magic or technology. Limitations based on the specific stunt.
- **Other Skills:** Can sometimes be used either because of a stunt, or in a specific conflict (such as using Investigate in a conflict to solve a mystery before the perpetrator strikes again).

DEFENDING

This list applies specifically to defending against the attack action; there are plenty of situations where other skills may be used to defend against other actions (e.g., if an opponent tries to find a hidden Champion using Notice to overcome, you'd use Stealth to defend).

- **Fight:** Used to defend against melee attacks. May not work against attacks from colossal or tiny foes that cannot be blocked or parried.
- **Athletics:** Used to defend against any melee or ranged physical attack.
- **Will:** Used to defend against mental attacks. May not work against lies or deception.
- **Empathy:** Used to defend against Deceive attacks or other forms of deception.
- **Notice:** Used to defend against traps and surprises.
- **Physique:** Used to defend against poisons and environmental conditions such as extreme heat or cold, or lack of air.
- **Drive:** Used to defend against physical attacks while you're driving.

The GM or table consensus can determine whether other skills may gain permission to attack or defend under special circumstances. Some stunts may grant broader, guaranteed permission when circumstances might otherwise not do so. When a skill can't be used to attack or defend but might help with it, prepare for it by using that skill with the create an advantage action, and use the free invokes generated on your next attack or defend roll.

In general, if a character is taking any action directly against an opponent to end a conflict, thus causing them exit the conflict in one way or another, the player may ask to treat it as an attack action and may roll to deal stress of the appropriate type (mental or physical). Any opposing NPC that concedes or is successfully taken out has decided that they no longer wish to fight the PCs, are willing to step aside, and maybe even join the champion's cause.

> The champions are dealing with a group of unfriendly smugglers; negotiations started off strong but took a wrong turn, and now everyone's shooting at each other. Prince Pashawn, however, decides to throw up a white flag, and shouts, "You don't want to die, and neither do we, so let's talk!" He's using Rapport as an attack, with the hope of de-escalating the fight. Negotiations haven't ended; they just grew more tense.

GMs shouldn't feel they have to separate between "physical conflicts" and "mental/social conflicts"—they're all the same! Much like smart-alecky Spider-Man throwing verbal barbs at his opponents, your characters can throw punches, insults, or both!

NON-VIOLENT ATTACKS?

Like the best Saturday morning cartoons, Umdaar is a place where violence doesn't solve all problems. Words can be just as powerful and, thus, just as accessible in the mechanics.

We do want to caution that coercing someone into an unconditional surrender with words is no less problematic than coercing someone to unconditionally surrender with fists: robbing an opponent of their will and agency is hardly heroic.

When an opponent is taken out of a conflict, the terms of their defeat must be consistent with the nature of the attack. A robot terror defeated with Fight might very well be destroyed, but a rival leader of the Freelands taken out by Rapport means they have lost an argument, not given up their autonomy and will. They may agree to the terms but still harbor resentment, or they may have been totally won over and believe in the new possibilities, depending on their own motivations and beliefs, as well as the methods used in the conflict to defeat them.

> Prince Pashawn deals enough mental stress with Rapport to convince a Master's Militia to stop fighting. The Prince can't force the militia to do something humiliating (i.e., allow themselves to be chained) or suicidal (i.e., walk off a cliff, rebel against their Master). However, the militiamen agree to let the champions pass by; a few are convinced to desert their posts and return to their families.

ASPECTS AND FATE POINTS

An **aspect** is a word or phrase that describes something special about a person, place, thing, situation, or group. Almost anything you can think of can have aspects. A person might have a reputation as the **Greatest Sharpshooter in the Floating Wastes**. A room might be **On Fire** after knocking over an oil lamp. After an encounter with a monster, you might be **Terrified**. Aspects let you change the story in ways that go along with your character's tendencies, skills, or problems.

ASPECTS ARE ALWAYS TRUE

You can invoke aspects for a bonus to a roll (page 104) and compel them to create a complication (page 127). But even when those aren't in play, aspects still affect the narrative. When you have that robeast **Pinned Under a Hovertank**, that is true. It can't do much stuck under there, and it's not getting out easy.

In essence, "aspects are always true" means that aspects can grant or withdraw permission for what can happen in the story (they can also affect difficulty, see page 104). If the aforementioned monstrosity is **Pinned**, the GM and everyone else has to respect that. The creature has lost permission to move until something happens which removes that aspect, either a successful overcome such as a justifying aspect like **Superhuman Strength** or someone foolishly moving the tank. Similarly, if you have **Cybernetically Enhanced Legs**, you've arguably gained permission to leap over walls in a single bound without even having to roll for it. This also applies to benefits that can be reasonably extrapolated from aspects: if your high concept is **Merman Sorcerer**, you don't need a separate **Breath Underwater** stunt or character aspect to survive underwater; that minor ability is intuitively based on your high concept.

That's not to say you can create any aspect you want and use its truth like a club. Aspects grant a lot of power to shape the story, yes, but with that power comes the responsibility to play within the story's constraints. Aspects have to align with the table's logic.

Sure, you might like to create an advantage to inflict the aspect **Dismembered** on that fungal super-soldier, but that clearly steps on the toes of the attack action, and besides, it takes a bit more work to lop it's arm off than that (could work as a consequence, though—see the next page). You might say you're **Umdaar's Best Shot**, but you'll need to back that up with your skills. As much as you'd like to make yourself **Invulnerable**, removing permission for someone to use any weapons to harm you is too strong and open-ended (although conditional super-powers may be purchased as stunts).

WHAT KINDS OF ASPECTS ARE THERE?

There's an endless variety of aspects, but no matter what they're called, they all work pretty much the same way. The main difference is how long they stick around before going away.

CHARACTER ASPECTS

These aspects are on your character sheet, such as your high concept and motivation. They describe personality traits, important details about your past, relationships with others, important items or titles you possess, problems you're dealing with, goals you're working toward, or reputations and obligations you carry. These aspects primarily change during milestones (page 98).

Examples: **Leader of My Band of Rebels; Attention to Detail; I Must Protect My Family**

SITUATION ASPECTS

These aspects describe the surroundings or scenario where the action is taking place. A situation aspect usually vanishes at the end of the scene it was part of, or when someone takes some action that would change or get rid of it. Essentially, they last only as long as the situation they represent lasts.

Examples: **On Fire; Bright Sunlight; Crowd of Angry People; Knocked to the Ground; Pursued by the City Guard**

CONSEQUENCES

These aspects represent injuries or other lasting trauma taken by absorbing a hit, often from attacks; see *Stress* and *Consequences* on page 138.

Examples: **Sprained Ankle; Concussion; Debilitating Self-Doubt**

BOOSTS

A boost is a special aspect representing an extremely temporary or minor situation. You cannot compel a boost or spend a fate point to invoke it. You may invoke it once for free, after which it vanishes. An unused boost vanishes when the advantage it represents no longer exists, which may be a few seconds or the duration of a single action. They never persist beyond the end of a scene, and you can hold off naming one until you use it. If you're in control of a boost, you may pass it to an ally if there's a rationale for it.

In My Sights; Distracted; Unstable Footing

OTHER KINDS OF ASPECTS

These additional types are optional but may add value to your game. To some extent, these are variants on character aspects (if you expand your notion of what counts as a character) and situation aspects (if you change your notion of how long those last).

Organization aspects: Sometimes, you might be dealing with a whole organization that operates under a certain set of principles. Consider giving the organization aspects which any member of it can access as if it were their own.

Scenario aspects: Sometimes, a particular plot might introduce a new "trope" that shows up time and again in the storyline. Consider defining this as an aspect that is available to all characters in the story until that part of the story concludes.

Setting aspects: Like a scenario aspect, the setting of your campaign itself may have recurring themes. Unlike a scenario aspect, these aspects don't go away.

Zone aspects: You can attach situation aspects to a particular place on the map represented by a zone (page 131). This can add extra dynamism to your group's interactions with the map. A GM can encourage this by making an "up for grabs" free invoke available on a zone aspect at the start of the scene, drawing characters (player and non-player alike) to leverage that aspect as part of their early strategy.

ASPECTS FOR BEGINNERS

If you're new to aspects, a good way of thinking of them is this: aspects are potential energy, like a bowling ball sitting high on a shelf. While it's at rest, the bowling ball isn't really doing much. With a little nudge, though—from say, a fate point—it comes toppling down, and is converted to kinetic energy.

For example, if I have the aspect **Raging Bull** it doesn't mean I'm always raging or that I perpetually get a mechanical bonus when smashing things. However, I can use aspects with fate points to give me a mechanical boost, or give me a narrative boost to shape the story.

Negative or double-sided aspects are great. They reflect struggles in your life and can be used with compels to grant me fate points. Later on, I can spend these fate points to trigger aspects. Think of it like putting the bowling ball back on the high shelf for later use.

HOW CAN I ADD AND REMOVE ASPECTS?

You can remove an aspect provided you can think of a way your character could do so—e.g., douse the **Raging Fire** with a rain barrel or use evasive maneuvers to escape the pursuing guard that's **On Your Tail**. Depending on the situation, that might require an overcome action (page 109); in this case, an opponent could use a defend action to preserve the aspect if they can describe how they do so.

However, if there's no narrative block to removing an aspect, you can simply do so. If you're **All Tied Up**, and then a friend unties you (with no one nearby opposing their action), the aspect goes away. If nothing is stopping you, there's no need to roll.

WHAT CAN I DO WITH ASPECTS?

In addition to describing the truth of a person, place, object, or situation, aspects can affect the mechanics of the game. Players, including the GM, can **invoke** them to help in actions they apply to or **compel** them to cause complications.

INVOKES

To unlock the true power of aspects and make them help you, you need to spend fate points to invoke them during dice rolls (page 104). Keep track of your fate points with pennies or glass beads or poker chips or some other tokens.

You can also invoke aspects for free, if you have a free invoke on it (from you or an ally creating an advantage; see page 110).

EARNING FATE POINTS

You can earn fate points by letting your character's aspects be compelled (page 122) against you to complicate the situation or make your life harder. You may also get a fate point payout if someone uses your aspect against you in a hostile invoke (page 121).

Remember that in each session, you start with fate points at least equal to your refresh. If you were compelled more than you invoked in the prior session, you show up at the next one with more. See page 69 for details.

You also gain a free fate point when you concede (page 141), but this has nothing to do with aspects.

THE ELLIPSIS TRICK

If you want an easy way to ensure you have room to incorporate aspects into a roll, try narrating your action with an ellipsis at the end ("..."), and then finish the action with the aspect you want to invoke. Like this:

> Eloise says, "So I'm trying to decipher the runes and..." (rolls the dice, dislikes the result) "...and **If I Haven't Been There, I've Read About It**..." (spends a fate point) "...so I easily start rambling about their origin."

HOSTILE INVOKES

Most of the time, when an aspect is invoked, it's a character aspect or a situation aspect. Sometimes you invoke enemies' character aspects against them. This is called a **hostile invoke**, and it works like invoking any other aspect—pay a fate point and get a +2 to your roll or reroll the dice. There's one small difference—when you make a hostile invoke, you give the fate point to the enemy. But they don't get to use the fate point until after the scene is over. This payout only applies when a fate point is spent on a hostile invoke. Free invokes do not trigger a payout.

A handy tabletop tool is a notecard that says "Pending Points"; whenever the GM spends a fate point on a hostile invoke, place it on the card, as a reminder to give out at the end of the scene.

> A Skeledrone trooper charges a champion. It rolls a total of Great (+4) on their attack, while the Champion rolls only Fair (+2) to defend; a successful attack! However, the champions have discovered the Skeledrones have the aspect **Simple Puppets**; they spend a fate point to invoke it, and argue that a simple feint maneuver is enough to throw off the Skeledrone's attack. The defender adds +2 to their defense roll, meaning the Skeleton ties instead. The GM will get an extra fate point at the end of the scene.

INVOKING TO DECLARE STORY DETAILS

You may add an important or unlikely detail to the story based on an aspect in play. Don't spend a fate point when "aspects are always true" (page 117) applies. Pay when it's a stretch—or, table willing, when there's no relevant aspect. If allowed, the result will be either a story element or an aspect with no free invoke.

If it's common sense (a hunter having a pocket knife or a castle having torches on the wall), you don't need to spend a fate point.

If it's possible but a little too convenient to be probable (a hunter having a special trick arrow; declaring that there's a chandelier directly over an opponent's head), the GM may ask for you to pay a fate point.

If the story detail is way too outlandish (the players need to quest for a rare herb, but the hunter declares they already have it in their bag; the sturdy castle spontaneously collapses on the opponent), the group may agree to veto the story detail entirely.

COMPELS

Aspects can be compelled to complicate the situation and earn fate points. To **compel** an aspect, the GM or a player offers a fate point to the player and tells them why an aspect is making things more complicated. If you refuse the compel, you must spend a fate point and describe how your character avoids the complication. Yes, this means that if you don't have any fate points, you can't refuse a compel!

Any aspect can be compelled—whether it's a character aspect, situation aspect, or consequence—but it must be something that affects the character being compelled.

Anyone can offer a compel. The player proposing the compel must spend one of their fate points. The GM then takes over running the compel for the affected target. The GM does not lose a fate point by offering a compel—they have a limited pool of fate points for invoking aspects, but they can compel as much as they'd like.

Compels can be retroactive. If a player finds they have roleplayed themself into a complication related to one of their aspects or a situation aspect that concerns them, they can ask the GM if that counts as a self-compel. If the group agrees, the GM slides the player a fate point.

Note: It's okay to recognize a compel as off-the-mark and withdraw it. If the table agrees that a proposed compel wasn't appropriate, it should be withdrawn at no cost to the compelled character.

EVENTS AND DECISIONS

There are two general kinds of compels: **events** and **decisions**.

- An **event** compel happens to a character because of an external force. That external force connects with the aspect somehow, resulting in an unfortunate complication.
- A **decision** compel is internal, where the character's flaws or competing values get in the way of better judgment. The aspect guides the character to make a particular choice—and the fallout of that choice creates a complication for them.

In either case, a resulting complication is key! Without a complication, there is no compel.

HOSTILE INVOKES OR COMPELS?

Don't confuse hostile invokes and compels. Though they are similar—they are ways to give a character an immediate problem in exchange for a fate point—they work differently.

A compel creates a narrative change. The decision to compel a character's aspect isn't something that happens in-universe; rather, it's the GM or player proposing a change to the story. The effect can be broad, but the target gets the fate point immediately if they accept the compel, or they may refuse both the fate point and the compel.

A hostile invoke has a mechanical effect. The target doesn't get a chance to refuse the invoke if it's justified, and while they do get a fate point, they don't get to use it in the current scene. However, the result for the invoker is much more constrained: a +2 bonus or one reroll of the dice.

As a player or GM, compels let you change what happens in a scene. They throw a wrench in the narrative. Using them against an opponent is a risky proposition—they might refuse or accomplish their objective despite the complication thanks to the shiny new fate point you handed them.

Hostile invokes help you in the current moment. In addition to your aspects, your opponent's aspects are available to invoke, giving you more options and making scenes more dynamic and connected.

COMPELS ARE COMPLICATIONS, NOT STYMIES

When offering a compel, make sure that the complication is a course of action or major change in circumstance, not a denial of options.

If a Championhalf-blinded by **Sand in Your Eyes** wants to shoot, responding "Oh, you've got sand in your eyes, so you shoot at the creature and miss" is not a compel. It denies action rather than complicating anything.

"You know, curse your luck. I think that the **Sand in Your Eyes** means you can't see anything. Your shots at the skeledrone go wild, puncturing a few barrels that are now gushing rocket fuel toward the fire pit." This is a much better compel. It changes the scene, ratchets up the tension, and gives the players something new to think about.

"The **Sand in Your Eyes** means you can barely see. Do you think your character would shoot blindly, knowing they might hit Gurty, their Surrogate Brother?" The player can either pick a different action, or continue, knowing that they might damage Gurty physically or emotionally with their wild shots. This is a decision compel.

BEING A GAME MASTER

This chapter is intended for Gamemasters, to help them set up and guide a game. It is **not** full of secret information the players are not allowed to know; rather, it's information that players are **not required** to know.

As the GM, you are the director of game sessions. Note that you are not the boss. ***Fate Condensed*** is collaborative and the players have a say in what happens to their characters. Your job is to keep things moving by doing the following things.

Run scenes: A session is made up of scenes. Decide where the scene begins, who's there, and what's going on. Decide when all the interesting things have played out, and the scene's over. Skip over the unnecessary stuff—in the same way that you don't roll dice if the outcome of action won't be interesting, don't have a scene if nothing exciting, dramatic, useful, or fun will happen during it.

Adjudicate the rules: When some question comes up about applying the rules, you can discuss it with the players and try to reach an agreeable consensus, but you get the final say.

Set difficulty: Decide when rolls are necessary and set their difficulties. (See page 126 for more.)



Determine the costs of failure: When a character fails their roll, you decide the cost of success at a cost. You can certainly take suggestions from the player—they may know just how they want their character to get hurt—but you ultimately decide.

Play the NPCs: Each player controls their character, but you control all the rest, from minions to robeasts to the Big Bad itself. (See page 128 for more.)

Give the PCs opportunities for action: If the players don't know what to do next, it's your job to give them a nudge. Never let things get too bogged down in indecision or lack of information—do something to shake things up. When in doubt, think about your Big Bad's tactics and goals to create a spot of bother for the heroes.

Make sure everyone gets the spotlight: Your goal isn't to defeat the players, but to challenge them. Make sure each PC gets a chance to be the star once in a while. Spread around compels and challenges tailored to the characters' different abilities and weaknesses.

Complicate the PCs' lives: You will be the primary source of compels in addition to throwing baddies at the characters. Players can compel themselves and other characters, of course, but you must ensure that everyone gets opportunities to experience the negative repercussions of their aspects.

Build off player choices: Look at the PCs' actions during play and think about how the world changes and responds. Make the world feel alive by presenting the PCs with those consequences—good and bad—in play.



SETTING DIFFICULTY AND OPPOSITION

Sometimes, a PC's action will face opposition via a defend roll from another character in the scene. In this case, the opposing character rolls dice and adds their relevant skill rating, just like the PC. If the opposing character has relevant aspects, they can be invoked; the GM can invoke NPCs' aspects using the fate points in their pool (page 129).

If there's no opposition, you have to decide on the difficulty of the action:

- **Low difficulties**, below the PC's relevant skill rating, are best when you want to give them a chance to show off.
- **Moderate difficulties**, near the PC's relevant skill rating, are best when you want to provide tension but not overwhelm them.
- **High difficulties**, much higher than the PC's relevant skill rating, are best when you want to emphasize how dire or unusual the circumstances are and make them pull out all the stops, or put them in a position where they will need to suffer the consequences of failure.

Likewise, use **the adjective ladder of ratings** (page 66) to help you choose an appropriate difficulty. Is it superbly difficult? Then pick Superb (+5)! Here are a few rules of thumb to get you started.

If the task isn't very tough at all, make it Mediocre (+0)—or just tell the player they succeed without a roll, as long as there's no serious time pressure or the character has an aspect that suggests they'd be good at it.

If you can think of at least one reason why the task is tough, pick Fair (+2); for every extra factor working against them, add another +1 or +2 to the difficulty. (For variety, you can roll a two fate die and use the result to potentially increase or lower it.)

When thinking about those factors, consult what aspects are in play. When something is important enough to be made an aspect, it should get a little attention. Since aspects are always true (page 117), they might influence how easy or difficult something should be. That doesn't mean that aspects are the only factors to consider, of course! Darkness is darkness regardless of whether or not you decided to make it an aspect in the scene.

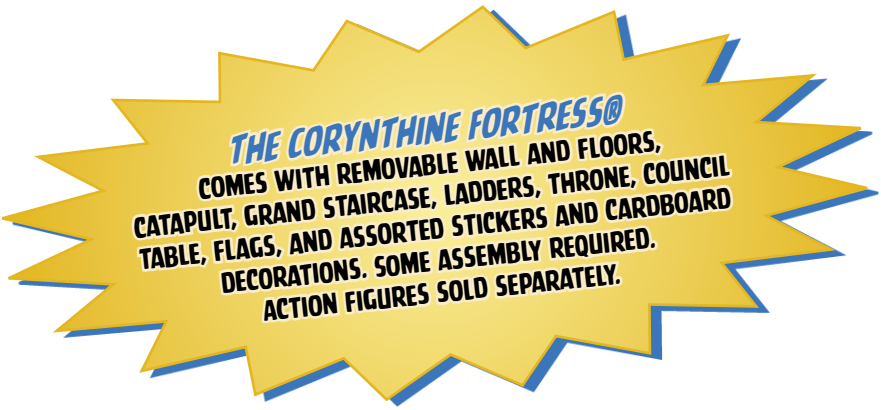
If the task is impossibly difficult, go as high as you think makes sense. The PCs will need to drop some fate points and get lots of help to succeed, but that's fine.

For an expanded look at what you can do to create varied and interesting opposition and adversaries for your players, check out the Toolkit section on page 318, or ***The Fate Adversary Toolkit***, available for sale as a PDF or with its essentials freely available in the online system reference documents at **fate-srd.com.**

MANAGING COMPLICATIONS

Part of a GM's role is to add complications (both planned ones, as well as unplanned complications from failures and compels). However, your other role is to keep the story moving and engaging. Sometimes these two roles can be at odds.

> The champions have broken into a castle and just fought two conflicts in a row. A hacker is trying to break into a safe with the stolen artifact (to steal it back). However, they fail terribly. The logical thing to do is to have the alarm sound and more guards come, but the GM is wary that yet another conflict will just bore the players!



A good thing to keep in mind is that not every complication has to stand in the way of the plot—some of them can raise the stakes, or make the champions temporarily lose the advantage. Think of those comical action scenes where a hero has the vital MacGuffin, only to have it slip out of their hands and be bounced around from character to character.

> The hacker fails their safe cracking roll; however, instead of summoning guards, the safe door opens wide, and the prize artifact flies out, zooming down the hall, compelled by a mystic force. Now the champions have to quickly follow the artifact (forcing them along in the plotline).

NPCS

NPCs include bystanders, supporting cast, allies, foes, monsters, and pretty much anything else that might complicate or oppose the efforts of the PCs. You will probably want to create other characters to interact with the PCs.

MAJOR NPCS

You can stat them out if someone is particularly important to the story just like a PC. This is appropriate for someone who the PCs will deal with a lot, such as an ally, a rival, the representative of a powerful group, or a Big Bad (such as a Master or their Lieutenant).

A major NPC doesn't necessarily follow the same limits as a starting PC. If the NPC will be a recurring boss-level threat, give them a higher peak skill (see *Setting Difficulty and Opposition* on page 126), more stunts, and whatever else it takes to make them a danger.

- For more advice on *Creating Bosses*, see page 343.
- For a rogues gallery of pre-made Masters, start on page 165.

MINOR NPCS

NPCs that aren't going to be major, recurring characters don't need to be nearly as well-defined as major NPCs. For a minor NPC, only define what is necessary.

Most minor NPCs will have a single aspect, which is just what they are: **Guardian Statue, Obstructive Bureaucrat, or Enraged Minion**, etc.

If necessary, give them another aspect or two to reflect something interesting about them or a weakness. You may also give them a stunt.

Give them one or two skills to describe their prowess. You can use skills from the skill list or make something more specific, like Fair (+2) at Getting into Tavern Brawls or Great (+4) at Biting People. You might also give them a general category, like Fair (+2) Physical Skills, Average (+1) Social Skills.

Give them zero to three stress boxes; the more they have, the more of a threat they can be. Generally, they have no consequence slots; if they take a hit with more shifts than available stress boxes, they are simply taken out. Minor NPCs aren't meant to stick around.

- For pre-made henchmen, look for the followers of the Masters starting on page 165.
- For pre-made dangerous *Flora and Fauna NPCs*, see page 198.
- For more advice on *Creating Henchmen*, see page 354.

MONSTERS, BIG BADS, AND OTHER THREATS

A common type of NPCs are monsters and enemy minions; however, in Fate, NPCs can be also be used to convey threats that wouldn't typically be thought off as "characters," such as a storm or a spreading fire.

Unlike other minor NPCs, these threats can be defined really in any way. Break the rules. Give them whatever combination of aspects, skills, stunts, stress, and consequences it will take to make them dangerous, and think about what sort of difficulties they will present to the PCs when determining their ratings.

- For more advice on stunts and extras for Big Bads, see page 347.

YOUR FATE POINTS

At the start of each scene, the GM begins with a pool of fate points equal to the number of PCs. If the scene includes a major NPC or monster that conceded (page 141) a previous conflict, or who received hostile invokes (page 121) during a previous scene, those compensatory fate points are added to your pool. Similarly, if you received a compel in the prior scene that just ended, you may add that fate point to your pool.

> Princess Kraq, Redtail, Meriander, and Qwora are headed for the final confrontation with the master, Queen Ve'Gloria. Previously, she escaped from the champions by conceding a conflict after taking a moderate consequence. That means the GM gets four fate points for the PCs and two more from Ve'Gloria.

As the GM, you can spend fate points from this pool to invoke aspects, refuse compels that the players offer NPCs, and use any NPC stunts that require you to—all exactly as the players do.

However, you do not need to spend fate points to compel any aspects. You have an infinite supply of fate points for that purpose.

TO CHALLENGE, NOT TO DEFEAT

If you're new to being a game master, remember: the players aren't your opponent, and you don't "win" by defeating them. Your goal is to give them solid challenges.

Sometimes the champions will fail, and that's fine! A failure shouldn't be seen as "the end of an adventure," but rather as, "moving from a dangerous situation to an even more dangerous situation." The stakes are higher and their options have changed, but it's not hopeless. Even if a failure causes a door to close, the GM opens a window.

CHALLENGES, CONFLICTS, AND CONTESTS

You will often be able to resolve an action with a single roll of the dice—do you crack the vault, avoid the guards, or convince the elder to give up their secrets? Other times you'll face extended engagements that take many rolls to resolve. We offer three resolution tools for those cases: **challenges, contests, and conflicts**. Each does things a little differently, depending on the goal of the engagement and the opposition involved.

A **challenge** is a complicated or dynamic situation, which might be broken into consecutive or current tasks. You'll be opposed by someone or something, but there isn't a dominant "other side."

> A researcher looks for clues in a forbidden tome, while the bard distracts the librarian, and the fighter holds back Cyborg Assassins from entering the library (all at the same time).

A **contest** is a situation where two or more parties are pursuing mutually exclusive goals but not actively harming one another. Contests are perfect for chases, debates, and races of all sorts. (And just because the parties are not trying to harm each other doesn't mean that harm can't befall them!)

A **conflict** is when characters can and want to harm one another. A sword fight with a Master's lieutenant, riddling a swarm of skeledrones with lasers as their claws rake at your flesh, and an exchange of vicious barbs with your rival under the watchful eye of the queen—these are all conflicts.

SETTING UP SCENES

Regardless of the type of scene, the GM starts by setting the essential pieces into place so that the players know what resources are available and what complications are in play.

ZONES

Zones represent the physical space—a quick map broken into a few discrete sections. A conflict in a remote farmhouse might have four zones: the first floor, second floor, front yard, and backwoods. Two to four zones are sufficient to handle most conflicts. Large or complicated scenes may require more. Try to keep your zone map to a simple sketch, something that fits on a notecard or can be quickly drawn on a whiteboard. When in doubt, you can find good inspiration zones in sports—look at how a soccer pitch or a basketball court is broadly divided by lines and circles.

Zones help guide the story by shaping what is possible. Depending on your zone, who you can attack and where you can move.

Anyone in a zone can interact with everyone and everything in that zone. This means you can hit, stab, or otherwise physically engage with people and things in your zone. Need to open that secret vault behind the altar? You'll have to be in that zone. Anything outside your zone is usually beyond your reach—you'll need to move to get there or use something that can extend your reach.

There are several ways you can move between zones.

- **Free move:** You can move to an adjacent zone in addition to your action during an exchange (page 133) as long as nothing is in your way.
- **Moving past an obstacle:** If your movement is impeded by something in your current zone or the next one, it takes your action to move. Make an overcome roll to climb a wall, rush past a group of minions, or leap across rooftops. If you fail, you stay in your zone or the movement costs you something.
- **Moving as an action:** You can also use your action to move anywhere on the map, though the GM is within rights to set a difficulty, based on the range and the obstacles. A particularly epic movement can warrant a very high difficulty.

If something isn't risky or interesting enough to merit a roll, it isn't an impediment to movement. For instance, you don't need to use up your action to open an unlocked door—that's just a part of the movement.

Shooting lets you attack from a distance. Ranged attacks can target enemies in adjacent zones or further if the zones are clear enough. If there's a creature in the bedchamber upstairs and around the corner, you can't shoot it from the bottom of the stairs. Pay attention to the way the zones and situation aspects are set up when deciding what's fair game or not.

Rapport and Provoke attacks are typically long range, but might be reduced in nosy situations.

- For adding more advanced rules on zones, see *Environments* on page 383.

SITUATION ASPECTS

When setting the scene, the GM should think of interesting and dynamic environmental features that can constrain the action or provide opportunities to change the situation by using them. Three to five details are more than enough. Use these categories as a guide:

- **Tone, mood, or weather:** darkness, lightning, and howling winds
- **Impediments to movement:** connected by ladders, covered in slime, and filled with smoke
- **Cover and obstructions:** vehicles, pillars, and crates
- **Dangerous features:** crates of explosives, flaming braziers, and misfiring artifacts crackling with electricity
- **Usable objects:** improvised weapons, statues, or bookshelves to knock over, and doors to be barred

Anyone can invoke and compel these aspects, so remember to take them into account when you wrestle that minion to the ground amid the **Caustic Slime Covering Everything**.

More situation aspects can be written down as the scene plays out. If it makes sense that there are **Deep Shadows** in the recesses of the catacombs, go ahead and write that down when a player asks if there are any shadows they can use to hide. Other aspects come into play because characters use the create an advantage action. Things like **Flames Everywhere** don't just happen without character action. (Well. Usually.)

FREE INVOKES ON THE SCENE'S ASPECTS?

It's up to the GM to decide if a situation aspect arising from the scene's setup provides a free invoke to the players (or even to the NPCs). For example, free invokes might end up on the scene's aspects at the start due to preparations made in advance, or certain Pathfinder stunts. The GM can also decide to add free invokes to certain environmental aspects to encourage players to interact with them. See *Environments* on page 383 for more.

ZONE ASPECTS

Some situation aspects might apply to specific zones on the map and not others. That's okay—it can add some extra texture, opportunity, and challenge to the map that might be lacking otherwise.

TURN ORDER

Often, you won't need to know who is acting precisely when, but in contests and conflicts, turn order can become important. These scenes occur as a series of **exchanges**. Each character can take one **overcome**, **create an advantage**, or **attack** action, and can move once during an exchange. (Contests work slightly differently, see page 134.) Because **defending** is a reaction to someone else's action, characters can defend as many times as they need to during another characters' turns, so long as they can justify their ability to interfere based on what's already been established in the story.

At the start of a scene, the GM and players decide who goes first based on the situation, then the active player picks who goes next. The GM's characters are selected in the turn order just like the PCs, with the GM deciding who goes next after the NPCs have acted. After everyone has taken a turn, the last player picks who goes next at the start of the next exchange.

> Korat and Redtail stumbled across a small group of minions led by a lieutenant in a golden mask awakening an ancient war machine. Because the minions are focused on their work, the GM declares that the PCs go first in this conflict. The players decide that Korat acts first: she creates an advantage against the masked leader, **Distracted**, by running directly at them screaming. It's crude but effective. Korat's player decides that Redtail should go next to make the best us of the situation aspect. Redtail throws a dagger at the masked leader and immediately invokes **Distracted** to improve his attack. It's not enough to take out the lieutenant in one hit, but it is a one-two punch that leaves the leader reeling.
>
> Unfortunately, now that all the PCs in the scene have acted, Redtail has no choice but to pick one of the minions to go next. The player chooses the masked acolyte. The GM smiles because they know that once the lieutenant acts, she can have the minions act until the end of the round, at which point they can choose the masked leader to start the next exchange. The PCs may have gotten a good first hit in, but now the minions get to fight back.

Common names from online discussions for this method of determining turn order goes by: elective action order, and "popcorn," "handoff," or "Balsera Style" initiative, named after ***Fate Core*** author Leonard Balsera who planted the seed for the idea. You can learn more about this method and its strategies at **fate-srd.com/odds-ends/elective-action-order/**

Don't forget that players can also use their action to provide teamwork (see page 143).

CHALLENGES

Many of the difficulties your characters face can be handled with a single roll in the course of a scene—disarm the bomb, find the tome of ancient lore, or decode the cipher. But sometimes things are more fluid, more complicated, and it's just not as simple as finding the tome of eldritch lore. Why? Because the airship you're searching is careening through a radioactive jungle with a smashed rudder, and the ship's library is on fire—which is totally not your fault.

In complicated circumstances with no opposition, you'll want to use a **challenge**: a series of overcome actions that tackle a bigger issue. Challenges let the entire group work together in a scene, keeping things dynamic.

To set up a challenge, the GM considers the situation and picks several skills that can contribute to the group's success. Treat each action as a separate overcome roll. Teamwork actions are allowed but may introduce costs or complications, such as running out of time or other inefficiencies.

GMs, do your best to give each character in the scene an opportunity to contribute—aim for a number of skills equal to the number of characters involved. Downsize if you expect to have some of the characters pulled away or distracted by other priorities or if you want to make room for teamwork. For more difficult challenges, build the challenge with more needed actions than there are characters and adjust the difficulties of the actions.

After the rolls have been made, the GM evaluate each action's successes, failures, and costs as the scene progresses. The results could lead to another challenge, a contest, or even a conflict. A mix of successes and failures should allow the characters to move forward with a partial victory as they face new entangling complications.

Advanced options: It's possible to include a challenge inside of a conflict! See *Challenge or Contest Immunity* on page 350.

CONTESTS

A **contest** is when two or more sides are in direct opposition, but there isn't a conflict. This doesn't mean one side doesn't want to hurt the other, but rather hurting each other isn't the immediate goal. Contests may involve the group trying to escape a threat before it cuts off any chance of victory.

At the start of a contest, everyone involved declares their intent, what they hope to get out of it. If multiple PCs are involved, they can be on the same or different sides, depending on their goals—e.g., in a foot race, each character might be on their own side. In a contest, the PCs can't or aren't trying to harm the enemy. External threats (e.g., an erupting volcano, angry god) may attack any or all sides; those threats might also be a participant in the contest.

Contests take place over a series of exchanges. Each side takes one overcome action to achieve their goals during each exchange. Only one character on each side takes the **overcome** action in each exchange, but their allies can provide teamwork. The overcome action can be against passive difficulties—if the contestants face separate environmental challenges or compared against one another when they're in direct competition.

At the end of each exchange, compare the efforts of each side's action. The side with the highest effort marks a victory. If the victor succeeds with style—and no one else did—they mark two victories. The first one to three victories wins the contest. (You can always decide instead to run an extended contest requiring more victories, though we recommend no more than five.)

When there's a tie for the highest effort, no one marks a victory, and an unexpected twist happens. The GM will introduce a new situation aspect to reflect how the scene, terrain, or situation has changed.

In contests where a third party threat is trying to harm any of the contestants (e.g., a race across an active lava field), everyone on a side takes a hit when their contest roll is lower than the threat's attack roll or static difficulty rating. They take shifts equal to the shifts of failure. Just like in a conflict, if a character can't absorb all the shifts of a hit, they are taken out (see *Getting Taken Out* on page 140).

> As the Champions approach the final chamber in the ruins, they see what the artifact they've been sent to secure: the Frozen Flame Spear of Ed'ee. However, they see the lieutenant, Kaji-Sa, the Bloodmonger, emerging from the other end of the chamber from a side tunnel. She too sees the spear, and then sees you, and then runs to grab it for herself! It's now a race over the rubble-strewn floor to see who can claim it first, with Kaji-Sa having a momentary lead! The racing Championruns for it, with her teammates shouting encouragement and trying to prevent Kaji-Sa's minions from shooting your racer. Should the racers roll a tie and encounter a twist, the temple will provide obstacles of its own: the walkway may crumble, plodding ruin guardians might appear in your path, darts might shoot from the wall. Even the spear might not remain static, sinking into the floor or coming to life.

CREATING ADVANTAGES IN A CONTEST

Your side can try to create advantages during any exchange before making your overcome roll. If you're targeting another participant, they get to **defend**. If someone can interfere, they may oppose it with a defend roll as normal. Each participant may attempt to create an advantage and roll or provide a **teamwork bonus** (page 143). If you fail to create an advantage, you have a choice: either your side forfeits its overcome roll, or you may "succeed at a cost" (preserving your roll or teamwork bonus) by giving the other side a free invoke or advantage instead. If you at least tie, proceed as normal with your roll or bonus.

CONFLICTS

When the heroes get into a straight-up fight—whether with minions, a wild robeast, or ancient elemental—and you have a chance of winning, you have a **conflict**. In other words, use conflicts when one or more sides is using violence or coercion as means to an ends.

Setting up a conflict is more involved than setting up contests or challenges. Here are the steps:

- Set the scene. Describe the environment, create situation aspects and zones, and establish the participants—what side they're on and their goals.
- Determine the turn order (see *Turn Order* on page 133)
- Start the first exchange:
  - On your turn, take an action and then resolve it. Pick the next character to act.
  - On other people's turns, defend or respond to their actions as necessary.
  - At the end of everyone's turn, start again with a new exchange.
- Continue taking exchanges until the conflict is over (i.e., when everyone on one of the sides has conceded or been taken out.)
- Clear Stress



Setting Goals: At the beginning of a conflict, be sure to set the goals of each side: what is this side's main objective? Afterward, consider what secondary and tertiary goals might be. If the NPC opponent is mysterious, their objectives may be unknown: instead, the GM should set up what the champions perceive the stakes (e.g., It looks like the attackers want to kill or capture the champions!)

> The champions are ambushed by Sco-dak the Crystalchemist's minions; their chief objective is a) to get out alive for they are cowardly, b) to steal the data crystal, and c) to capture or kill the champions. The champions know how many innocents will die if the crystal is taken: they prioritize a) keeping the crystal safe above all, b) then saving their own lives, and c) thirdly, capturing a minion for questioning.

A conflict may consist of the Champions using nonviolent persuasion, while the enemy uses violence and coercion, resulting in very different stakes.

Conflicts may seem the most straightforward—after all, the history of roleplaying games is built on combat simulators. But keep in mind a key part of their description: the characters involved are both able to harm each other. If it's one-sided—say you're trying to punch a living mountain—there's no chance you can hurt it. That's not a conflict. That's a contest, probably where the PCs are trying to escape or find the means to fight back.

Conflicts can be physical or mental. Physical conflicts can be shoot-outs, sword fights, or ramming Tekno-krakens with frigates. Mental conflicts include arguments with loved ones, interrogations, and telepathic assaults upon the mind.

TAKING HARM

When an attack is successful, the defender must absorb the hit, which are shifts equal to the difference between the attack's and defense's efforts.

You can absorb shifts of a hit by marking stress boxes and taking consequences. If you can't or don't absorb all of the shifts, you are taken out (page 140)—you're removed from the scene, and the attacker decides how it plays out.

> A series of regrettable decisions has put Princess Kraq in a fighting arena, confronting a Necrunicorn that very much wants to eat her. The undead unicorn-bot attacks, lunging with its sharp horn; this attack uses Fair (+2) Fight. The GM rolls ■■+, bringing the effort up to Great (+4). Kraq tries to leap out of the way with her Good (+3) Athletics but rolls ■■−, taking her effort down to Fair (+2). Because the Necrunicorn's attack effort was two steps higher than Kraq's defense effort, Kraq must absorb two shifts. She marks the first two of her three physical stress boxes; already the fight is proving dangerous.

STRESS

Simply put, **stress** is plot armor. It's a resource used to keep your character up and in the fight when their foes hit them. When you mark stress boxes to absorb a hit, you're saying things like, "I got scratched," "That just missed me," or "Whoa, that knocked the wind out of me, but I'm okay." That said, it's a limited resource—most characters only have three boxes for physical stress and three boxes for mental stress, though characters with high Will or Physique have more.

You'll find two stress tracks on your character sheet, one for physical harm and mental harm. When you take a hit, you can mark empty stress boxes of the appropriate type to absorb it and stay in the fight. Each stress box you mark absorbs one shift. You can mark multiple stress boxes if you need to.

The boxes are binary—they're either empty and can be used or they're full and can't. That's okay, though. You'll clear the stress track as soon as you make it through the scene—provided the robeasts don't eat you first.

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are new aspects you write on your character sheet when your character takes a hit, representing the real harm and injury your character suffers.

When you take a consequence to absorb a hit, write an aspect in an empty consequence slot that describes what harm befalls your character. Use the severity of the consequence as a guide: If a Woolly T-Rex bit you, a mild consequence might be **Nasty Bite**, but a moderate consequence could be **Bite That Won't Stop Bleeding**, and a severe consequence might be **Crippled Leg** (see below for more advice).

While stress turns a hit into a near miss, taking a consequence means you got hit hard. Why would you take a consequence? Because sometimes stress isn't enough. Remember, you have to absorb all the shifts from a hit to stay in the fight. You only have so many stress boxes. The good news is that consequences can take pretty big hits.

Each character starts with three consequence slots—mild, moderate, and severe. Taking a minor consequence absorbs two shifts, a moderate one absorbs four shifts, and a severe one absorbs six shifts. Unlike other aspects, you can't take more consequences than you have slots.

So, if you take a big five-shift hit, you can absorb the whole thing with a single stress box and a moderate consequence. That's a lot more efficient than spending five of your stress boxes.

The downside to consequences is that they are aspects, which are always true (page 117). So if you've got **Gut Shot**, your character has taken a serious wound to their stomach! That will mean you can't do things a gut-shot person can't do (like run fast). If things get particularly complicated due to this, you might even face a compel on your consequence, too. And, just like the aspects, you make when you create an advantage, the character that created the consequence—that is, whoever shot you—gets one free invoke on that consequence. Ouch!

> Princess Kraq is still battling the Necrunicorn. It slashes at her, this time rolling a ■■+2, adding its Fair (+2) Fight, and invokes its **Hungry for Flesh** aspect for an additional +2, adding up to a devastating Fantastic (+6) blow. Kraq's −−■■, added to her Good (+3) Athletics, gives her a merely Average (+1) defense; that's five shifts she needs to absorb. She chooses to take a moderate consequence. Her player and the GM decide that the Necrunicorn gave Kraq a **Gaping Chest Wound**. This consequence absorbs four shifts, leaving one, which Kraq absorbs with her last remaining stress box.
>
> Unlike stress, a consequence doesn't automatically go away at the end of a scene; it requires both a recovery roll and a set length of time (see *Ending a Conflict* on page 142.)

NAMING A CONSEQUENCE

Here are some guidelines for choosing what to name a consequence:

Mild consequences don't require immediate medical attention. They hurt, and they may present an inconvenience, but they aren't going to force you into a lot of bed rest. On the mental side, mild consequences express things like small social gaffes or changes in your surface emotions. Examples: **Black Eye, Bruised Hand, Winded, Flustered, Cranky, Drunk, Temporarily Blinded.**

Moderate consequences represent fairly serious impairments that require dedicated effort toward recovery (including medical attention). On the mental side, they express things like damage to your reputation or emotional problems that you can't just shrug off with an apology and a good night's sleep. Examples: **Deep Cut, First Degree Burn, Exhausted, Terrified.**

Severe consequences go straight to the emergency room (or whatever the equivalent is in Umdaar)—they're extremely nasty and prevent you from doing a lot of things, and will lay you out for a while. On the mental side, they express things like serious trauma or relationship-changing harm. Examples: **Second-Degree Burn, Compound Fracture, Guts Hanging Out, Crippling Shame, Trauma-Induced Phobia.**

GETTING TAKEN OUT

If you can't absorb all the shifts of a hit with stress and consequences, you're taken out.

Getting taken out is bad. Whoever took you out decides what happens. Given dangerous situations and powerful enemies, this could mean you're dead, but that's not the only possibility. The outcome must be in keeping with the scope and scale of the conflict at hand—you won't literally die of shame if you lose an argument—but changes to your character sheet (and more) are possible. The outcome should also fit within the boundaries your group has established—if your group feels that characters should never get killed without the player's consent, that's perfectly valid.

But even when death is on the table (it's best to be clear about that before a roll), GMs should remember that it's usually a boring result. A PC that's been taken out could be lost, kidnapped, imperiled, be forced to take consequences... the list goes on. A character's death means someone has to make a new character and bring them into the story, but a fate worse than death is limited only by your imagination.

DOWN WITH DEATH!

Removing death as a consequence is common for more kid-friendly settings, such as when using the *Saturday Morning Cartoon Dial* (see page 424). Cartoonish villains LOVE capturing the heroes alive.

Follow the fiction when describing how someone—or something—is taken out. Did a barrage of laser beams take out a skeledrone? It might be pulverized, collapsing into a pile of broken circuits and bone dust. Were you hurled from a hovertank as it crossed the Amethyst Bridge? You disappear over the edge and plummet into the Gemstone Canyon below. Keep death in mind when discussing the terms of being taken out, but often it's just as interesting to cheat death.

> The Necrunicorn gets in a very lucky hit, dealing a Legendary (+8) attack against Kraq's Poor (-1) defense. By this point in the conflict, all of Kraq's stress boxes are full, as is her moderate consequence slot. Even if she were to take a mild and a severe consequence at once, absorbing eight shifts, it wouldn't be enough. As a result, Kraq is taken out. The Necrunicorn gets to decide her fate. The GM would be within their rights to have the Necrunicorn kill Kraq then and there... but getting killed isn't the most interesting result.
>
> Instead, the GM declares that Kraq survives; she is knocked out, but before the Necrunicorn can finish her, the arena guards drag her to safety. "She may yet be of use to us..." says the Master from her box seat. "Throw her in the Hyperdungeon!" Kraq will wake up, consequences intact, lost and very fragile in the pitch-dark catacombs beneath the arena, and chained to the wall. Because she was taken out, Kraq has no choice but to accept the terms laid before her.

CONCEDING

So how do you keep from dying horribly—or worse? You can interrupt any action in a conflict to concede as long as the dice haven't hit the table yet. Just give in. Tell everyone that you're done, that you can't keep going. Your character loses and exits the conflict, but you gain a fate point plus an extra one for each consequence they took in the current conflict.

Also, concession means you declare the terms of your loss and how you exit the conflict. You can escape the minions and live to fight another day. It is a loss, though. You'll have to give your foe something they want. You can't concede and describe how you heroically save the day—that's not on the table anymore.

Conceding is a powerful tool. You can concede to escape with an action plan for the next fight, a clue as to where to go, or some advantage going forward. You just can't win this fight.

You must concede before your opponent rolls the dice. You can't wait to see the outcome of the dice and concede when it's obvious you can't win—that's poor form. (Some stunts allow this as an exception.)

Some negotiation is expected here. Look for a solution that works for everyone at the table. If the opposition isn't on board with your concession terms, they can push for rewording those terms or ask that you sacrifice something different or extra. Because a concession is still a loss for you, that does mean the other side should gain at least part of their goal.

The more significant the cost you pay, the greater the benefit your side should receive as part of the concession—if certain doom is about to befall the entire group, one member choosing to concede as a heroic (and potentially fatal) last stand could mean everyone else is spared!

Tip: Conceding is also a really good way to streamline scenes. If the villains in a minor conflict have already lost more than half of their forces, and every Championhas got a chance to do something cool, it makes sense to have the minions concede and run away. No sense dragging out combat for another twenty minutes!

> The ambushing minions and the champions fight over a data crystal.
>
> If the ambushers concede, they value their own lives first and the data crystal second. Ergo the GM can pick:
>
> - If they have the crystal before they concede, they will likely opt to escape scot-free (taking any downed minions with them), but leave the crystal behind.
> - If they don't have the crystal, they have to make a different concession: maybe they leave their wounded behind to be captured.

If the champions are forced to concede, they get to pick a concession:

- If the champions hold the data crystal but concede, they get to choose to escape (but leave the crystal behind) or keep the crystal safe (but at the cost of being captured). The GM might even suggest a third option—maybe the crystal breaks in half, and each side escapes with half of the intel.
- If the champions don't have the crystal, then the ambushers definitely get the crystal, while the heroes escape without harm or capture. However, they get some small concession. For example, they put a tracker on one of the ambushers, made a partial back-up of the crystal first, or recognized one of the ambushers.

ENDING A CONFLICT

A conflict draws to a close when everyone on one side has either conceded or been taken out. At the end of a conflict, any players who concede collect their fate points for the concession (page 141). The GM also pays out fate points owed to players for hostile invokes (page 121) that happened during the conflict.

RECOVERING FROM CONFLICTS

At the end of each scene, every character clears their stress boxes. Consequences take more time and effort to clear: a consequence needs two things to recover, a successful overcome action, and a set length of time.

Overcome Roll: The person treating you will need to succeed at an overcome action with an appropriate skill to start the recovery process. Physical injuries typically are addressed using medical knowledge via Lore while mental consequences are healed with Empathy. This overcome action faces difficulty equal to the severity of the consequence: Fair (+2) for a mild consequence, Great (+4) for moderate, and Fantastic (+6) for severe. These difficulties increase by two when you're trying to treat yourself (it's easier to have someone else do that).

If you succeed this roll, rewrite the consequence to indicate that it is **In Recovery**. For instance, a **Broken Arm** may be rewritten as **Arm in a Splint**.

Length of Time: After a consequence is in recovery, it takes time to clear the completely consequence.

- **Mild** consequences take one full scene after treatment to clear, or end of the session (whichever comes first).
- **Moderate** consequences last longer, taking a full session after treatment to clear.
- **Severe** consequences only clear when you reach a major milestone (page 98) after treatment.

TEAMWORK

Characters can help each other out on actions. One way to do that is by creating advantages that another Champion can invoke. See *Create an Advantage* on page 110. The other method is by combining skills, for when you are all putting the same kind of effort into an action (like using Crafts together to repair a Glowbot).

When you combine skills, figure out who has the highest skill level among the participants. Each other participant who has at least an Average (+1) in the same skill adds a +1 to the highest person's skill level, and then only the lead character rolls. So if you have three helpers and you're the highest, you roll your skill level with a +3 bonus.

If you fail a roll to combine skills, all of the participants share in the potential costs—whatever complication affects one character affects all of them, or everyone has to take consequences. Alternatively, you can impose a cost that affects all the characters the same.

> After an earthquake, Stigar is trapped under fallen rubble. Qwora, Redtail, and Korat are all trying to rescue him, by levering the boulder that is pinning him down. Redtail has the highest Physique, at Great (+4), Quora has Good (+3), and Redtail has Average (+1), so they each contribute +1. Korat rolls the contest on behalf of everyone at Fantastic (+6).

You may also invoke an aspect to add a bonus to someone else's roll outside of your turn. For example, you can spend a fate point and invoke any appropriate aspect on any character to help a teammate on their roll (although, if you're somehow able to tie it into your PC being supportive, it's even more fun).

> Crystal's champion, the gruff fighter Stigar, attempts to be diplomatic and rolls terribly; they are low on fate points, but tablemate Alex says, "I'll help; I pay a fate point and invoke Stigar's relationship aspect, **Sibling-bond with Prince Pashawn**. Pashawn is a true diplomat, and no doubt Stigar picked up at least one trick from his blood-sibling, and gets the re-roll.

THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

This chapter offers advice for portraying and populating the world of Umdaar. Though it's primarily GM-focused, players may find useful details to help create their Champions and shape the world they care about.

THE DEMIURGE'S LEGACY

We may never know what the planet Umdaar looked like before the Demiurge. We may not know why they shaped the planet and its life-forms and whether their objective was ever reached. All we know is their powers were staggering, based on the potent artifacts and advanced ruins that they left behind.

Colossal Demiurge ruins dot the landscape all across Umdaar. Some have become the capitals of kingdoms in the Freelands and fortresses in the Dread Domains.

There are many more ruins buried deep in the Wildernexuses, surrounded by wildlife and the scars of ancient war machines. Some float in the sky, seemingly frozen in time or traveling above the planet's surface like storm clouds.

The contents of these distant ruins are a mystery, but this can also be said for any Demiurge structure. Who knows what truths may be revealed if the right word is said on the right day?

THE LOOMING THREAT

Things are bad now. The Masters control most of the planet and rule through manipulation and brute force. Their hold seems unshakeable.

But things are about to get worse. Breakthroughs in Replitech and artifact research have made the Masters' arsenals more powerful than ever. They've started encroaching on Freeland kingdoms that were once thought unconquerable, and scouring Wildernexus territories for resources. The Masters are starting conflicts with each other, clashing over border towns with their innocent subjects caught in the middle.

The refugee camps grow more crowded every day and the thunder of the Masters' war machines grows closer. Can you hold out, or will the lingering embers of rebellion be snuffed out for good?



TECHNOLOGY

In many science fiction stories, technology is used in a logical, futuristic way. In Planetary Romance stories, future technology is used to parallel a technological level from the past. For example, in the ***John Carter of Mars*** series, the Martians possess advanced radium pistols and rifles, but they use them alongside sabers, not unlike combat in the Napoleonic War.

To think about what technology feels right, we use the No Jam Today rule, inspired by a line from Lewis Carroll, "The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday, but never jam today." Thus, technology should parallel a technology from the past or the future, but not the present.

Here are some examples:

- **Good—Yesterday:** a piece of technology that's ancient (e.g., a pot over a stove) or functions identically to an ancient tech (i.e., a technopot that hovers over a fireplace).
- **Good—Tomorrow:** technology that's far beyond what we have now (e.g., a replicator that produces any hot drink in seconds).
- **Bad—Today:** technology that parallels something we, as players, use in everyday life (e.g., an electric coffee maker). This feels strangely out of place in a fantasy world and takes us out of the immersive experience.

Exceptions can be made, of course. For example, both ***She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*** and ***Zelda: Breath of the Wild*** feature lead characters who walk around with what are effectively tablet computers. However, these are treated as rare and wondrous items used to hack ancient tech. Something as mundane as "a smart tablet with apps and games" feels less extraordinary and too recognizable.

You can customize how tech is presented in your setting based on the Champions. For example:

- If there's a Runekeeper in the banner, present technology as distant, mysterious, and sacred.
- If there's an Artihacker, use terms that make it feel more approachable like "mainframe" and "processor" even if they're only approximations of Demiurge technology.
- Use tech to showcase underused skills. For example, if a character has a high Drive skill, you may wish to have a few adventures featuring cyborg beetle chases or glowbot autocycles that zip along hard-light highways.

Another idea to consider is how Demiurge technology can be so advanced that we would barely recognize it. Perhaps they've merged where electronics and biology meet, and have half-organic fungus-based myco-mputers; over the millennia, they've grown unchecked and are full of bugs (literally).



Here are a few random tech mash-ups to consider:

- Antimatter Catapults
- Skyships
- Plasma Swords
- Laser Crossbows
- Sonic Blunderbusses
- Giant Mech Suits of Armor
- Hover Chariots (optional: pulled by robot pegasi)
- Robot Siege Towers
- Memory Crystals
- Armadillo Multi-Tool
- Synthetifur Garb

For more on using Replitech see *Creating Artifacts* on page 341.

VALUED MATERIALS

Here are some items that are necessary yet often scarce on Umdaar.

Food and Shelter: Food is always important. Large cattle always fetch a price. Similarly, ways to preserve food are valued, such as salt and spices. In certain dry areas, fresh water can also be a valuable commodity. Access to sturdy shelter is often vital to survival.

Fuel: Most commoners manage with cheap fuel sources, like wood, peat, and oil. Masters use all of the above and go through great amounts of crude oil and **Smogstone**. It also includes the radioactive **Glowstone**, as well as **Electrocite** which has no innate power but can store energy as a battery.

Mech Parts: Any material that can be used to help repair artifacts or build Replitech is valuable, such as non-degraded scrap, rust-free steel, copper and gold ingots, and, rarest of all, **Astrolanium** metal. Similarly prized are precious stones such as rubies, emeralds, and diamonds used in lasers and drills.

Luxury Items: Years of struggle have made the Umdaarians relatively practical. Fancy pigments and pearls are pretty but only prized by the most hedonistic of Masters. They can also be valued by the nobles of the Freelands which is sometimes a sign of their growing decadence. The most valued materials are ones that can be used in both jewelry and machines, such as gold (a great conductor), platinum (used in skycrafts), and gems (also useful in lasers and drills).

SMOGSTONE

Smogstone is a burnable resource dug out of the ground. Masters typically burn it by the cartload in their giant furnaces and war machines. It's very versatile: it can be concentrated to fit into small Replitech guns, as a propellant in jet-packs, or whatever the story needs. However, it causes a heavy amount of pollution and thus is used only sparingly outside the Dread Domains.

Smogstone is one solution to the old quandary, "How do I give the villains cool gear that the heroes won't use after?" With smogstone-powered devices, the players can use the heavily toxic machine, but at a price. The bigger the device, the greater the pollution: this can upset their allies (in the Freelands), poison the ecosystem (in the Wildernexus), or make them easier to detect (in the Dread Domains). By all means, let them keep small devices (like a Replitech rifle, or a small robot-dog) without guilt. If they capture a hovertank and want to keep using it in further adventures, they'll have to go on a quest for a cleaner energy source to fuel it, or risk making their allies mad. And when the Smogstone supplies run low, they'll have to head back into the Dread Domains to refuel.

ASTROLANIUM

A metal alloy made by the Demiurge, Astrolanium is stronger than steel but half the weight. It was their favorite metal when creating machines, Glowbots, and even ruins. The secret to making it is lost to time. Another mystery is the variance of its strength: some Astrolanium ruins have endured for millennia free of rust, while others are corroded and weakened. Some Demiurge walls can be cut with power tools (e.g., sharp Astrolanium blades, lasers, diamond drills), while other forms of Astrolanium seem to be impervious to any blade. The varying "toughness" of Astrolanium means you don't have to be consistent; you can have the players face a breakable Astrolanium machine in one part of a dungeon while locking them in an un-cuttable Astrolanium cell in another.

CURRENCY

You can play pretty fast and loose with currency on Umdaar and make it your own. However, here are a few suggestions to consider when setting difficulty for Resources rolls or when describing commerce. The Valued Materials section above lists items people often trade for.

- **Small Currency:** A person may buy something mundane like food or a day's rent with steel coins, quartz crystals, or scrap pieces of broken tech.
- **Medium Currency:** A person may buy something uncommon like a horse or hire a mercenary with silver coins, small emeralds, Astrolanium metal, or a Replitech item.
- **Rare Currency:** A person may bribe a powerful person or buy a large house with gold coins, diamonds, Electrocite crystals, or a minor artifact (e.g., a heater; an astrolabe; a multi-tool; a personal forcefield).
- **Ultra Rare Currency:** A ruin's treasure chamber or a Master's fortress might contain heaps of the rare currency items—Demiurge manuscripts, or a major artifact. Think legendary weapons, a functioning Demiurge rune-tablet, a vehicle, or a robot steed.
- **Favors:** ***Umdaar*** is based around members of a global community helping each other—lots of adventures start with an old friend calling in a favor, or asking the party for a new favor. You can waive some costs, citing that the NPCs already owed them a favor. Better still, reward players who offer favors as currency, as it ties them to the community (and gives the GM fodder for future adventures!)

SUPPOSE PCS GAIN MONEY, OR GO INTO DEBT?

In that case, you can use a simple aspect to remind yourself such as **Bag of Emeralds** or **Owe Big Debt to Steeleye Sonia**, with invokes that can be added or removed once it has been spent or paid. Alternatively, use a consequence for the character or party: however, this cannot be recovered with Lore or Empathy, but with an action that gains them money and a Resources roll.

KEEPING TRACK OF CURRENCY

With Fate, don't worry too much about tracking currency down to the penny. When in doubt:

- **Small currency:** You'll always have small currency on you unless you were robbed, or have a negative aspect preventing you, like **YOUR MONEY'S NO GOOD HERE.**
- **Medium Currency:** Ask the players to make a Resources roll. The higher something is worth, the higher the difficulty—e.g., Hiring a mercenary for an adventure might be Great (+4) difficulty; a ransom on a captured Glowbot NPC might be a Superb (+5) difficulty.
- **Rare and Ultra-Rare Costs:** Characters will generally *not* be able to pay rare and ultra-rare costs unless they recently received rare treasure from an adventure, or they're willing to trade in their artifacts (e.g., forfeit their Laser-bow artifact, losing the bow and their corresponding stunt). A Champion with incredible wealth, such as a dignitary with financial support of a whole kingdom, can sometimes afford rare and ultra-rare purchases. However, this kind of decadence always comes at a cost. Have the PC make a Resources overcome roll versus a set difficulty. If they succeed, the cost is minor (e.g., **MY MOTHER THE QUEEN WILL BE FURIOUS**); if they fail, they can choose to succeed, but at a very major cost (e.g., the citizens will **RIOT IN THE STREETS**).

LANGUAGE

Most of the denizens of Umdaar speak the same language through voice and/or signed language. However, if the Champions encounter a language they don't recognize, they can use their skills to attempt to communicate:

- Contacts helps with understanding and communication, and reading basic, modern signage (ex. a road sign).
- Lore helps with understanding writing (ancient or modern).
- Empathy helps with communicating with speakers who desire to be understood.

The other predominant language is **Demiurge Tongue**, the ancient language of the Demiurge themselves; the current knowledge of this is fragmented, and the language is typically only spoken during spells and rituals. Some ruin AIs speak only Demiurge Tongue, while some speak the modern language, and some cannot communicate at all. Demiurge Tongue is understood and spoken with Lore.

THE FREELANDS

This section covers common themes for running a Freelands adventure, known Freelands you can use in your game, and NPCs the Champions might encounter.

The Freelands are the few nations on the continent that struggle to stay free of the Masters' reign—a struggle that grows harder with each passing day.

In the past, many have tried to unite the Freeland nations to face the Masters' threat as a combined force, but those efforts didn't succeed. Whether it was because the leaders of such endeavors were inadequate or the Masters found a way to sabotage these failed coalitions is unclear. Perhaps the peoples of Umdaar are better off fighting as distinct groups with a wide array of strategies and resources, keeping the Masters busy at all times attacking from different fronts and following different tactics.

THEMES AND TOUCHSTONES

Themes: high fantasy; friendship; peaceful inside, violent outside; politics; intrigue; morality and ethics

Touchstones: ***He-Man; She-Ra & the Princesses of Power (2018); Steven Universe; Legend of Korra; King Arthur and the Knights of Justice; How a Realist Hero Rebuilt the Kingdom***

KNOWN FREELANDS

Here are some of these communities, along with their current leaders and whatever characteristics their members share.

- The Gale Gliders
- The Wood Watchers
- The Tsunami Surfers
- The Burrow Builders
- The Five Fingers

For tips on creating your own Communities, see page 320 in the *Umdaar Toolkit*.

THE GALE GLIDERS

Location: Flying Citadels of Nimbusinia
Current Leader: Cirras, First Wing of the Aviators
Community's Main Value: Individual Freedom At All Costs
Size: Medium (Small Citadels Flying in Formation)
Current Issue: Our Flying Tech & Magic Are Working Erratically
Impending Issue: Our Numbers Are Dwindling

Since the beginning of the conflict against the Masters, the peoples of Umdaar have looked to the skies for help. In the past, these flying bioforms lived in the highest peaks of the Purple Mountains; but when their lairs and underground cities became compromised, they had to abandon them. To survive—and avoid further sabotage in the future—the Aviators built cities with equal measures of technology and magic.

Thus were the Flying Citadels of Nimbusinia born.

Each Flying Citadel has distinctive features and amalgamations of cultures, but they share a couple of common characteristics. First, they are always on the move—they fly together in formation as they have learned to fight and protect one another in this way. Second, they keep their locations hidden through magical and technological means.

On the other hand, to live in a Flying Citadel it is necessary for a citizen to have personal means of flying—biological, magical, or technological. Whether by coincidence or by their freedom of movement, the Aviators gather in groups called Flocks.

Members of the Flocks choose representatives from among their own through various means. Those leaders, in turn, gather in a Parliament that makes decisions about the citadel's inhabitants only when forced. These Parliament meetings are often long and tedious affairs, with leaders voting and discussing even the very means of making decisions, wasting an obscene amount of time.

Despite this lack of effective organization, the Aviators and their Flocks are reliable fighters in the struggle against the Masters. Their preferred tactic of hit and fly away is particularly useful when in need of a colorful distraction and when one needs to steal a specific piece or object that would be otherwise beyond the reach of other freedom fighters.

Cirras, First Wing of the Aviators (She/Her)

Boss: Great (+4)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Field Commander and Executive Avianoid

Trouble: As Subtle As A Punch To The Face

Other Aspects: Faster Than Sight; Hands Tied By The Bureaucrats

SKILLS

Great (+4): Notice

Good (+3): Will, Athletics

Fair (+2): Empathy, Contacts, Shoot

Average (+1): Everything else

STUNTS

Wings (Athletics): Cirras has wings that let her glide through the air. In safe circumstances, she may ignore obstacles that she can simply fly over. When it's dangerous, Cirras gains +2 to Athletics to overcome such obstacles.

Deadly Dive: If not obstructed by physical obstructions or by red tape prohibiting lethal force, Cirras can make physical attacks with Athletics. If the attack succeeds, Cirras gains a Weapon rating +2 and may immediately move up a zone.

Fly-Over: Whenever successfully overcoming by flying out of a zone with an object or enemy in her path, Cirras may choose to deal one stress to all opponents in the zone she left, or to bring a willing human-sized or smaller ally with her to the new zone.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[4] **Moderate:**

THE WOOD WATCHERS

Location: Evergreen Forest of Melinor
Current Leader: Tedra, The Speaking Bristlecone Pine
Community's Main Value: The Natural Order Is Better Than Any Invention
Size: Big (A Massive, Ever Expanding Forestland)
Current Issue: Melinor Is Expanding Too Much, Encroaching on Other Freelands
Impending Issue: When Tedra Dies, Who Will Lead Us?; Omen of the Forest King

There are many forests and woodlands in Umdaar, but it is said that all are the offspring and connected in one great network. That network is usually referred to as the Evergreen Forest, also known as Melinor.

A variety of bioforms inhabit the Evergreen Forest. Yet, they all share the same distinguishing characteristic: a part of their bodies is tree-like: bark for skin, twigs instead of eyebrows, fingers that end in sharp thorns, etc.

The bioforms who inhabit Melinor acquire these features after entering what is commonly known as the Woodland Pact. Through this pact, the bioform swears allegiance to the Evergreen Forest. In exchange for their fealty, the forest blesses them with a life as long as that of the woodland itself. Thanks to this, these bioforms are effectively immortal although the older they are, the more they depend on the forest's life force to keep on living and, as such, the more tree-like they become.

The oldest being in Melinor is Tedra, once a bioform that now has the shape of an elder bristlecone pine whose only non-treeish feature is their ability to speak with a humanoid voice. Since all bioforms in the forest respect the wisdom of old age, Tedra is their *de facto* leader and guide. In most cases, however, the Watchers prefer to leave most decisions to the oldest bioform among them, trusting that their wisdom is sufficient enough to guide them to the right path.

Tedra, The Speaking Bristlecone Pine [They/Them]

Boss: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Ancient Sentient Tree and Leader

Trouble: Alien Vision and Alien Mind

Other Aspects: Wisdom of A Thousand Years; Slow and Steady; Love of the Forest and Watchers in my Roots

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Lore

Great (+4): Will, Physique

Good (+3): Anything involving native Flora and Fauna

Fair (+2): Anything else mental except Empathy

STUNTS

Deep Thinker: If someone asks Tedra a question that could be answered with Lore, and they wait for an entire session for the answer, Tedra gains +2 to Lore when creating an advantage or overcoming to discover the answer.

Wise Riddles: Once per adventure, Tedra may impart their "wisdom" to a group of players; it will come across as a string of nonsense words. That group gains a wisdom "boost." They may spend that boost to have the nonsense words suddenly make sense during that adventure, giving them wisdom. The GM decides how to interpret this—e.g., giving a hint, answering a yes or no question, discovering a hidden aspect.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1

Mental 1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**

4 **Moderate:**

THE TSUNAMI SURFERS

Location: Fathomless Depths of Aqueront
Current Leader: Rodokar, The Great Wave Caller
Community's Main Value: Better To Die Fighting Than To Live In Chains
Size: Medium (One Underwater Freeland)
Current Issue: Our People are Disappearing
Impending Issue: The Great Sea Serpent's Ascent

Although the surface and skies hold many wonders and terrors to behold, the depths of Zeradel, "The Great Sea"', have nothing to envy either of those.

Since time immemorial, the Fathomless Depths of Aqueront have been inhabited by all manner of sea creatures, as well as bioforms who can breathe underwater. Once upon a time, these bioforms were free spirits who cared little for surface-dwellers and their problems. They were content freely moving from place to place under the waves, in large and pacific groups who had no interest in struggles of any kind, least of all those of air-breathers.

Nowadays, however, the Aquerontians have had to abandon their peaceful but isolationist ways to do their part in the struggle against the tyrannical reign of the Masters. They have had a hard time adapting to these new conditions. As a result, their leadership has changed from a conservative, elder-led coalition to a single progressive leader, Rodokar, who has united all the underwater peoples under his banner.

Rodokar has given the Aquerontians a new perspective and awakened their dormant fighting spirit. Those who follow him into battle are usually young people with a burning desire to overthrow the Masters and restore freedom to all of Umdaar. As a result, now no shore outpost nor open sea is safe for the tyrants.

Rodokar, The Great Wave Caller (He/Him)

Boss: Great (+4)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Rebellious Young Squidman

Trouble: Lacks Experience

Other Aspects: A Helper by Nature; Playing It Safe Is For Land-Dwellers

SKILLS

Great (+4): Fight

Good (+3): Physique, Athletics

Fair (+2): Rapport, Empathy, Investigate

Average (+1): Everything else

STUNTS

Tidewater Escort: Rodokar can arrange an escort to any of his allies. When a friendly group is traveling to a location connected by water to Aqueront, he may have them start with an aspect with a free invoke related to one of the following: getting there quickly or getting there safely. If Rodokar is part of the escort himself, he will always pick quickly!

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1

Mental 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**

4 **Moderate:**

THE BURROW BUILDERS

Location: The Underground City-Hub of Kruxafar
Current Leader: Dwimbor, The Master Tunneler
Community's Main Value: The Underground Has Everything You Need
Size: Small (The Underground City-Hub of Kruxafar)
Current Issue: Our Burrows and Tunnels Are Collapsing For Unknown Reasons
Impending Issue: The Above-Dwellers Want What We Have

For the Burrow Builders, nothing above is more precious than what they have underground; they call it "The Place Where All Things Are."

A variety of beings inhabits the Underground—some were born here, while others settled here for their own reasons. Some return to the surface from time to time, but the vast majority never see the suns or moons, except through the rare openings in their rocky sky that reach so high.

Unbeknownst to most other people on the planet, the Burrow Builders have a massive network of tunnels that traverse most of the world—even underwater!—connecting places in ways that are only known to them. They have done so thanks to a marvelous form of magitech called "Terra Song."

Through a combination of mystical knowledge and some specially-designed reverberators, the Terra-singers can influence rock, sand, and stone to move out of the way and allow them to create pathways beneath the surface.

This ability is more efficient than any form of magic or technology known on Umdaar. According to the Builders' credo, it is the only respectful way of interacting with the planet. To prove their point, they offer as an example how all other underground constructions suffer and collapse after a time, whereas theirs remain untouched since they were first sung, in some cases centuries ago.

Dwimbor, The Master Tunneler (She/They)

Boss: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Sincere Snakeperson Leader of Kruxafar Central

Trouble: Wants to Lead, Not to Follow

Other Aspects: Knowledgeable as the Roots of Terra; Terra Elementalist

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Crafts

Great (+4): Will, Lore

Good (+3): Resources, Physique, Contacts

Fair (+2): Anything else except Athletics

STUNT

Earth, Obey My Song!: Dwimbor may use their voice to command the rocks. They may use Crafts to build tunnels or make structures or objects out of dirt and rock. Does not affect Astrolanium metal.

Seismo-Reverberator: If a Terra-singer has a Seismo-Reverberator and an abundance of dirt/rocks, they may use Crafts as if it were Shoot to attack.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1

Mental 1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**

4 **Moderate:**

THE FIVE FINGERS

Location: The Delta that forms Stormsurge River
Current Leader: The Council of Five
Community's Main Value: Everyone Must Row for Our Ships to Sail
Size: Medium(Our Fingers Sift Through Fertile Soil)
Current Issue: The Price of Freedom
Impending Issue: The Emissary of the Master Arrives Soon

The people of the Five Fingers are sailors who settled in a fertile delta that was initially planned to be a temporary refuge, but has become their home. The Five Fingers have an uneasy truce with the nearby Masters, who collect a "River Tax" from them in the form of fish, crop harvests, and the runoff of Astrolanium that comes from Purple Mountain. So long as the Fingers pay, they are left in peace; however the tax seems to keep increasing, and many say freedom that's bought isn't any freedom at all.

The Fingers are led by a Council of Five, one representative from each tributary that feeds the delta. The council is divided on what course to take. Some wish to continue the status quo, others want to refuse to pay the tax and prepare for a fight. And others want to return to their ships and sail away from this fertile land that seduced them all into complacency.

The Council of Five

Boss: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Five Fingers Together Make a Fist

Trouble: Each Knows What Is Best

Other Aspects: Magar, the Wise (they/them); Willow, the Swift(he/him); Worta, the Strong (she/he); Turing, the Bold (she/her); Bosun, the Bland (they/them)

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Resources

Great (+4): Drive (sail), Lore

Good (+3): Notice, Fight, Contacts

Fair (+2): Anything else (at least one of them is Fair)

STUNT

Sail Away: When on water, the Council gains +2 to Drive when Overcoming, Creating and Advantage or Defending during a chase.

United we are Victorious: If all Five members of the Council are united in an action, they gain +5 on the roll, but then take a Consequence that reflects how they fall back into bickering, threatening their unity.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1

Mental 1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**

4 **Moderate:**

RUNNING A DIGNITARY GAME

Consider the following when creating a Dignitary campaign:

- More so than other Banners, Dignitaries may become particularly invested in a core location, spending their time building connections and fortifying the defenses. If so, bring the adventure to them, with sieges and spies and internal divisions.
- Focus on interactions and introspection. Between daring combats and escapes, give the PCs downtime to talk to each other. Have them **Stuck on a Stake-out** and compel them to fill the silence. You can even compel them to reveal their secret emotions and to air their grievances with each other.
- Encourage players to work together. Remind them of the teamwork rule (page 143) and that they can spend their fate points to invoke other Champions' aspects to help. Invite the player to say something encouraging in character: "As your aspect is invoked, how does your Champion help them? What do they say? What's their facial expression or body language?"
- Failure can be a gateway to player cooperation. When you or a player describes a failure or a success at a cost, it's an opportunity for another player's Champion to step in and save the day and gain the spotlight. Encourage a positive loop of players "passing the spotlight" to each other. For example, "Your attack fails miserably, and you find yourself about to get skewered; luckily, a teammate pushes you out of harm's way, so you only have a bruised tail bone. Which teammate saves you, and what do they do?"
- Present the challenges of leadership and working together. Sometimes personal goals conflict with duty and obligations. Sometimes two Champions have very different approaches to problems. Look for aspects that might come into conflict and put the Champions in a situation where that tension comes to the surface. Start a game with the Champions already captured, each of them blaming the other who got them into this mess!
- Find reasons to separate the party, and vary the pairings, so people can get alone time with different allies or enemies. Players will naturally want to stick together when danger is present, but if there are many avenues to explore or people to talk to, splitting up to cover more ground will come naturally.
- When characters heal each other after a conflict (see page 142), make it a short scene between the two characters. Invite them to talk it out. For example, if a character has the mental Consequence **I Wasn't Strong Enough**, what comforting words does the Empathetic healer offer?
- Create nonviolent situations that let the players talk to the Masters and their Lieutenants. Fancy balls. Treaty signings. Parley before the battle. Let the Champions or villains get captured.

Mission Types to consider: Defend, Solve. See the *Adventure Generator* on page 401.

DIGNITARY ADVENTURES

Some themes you might consider when creating adventures:

- **Responsibility:** Being a dignitary or leader comes with responsibilities. The bar is set impossibly high. Can you carry the strain without buckling or needing a release?
- **Façades:** Being a dignitary means putting on a persona different from your own. What happens when you wear it too long and forget how to take it off? What's it like to hide the real you?
- **Duty:** You have taken an oath to serve (e.g., as a knight or Runekeeper). What happens when an order conflicts with your ethics? What happens when you've taken two oaths that contradict (e.g., a princess knight who must fight but must also preserve herself for her kingdom's sake?)
- **Politics:** What happens when two allies fight? How do you mediate? Or when you're presented with a potential ally who can further your cause but has a questionable past? Or when the people in your kingdom use their free speech to denounce your cause?
- **Sins of the Father:** You learn that you rule or serve a Freeland with a dubious past. Was your land gained by ancient conquest? Is your magical weapon stolen? How do you make amends? Does it change how you look at the young princesses of the Dread Domains?
- **The Foil:** Create a young princess or heir to a Master that interacts with your party. In what ways do they parallel or contrast the royal PCs? Why do they follow their parent? Are they still naïve and pliable or are they treacherous double agents? Could they grow to become a benevolent ruler, or will they become an even greater threat than their parent?
- **Privilege:** Dignitaries are often leaders or respected members of society that may not realize the challenges others face. Present the struggles from people in the Dread Domain and ask how much they are willing to give to help others. Are they still generous when sacrifice is required?

COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIPS

Dignitary stories, especially those featuring young leaders coming of age, frequently focus on complicated relationships with friends, mentors, authority figures, and the like. Some issues may include:

- Different origins and beliefs
- Conflicting opinions on how to best help the people of Umdaar
- Hiding secrets that you fear would hurt others or make them reject you if they found out
- Duty gets in the way of friendship
- Past actions that cannot be forgiven
- Conflicting loyalties

Tense relationships are an opportunity for the Champions to grow and mature. Relationships that might start off as tense or combative can develop as the Champions learn more about each other and forge strong bonds between them.

Draw on the Group Dynamic aspect you chose during banner creation (see *Name and Reputation* on page 32).

> Idea: A character who's constantly angry about one thing might subconsciously be angry about something else. For example, a knight who lashes out against princesses might be upset with her mother, the queen, or authority figures.

THE DREAD DOMAINS

by Misha B, additional content by Dave Joria

This section covers some of the common themes for running a Dread Domains adventure, and some threats they might encounter.

A Master can rise to power through many means: discovery of an artifact, a brutal invasion, a subtle coup. But the result is always the same: the Master clearly marks their territory and secures their border, to keep rivals out and their subjects in. They then exploit every natural resource they can, until the land is blackened and useless; this, of course, makes it necessary for them to expand their borders once more.

There are dozens of Dread Domains strewn about the continent, each controlled by a different Master or group of Masters, but a few notables managed to carve out larger chunks of territory for themselves.

THEMES AND TOUCHSTONES

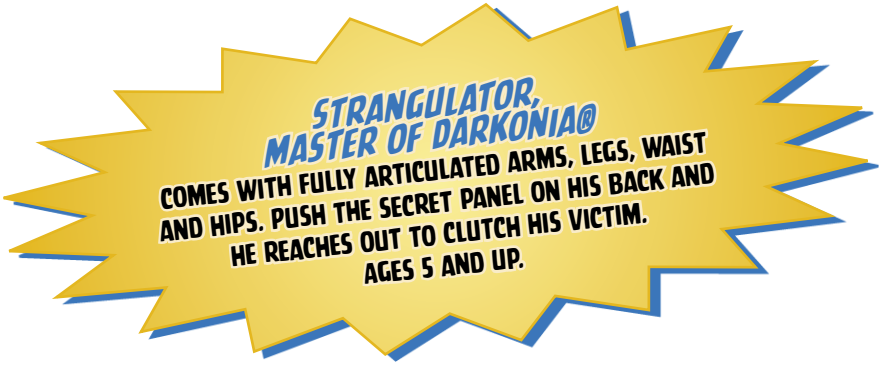
Themes: dystopia; man vs. society; rage against the dying of the light; suspense; gritty; struggling to hold on; take the victory and run

Touchstones: ***Robin Hood; She-Ra (1985); Rogue One; Andor; Hunger Games; Avatar: The Last Airbender; Firefly; Leverage***

ROGUES GALLERY

The following are a selection of Masters and their Dread Domains to include in your Umdaar setting, should any of them inspire you.

- The Cudgelord of the Icequake Tundra
- The Skynarch of the Floating Island of Lleh'ro Neveah
- Sorpentra, Serpent Sorceress of the Jewel Jungles
- Queen of Hearts, Ruler of the House of Ten Thousand Rooms
- Necrokadnezzar and the Skeledrones of the Haunterlands



CUDGELORD OF THE NORTH

Content Warning: cannibalism

Among the collapsed cities strewn with partially powered weapons in the north, a fearsome warlord arose, drawing soldiers and fighters to his banner. The grizzled old man who now calls himself the Cudgelord of the North wields a massive warhammer named Skullcrusher; recovered from the ruins when he was a mere soldier and used to win his first battles, the Cudgelord now wields it to keep his steel grip on the Corps. The weapon responds only to his command, incinerating any others who dare try to use its power for themselves. After he brutally slew the first few challengers to his position, word spread down to the troops that he was not one to be trifled with. Loyalty was demanded of any who sought his favor. He gave them purpose, uniting them into a massive army that fought its way across the north, destroying everything in its path like a pack of ravening locusts. No quarter was given; no mercy was shown. The fields were salted, the earth scorched, and any who did not join the Corps were slaughtered.

A massive earthquake halted the Cudgelord's Corps from spreading further, creating a miles-wide chasm with a swiftly flowing river and rapids between the bulk of the Cudgelord's army and the mainlands. With no real food source, most of the army began infighting and picking off the weaker among them, but even that wasn't enough to stave off hunger for long. Soon all that remained of the Cudgelord's Corps was a mere hundred of those of his troops—those able to ride the few flying beasts that allowed them to forage farther from the destructive zone around the Corps for sustenance. Now the Corps raids the surrounding area for food and supplies, occasionally even bringing back fresh recruits. Thanks to the chasm, their range is much more limited, but they are no less ruthless.

The ground is littered with discarded weapons and gnawed on bones of every bioform, human and animal alike. On the rare occasion that enough rations are brought, the Corps stuff themselves for weeks, not knowing when the next good meal will come. As a result, they are lean, almost emaciated, with muscles and sinew standing out prominently in the gaps in their armor.

Not even the Cudgelord himself escapes this fate: he is always hungry for the next meal, the next fight, the next kill. The Cudgelord is always accompanied by at least one of his two lieutenants: Bash, a hulking brute of a rhinowoman, and Slash, an oily, weasel-faced man. Bash is blunt and direct, prone to solving problems by smashing them like her namesake. Slash prefers to stab someone in the back or slit their throat in their sleep. The Cudgelord trusts them both inherently but knows their weaknesses and deploys them accordingly.

The Icequake Tundra

Aspects: Dangerous Ground; Desperate Survivors

Issues: The Raiding Season Draws Near; Raiders Turned Invaders

Cudgelord of the North (He/Him)

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Grizzled Humanoid Master Of The Icequake Tundra

Trouble: Hungry for More

Other Aspects: Survival of the Fittest; Composite Artifact Weapon, the Skullcrusher; Bash Supports Me

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Fight

Superb (+5): Physique, Notice,

Great (+4): Athletics, Drive, Will

Good (+3): Provoke, Resources, Contacts, Investigate

Fair (+2): Stealth, Empathy, Shoot, Burglary, Lore

STUNTS

Skullcrusher's Blast Radius: The Skullcrusher Maul, a weapon made from multiple captured artifacts assembled into a massive hammer, can only be wielded by Cudgelord. When Cudgelord uses Fight to attack with Skullcrusher he can spend a fate point to attack every enemy in his zone.

Frozen Heart: Cudgelord gains +2 to defend with Will against all Rapport attacks unless it was from Bash or someone he deeply trusts.

Only the Strongest Survive: Once per round, if any characters or NPC (including Cudgelord's minions) were taken out, the GM gains a free boost to be used by Cudgelord and his side; the weakness of others reminds the warriors of their superiority!

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[2] **Mild (Physical):**

[4] **Moderate:**

[6] **Severe:**

Bash, the Cudgelord's Fist [She/Her]

Tank: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Serious Woolly-Rhinowoman Lieutenant
Trouble: Violence Is The Only Solution I Know
Other Aspects: Fiercely Loyal To Cudgelord And The Cause

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Physique
Great (+4): Fight, Contacts
Good (+3): Will, Notice, Athletics

STUNTS

Hurl: May spend a fate point to use Physique as Shoot to throw a heavy object at an opponent.
Punch Gloves: When Bash attacks with Fight, she gets Weapon:2.
Thick Skin: When Bash defends against any physical attack, she has Armor:2.

STRESS

Physical ☐1☐1☐1 ☐1☐1☐1
Mental ☐1☐1☐1 ☐1☐1☐1

CONSEQUENCES

☐2 **Mild:**
☐2 **Mild (Mental):**
☐4 **Moderate:**

Slash, the Cudgelord's Assassin (He/Him)

Hitter: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Muta-Weasel Trickster Lieutenant
Trouble: Self-Serving Coward
Other Aspects: Keen Eye; Throwing Daggers of Death

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Provoke
Superb (+5): Deceive, Shoot
Great (+4): Athletics, Empathy, Will

STUNTS

Under Your Skin: If Slash deals two or more stress in a Provoke attack against an opponent, they must use a Mild Consequence to absorb it, if able.
Guarded Mind and Body: As long as Slash has unrestricted movement, he has Armor:2 against mental and physical attacks.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]
Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] Mild:
[4] Moderate:

Bash and Slash both provide a unique opportunity to the players. Slash is the more treacherous lieutenant and the more likely to help the players. Bash is more loyal and harder to sway, but if you can win her over, Cudgelord will be less able to defend.

THE SKYNARCH

Content Warning: addiction, religion, cults, grooming

The floating island of Lleh'ro Neveah traces a lazy ellipse above the Freelands. It is the realm of the Skynarch, self-professed interlocutor to the gods. A lean, short, and charismatic man, the Skynarch enjoins those who would wish to bask in the wisdom of the ancients to give over their worldly possessions and cut themselves off from their relationships. The island is dominated by a massive building bedecked with stained glass windows depicting the Skynarch's rise from a simple farmer to beloved leader. The tableau shows an island carpeted in flowers drifting close to a man in a field, the man stepping onto it and seeing a glowing pillar pointing to the hills, then following that pillar into a great hall, and finally discovering an artifact of The Demiurge—a small, thin box of glass and metal. The Skynarch keeps this box in his chamber, which is the only room on the island—let alone the basilica—with a lock. He allows no one but himself to look upon it, meaning he is the only one allowed to interpret what is shown. When it sufficiently absorbs the light from both suns of Umdaar, it rewards its viewer with fantastical visions. The artifact shows recordings of a series of experiments performed by the Demiurge.

The island itself appears pastoral, with fields of flowers all around releasing their heady scent into the air. The flowers are a rare type of star-poppy, whose scent has a calming effect and acts as a mild appetite suppressant. They grow wild here, with strict orders from the Skynarch that they not be destroyed or disturbed. The few that defy this order and walk into the fields never return—they succumb to the scent of the poppies and they fall asleep, never to wake again. Their bodies enrich the earth and feed the deadly flowers.

The Skynarch is served by a silent, masked trio he calls the Rooks. No one on the island has seen their faces or knows their identities. Some say they are automatons brought to life by the knowledge of the tablet. Others are sure that they are his children, masked to protect them from the outside world and keep them pure. They are the ones who leave the island and return with more devotees and supplies, silently spreading the teachings of the Skynarch through pamphlets and mummery as they visit the Wildernexuses and Freelands.

PLOT SEED: THE BROKEN BIRD

A wounded Rook crash-lands in your community. Will they convert others to their cult? Or will you convert the Rook and help them break their brainwashing? If the Skynarch comes to collect the citizen, can you afford to offer them sanctuary and risk war with a powerful Master?

Floating Island of Lleh'ro Neveah

Aspects: Haven Full of Secrets; People Don't Return from the Star-Poppy Fields

Issues: The Cult of Skynarch has Taken Root; Another Master Lurks Behind the Scenes; I Left the Cult Once, Can I Avoid Getting Pulled in Again?

The Skynarch, Master of Lleh'ro Neveah (He/Him)

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Humanoid Cult Leader

Trouble: Control Freak

Other Aspects: I Speak for the Gods; Weaver of Lies; Legion of Devoted Drugged Followers; My Secret Runetablet of the Setting Suns

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Rapport

Superb (+5): Deceive, Will

Great (+4): Lore, Shoot, Empathy

Good (+3): Burglary, Provoke, Contacts, Crafts

Fair (+2): Notice, Resources, Athletics, Drive, Stealth

STUNTS

Runetablet of the Setting Suns: The lore tablet grants the Skynarch or anyone who holds it and knows the ancient password: +1 to Lore, +1 to Crafts, and +1 to Burglary when creating advantages related to examining, building, and hacking Demiurge tech. If it is during a double sunset, the holder may also make an extra action each round to create an advantage based on tech.

Forcefield Generator: Whenever he is hit with a physical attack, the Skynarch may pay a fate point to ignore all stress.

Lazer-Staff: His staff is also a long-barrel laser rifle. It has Weapon:2 when using Shoot.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] Mild:

[2] Mild (Mental):

[4] Moderate:

[6] Severe:

The Rook (They/Them)

Hitter: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: One of Three Loyal Flying Apostles
Trouble: Must Resist The Siren Call Of Freedom
Other Aspects: Swift and Silent

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Athletics
Superb (+5): Fight, Stealth
Great (+4): Notice, Burglary, Investigate

STUNTS

Dive Bomb: If the Rook has the aspect **Airborne**, they may discard the aspect; if they do, they may move an extra zone and attack with Weapon:2 this turn.
Hit and Run: Whenever the Rook succeeds in style on an attack, they may reduce the stress by one and forgo the bonus to move the rook to another zone and gain the aspect **Airborne**.
Brainwashed: The Rook has mental Armor:2 against Rapport attacks, provided it is coming from an outsider to the Floating Isle.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] Mental [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**
[4] **Moderate:**

ASPECTS: WHAT DOES AN "AIRBORNE" ASPECT MEAN?

An aspect defines reality. Thus, it defines what a Champion may and may not do against it.

- In an open field, an "airborne" flyer would be impossible to attack with Fight. You can't punch someone 10 feet above you!
- However, in a coliseum full of ruined pillars, a player may declare, "I want to run up a pillar, jump off it, and attack!" In which case, **Airborne** would be an aspect the GM could invoke when making a defense roll. It's not impossible to attack the flyer, but it's not easy!
- Permit players to think creatively: maybe a Champion creates an advantage to launch a teammate in their air. If so, reward them by ignoring the airborne penalty to attack.

Devout Island Cultist

Filler: Average (+1)

SKILLS

Average (+1): Diverting and Clinging.

STRESS

[1]

SORPENTRA, SERPENT SORCERESS OF THE JEWEL JUNGLES

Content Warning: mutation, snakes

Deep in the sweltering groves of the Jewel Jungles resides the lair of Sorpentra. Once a gifted woman with a promising future as an Runekeeper, she discovered a cache of artifacts from The Demiurge while on an expedition. After years of obsessive study, she finally unlocked some of their secrets, and transformed into a hybrid humanoid serpent. Decades more study of the artifacts unlocked more secrets, allowing her to shift between forms and perform feats of sorcery unseen on Umdaar since the time of the Demiurge. It allows her mastery over reptiles of all varieties, from venomous snakes to snapping crocodiles to the great flying pterosaurs that darken the skies over her lair. Since she has invaded the Jewel Jungles and claimed them as her own, the local wildlife has been overrun with poisonous plants and the venomous creatures. Even the waters of the rivers that flow sluggishly through the area have grown poisonous and deadly, alive with carnivorous fish ready to attack anything foolish enough to brave the water. Few make it to her lair, most underestimating how quickly their supplies rot or mold in the muggy climate and turn back, perish beneath the sweltering sun, or fall to the flora or fauna. Even fewer live to tell the tale of finding it, facing not only the dangers of the environment but of the Serpent Sorceress herself. She prefers her lonesome existence, creating an army of cybernetic alligators and snakes to terrorize the neighboring countryside, bringing back more artifacts for her collection, so that she may unlock more ancient secrets.

PLAYING SORPENTRA

Sorpentra can serve as a dark reflection of your party's Archaeonauts (warning them of the danger of prioritizing discovery over humanity). Like most comic book "evil genius" villains, she's a perfect vehicle for using the Countdown rules for some doomsday device (see page 363). She also has high Drive and Crafts, making her a fun opponent in situations involving artifacts and ruins (e.g., vying for control of an awakened Demiurge craft; racing to hack into an ancient ruin computer).

ADVENTURE TIE-IN!

If you want a ready-made adventure for Sorpentra, you can easily substitute her as the big bad in *the Laya Factory* adventure (see page 266).

The Jewel Jungles

Aspects: Hungry Fauna; Wrong Step and You're Poisoned

Issues: What Secrets Does Sorpentra Hoard?; The Search for the Antidote; Can I Redeem Sorpentra, My [Relative/Ex/Friend], Before It's Too Late?

Sorpentra, Serpent Sorceress of the South [She/Her]

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Runekeeper Turned Sorcerous Snakewoman Master

Trouble: Obsessive Scientist

Other Aspects: Coldblooded; Ends Justify the Means; Reptilia are My Servants; I Know All The Archaeonaut Tricks

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Lore

Superb (+5): Will, Contacts

Great (+4): Crafts, Drive, Investigate

Good (+3): Notice, Fight, Burglary, Athletics

Fair (+2): Resources, Physique, Rapport, Shoot, Stealth

STUNTS

Staff of Conductivity: While Sorpentra holds this artifact, she can use Lore to make magical attacks and defend against physical and magical attacks. She can also use create an advantage with Lore to cast magic of any type, particularly transmutation and mind control.

Transmute Self: At the start of her round, if she holds the Staff of Conductivity, she can change her shape temporarily and change her high concept to match (e.g., Sorcerous Master In The Shape Of A Flying Pterosaur); this either counts as her action for the round or she can spend a fate point to do it immediately. When she changes, the staff becomes a torc that wraps around her wrist. She can pick up to two appropriate skills that she may use at the rating as Will. She turns back if she loses the staff/torc, loses the conflict, or is given an apt compel. She can voluntarily change back at the start of her round for free.

Summon Reptilia: Once per session, she can draw on her contacts to bring in reptile reinforcements. These reinforcements take the form of either one hitter with an apex skill rating equal to her Contacts (e.g., Dilo-phosphorus), two tanks with apex skills rated one step lower than her Contacts (e.g., two Chromodiles), or Fair (+2) fillers equal in number to her Contacts.

Immune to Poison: Sorpentra is immune to all stress and aspects related to poisons. (For more on *Resistances*, see page 369).

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1] Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] Mild:

[2] Mild (Mental):

[4] Moderate:

[6] Severe:

Raptorborg

Filler: Fair (+2)

ASPECTS

SWIFT CYBORG DINOSAUR

SKILLS

Fair (+2): Sprint and Slash

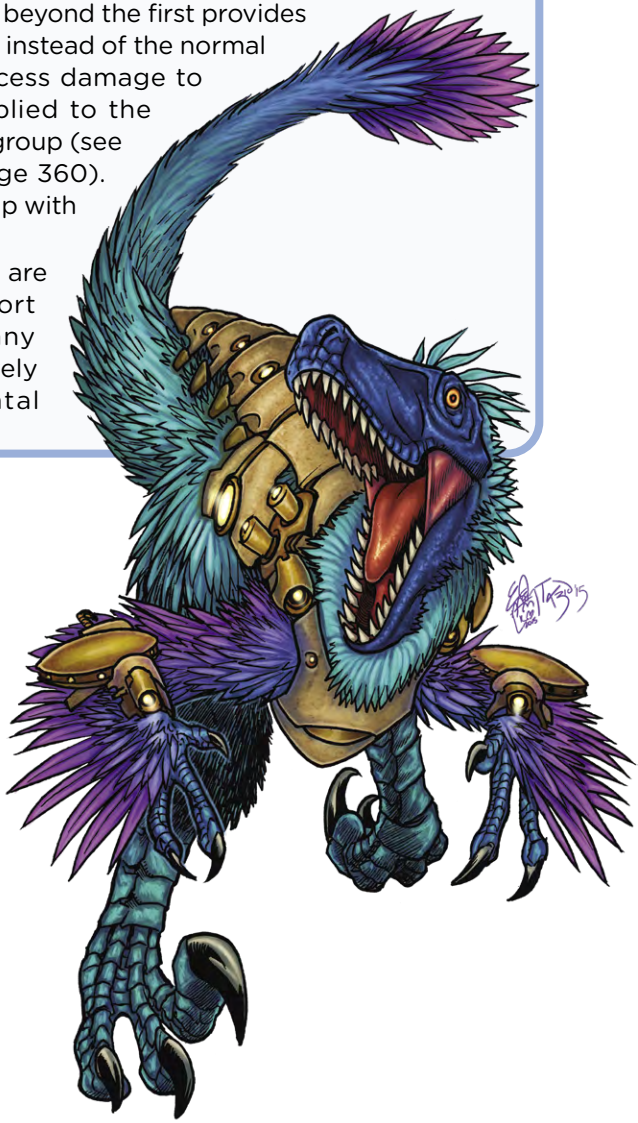
STRESS

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STUNTS

Pack Hunters: Two Raptorborgs may join together into one henchmen group (if Sorpentra is in the conflict, up to three). Each raptorborg beyond the first provides a +2 to Sprint and Slash instead of the normal bonus. If attacked, excess damage to one raptorborg is applied to the next raptorborg in the group (see *Grouping Fillers* on page 360). Raptorborgs won't group with non-raptorborg fillers.

Animalistic: Raptorborgs are immune to any Rapport attacks, as well as any Provoke attacks that rely on dialogue or mental manipulation.



Dilo-phosphorus

Hitter: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

Twin-Crested Fire-spitting Dinosaur; Radar-dish Frill

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Shoot
Great (+4): Fight, Provoke
Good (+3): Notice, Athletics, Stealth

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 Mental 1 1 1

STUNTS

Animalistic: The dinosaur is immune to any Rapport attacks, as well as any Provoke attacks that rely on dialogue or mental manipulation

Fiery Phosphorus Spit: The dinosaur has Weapon:1. If the target is extra vulnerable to fire (e.g., plant elemental; mummy), count it as Weapon:3 instead.

Chromodiles

Tank: Great (+4)

ASPECTS

Cyborg Reptile; Aquatic Ambush Hunter; Ponderous

SKILLS

Great (+4): Physique
Good (+3): Stealth, Athletics
Fair (+2): Fight, Provoke, Notice

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1
Mental 1 1 1

STUNTS

Animalistic: The reptile is immune to any Rapport attacks, as well as any Provoke attacks that rely on dialogue or mental manipulation

Metal Hide: The reptile has Armor:2.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Content Warning: gambling, addiction, exploitation

Lurking in the west, the domain of the Queen of Hearts calls to those who crave pleasures. At the center of it all is a large and flashy palace many call the House of Ten Thousand Rooms, with lights always sparkling at every window and gilded decorations at every crenelation. Sex, food, drugs, wine, gambling—nothing is off-limits, and everything is available at any time, for the right price. People come and go at all hours, searching for easy relief. Some stay, lulled by the opulence they find; others chase the next win, the next high. The Queen of Hearts sits above it all on a velvet divan, overseeing the House. She welcomes anyone into its walls—rich, poor, farmer, head of state—as long as they want to play. Those who come to play often find themselves on the wrong side of The House—losing too much at the gambling tables even as they're so sure they're close to winning, gorging themselves sick yet still craving more, lusting after someone beyond their means. These are not necessarily limitations, as The House will generously extend credit in exchange for collateral or a period of service to the Queen. Service might be in The House as a server, as a soldier on a raid to bring in more of the never-ending supplies needed for The House, or as an artist to fill the rooms with paintings or sweet music. Collateral can be anything from a piece of jewelry to a royal heir, maybe even a firstborn not yet conceived. Sooner or later, everyone ends up in debt to The House, and the Queen watches it all with her enigmatic smile.

The Queen is a middle-aged woman, tall and curvaceous, her body draped in velvets and silks. Her hair is coiffed into dozens of tiny braids, each with a gem or bauble hanging from it. Although it appears she just lounges about all day, she has her finger on every pulse, knows what is going on in every room, recalls every debt and deal made in The House. From her divan, she controls entire kingdoms as their rulers owe her a debt or have turned over hostages as collateral. One word from her can start wars or end them, if she is so inclined. Those who dare to try and renege on their deals with her meet a gruesome fate, with the lucky dying quickly at the hands of her guards. The less fortunate become an evening's entertainment as they are allowed to be slowly tortured by patrons who pay for the privilege or forced to fight in the arena for their entertainment.

The Queen's Hand, her cadre of elite soldiers and guards, is led by The Knave, who faithfully serves her queen. She leads the raids in the Queen's name and metes out the sentences she passes. The Page keeps a careful record of all transactions in The House, consulting with the Queen and acting as gofer and spymaster. He is her eyes and ears and knows almost as many of The House's secrets as she does.

House of Ten Thousand Rooms

ASPECTS

House of Temptation; Someone's Always Watching; Money Talks

Issues: The Queen Calls in Her Debts; Rescue the Captive Heirs

Queen of Hearts, Ruler of the House of Ten Thousand Rooms [She/Her]

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Many-Eyed Master Puppeteer Of Games And Politics

Trouble: Can't Resist a Good Wager

Other Aspects: All Debts Must Be Paid; The House Always Wins; Sharp Memory

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Resources

Superb (+5): Will, Rapport

Great (+4): Empathy, Deceive, Contacts

Good (+3): Fight, Athletics, Burglary, Investigate

Fair (+2): Lore, Shoot, Notice, Stealth, Provoke

STUNTS

Money Talks: The Queen can use Resources as if it were any skill for any action, provided she can justify how it relates to something she bought or someone she hired (e.g., bought a Replitech homing missile launcher for Shoot; hired a Runekeeper for Lore). She can use this freely three times per session; the GM may pay a fate point for each additional use.

See Into Your Heart: The Queen gains +2 to Empathy when creating an advantage to discover any weaknesses in a character related to their addictions, joys, and loved ones.

Indentured Meat Shields: If someone would make a physical attack against the Queen (i.e., Fight or Shoot), she can spend a fate point to have someone indebted to her jump in front of the attack. Move the minion/minion group to the same zone and treat it as if the adversary attacked the minion instead.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] Mild:

[2] Mild (Mental):

[4] Moderate:

[6] Severe:

LIMITATIONS

The Queen of Hearts works best when used with *Limitations* (see page 367). Perhaps she has a Champion or a Freeland in her debt, preventing the Champions from confronting her directly?

Reminder: in ***Umdaar***, Contacts can be used like Lore to know about current events, and the Queen is Great at that.

The Knave: The Queen's Head Raider [She/Her]

Tank: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Space-Vampire Lieutenant and Soldier
Trouble: The Queen's Favorite Lover (for Now)
Other Aspects: My Word is My Bond

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Athletics
Superb (+5): Fight, Burglary
Great (+4): Will, Notice, Physique

STUNTS

Draining Saber: Whenever she successfully deal 1 or more stress with Fight, the Knave may recover 1 stress she has marked (does not apply to consequences)
Sword Dance: Whenever she takes any action with a physical skill (ex. Fight, Athletics), the Knave may immediately move a zone for free, provided she's not inhibited by an aspect placed on her specifically. This is in addition to the normal free one zone of movement everyone gets.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1
Mental 1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**
4 **Moderate:**
6 **Severe:**

The Page: The Queen's Eyes and Ears [He/Him]

Hitter: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Sentient Glowbot Virus
Trouble: Identify Fracturing After Countless Replications
Other Aspects: I am Everywhere and Nowhere

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Notice, Stealth
Great (+4): Will, Lore, Crafts
Good (+3): Drive, Rapport, Deceive

STUNTS

Glowbot Virus: The Page can infect any Demiurge technology including Glowbots and other artifacts, observing everything in their vicinity undetected, and reporting it back to the Queen. The Page can spend a fate point to declare that he has already infected a piece of tech. An opposed overcome roll with Crafts or Investigate versus his Stealth can find him, and once found an opposed overcome roll with Crafts versus his Will can evict him.

No Physical Form: Unless every device he has replicated himself into is purged or destroyed, the Page cannot be killed. If taken out, he can return in the next session in a new body.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]
Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**
[4] **Moderate:**
[6] **Severe:**

Queen's Hand: Royal Soldiers

Filler: Average (+1)

SKILLS

Average (+1): Brawling and Bullying

STRESS

[1]

STUNTS

Reinforced: If deployed in a conflict with either the Queen of Hearts, the Knave, or the Page, the Queen's Hand group is upgraded to a Raider (gains Weapon:1) or a Guard (gains Armor:1).

NECROKADNEZZAR AND THE SKELEDRONES

The following is an example of a Master with a henchmen at every tier, from tank to mob. For advice on creating your own henchmen at every level, see page 354 in the toolkit.

In the far South lie the Haunterlands, a frozen desert ruled by Necrokadnezzar, the Corpse King. The undead ruler slowly expands his territory century by century, swallowing up villages and converting the inhabitants into his mindless Skeledrones, using the nano-magic of the Cyber-Cauldron. Unlike other Masters, he is patient; but he's only waiting until the perfect time to strike out and conquer everything in his path.

The Haunterlands

Aspects: Frozen Wastes; Skeledrone Spies At Every Turn; Fortified Cyber-Cauldron Castles; Rare Pockets Of Resistance

Issues: The Bickering Of Necrokadnezzar's Vassals; The Inevitable March of the Silent Throng; The Time of the Dark Ritual Approaches

Necrokadnezzar, The Corpse King (He/Him)

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Ancient Techno-Undead King of the Haunterlands

Trouble: Fear and Awe of the Demiurge

Other Aspects: Slow & Steady; Brilliant Artifact Collector; Man of His Word; Wishes All His Minions Were Mindless Puppets

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Lore

Superb (+5): Fight, Drive

Great (+4): Will, Resources, Notice

Good (+3): Contacts, Athletics, Provoke, Investigate

Fair (+2): Empathy, Deceive, Rapport, Stealth

Average (+1): Every remaining Skill

STUNTS

Magic Eye: Necrokadnezzar's bionic eye is a channel for his magical power. While he has it, he may spend a fate point to use Lore as if it were any skill for any action.

Puppet Master: Instead of taking a normal action, Necrokadnezzar may have any mindless skeledrone in the scene take an additional action; for this action, their skill rating becomes equal to Necrokadnezzar's Drive rating, Superb (+5).

Mook Shield: Whenever he is attacked, Necrokadnezzar can spend a fate point to divert the attack to his nearby filler minions.

Grafted Limbs: Against truly worthy foes, Necrokadnezzar reveals his full form; a set of skeletal wings, and multiple sets of bony arms. He gains +2 Athletics, and can take two actions each round; however, he cannot use the same skill twice, nor the same action, nor target the same Champion twice in any given round.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1

Mental 1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**

4 **Moderate:**

6 **Severe:**

Bone-hemoth

Tank: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Massive Undead Brute

Trouble: Remote-Controlled Bio-Machine

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Physique

Great (+4): Fight, Will

Good (+3): Athletics, Notice, Drive

STUNTS

Bone Shield: While holding the shield, the first time they are attacked with Shoot each round, Bone-hemoth may use Fight or Physique to defend, provided they know the shooter's location.

Bone Plating: Bone-hemoth has Armor:2.

Emotionless: Bone-hemoth are immune to Rapport and Provoke attacks.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] Mild:

[2] Mild (Physical):

[4] Moderate:

Chitin-Kite Raiders

Hitter (Physical): Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Undead Insectoid Snipers in Flying Rigs

Trouble: Malicious Bullies

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Shoot

Great (+4): Empathy, Notice

Good (+3): Athletics, Drive, Resources

Variations: Consider Deceive, Stealth, Notice

STUNTS

Hit and Run: Before taking their action, Chitin-Kite Raiders may have the Raiders gain +2 Athletics or Weapon:2 until their next round; Chitin-Kite Raiders cannot use "Weapon Rating" two turns in a row.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1]

Sacrolich

Hitter (Social/Utility): Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Loyal Cyberlich Runekeeper Diplomat

Trouble: I Am Superior to Living Beings

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Lore

Great (+4): Provoke, Empathy

Good (+3): Contacts, Crafts, Rapport

STUNTS

Lethal Tongue: All mental attacks with Provoke have Weapon:2.

Crafty Worker: If the Sacrolich is working with Replitech or Demiurge devices, they may use Lore as if it were Crafts, Burglary or Drive.

Diplomatic Immunity: If a Sacrolich is acting as a Diplomat, he is protected by international law; he is immune to any Provoke attacks that threaten violence (or other actions that would breach international law). This lasts until a Champion actually breaks international law (which has big consequences later).

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1]

Skeledrone Grunt

Filler: Average (+1)

SKILLS

Average (+1): Rattle and Claw

STRESS

[1]

STUNTS

Emotionless: Skeledrones are immune to Rapport and Provoke attacks.

Skeledrone Archer

Filler: Fair (+2)

SKILLS

Fair (+2): Shoot

STRESS

[1][1]

STUNTS

Emotionless: Skeledrones are immune to Rapport and Provoke attacks

Skeleknight

Filler: Good (+3)

SKILLS

Good (+3): Defend

Average (+1): Fighting or Throwing Laser-Javelins

STRESS

1 1 1

STUNT

Emotionless: Skeledrones are immune to Rapport and Provoke attacks

Cyber-Cauldron

Tank (Utility): Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Portable Replitech Undead Factory

Trouble: Limited Function & mobility

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Physique

Great (+4): Crafts, Notice

STUNTS

Cauldron Spawn: The Cyber-cauldron can use Crafts to create new mobs of Skeledrone fillers, or heal mobs that have suffered stress in a conflict.

Tough Shell: The Cyber-cauldron can use Physique to defend against any shooting and magical attacks.

Emotionless: Cyber-cauldron are immune to Rapport and Provoke attacks.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1 Mental 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**

2 **Mild (Physical):**

4 **Moderate:**

HOW MANY SKELEDRONES DOES THE CAULDRON SPAWN STUNT CREATE?

A good rule of thumb is: if there's no opposition, set the difficulty at Fair (+2) for Grunts. Good (+3) for Archers, and Great (+4) for Skeleknights. A success creates one; every shift above that heals or creates one more skeledrone. (e.g., A roll of Great +4 to create Grunts would create three Grunts, or heal three stress.)

ENEMY VEHICLES

There are several ways to represent vehicles and their crew in ***Umdaar***.

- Treat a vehicle and its crew as a single henchman (machine and crew together).
- Treat the vehicle as a stronger henchman grouped with weaker minions. For example, a Sharktank at Good (+3), with a Filler group of Average (+1) mooks operating it.
- Using some of the rules and stunts below.

If players capture a hovertank and want to keep using it in further adventures, warn them that it runs on the heavily toxic Smogstone; see *Fuel* on page 148.



Hovertank Driver

Filler (Utility): Good (+3)

SKILLS

Good (+3): Drive

Average (+1): Repair and Upgrade

STRESS

[1][1][1]

Hovertank

Tank (Literally): Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Armored War Machine

Trouble: Poor Visibility

Other Aspects: Protect the Crew

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Physique

Great (+4): Shoot, Athletics

SPECIAL RULES

As Good As Its Driver: Whenever a driver or group of drivers takes an action, they may take the Hovertank's action instead. Use either the skill rating for the Hovertank or the driver's Drive skill, whichever is lower. This does not apply to defending, which always uses the Hovertank's base stats.

STUNTS

Thick Plates: The Hovertank may use Physique to defend against physical attacks, and has Armor:2. Also, all stress must be done to the tank before it hits the crew unless it is an aimed attack (i.e., using an aspect specifying a crew target).

Ramming Speed: The tank may use Athletics as if it were Fight to attack anything in its path provided the tank is moving and operational.

Shield of Confidence: While the tank is operational, anyone inside is immune to Rapport and Provoke attacks from anyone outside, but not from Rapport or Provoke aspects. The tank itself is immune to all mental attacks and aspects, as it is a mindless tool.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[2] **Mild:**

[4] **Moderate:**

RUNNING A REBEL GAME

If the players express interest in running a rebel-themed game, it means they're likely interested in a game with lots of conflicts. This means both conflict in general (struggling against a greater opponent) and literal conflict scene types (i.e., battles). Here are some recommendations:

- Some players like being a Rebel because it's darker and grittier—the odds of victory are slim, and players must make difficult ethical decisions. Other players like it because the conflicts can seem more black and white—when villains surround you, any direction you kick, you will hit someone who deserves it! Sometimes you just want to punch bad guys and redress wrongs. Be sure to check in with your group regularly, and see if they're having fun or if it's getting too grim.
- Create, or have your group help you create, different situation aspects for each battle. Conflicts in a vacuum can feel quite redundant; adding new surroundings will help keep them fresh. See *Zones* on page 131.
- It can be difficult to balance "The need for consequences to have actions" with "the need to make sure conflicts are exciting and unique." However, aspects help. For example, if a Champion fails to overcome a lone guard, and you don't want another conflict just yet (you just had one), have the cost of failure be an aspect, **Raise the Alarm**, with one or more invokes. This can be invoked to make player actions harder, such as guards coming to distract them or increasing the number of guards in the **next** fight.
- Alternate between mindless bot bashes and dealing with real live minions; this gives them a chance to have fun, reckless fights, contrasted with fights against living opponents who may be unwitting pawns.
- Have fun creating villains. Create over-the-top Masters inspired by topics you are passionate about. Do you like biology? Make a scientist Master who creates mutant plants. Do you like mythology? Use ancient deities to inspire a pantheon of false gods. If you're out of ideas, get the players involved or use one of the Masters we've provided.

- Make the struggle personal for the characters—maybe each of the Champions have a Master who is their arch-rival, someone they know well. These should be emotionally connected to the **characters**, not the players. Be sure to make sure you and the whole table are aware of the safety rules. Maybe all of these hated villains might be united under one Mega-Master, who lords over them.
- Ask the players to make choices—they are too small to do everything at once. Do they fight to the last or get the innocent villagers out? Do they get revenge or save their poisoned comrade? Do they save the burning library or the burning orphanage? However, don't make the campaign an endless series of painful trolley problems. Let them occasionally pick between two advantages.
- Remind the players of the rules for conceding, preferably by example. Don't design fights to make them "impossible," but don't be afraid to raise the difficulty of your next match if the last big boss was too easy. Rebel campaigns are designed to be a bit more challenging.
- Make sure the players do get victories, even if they're small. If an ignorant town throws them out, let them talk to the village boy who won't forget them. If the villagers have to evacuate their town, allow the refugees to get somewhere safe. Let the Champions see the people who they saved, who will name their children after them and tell their tale.
- Villainous doesn't automatically mean "high body count." Don't feel like you need to kill lots of innocents. It can kill the mood instead of setting it. Most importantly, don't give them a victory by saving a village, only to "undo it" by massacring them all.

PLOT HOOK

Present a small moral dilemma to your players by having a Dread Domain grunt soldier (not a robot) end a scene in peril. For example, a soldier is hanging off the edge of the cliff, begging for help. What will the Champions do? Will some Champions have motivations that compel them to help or ignore the stricken enemy? If the enemy is saved, let it pay off, but not immediately: for extra satisfaction, have the saved soldier scamper off; wait for several scenes, or even sessions before they return to pay it back in kind. See *No Good Deed Goes Unnoticed* on page 411).

REBEL MISSION TEMPLATE

Here's a template you can use to create adventures for Rebels infiltrating a Master's hold over a Dread Domain.

Mission Types to consider: Escape/Rescue, Thwart. See page 401 for the *Adventure Generator*.

PHASE 1: INFILTRATION

To infiltrate the Dread Domain you'll need to convince the Master or their proxy that you are there to help or work for the Master, to give them a reason to not just toss you out on your ear or worse. There are various cover stories that you can use to accomplish this. If you're from this Dread Domain, this step may be part of your background.

Mercenaries: If you can prove you have the combat prowess and convince them you'll do anything for money or other rewards, you can probably get hired.

Entertainers: Every Master needs a way to keep the populace content. Hiring traveling entertainment is a common way to improve morale. If you show you have the talent, you can probably get in.

Artisans: There are specialized jobs that are infrequently needed enough to not merit a permanent full-time position but still often enough to be valuable, like dentist, farrier, well digger, vid-com repair person, window glazier, etc. There are also jobs for which there might be permanent positions like mechanic, sewist, weaver, cook, and stable hand. If you do any of these, you might have a way in.

Dealers: If you have an item needed in the Dread Domain, you might be welcomed with open arms. Examples include specialty foods and beverages, clothes, weapons, armor, tools, mounts, vehicles, and political prisoners. (See *Currency* on page 149 if you need more ideas).

PHASE 2: RECONNAISSANCE

You have gotten in without getting thrown into the dungeons or strung up by your heels. Time to do some reconnaissance. Find out the strengths and weaknesses of the Master, their minions, and the populace that might become your accomplices.

- Who is benefiting most from the status quo? What's the biggest threat to their comfortable position?
- Who is most likely to remain loyal? What would it take to shake that fidelity?
- What will motivate the most people to rebel? Do they want money, revenge, safety, or something else?
- What do they want changed? What policies has the Master implemented that they chafe against?
- What do they want instead? In an idealized situation, what would the system look like?
- What assets are in their possession? Demiurge artifacts? Machines of power? Can they be stolen or sabotaged?

PHASE 3: ORCHESTRATION

Now that you know who your allies and enemies are and their strengths and weaknesses, you need to decide how to best use those assets:

Capture the Master

- Hold them hostage until demands are met? This might be the best option if there are more loyalists to the Master than rebels or if the resources are all in the hands of the loyalists.
- Impersonate the Master and issue new dictates? If you can get close enough, ruling in the Master's name might keep suspicions that anything is wrong to a minimum. Perhaps a non-fatal-but-incapacitating poisoning is in order?
- Kill the Master and set up a new government in their place? Straightforward and to the point. Publicly replacing the Master leaves no doubt you are a force to be reckoned with.

Coerce the Master

- Shame the Master into holding fair elections? Turning public sentiment against them can work if they don't rule with an iron fist or need to play nice with those in charge of the Domain's resources.
- Rob the treasury and take their ability to pay for their army away? If the Master's strongest asset is their army and that army is paid for in coin rather than serving out of devotion, they won't stick around for long if they aren't getting paid. They'll likely change sides faster if someone else is offering a sweeter deal.
- Initiate a labor strike or a refusal to pay taxes or tribute? Without the funds to keep their minions content, their support will dry up, leaving the Master vulnerable to attacks.

Banish the Master

- Drive the Master from the Domain? If you can't get close enough to capture or kill the Master outright, you may be able to make them flee from their stronghold.
- Wait until the Master goes elsewhere for a visit and take over? Odds are, where the Master goes, so goes the bulk of their protection. With that gone, it should be easier to take over the stronghold.

There are many paths to get the desired results. It's just a matter of which you want to take.

PLOT SEED

Queen Ve'gloria was once the matriarch of a Freeland before she backslid into authoritarianism. Can she be shown the light? Or will stronger measures be required?

PHASE 4: FREEDOM

Now that you've got what you and the denizens of the Domain want, what are you going to do? How does the power vacuum left by the loss of the old Master get filled?

- Settle down in the Domain? You've spent time making connections here. You have friends and resources, perhaps even a job you like. It's an opportunity to stay and keep the Master from returning.
- Move on to help a different Domain? Maybe you want to roam the lands freeing all from the yokes of their Masters. Who will guard in your place?
- Fall in love with the former Master now in your care and help them find redemption?



THE WILDERNEXUSES

This section covers common themes for running a Wildernexus adventure, and some threats and locations they might encounter.

EXPLORING THE WILDERNEXUS

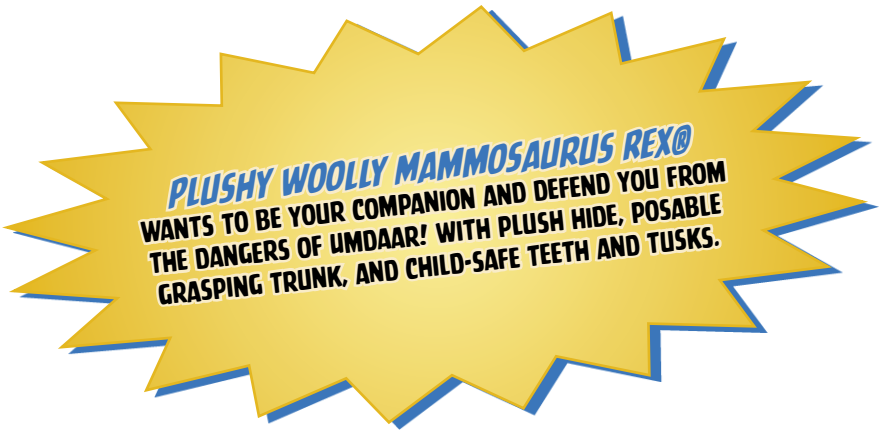
The Wildernexuses defy the imagination. Mountains that float in the sky. Flowers that grow and blossom on lava fields. Underground caves with phosphorescent fungal suns shining in the "sky."

The key principle to describe a Wildernexus is—inspire awe. The inhabitants of Umdaar pay it great reverence for good reason. Inside it are forces many times greater than the individual, humblingly so. There is beauty, awe, and tragedy in unsettling harmony, an ecosystem that deserves to be protected from those seeking to exploit it.

THEMES AND TOUCHSTONES

Themes: environmentalism; the power and majesty of nature; sublime romanticism, that which is greater than us and therefore beautiful; survival; collaborative world-building; changing horizon

Touchstones: ***Nausicaa, Valley of the Wind; Princess Mononoke; Horizon Zero Dawn; Nier Automata; Captain Planet and the Planeteers; Ferngully, the Last Rainforest; One Piece***



WILDERNEXUSES ADVENTURES

Here are some themes to consider when running Wildernexus stories.

Sustainability: Whenever a story involves Freelands and Wildernexuses, a common theme to consider is nature vs. industry. This can go several different ways:

- **Demiurge knew best:** Current Replitech is unsustainable, exhausting and poisoning the environment. However, the Demiurge knew the secret to sustainable, pollution-less energy—it's just a matter of unearthing it.
- **Demiurge didn't know everything:** The Demiurge were smart but didn't use sustainable clean power—after all, it's possible they were the only the *first* colonizers on Umdaar. It might also be the reason they left or died. Ancient artifacts are poisonous, but Artihackers could heretically suggest that there is a way to improve on the tech to make it sustainable.
- **No Silver Bullet:** There is no such thing as 100% clean power. It is the responsibility of sapient bioforms to consume in moderation, responsibly.

You can go any of the three ways, or talk to your players and decide as a group. No matter what you decide, establish that the Masters are way worse and need to be stopped. If you need an example of this in action, we recommend Ghibli films, like ***Princess Mononoke***.

Imperialist Grab: A neighboring community is encroaching into the Wildernexus. If the offender is a Master, the solution is simple but not easy—repeal the invaders. If the offender is a Freeland community, it might be more complicated—the territory might be disputed, or the Freeland desperately needs more resources to survive. At what point do you have to say "no" to your allies? Can you find them an alternative?

Sins of the Father: Perhaps the encroachment was not a recent transgression, but one in the past. If a Champion is a dignitary, is it possible their parent or grandparent acted in an imperialist and exploitative way? Can you make amends? (For examples of this in pop culture, see ***Frozen 2***, the new ***She-Ra***, the new ***Thundercats, Avatar, Steven Universe***.)

For advice on avoiding harmful tropes while creating Wildernexuses Adventures, see *Primitivism* on page 422.

COMMUNITY

There are very few settlements bordering the Wildernexus, and even fewer within it. Though much of this stems from the abundance of risks that one takes when entering the Wildernexus, it also has to do with a reverence for the ecosystem. Communities inside the Wildernexus call themselves many names, one of which is the Wardens. They live sustainably within micro-climate regulators that insulate them from the most dangerous conditions that tear through the area. Warden communities are usually open and friendly to travelers, especially the pathfinders and archaeonauts who hold status as revered comrades. Though few and far between, these communities are a welcome sight for any who plan to trek through the Wildernexus.

While it is listed under "Freelands," the Wood Watchers on page 154 could easily be interpreted as a Warden Community.

FAMOUS LOCATIONS

The Wildernexus is a collection of diverse geographical locations, each with its own climates and challenges. Listed below are some primary distinctions and interesting features, but many more points of interest exist just waiting to be discovered.

- The Midnight Plains
- The Glowing Sands
- The Infinite Green
- The Sludge Swamps

THE MIDNIGHT PLAINS

A perpetual twilight shades these beautiful, bioluminescent plains. Large herds of bovine robeasts graze endlessly on the shimmering grass, dancing like fairy lights in the wind. The elevation changes little, and one can see its mesmerizing waves for miles and miles. A solitary Demiurge temple lies upon the Midnight Plains like a knife stuck in a table and forgotten. It is luminescent, wrought from purple-tinted crystals that shine beautifully in the ever-twilight. The wind that passes through the plains sings a sorrowful, incomplete song as it resonates with what remains of the pillars.

Aspects: Dynast Mi'lanx, Unpredictable Ally; Swift Plain Hunters; The Haunted Crystal Ruins

Issues: T'st'gar, the Roaming Beast of a Thousand Mouths, Has Awakened!; Dynast Mi'lanx's Cryptic Missive

THE GLOWING SANDS

What appears as a normal desert during the day gives way to a neon yellow-green hue by sunset. The sands are exposed to some form of radiation that renders them so. Whether this is natural or due to some Demiurge artifact is unclear. Properly shielded clothing can increase the amount of time one can spend in the Glowing Sands, but will do little to protect from the roaming fauna, and from raiders who pillage the caravans.

Aspects: Open Graves of Fools; Razorpion Ambush; What Secrets Lie in the Library of Bones?

Issues: The Bone Archivist has the Secret You Need... For a Price; Beetlebot Gang Raids the Outpost Again

Glowing Sand Dunes

Type: Limitation

LIMITATION

Weapon:2, no effect on native flora/fauna, Glowbots, or those wearing a radsuit

THE INFINITE GREEN

The verdant jungles of the Wildernexus are some of the most iconic representations of its splendor. Underneath its dense canopies exists a different world entirely, full of more diverse wildlife than anywhere else on Umdaar. One can wander the jungle forever, the canopies fading out of sight and leaving only the bioluminescent glow of fungi to light the way.

Aspects: Hungry Animals and Plants; Secrets in the Mists and Shadows; Majestic Omnibeetles

Issues: The Forest King's Treasure; Master Lootbot's Logging Operation; The Ruins of the Hunter Goddess are Found!

THE FOREST KING

A creature of unparalleled size and might makes its home in the deepest, densest foliage of the Wildernexus's greatest jungles. As long as the forest has existed, so has **the Forest King**. Reports tell tales of a giant elk, an enormous bear, or even the snaking form of a dragon, all bearing distinct moose-like antlers. Cybernetics weave through them, blossoming like so many flowers. When the Forest King appears, it is a sign of imminent disaster for those who would despoil the forest.

PLOT SEED

Some say that the Infinite Green goes downwards forever, too—if you dig deep enough, you'll find the "ground" is the lower canopy, with the tree trunks descending to the planet's core.

THE SLUDGE SWAMPS

It is unclear how the Sludge Swamps came to be, outside the clear indication of folly. They stand as a reminder that even the Demiurge were not perfect beings, and that their meddling in the formation of Umdaar may have had dire consequences. These swamps are ancient, full of toxic materials that make them nigh unlivable for all but the hardiest of creatures. Some theorize that there is a temple under all that muck, dedicated to cleaning the waste, that has long since stopped working.

Aspects: Nature is Out of Balance; Beware the Slime-pits; Sunken Temple of Woe

Issues: Nature is Out of Balance, Find the Cure; The Laya Factory Activates! (see page 266)

PLOT HOOK

Sometimes the deadliest poisons make the best medicines. If players need an antidote to save a friend or a town, they may have to travel the Sludge Swamps to find it. Can they find the priceless Ultra-violet Orchid or milk the venom from a massive Centikraken? Of course, Masters often seek the same poison, but for more nefarious purposes!

Stinkhole

Type: Limitation

HAZARD

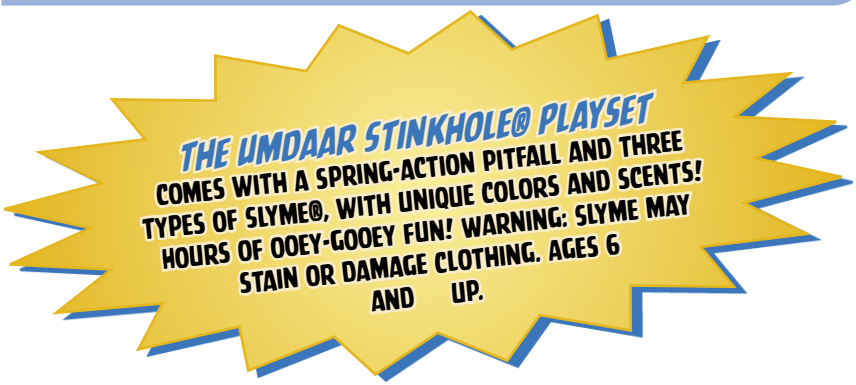
Weapon: See below

SPECIAL RULES

When a character first falls into a stinkhole, instead of receiving stress, they immediately gain a minor consequence Trapped in the Slime!

Freeing yourself from the stinkhole without the help of a rope or apt superpower is extra hard. Increase the difficulty by 2.

After every round, anyone still trapped takes two mental stress from the smell and the drastic situation.



FLORA AND FAUNA NPCS

ϖTHONS

Composed of many large, interlocking metal plates, the ϖthon snake engages magnetic coils to "swim" across the air in relative silence. They are not prone to attacking unless provoked or while hunting.

It enters a poised stance and activates its magnetic coils when defending itself, attracting any metal objects nearby. It can then propel them forcefully in all directions.

ϖthons

Hitter: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: GIANT, FLYING CYBERNETICSNAKE

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Physique
Fair (+2): Hunting and Resisting
Terrible (-2): Planning

STUNTS

Ambush Hunter: ϖthons always go first in the first round of a physical conflict unless someone ambushes them.

Crushing Coils: If they trap someone in their coils (by creating an advantage), ϖthons can use Physique to make physical attacks in subsequent rounds.

Magnetic Push/Pull: The ϖthons can create an advantage with Physique to pull in magnetic objects within two zones. If successful, they can invoke the aspect to shoot metal objects back; treat it as a Shoot Fair (+2) attack against every non-ϖthon in two zones.

STRESS

1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

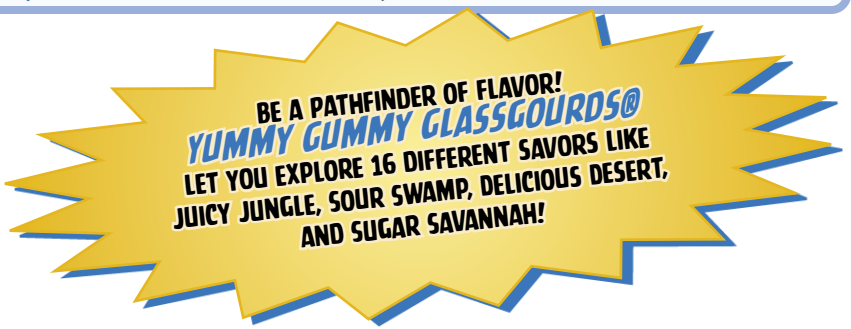
2 **Mild:**
2 **Mild:**

GLASSGOURDS

A plant that appears like a large hourglass filled with water. Its two halves are separated by a filter-like apparatus that is the main body. It feeds by filtering bacteria and microorganisms out of water. It stores safe drinking water and is thus one of the most important plants for an archaeonaut to recognize. Due to it filtering at a constant rate, these plants can also keep time with surprising accuracy. An inexperienced pathfinder might accidentally drink from the lookalike plant, the Foolsgourd. These contain water that induces nausea and mild hallucinations.

Glassgourds

Aspects: Saving Time and Lives; Watch out for Foolsgourds!



THE LOST GUARDIAN

Stories tell of a massive being hewn from stone and alloy, veins of energy pulsing quietly underneath layers of flowers and moss. It is said to have been guarding a Demiurge ruin long ago. It now roams throughout the Wildernexus, seemingly content to tend to its inhabitants.

The Lost Guardian may appear anywhere within the Wildernexus with the special designation of caring for its flora and fauna. It has been observed regulating algae blooms, tending to injured creatures, and, on rare occasions, defending settlements from attack.

PLOT SEED

It's up to you where and how the Lost Guardian appears. Is it located in one single Wildernexus? Does each location have a Guardian? Is the same Guardian moving between them, adapting its form to match the local habitat? What machinations of the Masters might be making it sick and lash out against those it would normally protect?

The Lost Guardian

Boss (Beast): Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Ancient Elemental of Nature
Trouble: Sees Matters in Black and White
Other Aspects: Healing Presence; Mysterious Gift from the Gods?; Kill the Guardian, Kill the Forest

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Will
Superb (+5): Physique, Shoot
Great (+4): Empathy, Crafts, Notice

STUNTS

Healing Touch: If the Guardian is not poisoned or corrupted itself, it can use Empathy to heal any other organic or cybernetic lifeform it can touch, removing poisons and knitting wounds. With consequences, treat this as removing the unfriendly invokes and starting the healing process.
Guardian Reborn: The guardian cannot be completely killed so long as the Wildernexus is healthy.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1]
Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] Mild:
[2] Mild:
[4] Moderate:
[6] Severe:

NOTES

If attacked, the Guardian will defend itself with violent swings of its massive arms or fire energy beams from its core.
The Lost Guardian is big; you may consider using the optional Scale rules from page 442.

WILDERNEXUS HAZARDS

The Wildernexus is full of bizarre natural phenomena that make traversing it very difficult. Listed below are a couple of things to consider in this regard.

If you want to emulate the cliffhangers of adventure games, Countdowns are a great way to go (see page 363 for rules). These can make interesting scenes all on their own and give a nice contrast to combat. They can also be used IN combat—if so, you might consider adding another box to the track, giving them a little more time to respond if you're feeling generous.

TREACHEROUS TERRAIN

The Wildernexus can be full of dangerous areas that make travel perilous at the best of times, let alone under unfriendly circumstances.

The Rope Bridge: The only way across the canyon is via a worn-out rope bridge, swaying in the wind. It can have aspects such as **Frayed Ropes** and **Inky Depths Below**.

- **Type of Scene:** Challenge in three parts. The bridge is delicate, and cannot support the weight of all the Champions at once.
- **Part one:** Carefully starting the crossing, watching out for rotten boards (Notice or Physique)
- **Part two:** Getting past the middle of the bridge without panicking yourself or others (Will or Deceive)
- **Part three:** Gently getting across without collapsing the bridge (Athletics or Stealth)
    - **Alternate Parts:** avoid detection while being shot at or chased.
    - **Mind the Gap:** You can compel the aspect "Frayed Ropes" to make people **Hang From the Edge** (see below).

Hang from the Edge: Should a person fall from a bridge, this leaves them literally hanging off a cliff!

Dangling on the Edge!

Type: Obstacle + Countdown
Aspects: **Strong Winds**
Opposition: +3
Countdown: ☐☐☐ or their Physique; whichever is higher.
Trigger: First person to fail an Athletics roll to cross or climb.
Trigger: The dangling person fails their attempt to climb.
Trigger: An exchange elapses.
Outcome: The person plummets into **Inky Depths Below**

WEIRD WEATHER

Weather makes very little sense in the Wildernexus. Millennia of terraforming and misfiring Demiurge technology has made erratic weather rip through the Wildernexus with frightening frequency.

Sky-Rivers

Spiraling torrents of water that fly through the sky, dropping torrential rain upon everything below them. One can ride them great distances, but their unpredictable appearance makes them hard to rely on. They may suddenly rise from any large body of water, whisking away any nearby creatures.

Caught in the Riptide!

Type: Limitation

SPECIAL RULES

When a character first falls into or sucked up by a sky-river riptide, they are immediately moved one zone along with the current

Freeing someone or yourself from the riptide is difficulty Fair (+2)

After every round, if the victim is still trapped, move them to another zone. Anyone taken off the map or to another location is considered taken out of action.

Intentionally Riding the Sky-River Rapids

Type: Obstacle

ASPECTS

Finding the Riptide; Staying Upright; Jumping off at the Right Time; Landing Safely

Shraphail

Microscopic debris seeps into the water and is carried up into the sky only to fall like hail. Unfortunately, this particulate shraphail is incredibly dangerous, having the potential to lacerate anything in its way and infect any machine it comes into contact with a debilitating virus. Taking solid cover is advised, as one never knows when hail could be shraphail.

Shraphail

Type: Limitation

SKILL

Weapon:2

SPECIAL RULES

Any robots or Glowbots caught in the Shraphail do not take damage but gain the mild consequence **Viral Glitch**.

For rules on *Weapon Rating in Limitations*, see page 367.

Auroara

The night sky is filled with blinding lights in certain regions. However, these auroara lights do not quietly twinkle—rather, they roar with the might of a jet engine. The location has the **Hypnotic Lights** and **Deafening Noise** aspects.

FLORA

The vibrant and verdurous Umdaar would be naught without its native wildlife. The plants here share the same cybernetic enhancements as the animals, inseparably linked as symbiotes.

Pitcher Plants

A sweet, alluring scent sends many tumbling into a bubbling vat of corrosive acid. These come in all shapes and sizes—some are adorned with glowing lights, and others are dangerously subtle. They wait for creatures to stumble in, then wait as they are quickly reduced to nutrients for the plant to absorb.

Pitcher Plant

Type: Obstacle + Countdown
Opposition: Good (+3)
Countdown: ☐☐☐

TRIGGERS

Trigger: Someone is pulled into the Pitcher Plant!
Trigger: An exchange elapses.
Trigger: Someone tries to free themselves or another victim from the plant but fails.

OUTCOMES

The victim takes eight stress each round until they concede or are taken out of action, either due to suffocation or the deadly acid.

ASPECTS

Supersticky; Panic Inducing!

Exploding Plants

Explosions are a common form of seed dispersion on Umdaar, leading many to joke about the dangerous flora that populates the Wildernexus. When algae grow too rapidly, it will condense into a ball and then explode outwards. A hissing cactus will explode, sending needles everywhere. When certain trees are exposed to fire, they will explode, shedding flaming bark in all directions.

Hissing Cactus

Type: Limitation + Countdown

HAZARD

Weapon:2 to anyone touching or entering the zone

Countdown: ☐☐

Trigger: Someone disturbs the cactus.

Trigger: An exchange elapses.

Outcome: Everyone in the cactus's zone and the neighboring zone suffers an Weapon:2 shooting attack.

Exploding Obsidipine Trees

Type: Countdown

HAZARD

Countdown: ☐☐☐

Trigger: Exposes a tree to fire

Trigger: An exchange elapses

Outcome: A chain reaction of razor-sharp crystal seeds shoot in every direction as a Shoot Fantastic (+6) attack against anyone not in cover.

FAUNA

The animals of Umdaar range from massive to microscopic, from docile to deadly, and everything in between. They are similarly infused with Demiurge tech, which has grown and evolved with them.

You Are But Prey

Sometimes, you are the hunter—sometimes, you are the hunted. Most creatures do not hunt people as they are sinewy and have too many bones for so little meat. Rarely, one will happen upon a taste for flesh, and you happen to be made of flesh.

Woolly Mammosaurus Rex

Boss (Beast): Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Hairy Dinosauroid Animal
Trouble: Dumb and Hungry
Other Aspects: Thick Hide; Sharp Teeth and Tusks; Stubborn

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Physique
Superb (+5): Fight, Notice
Great (+4): Athletics, Provoke, Will
Poor (-1): Planning, Self-control

STUNTS

Natural Strong and Tough: The Woolly Mammosaurus Rex has Weapon:2 and Armor:2
Thick Hide: The Woolly Mammosaurus Rex may use Physique to defend against Shoot attacks unless the attacker targets a specific weak point (i.e., has a targeting aspect).
Grasping Trunk: When using their trunk to grab someone or something using Physique, on their next action, a Woolly Mammosaurus Rex may choose one: to use them as a club treating Physique as if it were Fight, or to throw it treating Physique as it were Shoot. If the object picked up and the object targeted are both characters, treat it as an attack against them both (split between the two defenders).
Army of One: If they are the only threat in the conflict, a Woolly Mammosaurus Rex may take two actions each turn instead of one; they may not target the same target twice in a single turn.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1]
Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**
[4] **Moderate:**

For more **Boss Beasts**, see *the Lost Guardian* on page 199; or see page 346 for advice on making your own.

Nanoswarms

Ravenous swarms of tiny nano-organisms float around and devour any material they come across to replicate. The swarm's only directive is to consume anything and everything, save for the dirt and the water. Nanoswarms can leave a verdant landscape barren in mere hours.

Nanoswarms

Type: Obstacle + Countdown
Opposition: Mediocre (+0) to Good (+3), difficulty is equal to Countdown minus one.
Countdown: ☐☐☐☐
Trigger: The swarm appears on the horizon.
Trigger: One round.
Outcome: Any material or person (organic, silicate, or metallic) left in the open air in this location is devoured / taken out.

PLOT SEEDS

The following plot hooks can be used in your stories or as Adventure aspects.

SIGNAL 363

A mysterious and regular signal has been picked up, seemingly originating deep within a Demiurge ruin. Investigate the source of the signal and determine why it has been activated after being dormant for so long.

THE GREAT TERRAFORMING PROJECT

A team of archaeonauts has discovered the remains of one of the Great Terraformers, a piece of the immense machines used to originally craft the landscape of Umdaar itself. Unfortunately, the Masters have caught wind of this and will stop at nothing to turn the Wildernexus into a poisonous bog suitable for their nefarious purposes.

ORPHANED CUB

A young robeast has been separated from its migrating herd, and its father has died protecting it. Reunite it with its herd so it may grow up safely.

THE FOREST KING'S TREASURE

A Master has stolen an important artifact belonging to the Forest King, causing great duress. The local Warden communities come to beseech you for help. Track down the artifact and return it to the Forest King's domain before the catastrophic consequences begin to set in.

RUNNING A PATHFINDER GAME

If players show interest in a Pathfinder campaign, this suggests that they're interested in collaborative storytelling, exploration, treasure, and/or survival.

Mission Types to consider: Aid, Escort. See the *Adventure Generator* on page 401 for more.

COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

Let the players contribute to the building of the game. Make sure your players are aware of how they can create aspects including by spending fate points. Also, involve them when creating the environment—when you describe a room, explain the basic function (e.g., a prisoner's cell), and ask them how it is meaningful to them or what past experiences they associate with it.. As time goes on, they can fill in the blanks for more, like relationships with NPCs they need to rescue or rumors they have heard about wild biomes they need to traverse, and eventually details about the Masters and major plot points.

Lastly, for the ultimate challenge in collaborative exploration: open your mind to the prospect of letting someone else be the Game Master. If you have a group of experienced Fate players, every session may have a new GM switching off after every adventure. It can be very daunting to let someone else take the wheel of "your" campaign, but if the other players are able and eager, let them take over sometimes. Your group will get to experience new styles of play, and you (the GM) will finally get to take a break and be a player for a change!

EXPLORATION

Keep things moving. Don't linger in one town too long—1-3 sessions should be long enough to address most problems, then move on to the next. If you want important NPCs to appear, have them be able to find the Champions, or create a way to communicate with them. You can also use "in media res" to start in the middle of an adventure or fast-forward after an adventure to get through the epilogue quicker.

Focus on shorter arcs. Short adventures through the Wildernexus that last one session; dungeon crawls that last one or two sessions. Don't put tons of energy into long arcs until you get a better sense of what's important to the players. One-session stories also make it easier to play with a rotating play group or busy schedules.

Umdaar always has one more surprise up its sleeve, one more region to explore. There are amazing discoveries all over the world. You have permission to break any law of physics or thermodynamics. Want an ice palace on a lake of lava suspended in the sky? Go ahead. The Champions have explored the entire map? Surprise, thanks to a dimensional shift, there are now brand-new cities to discover in your own backyard. GMs can also treat **Wondrous, Unpredictable World** as a world aspect that you can invoke to introduce new surprises.

TREASURE

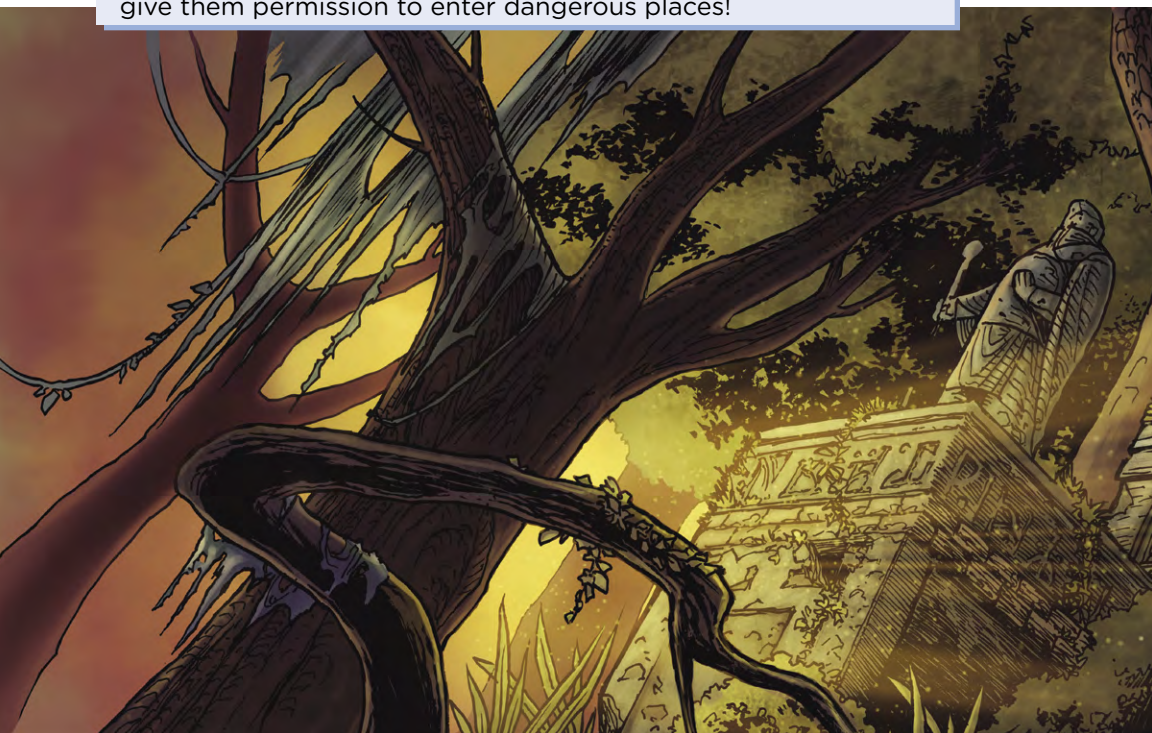
Umdaar is designed to discourage players from plundering artifacts and taking things without permission. Gear is usually not mechanically significant unless it is represented by an aspect or stunt, so there's little value in acquiring more stuff—however treasure hunting is fun. So, if the players are looking for opportunities to explore and seek out lost treasures, don't be afraid to say "yes" if it fits the story. "Please go into our nearby ruins and bring back treasure so we can share it" can be a perfectly normal way to start a quest. You can reward players with treasure in the manner of simple magical artifacts and strong artifacts; see *Artifacts* on page 218 for more.

You can also reward the players with fancy new ways to get around the continent; this lets them fast-travel back to old places without incident but still let them go on perilous treks to new places. Gifts such as robot steeds, airships, teleport pads are a great way to reward them with less chance of disrupting the power level.

SURVIVAL

Survival themes are about feeling the scarcity of resources and the suspense of imminent danger. Present tough challenges that will require them to spend fate points to survive. When a player has 0 or 1 fate point, they are more vulnerable to dangers and less able to pull out food, drink, or medical supplies. However, too much of this can be taxing, so stay attentive to the mood of the table and alternate with scenes, episodes, or even arcs that give the players a breather.

Champions—and Pathfinders in particular—go where they are wanted; have Wardens of the Wildernexus **ask** them for help and give them permission to enter dangerous places!



THE RUINS

This section covers some of the common themes for running a ruins adventure, and some threats the Champions might encounter.

The variety of ruins has staggered generations of archaeonauts. While some ruins have similar features adapted into the architectural vernacular, others are constructed with unreplicable techniques. Thus, when referring to a ruin, one can mean anything from impregnable labyrinths to spires of quartz veined with circuitry. Other less fanciful ruins exist, and some myths speak of sites with deadly reputations.

What ruins have in common is that they are products of eons-advanced minds. Ruins are prized for their technological sophistication and feared for their ability to enact wide-scale effects in an area. The reasons for these vary, and often, the intentions behind the Demiurge's designs are unclear.

When a ruin appears or is abruptly activated, it is often discovered when the local environment is radically altered in some way. Examples of phenomena accompanying a ruin's activation include terraformation and dramatic atmospheric changes. These signs often trigger a race for archaeonauts to journey through the Wildernexus to find a lost ruin before the Masters do. They may discover that a local community has long inhabited the "lost" ruin! In the Freelands, protocols have been established regarding formal liaising with these neighbors. The Masters, being ruthless warlords, ignore any residents' idea of ownership or homeland and will seize a ruin if they have the means to absorb the coveted territory.



A NOTE ON DECOLONIZATION

The Demiurge left behind ruins. The history of Umdaar does not maintain that all these remnants were claimed fairly after their maker's departure. In particular, the acquisition methods need to be explored and differentiated between Masters and other claimants.

Historically, colonizers were quick to lay claim to artifacts and structures that were unguarded, seeing them as free for the taking because their originators weren't there—that and there was an asymmetry of power, often military, over the originators' descendants. Modern museums are replete with colonized peoples' ransacked cultural treasures. This notion of "might makes right" was horrific then, horrific now, and not one that the creators of ***Umdaar*** encourage in your games—the exception being with the antagonistic Masters, who maliciously conquer and seize regions and ruins, to the misfortune of others.

By contrast, many Umdaar sites that had been abandoned by the Demiurge and later inhabited do not fit a colonialistic formula. These ruin-based societies evolved with these ruins' presence in their lives after eons. Their relationship with the ruin results from syncretically adapting the work of the Demiurge into their practices and traditions. It is neither an act of colonization nor appropriation for a culture to emerge organically this way, particularly because violence was not done to the Demiurge for access to their leftover sites.

Groups may want to explore the idea that the Demiurge were the original raiders of the land that left relics of their conquest after their departure—a mark of colonization that is best handled by those they had previously conquered, just as we see in our troubled world.

Though ***Umdaar*** is a work of imagination, there is no need to re-imagine, let alone playfully reenact and perpetrate, the harmful narratives and positions of a colonizer over the colonized.

LOCATIONS

Ruins have such strategic value that many have been re-purposed as bases of operation or seats of power. Many archaeonauts make it their life missions to find and harness ruins for the good of their fellow bioforms. Unsurprisingly, the Masters would rather monopolize ruins for themselves. The greediest of the Masters absorb multiple ruins into their demesnes, believing that whoever controls these sites would gain substantial power. Were it not for the heroics of Free societies, many ruins would have been claimed for a Master's unscrupulous agenda—though that said, the Masters' willingness to eliminate fellow rivals also puts an effective check to the accumulation of ruins under a single usurper.

Most ruins have been explored in the Freelands and Dread Domains. Governments, Masters, et al., have excavated the breadth of their lands for ruins, hoping to find a tool of the Demiurge to benefit themselves. Because of this, interest has turned to the Wildernexus, where speculations abound that some ruins are yet unrevealed within its reaches.

THEMES AND TOUCHSTONES

Themes: dungeon crawl; mystery; investigation; mysticism; daring chases; badass archeology; treasure/MacGuffin hunt; ancient tech/wisdom; be careful what you wish for; religion vs. science

Touchstones: ***Indiana Jones; National Treasure; TinTin; Dragonball; Pirates of Dark Water; Laputa: Castle in the Sky; Myst; Ducktales; Ancient Aliens***

PLOT SEED: THE GET-BACKERS

Most of the artifacts the Champions will search for are in unexplored ruins. However, sometimes they're already stolen, and sitting in the vault of a greedy Master. Thus, in order to return the item to its rightful owners, the Champions may have to pull a heist! For inspiration, look at *Rebel Mission Template* on page 190.

INITIATING CONTACT

Because a ruin in the hands of a Master is frequently weaponized against others, members of the Freelands make it a point to investigate a ruin to see if anyone has claimed it. If the location has been abandoned for millennia, the ethical issues are minor. However, some ruins may have long-standing inhabitants. If these people have been uncontacted and are in a different state of technological advancement, Freelanders find themselves faced with an ethical dilemma—do they make contact or not?

Champions may find the desire to respect others' norms and values conflicting with their sense of responsibility. What if the indigenous people are vulnerable? What if a Master attacks them and captures the ruin? Wouldn't they be better served with allies? However, could the archaeonauts' presence upend their way of life?

There is no easy answer for this, and encountering a ruin raises heated debates on what to do if the new claimants were previously uncontacted. What both sides of the debate agree on is that they must not allow the Masters to exploit these peoples for their own cruel ends. The fundamental disagreement is on how to intervene. Too often, this leads to unsatisfying compromises on all sides.

Currently, the prevailing Pathfinder code behind contacting Wildernexus peoples simply states: **do not contact unless they are in clear and pressing danger**. Communities that approach Pathfinders of their own volition are asked if the Freelanders may tarry or travel in the Wildernexus. If permission is denied, the code of Pathfinders requires them to depart immediately and inform allies that the territory is claimed and not to be troubled. Excepting emergencies, if the people of the Wildernexuses did not ask for it, you do not give it. More than one serious faux pas has resulted from the nuance-lacking yet well-meaning unsolicited advice of a Freelander, often because advice felt condescending and pitying.

Dignitaries will be sent along with Pathfinders to those societies that welcome Freelanders so both parties can negotiate towards mutual benefit.

Freelanders tell cautionary tales of former Champions who became Masters in their own right. Driven either by greed and fear to protect themselves or misplaced sense of stewardship, these misguided leaders subjugated Wildernexuses peoples and their resources. The means do not justify the ends, and when leaders of the Freelands start hinting at such behavior, other communities quickly rally to bring them to their senses, and if they cannot, to bring them to justice.

The Laya Factory is an example of a ruin that has come to the attention of the Freelands. In the case of the Factory, the survivors of Laya requested help from all allies, even as they concentrated their skills towards a solution. See page 266.

RUINS OF MYSTERY

Below are ruins that have been explored and since populated by communities who served the Demiurge generations ago.

- The Tourmaline Tower (Freelands)
- Lunula (Dread Domain)

For even more thorough examples of ruins, see the following adventures:

- The Laya Factory on page 266
- The Perplexolis on page 275
- The Silent Spire on page 300
- Libratopolis on page 309

THE TOURMALINE TOWER (FREELANDS)

The Tourmaline Tower

Aspects: Ameliorating Aura; Renowned for its Services; Lying in Wait; Only the Unarmed are Welcome.

Issues: Spies among the Siblings; This Wound Needs a Rare Medicine; Getting too Old for This

A glowing spindle-shaped tower of emerald and watermelon pink crystal, the Tourmaline Tower is renowned as a center for healing and relaxation throughout the Freelands. Sunlight hits the Tower's facets and refracts into soothing light, literally tinting visitors' perceptions rosy. Exhausted and spent Champions love taking pleasure visits to the Tower, using its comforts to attend to their weary bodies. Such amenities include heated pools tiled with green and citrine crystals, where visitors conduct pleasant conversations poolside. Another favorite is the multifaceted private rooms that pump in steam, restoring vitality to their grateful occupants.

A feature that allows the heated pools and steam rooms is a ruby rod called the Hearth Wand. Stored underground, it serves as inexhaustible fuel for a system of furnaces that regulates temperature throughout leftover Demiurge plumbing. A nearby aqueduct supplies the Tower with fresh water.

The Tower is run by the Siblings of Palm and Fern, an order dedicated to Balm, a local deity with a portfolio of reflective restoration. These devotees mapped the Tower long ago. They will provide guided tours for a small offering and tell interesting trivia about the Tower's history of hosting famous visitors in its hexagonal halls.

Theorder has discovered texts—but not spread word of them—claiming that the Tourmaline Tower is a field hospital whose primary conditions for activation are signs of war. The order does not understand how the Tower can be roused, though clues hint that activation follows if a battle occurs near the Tower. They keep abreast of politics, reading for early signs of conflict. Additionally, a longstanding rule forbids weapons inside. Visitors who refuse to relinquish their arms are refused entry.

LUNULA [DREAD DOMAIN]

Lunula

Aspects: Everything Looks the Same; Oubliette; "Sleep Well, Dear Prince".
Issues: Syr Syrabus is Captured!; The Masters Strike a Deal!; Prison Break
Hidden Aspect: Secret Symbols

Seen from afar, the ruin called Lunula seems at odds with the vicious reputation of the Dread Domains. Thousands of snowy plinths dot the grounds' manicured grass, marble prisms that grow straight from the earth. Dendrites—snowflake-shaped formations of blue ice—glow opalescent at each plinth's base. Motes of light gently rise from the dendrites, blanketing the ruin in a fey aura. The air here is cool and tranquil.

To the unwary traveler Lunula looks like a place of rare succor, but resting there is a fatal mistake. Only a few survive encountering the ruin's guardians, yet their recollections conflict. The fewer who are welcome at the ruin share very little and cannot give detailed impressions—a consequence of dealing with Lunula's Master.

Lunula's Master has many personas, which she changes capriciously: the Schoolmarm, the Abbess, Gardening Mary, or Urchin Lass. The aspect she wears most recently is the Countess, though the title doesn't matter to her as she can be anything she puts her mind to—literally. Armed with an arsenal of telepathic tricks, it's a small matter for her to shift her appearance in people's perceptions. When she can't be bothered to construct a new identity, she simply wipes her true appearance from people's minds.

Consequently, her description varies, but whatever her form, she sports adamantine nails, sharply filed into pointed ovals. Her primary physical weapons, these talons possess considerable power, capable of perforating armor. These, coupled with her psychic abilities, have locals wondering why the Countess hasn't bid for more power. Despite her perceived lack of ambition, she preserves her demesne by being useful to other Masters by leveraging her ruin's properties—specifically through a carceral use of her powers.

Despite its enchanting airs, Lunula is a prison, housing minions that have become liabilities to rival Masters, or personages that the Masters need to be contained and stored for later use or study. It's a dumping ground of missing persons with power and influence, the power contained by Lunula's plinths. Through a secret process, the Countess can activate a plinth to absorb a being into itself. This places them in suspended animation. Trapped beings do not age, require sustenance, nor have any awareness of their surroundings; they are invisible to detection. A plinth can be physically destroyed, though care is needed to avoid damaging its contents.

Knowing a plinth's contents is a challenge on its own. Because each plinth is otherwise unmarked, rescuers are stymied when confronted by legions of seemingly-identical stones with potentially fatal contents. The Countess, of course, knows what's inside every plinth. Fortunately for Umdaar, her powers of imprisonment function only within Lunula.

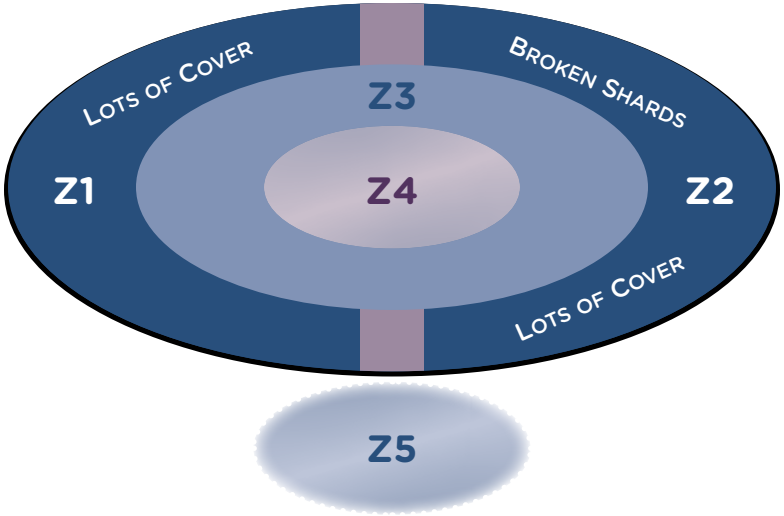
ENVIRONMENT

The entire valley is dotted with circles of mirror-glass obelisks, arrayed in circles, but the core is at the valley's base, in the Center Stones.

The following is an example of a thoroughly mapped-out environment with zone aspects. See page 383 for more on Environments.

Recommended zones include:

- Z1: The left half of the Outer rings that has the aspect, **Lots of Cover** to shield you and your target.
- Z2: The right half of the Outer rings, similar to the left, but with all but one mirror plinth smashed. The zone has the aspect: **Lots of Cover** to shield you and your target; **Broken Shards** which counts as Weapon:1 to anyone crawling or on barefoot.
- Z3: The penultimate row is guarded by several of the Countess's elemental henchmen, the Frostmantises. If anyone attempts to enter the center ring without the Countess's permission, the elementals will fight to stop them.
- Z4: The heart of Lunula and the seat of power. In it is a large mirror slab on the ground. An altar? A control panel? A door to the underground? Also, the location where newly captured prisoners are found.
- Z5: The Mirrorverse. Each of the mirrored prisms connects to a mirror dimension. The countess can enter this dimension from any uncracked mirror; and step out of it into any zone, from any uncracked obelisk. Anyone brave enough to enter the mirror or unlucky enough to be dragged in by the Countess suffers Weapon:2 mental stress. Leaving the Mirrorverse is a Fair (+2) test of Will, and puts the character in a random zone. Arriving in the zone of their choosing requires a second Far (+2) test of an appropriate skill (i.e., Lore or Investigate).



PLAYING THE COUNTESS

We intentionally left the Countess ambiguous to allow your group to work her origin story into your campaign. A common interpretation is that she is, unbeknownst to herself, an A.I. Guardian left behind by the Demiurge and has gone a bit haywire. However, add your own angle: maybe she's a Master that *thinks* she's an AI or pretends to be one to sow fear. Maybe the ruin's AI works as a psychic-parasite, taking over a new humanoid host every century (which would explain her shifting appearances and moods); if so, the humanoid known as "The Countess" may be just another victim who needs your help.

We've left a few possible ways for the players to beat her, outside of brute force: she is terrified of being trapped; she cannot travel through broken mirrors, and broken glass can be used to cut through her armor; her obsession with being useful to a greater power can be used to manipulate her, distract her, break her and even turn her to good.

Frostmantis

Filler: Good (+3)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Insect-Humanoid Shaped Construct of Ice and Shadow

SKILLS

Good (+3): Slash and Grab

Average (+1): Seeking

STRESS

1 1 1

STUNTS

Flying Barbs: A Frostmantis may use Slash and Grab to throw ice barbs up to one zone away. Anyone struck by the barbs must make a Fair (+2) Physique role to break free. Otherwise they are stuck in their zone.

Crushing Pincers: Their close combat attacks have Weapon:2, it does not apply to Flying Barbs.

The Countess (She/They)

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Many-face Immortal Master of Lunula

Trouble: Eager to Please

Other Aspects: Adamantine Talons; Psychic Supreme; What AM I?

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Stealth

Superb (+5): Fight, Provoke

Great (+4): Will, Athletics, Notice

Good (+3): Physique, Deceive, Burglary, Lore

Fair (+2): Empathy, Shoot, Investigate, Resources

Average (+1): Every remaining skill

STUNTS

Ruin Shaper: When within the ruins, the Countess may use Will as if it were Crafts to create any structure or obstacles she needs, as well as to twist or rearrange the maze-like structure.

Adamantine Talons: Whenever the Countess successfully Fights with her claws, she may choose: to deal an additional two stress or inflict a minor consequence. Some examples include Snared, hamstrung, or Hurled Into The Mirrorverse.

Shimmering Escape: Whenever the countess successfully defends against a physical attack with Athletics, she may immediately move through any unbroken mirror and into the Mirrorverse, provided no aspect prevents her.

Thick Skin: The Countess has Armor:2 to all physical harm, except against Demiurge weapons and mirror shards.

Free Spirit: The Countess has Armor:3 against mental damage, provided her movement isn't restricted and she considers herself useful.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1

Mental 1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**

4 **Moderate:**

4 **Moderate:**

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are tied to the past, often offering insights into history, cultures, or beliefs that may have changed over time. Some have special abilities imbued by the Demiurges, the verdant life on Umdaar, or the people that once held them.

Many times historical artifacts will be returned to the people they once belonged to. However, if a Champion is bestowed with an artifact or keeps one that they find, here are some rules.

ARTIFACT TYPES AND THEIR COST

Generally, there are three kinds of artifacts: **Key Artifacts, Simple Artifacts, and Strong Artifacts**, each with different costs to obtain. Of course, an artifact can be more than one thing: a Starblade of Su'ul is both a Strong Artifact AND a key artifact MacGuffin; see page 232 for *The MacGuffin*.

Key Artifacts

Like a quest item in a video game. The artifact may have a significant **narrative** effect (e.g., a data crystal or a key to a ruin's entrance); however, it doesn't have any mechanical impact (i.e., doesn't give a Champion a stunt or aspect).

Cost: The party is granted this item at no cost to the Champions.

Simple Artifacts

Each simple artifact is built like a single stunt.

Cost: During an adventure, a player can use a simple artifact until the end of the session by paying one of the following costs:

- Spend one fate point.
- Forgo one of your stunts until the end of the session—for example, you might holster your weapon to use the artifact. Note: You cannot pick a stunt with limited frequency use (e.g., usable only once per session or per adventure) if it has already been used.

Strong Artifacts

Strong artifacts are more powerful than a simple artifact; and generally worth two stunts.

Cost: During an adventure, you can use a strong artifact until the end of the session by paying one of the following costs:

- Spend two fate points.
- Spend one fate point and forgo one of your stunts until the end of the session.
- Spend no fate points; you can instead take a moderate consequence, representing the artifact transforming you.

Artifact Discount: These costs reflect an artifact found near the beginning of a session. If it is found right before the last scene, halve or ignore the cost for this session. The GM can adjust costs as appropriate to the artifact's power and utility in the game.

Smooth Rides

Artifacts can be vehicles such as air skiffs, a team of horsebots, or hover chariots. These don't need much in the way of rules—an aspect does fine—but they can grant your group the ability to journey to farther lands and have high-speed chase scenes. These ride artifacts don't have a cost unless they are folded into a single character's concept (e.g., a Knight taking a cyber-horse as her steed).

Key artifacts that are Vehicles also give a narrative reason why the Champions needed to spend a whole session braving the Fish-Spine Mountains early in the campaign but can later warp straight to the valley on the other side without incident.

Permanent Use

Suppose a player wants to permanently gain the effect of a simple or strong artifact. In that case, you may pay the same cost as above, but with refresh instead of fate points—for example, to permanently use a powerful artifact, you would spend two refresh. Treat this the same way you would rewrite a stunt or buy one at a minor milestone.

If the group reaches a major milestone, you can permanently add a simple artifact by forgoing the additional refresh point and the additional stunt you could have bought with it.

Timing

If you're going to grant an artifact, it is helpful to do so at the end of a major milestone; this means the Champion can more easily pay for the stunt. This also fits narratively, as a big showdown naturally revolves around a powerful artifact in high demand or facing a powerful enemy with an artifact.

HIDDEN POWERS

As a Champion grows stronger and gains refresh, there's nothing to say those stunts can't be added to an artifact they already have—perhaps the artifact has more powers hidden within it, waiting to be discovered! These might be triggered by the Champion's personal growth, or by their helpful Artihacker or Runekeeper teammate.

SIMPLE ARTIFACTS

For examples of Simple Artifacts, we recommend looking at *Magical Item and Demiurge Tech Stunts* on page 87. Here's one more example you could use:

Weapon Seed: You find a Demiurge weapon seed, a symbiotic artifact that can graft onto any weapon. Pick from the EZ-Stunt list of weapons and armor (page 89); you can add the stunt associated with that weapon to a weapon or artifact in your possession, merging the two forms—e.g., turning a sword into a gun-sword or letting your whip harden into a spear at will. Alternatively, you may graft the weapon seed onto your body, replacing one of your hands with the weapon, which means you can never become **Unarmed**.

STRONG ARTIFACTS

Here's a selection of sample Strong artifacts.

Briozia, the Heartsun: One of the five lost Starblades of Su'ul. Once per scene, when you attack with the Heartsun, you may call out the weapon's name to gain +2 to Fight. If you hit, you may deal two additional mental stress. Alternatively, instead of dealing ANY stress you may inflict a Moderate Consequence to the target, showing them becoming empathetic to your cause.

> Note: "call out the weapon's name" is a suggested trigger but put accessibility first. This could be signing the name of your weapon, telepathically sharing it, or using the means of communication specific to your bioform.

The Golden Imp: You find a statue roughly one foot tall, resembling a creature that's part monkey and part snake. It immediately springs to life and starts harassing you, nipping at your fingers and throwing rocks at you. It holds a bracelet in its hand, gained by anyone who defeats it. If you obtain the bracelet, you can control the imp—well, you can *mostly* control it, as it's mischievous and the GM can compel its aspect to cause you trouble. Treat it as an Animal Companion stunt (see page 86). It has Fair (+2) in Burglary and Athletics, and the aspect **STEAL THE SHINY!**

Mask of Menos: You have found a mask created by the goddess Menos, the only one to outfox the trickster god Argananth. This artifact draws out desires like a leech draws blood and uses them to build illusions. You gain +2 to Empathy when creating an advantage to discern who in a target's life motivates them. If you succeed while wearing the mask, you may use Deceive to cast an illusion, disguising yourself as that person in their eyes. You also gain a +2 to Deceive to defend against their investigation.

If the GM wants, they can use this chart to generate motivations:

2dF	−	■	+
−	Fear	Greed	Anger
■	Envy/Jealousy	Joy/Comfort	Ambition
+	Pride	Faith/Hope	Love

Whenever the target attempts to see through the illusion, you have +2 to Deceive to defend against it. Other people will see your holographic disguise too, but you don't gain the bonus to defend against them— they're less easily fooled!

Astrolabe of the Twin Suns: The astrolabe is a golden disc with a crystal eyepiece, which allows you to use Umdaar's twin suns to foresee the future. When the astrolabe captures the first ray of the red star in the morning or the last ray of the green star at night, it fills the user's mind with strange prophetic visions. Using the astrolabe, you can use Investigate or Lore to create advantages called vision aspects, rolling against a Fair (+2) difficulty. By default, visions are aspects of undefined feelings that can be invoked to defend against attacks, traps, or wild guesses. Alternatively, the GM may give the vision aspect a more specific definition, like a snapshot of the road you should take or a threat you will encounter. You can create these once in the morning and in the evening; generally twice per session, but never twice in the same scene.

TWISTED FATE

We encourage GMs to add extra vision aspects that might disturb the Champion. Perhaps they foresee what appears to be the gruesome death of a teammate or a teammate's vile betrayal!

DISTINGUISHING CHAMPIONS FROM MASTERS

As mentioned previously, we encourage the table to think of Champions as heroes, not colonizers or tomb robbers. A Champion might take an artifact that doesn't belong to them, not because they think their actions are "right," but because they are tempted by the power it offers or the desperate need they have. Champions are mortal and make mistakes or act selfishly, just like the rest of us. The character might be subjected to a self-compel with an aspect tied to their all-consuming love of treasure, devotion to a cause, or pursuit of knowledge (see page 122). The player knows that taking the artifact would be a bad decision introducing drama, complications, and even repercussions. For example, their friends in the community feel betrayed, the ruin starts collapsing, or the Masters hunt you down.

In the rare situation when a Champion steals a cultural artifact, it should add tension, make the threats more personal, and pave the way for character growth.

The emphasis, of course, is on a character **learning from their mistake**. If they survive the ordeal, the player is strongly encouraged to change their aspect to reflect this growth.

> After an enlightening adventure, Qwora has their Motivation aspect changed from **I Must Steal the Shiny** to **I Must Steal the Shiny from Bad People**. This could mean that they still have sticky fingers but have learned not to steal from innocents.

For more examples of crafting an adventure around a moral, see the *Saturday Morning Cartoon Dial* on page 424.

Of course, a handy way to teach the lesson, "don't steal the artifact," is with a Cursed Object!

CURSED OBJECTS

Considering how many traps stand between you and the artifacts, you can surmise that the Demiurge didn't want just anyone getting their hands on them. Thus, the Champions shouldn't be too surprised to find that an artifact is not quite what it appears. Here are some curses or twists to add to some of your artifacts.

Curse of Form: You feel a pain writhing through your flesh upon grasping the artifact. Your body starts changing into something new, something hideous. You're changed into a new bioform (page 57); nominate someone else at the table to pick the new one for you. You receive a severe consequence describing the painful process as your very DNA slowly morphs into that other form—for example, a humanoid that rolls **Cyborg** might find nanobots rebuilding her nerves into circuits, giving her the severe consequence **Turning Into a Cold Machine**. Once your consequence recovers, you gain a free stunt that reflects the strength you gained from fighting against it or the strange powers you gained by embracing it. You may rewrite your high concept to reflect this.

> A Curse of Form artifact is also a fun way to rewrite a bioform for a player who is getting bored. Their Champion might grab a cursed artifact, or heroically save a teammate from grabbing it (prompting the transformation). However, this does get very close to body horror; review your safety tools and make sure that everyone is okay with this kind of change.

Curse of Compulsion: The artifact carries with it great power, but it also tugs at your mind. You gain a trouble aspect, describing something that the artifact compels you to do—e.g., **Must Accept Every Challenge; I Only Speak the Truth; It's All MINE!** Compels on this trouble are particularly strong: resisting one costs you two fate points. When the trouble is compelled to cause you minor trouble, it grants you one fate point as normal, but you gain two fate points instead if it gets you in serious trouble. This trouble stays with you, even if you don't have the artifact on you—if you want it gone, why not make an adventure of it?

Curse of Mirrors: The treasure chamber contains not one artifact but three identical ones. Anyone who touches a fake treasure is immediately attacked by their mirror image, which has the same skills and stunts. Defeating a mirror image does not destroy it—it merely retreats into the mists. Now there's an evil doppelganger out there, spoiling your good name, waiting for the perfect opportunity to replace you.

> Curse of Mirrors are particularly fun for Dignitary Campaigns, as they can sabotage your party's reputation aspect.

RUNNING AN ARCHAEONAUT GAME

If players show interest in an Archaeonaut campaign, this suggests that they're interested in mystery, suspense, and/or treasure hunting.

Mission Types to consider: Discover, Retrieve. See page 401 for the *Adventure Generator*.

MYSTERY

Running mysteries can require a bit of prep-work on the GM's part. However, there's nothing wrong with using a pre-made adventure, or using the GM generator as a framework. Simply create a random story the day before, and add in elements that further your story.

> If you're not familiar with the concept of the "Five Room Dungeon," we recommend looking it up online.

Archaeonaut adventures tend to run in longform campaigns (see page 228 for advice). In particular, consider using a *Dismantled MacGuffin* (page 232), as this takes a core theme and stretches it over an arc.

Spend your energy creating the climactic moments, like a dungeon's entrance and final objective room. Don't be afraid to have players contribute some of the stuff in between.

Leave little breadcrumbs along the way: half a data crystal, a key, a broken wheel, a non-functioning artifact, a word scratched on a wall. The GM doesn't have to know what they mean at the beginning, but you can always weave these threads together later. A good example of breadcrumbs is the pre-made adventure *Feat Fit for a Wedding* (page 297), which features a lot of clues and lets the players shape the interpretation.

If you need a mystery to dangle in front of them, consider some of the following:

- What does this derelict factory or dismantled MacGuffin do?
- What project did the Demiurge leave unfinished?
- Who or what were the Demiurge? Gods? Daemons? Aliens scientists? Time-travelers?
- What happened to the Demiurge?

Listen to the players as they speculate. They might create an even better answer than you had.

SUSPENSE

If you're trying to build suspense for an adventure, have the players make suggestions on note cards. Read them silently to yourself, and don't share the suggestions aloud. The players wait to see if their contribution is part of the final reveal. Meanwhile, the other players will still be surprised.

In a short session or a one-shot, you might skip straight to the dungeon crawling. However, in longer games, you can add obstacles on the way to the ruins—think of it like a mini-adventure in the Freelands, Dread Domains, or Wildernexus to get to the destination. Use this opportunity to showcase PCs that haven't had as much time to shine; for example, maybe the Champions need a smooth talker to get past an obstructing Freeland bureaucrat.

TREASURE HUNTING

Like a Pathfinder game, you can reward players with treasure in the manner of Demiurge artifacts.

A huge part of ruin exploration is traps; for pre-made traps, see the adventure *The Hand of Rag-Nator* on page 307. For tips on creating your own, see *Obstacles* on page 373.

PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN

Umdaar is a world full of fantastic possibilities, strange beauty, undeniable danger, and a lot of hope. It is also a world your playgroup can make their own because there's always room for you to decide the truth behind its many mysteries.

There's a lot of setting information that we've provided in this book, and each concept we've introduced has multiple layers to it to hand more narrative power over to playgroups. The kinds of stories that you and your friends can tell in a setting like this are numerous. Deciding on the ones you want to focus on will make your game your own.



CAMPAIGN FORMATS

Your adventures will generally fall into one of three formats: a standalone, a longform, or an episodic.

STANDALONE

A Standalone game, also called a one-shot, is similar to a movie—a single plotline that can be achieved in a short time. This might be a single session or take as many as two-to-five sessions. Standalone or single sessions are great ways of introducing both a game world and its system to new players. They can give curious people a taste of the setting and see how it suits them. They also don't require a high level of commitment. Because the action and story are contained within a single adventure, no wider arc is required for the characters.

Banner: Any of them! However, if you're playing a really short event with strangers, the Rebel and Pathfinder banners make for quick simple adventures.

Continent Map: Standalone games might use the Mini-map from the Banner sheet, with a few starting regions. However, they are unlikely to use the large Continent Map.

Here are a few pointers you may want to consider if you're going to do a plug-and-play, self-contained session of ***Umdaar***.

IF YOU CAN, ASK WHAT YOUR PLAYERS WANT OUT OF THIS BEFOREHAND

If you're able, it's always good to get an idea of what your playgroup would like to do **before** preparing anything. Even if you're not building from scratch, the Game Worksheet can still be a useful tool to learn what sort of adventure they'd like to immerse themselves in.

It also helps the players share their Deal Breakers and Conditionals, which is a part of *Safety Tools* (see page 18).

HAVE A SAFETY TOOL AT THE TABLE

Start the game session by introducing a tool like the X-Card, as an essential step of tabletop roleplaying (see *Safety Tools* on page 18). It shows players that their comfort levels and boundaries take precedence, plus this makes your one-shot immediately more accessible to players. This practice is especially useful in a convention setting, where it's likely that your players are coming from all over the place. They may not know each other well, or may not be entirely comfortable in as public an engagement as a con.

PREPARE PREGENERATED CHARACTERS FOR PLAYERS TO USE

Lean into some archetypes of Umdaar's touchstones (e.g., ***She-Ra, Avatar the Last Airbender***) that a general audience is familiar with, and stat them in a way that reflects what these archetypes are best at. This will save you a lot of time and heartache! This is especially true for players who are new to either Fate or tabletop roleplaying in general. Character creation can be intimidating or overwhelming for players unfamiliar with the setting, the system, or roleplaying.

When you're pre-generating player characters, try to make the attributes, skills, and other traits which the bioforms possess elements that would be useful for your particular adventure. Give your players the option to customize names, bioforms, and other personal aspects of the character themselves—but if they're not feeling up to it, that should be okay too.

For example, for a group of four players, you might:

- Print out at least six contrasting Playbooks
- Print a page of miscellaneous stunts (matching the Banner or EZ-Stunts)
- Print off any other helpful handouts

KEEP THINGS SIMPLE

One-shots are meant to be self-contained. There is no need to go for anything overly complex or design a campaign with vast, multiple branches of possibility or choice. It's perfectly fine to stick to a scope that you're comfortable with and to know how you'd like the flow of your one-shot to go. Have a clear beginning and a clear end of things in mind. Make allowances for—at most—two to three decision points. Feel free to write out some Pre-Generated scenes or idea seeds for yourself to lean into as well.

Try to determine the desired run-time for your one-shot. Will things wrap up in an hour and a half? Two hours? Three? This could help inform how you structure the one-shot as a whole.

The In Medias Res technique on page 397 is particularly handy when you're crunched for time.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE CLOCK

Lags in pacing can drag the excitement down. If you feel like your players have difficulty with one of the decision points you've prepared, don't hesitate to switch things up and lead them towards the next step. "Railroading"—the narrative act of pushing the plot in the direction of your choice—is an especially useful GM method for self-contained stories.

With this, you can shift the discussion away from GM to player characters and back to GM and players themselves. Ask them what's on their minds, and offer some solutions (e.g., "Hey, there's a world aspect you can use for this," or "Maybe you can have your character do this..."). Consider divulging some useful, behind-the-scenes information. Generally, you want them to succeed in this adventure.

LONG-FORM

A **Long-form** or ongoing campaign is like a television series with several seasons. There's an overarching plot or an extended, complex conflict that deepens as the series progresses. The game's entirety will likely be divided into story arcs: a set of sessions that covers one aspect of the "main" plot, the resolution of this aspect, and an escalation or similar setup signifying the introduction of another aspect that will be tackled in the next arc.

Going for a Long-form game requires players to commit to regular sessions of play.. More investment and collaboration may be required to make everybody's experience fun and safe. A Long-form means that the characters will advance and grow in real-time or they may be replaced if they are retired. Within the narrative, months to years could pass within Umdaar. Communities will change, as will their concerns. NPCs may end up with their own backstories, and many other NPCs may join the roster. Similarly, the antagonists in your story may also change or grow in their complexity.

Some Long-forms go on indefinitely, the Champions never facing one Master or threat after another. Alternatively, your group can work towards an "endgame" to wrap everything up. The GM can, on their own, determine a set number of sessions with just a little bit of wiggle room in case things in the narrative take a different direction or in case the playgroup itself wants to change things up.

Some questions to consider with your group when starting a long-form campaign:

- Start with your Game Worksheet. Find out what inspires people, what directions they would like to see this campaign move towards; ask yourself, what's the Big Picture? You can start with a Session Zero, to make sure you have a solid foundation to start from.
- Pay extra attention to the *World Aspects* (see page 21) and the Issues from the Banner Sheet, as these will help prompt short term and long term problems to resolve. Issues tend to be a strong frame to build your campaign on. Of course, if the table doesn't like them anymore or gets bored, don't feel you have to stick with them; change them any time!
- Pay attention to the *Deal Breakers* and *Conditionals*, starting on page 20. We encourage the GM to read *The Social Contract* section on page 17, especially if they have any doubts about their material. Also make room, in between arcs or every so often between sessions, to check in with your group and see if they want to make changes to the Game Worksheet.

Banner: Any banner works fine, but Long-forms are a great basis for Dignitary and Archaeonaut campaigns.

Continent Map: The Campaign Map is perfect for Long-form campaigns, but it is not required.

EPISODIC

An **episodic** campaign is the middle ground between a Standalone and a Long-form: a series of sessions with self-contained stories.

Maybe the players enjoyed a Standalone "movie" and wanted to make a "sequel." Repeating players can replay the same characters from before or create new ones every time. Each time, they can build up their character's history and backstory, do a new "retconned" version, or bring old characters back from the dead (think of it like a reboot)

The Episodic Approach is particularly suited to players with busy schedules when getting the entire party every session may be next to impossible. However, consistently squeezing a full adventure into a single sitting can be hard unless you stick to simple stories, long game sessions, or small groups.

Going for episodic sessions leans heavily into old Saturday morning cartoon themes. Conflict stays simple and often relates to resolving the immediate concerns of the group or the people important to them. A problem rarely takes more than two sessions to fix. The characters themselves might not change or age much. There usually isn't a grand, overarching plot in place.

Treat the NPCs of your campaign as recurring "guest stars" of your playgroup's show to help keep things focused. Bringing them to life may even be a joint exercise: you can feature NPCs who are connected to the Champions themselves—their parents, their friends, and their loved ones.Because of how this sort of campaign is structured, there will likely be many NPCs who only appear for a session or two and don't require much fleshing out.

An episodic approach doesn't mean an absence of plot, but not all stories have to be grand endeavors or epic tales. Your group can explore small, self-contained, and personal stories between the heroes. Focusing on the bonds between the player characters, for example, can keep things engaging and fun. In the same vein, doing episodes about a hero's connection to an NPC or the group's connection to their community may also be good.

Lean into the Umdaar World Aspects (page 21). We also have sections on themes and tropes—including tropes that we'd caution playgroups against (see *Interrogating Old Stories* on page 414).

GMs may also want to use the *Adventure Generator* (page 401) for their playgroup. It's a good means of tossing a new conflict for the player characters to resolve with minimal preparation. Alternatively, the prompts that have been assembled there can serve as inspiration that GMs can customize for the player characters.

Banner: An Episodic campaign works with any banner; however, don't be afraid to time-skip around if it lets you dip into a specific style. For example: "For the past six months, your Pathfinder Champions have been working to become Honorary Knights, and now you're on a Dignitary mission."

Continent Map: Episodic campaigns may use the Campaign map, but it's not required.

SESSIONS AND ARCS

A **session** is a single period of play consisting of several scenes and a few hours of gameplay, similar to a single episode of a television show. It likely falls into the three-to-four-hour range.

An **arc** is a series of sessions that often contain plot elements that carry over from session to session. Those plot elements don't have to conclude within an arc, but there are usually significant developments and changes throughout it, like a third- or half-season of a television show. It's likely to be about four to six sessions of play.

If your arcs run longer than this, you may want to allow Severe consequences to clear after four sessions pass rather than waiting until the end of the arc. If you want advancement to happen more slowly, you might allow improvements like skill points and refresh gains less often. If your group tends to schedule fairly short sessions, you might not hit a minor milestone at the end of every session. Season to taste—the game is yours to shape!

WHAT HANGS IN THE BALANCE?

We discussed Regions and Issues in *Banners* (see page 25). With a standalone, all you need is to write a sentence or two about what's at stake and why; for a campaign, it's doubly important to keep that in mind, and make sure that the NPCs in jeopardy are established. Let the Champions spend time at home with their fussy fathers. Let them see the power of the war machines the evil warlord is planning to use.

Take a little time to consider the carrot and the stick. What's good and joyful in the World that keeps your team going?

- I look forward to returning to my husband.
- I must protect the monastery and the congregation that raised me.
- I will fight for the right to roam where I please, unburdened by tyranny.

What terrible things will happen should the opposition win?

- If King Necrokadnezzar wins, he will turn Umdaar into a silent planet of undeath.
- If the Masters capture all the rebel leaders, the flame of hope may be blown out forever in the Continent of Fearlandia.

CHARACTER ARCS

In the same way that TV shows shift the focus on members of their ensemble cast, your group may want to devote some sessions to exploring the internal worlds, motivations, and interpersonal connections relevant to each Champion in the banner.

These sessions don't necessarily have to contribute to the overarching conflicts in your Long-form. They don't even have to count as side quests or open up any secondary plotlines for the rest of the troupe. The main purpose is to frame the player in question as the focal point of the moment and put the spotlight on them. Letting someone feel like the star of the session is rarely a bad thing to do—but move that spotlight around from episode to episode.

Long-forms tend to have a lot more room to develop complex, recurring NPCs. Friends, lovers, family, rivals—there may be a revolving cast of faces around the party as a whole and smaller groups that orbit around each hero. The decisions of the playgroup may allow NPCs that their GM didn't intend to develop very far to become integral to the story. That's totally fine! Best to see where that takes everyone and collaborate for narrative directions that intrigue everyone. Keep in mind, though, that personal attachment to particular NPCs ought to be respected. Check for consent from your players concerning the harming and death of NPCs throughout the Long-form.

A Long-form's narrative tends to evolve throughout the campaign. This is, of course, dependent on your playgroup's expectations when you first got together. For example, perhaps your group is not as interested in pursuing a Long-form with several different antagonists and is more stoked over having a powerful baddie that their Champions will have to work long and hard to defeat in a grand finale. At any rate, it would be good to take time out and revisit the questions that you tackled as a group now and then, and revise things accordingly.

THE MACGUFFIN

A handy tool when creating an adventure or a campaign is a **MacGuffin** (sometimes McGuffin)—an object that will cause irrevocable damage if it gets into the wrong hangs. In some cases, it could be used for good or evil, meaning everyone desires it. Alternatively, it can be used only for ill, in which case the good characters want it solely to keep it out of the villains' hands.

The explanation behind the object is less important than the effect it has on the plot, and often optional. Of *least* importance is the science behind it: the players don't need to know how a sci-fantasy device creates a powerful imploding vortex, they just need to know that it does.

Does your story **need** a MacGuffin? Not at all, they are predictable and often overused. However, they are used everywhere because they work.

Examples from history and media:

- The Golden Fleece from Jason and the Argonauts
- The Holy Grail from Arthurian Myth
- The One Ring from ***The Lord of the Rings***
- The Ark of the Covenant from ***Indiana Jones***
- The missing treasure stash, the One Piece, in the series ***One Piece***.

PLOT HOOK: THE THIRD KIND OF MAGIC

It is rumored there's a third kind of magic. It comes not from the planet nor the Demiurge, but from a source far beyond, deep in the Phantom Realms—a source best left undisturbed unless you seek your own destruction!

DISMANTLED MACGUFFIN

A single MacGuffin is often a good motivator for a Standalone adventure. However, a subset of the MacGuffin is the Dismantled MacGuffin: a MacGuffin split into many pieces, forcing the characters to **Catch 'Em All!** This subtrope is particularly useful in campaigns, in that the individual parts provide little or no power boost, but when combined, it can result in a climatic, high stakes scene. If used, it likely manifests as a world or impending issue.

Examples from media:

- The Seven Dragonballs from ***Dragonball***
- The Numerous Shards of the Shikon Jewel from ***Inuyasha***
- The Six Infinity Gems from Marvel Comics (Infinity Stones in the movies)
- The Three/Eight pieces of the Tri-Force in ***Zelda***

Note: We strongly recommend against using characters as MacGuffins, as it demeans them and robs them of their agency. (with the possible exception of characters that are far too young to have agency, like the baby in ***Willow***).

As an example of a Dismantled MacGuffin: here's a plot hook that was first introduced in ***Masters of Umdaar***.

THE STARBLADES OF SU'UL

There are hundreds of tales of the Demiurge and of the magical devices they crafted. One tale tells of how the goddess Rygglosi used her Glove of the Sky to call forth the first monsoon. Another tale tells of how the trickster god Argananth used his Cloak of Confusion to rob the Voidlords of their riches. Other tales center on terrible tools of destruction. One of the most terrifying legends speaks of the Five Starblades of Su'ul. According to the tale, the Demiurge were besieged by the H'rthmaw, beings so full of hate that they could kill with a glance. Thus, the smith Su'ul forged a weapon that could attack the H'rthmaw from afar—he crafted the Firerain Wheel, which wiped the H'rthmaw armies, crafts, and cities off the face of the planet. So fearsome was the Firerain that the Demiurge themselves feared its power, should it ever be turned against them. They disabled the Firerain Wheel by breaking off its five spokes and scattering them across Umdaar. From these five spokes were forged five swords, known as the Starblades. Each indestructible blade bears great power when wielded in battle, but this strength is nothing compared to the power of the Firerain Wheel, to the destruction that would be wrought should it be restored—but who would be bold enough to do such a thing?

It would seem the only person bold enough to do it is Kaji-Sa, the Bloodmonger, who is the right-hand woman to the Master Queen Appa-tax. Kaji-Sa has spent the last few months hunting down the Starblades, supposedly for her Master—but perhaps for herself? Does she seek the Firerain to benefit her leader, or to replace her?

JUST WHAT IS THE FIRERAIN?

Is the Firerain a nuclear weapon? A laser-shooting satellite? A remote controlled

napalm cloud? A blob of strange matter? It's really up to you. We recommend you start by creating legends with your group, and if need be, work your way back to the "facts."

PLOT SEED: RED SPIRE CAMPAIGN

Alternatively, each of the Starblades is actually the key to the ignition of an ancient light skyship. However, someone with all five keys can turn on the engine of the BlackholeBehemoth, a terrifying sky-battleship!

CONTINENT-BASED CAMPAIGN

There are many ways you can frame a campaign. Our suggested method is to frame your story around a continent.

A continent is composed of a finite number of nations and biomes that are relatively close to each other (i.e., going from one region to the next would take only a few days of travel). A continent may be a single geographical area, like a landmass or a string of islands. More importantly, it's a pressure-cooker of communities connected by trade and war, the Wildernexus you cautiously explore, and even the nearby Dread Domains whose attention you try not to attract. Your Continent is everything around you.

During the Banner creation, you created a Region, Base of Operation, and a Core Community (see page 25).

Here are some other terms that will come up:

- **Site:** A **site** is a specific region on your continent map.
- **Community:** Most sites are also **communities**—they include happy villages, crowded shantytowns, and full kingdoms.
- **Alliance:** A community site that joins you becomes part of your **alliance**.
- **Periphery:** Nearby sites not allied with you are part of the **periphery**.
- **Status:** A site's **status** reflects its current situation, good or bad.

THE SHAPE OF A CONTINENT

The makeup of your Continent will vary based on your banner, and area of concern.

To recap:

- **Area of Concern:** based on banner
- **Dignitaries:** Allied Freeland nations
- **Rebels:** The Collection of Dread Domains
- **Pathfinders:** The Frontier of Wildernexuses
- **Archaeonauts:** The Scattered Ruins

The exact scale of your campaign may also vary. For example, a Dignitary campaign map is likely to be zoomed out in scale, dealing with grand nations and city states that span a wide continent. By contrast, a Pathfinder "continent" might fit into a tinier space like a wide valley, with smaller towns that are separated by uninhabited biomes.

SITES

You can set up your continent to be any size or shape, but we recommend using 15 sites. You can create them all at once before the game, or start with a few and build out as the Champions explore more of the world.

- The Core site is always marked. That's your home, where your adventure starts, and you can always go back. This site also contains your Base of Operations.
- The Periphery sites border your Core site. Fill in any names for your foundation sheets, and consider filling in the rest either this game or the next.
- All other sites can be filled in or left without names. You can put in region types (i.e., Freelands, Dread Domains), have a loose description like "the chasm," or leave them blank for now and fill them in as you go.

Arrange your 15 sites in a 4dF triangle chart. At the ■■ corner is the Core of your Continent—the remaining 14 Sites on the chart are either the Periphery (nearby) or farther out.

Use a star or symbol to indicate which sites are part of your alliance (see *Forging Alliances* on page 247). Your core site always starts as part of your alliance, either before or after your first game.

While these places have NPCs to meet and buildings to explore, the Continent sheet only tracks the broadest level of information.

The Continent Map is not meant to represent a physical map exactly—you don't live at the corner of a giant triangle, nor does the set-up equal literal distance on the map. Rather, it represents the difficulty to reach the location. The closer an area of the Periphery is to the core, the more immediately accessible it is. The further away, the harder it is to reach and the more dangerous it is. It's usually good to have Wildernexuses in between Freelands and Dread Domains, as the dangerous biomes act as a buffer between the two.

> The Dark Castle of Oogbor might be within sight of your core region, but the Chasm of Eternal Fire separates them, and to get around it requires a long journey (and thus is on the opposite side of your triangle chart).

SAMPLE MAPS

Here are some sample maps based on your focus.

FREELAND CAMPAIGN MAP

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Core	Freelands	Freelands	Wildernexus	Dread Domain
−	Freelands	Freelands	Wildernexus	Dread Domain	
−−	Freelands	Wildernexus	Dread Domain		
−−−	Wildernexus	Dread Domain			
−−−−	Dread Domain				

DREAD DOMAIN CAMPAIGN MAP

In a Rebel Campaign, most of the non-core settlements will be Dread Domains. However, the threat level should naturally increase, and might have lots of Dread Domains of various strengths.

At the end of the campaign chart are the unconquered Freelands: communities that are semi-mythical safe havens, with the strongest Dread Domains standing in your way.

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Core	RCF	WDD	Wildernexus	SDD
−	RCF	RCF	Wildernexus	Freeland	
−−	WDD	Wildernexus	SDD		
−−−	Wildernexus	Freeland			
−−−−	SDD				

WE NEED MORE POWER!!!

One way to increase threat is by how entrenched and powerful a Master is:

- **RCF:** Recently Conquered Freeland
- **WDD:** Weak Dread Domain
- **SDD:** Strong Dread Domain

WILDERNEXUS CAMPAIGN MAP

A Pathfinder campaign will have more Wildernexuses—PCs will encounter them not just as "places to travel through," but also as featured destinations. There's also at least one region on the community chart left undiscovered until much later in the campaign. Is it any ancient threat newly awakened? A peaceful kingdom living peacefully in isolation? Let the players help you build it as you go.

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Core	Wildernexus	Freelands	Wildernexus	Dread Domain
−	Wildernexus	Freelands	Wildernexus	Dread Domain	
−−	Freelands	Wildernexus	Ancient Mystery		
−−−	Wildernexus	Dread Domain			
−−−−	Dread Domain				

RUINS CAMPAIGN MAP

An Archaeonaut focus map is likely to look similar to one of the above maps (particularly the Pathfinder). However, most of the locations are going to have their own Demiurge ruins as well. Add a symbol to designate which locations have ruins (it should be about 2/3rds of them). The closer ones are named and had cursory explorations in the past, while far away ruins may only be rumors.



CREATING STATS FOR A COMMUNITY OR SITE

A Site follows all of the rules for creating a Community (see page 26), with a Name, High Concept, and Value (with optional Population and Faces).

A continent map campaign adds the following mechanics:

- **Trouble:** What is the location's tragic flaw? What could make it collapse?
- **Status:** What is the current situation?
- **Additional Aspects:** Miscellaneous, double-sided aspects describing their weaknesses, strengths, unique features, and landmarks.
- **Site Skills:** What does the community excel at (see page 240).
- **Power:** The size of the community (see page 241).

We encourage you to fill out the sites as you play: it makes it more flexible and saves you a lot of prep-work!

TROUBLE

A site's trouble works very similar to a trouble for an NPC. A trouble is generally not an external problem nor a temporary one; it often stems from a flaw in the community's values. (Speaking of which, using the value they don't appreciate is a great place to start). However, like a character's Motivation, a trouble that compels them to action can lead to fun results.

> **Given Up Hope; Sweeps Imperialist Past Under the Rug; Unfettered Curiosity; Painfully Repressed**

STATUS

Sites and Continents don't typically have stress tracks like characters, but they have a **Status aspect**. This aspect represents a site's current state, whether positive, negative, or in-between. If negative, the Status represents a central issue that the Site faces, such as an essential resource they lack, an outside threat, or current internal strife.

Some example status aspects: **Running Low on Water** or **Rowdy Gang of Bot-Hackers**. Check the *New Problems* table on page 252 for ideas.

To make bookkeeping easier, if a site is under more stress and the Status's more precarious, you can mark it in your sheet by underlining it.

Before or during an adventure at a site, the group gives it a Status aspect. You may create it during the mission briefing before you go in—however, the Status may be a secret to the players and the Champions, requiring them to investigate the site firsthand to discover what ails them. If you create a negative Status, it comes with a free invoke that the GM can use.

The Champions may be able to clear these problems through adventures or during *Downtime* on page 243.

Note: A Dread Domain is likely to have a negative Status aspect, such as **Populace Starved in Mind and Body; Under the Reign of Terror**. Even though these are bad for the population, these can be difficult to leverage directly against the Master.

> A Status of **Starved** will likely not affect a Master himself and his elite troops hoarding food. Of course, that doesn't mean players can't take advantage of the negative aspects in less direct ways. In a starved kingdom, food makes a good bribe or direct way to make friends. If it's a **Police State**, it's easy to find guards to mug (and uniforms to steal).

Alert the players if their Champions' actions would make a Status aspect worse for the *citizens* of the Dread Domain, as they are members of your Continent's community. Still, they can leverage the bad conditions towards a helpful end.

SITE SKILLS

A Continent also has a skill list, which features the same skills as the PCs.

Sites have at least one skill, which means they possess many people who excel at the profession or ability. If a Community has the Fight skill, then it likely contains well-equipped soldiers. A Community with Athletics means that it's full of athletic occupants, rather than a group of buildings that can run and jump very well!

Should you meet an NPC from that community, there's a decent chance they have at least Average (+1) or better in that skill, maybe even an expert with Good (+3) or Great (+4).

> If the adventure is in a community with Drive, you know an NPC with Drive Fair (+2) or better; maybe a pirate captain!

Note: Unlike characters, the Site doesn't use rankings from the Fate Ladder. It's binary: either it has a skill or doesn't.

In the unlikely event a Site has to make a skill roll, treat its signature skill as equal to its Power plus one, and all other skills as its Power (see optional rules for Power on page 241). For example, a city-state with a Power rating of Fair (+2) in Will counts as having Will: Good (+3) and every other skill at Fair (+2).

Skill: Who lives in your Site?

- **Athletics:** Athletes, gladiators, participants in ritual games.
- **Burglary:** Rogues, roustabouts, and criminal guilds.
- **Contacts:** Couriers and message-runners, diplomats. People who know people.
- **Crafts:** Inventors, artisans of all stripes.
- **Deceive:** Con artists and tellers of tall tales.
- **Drive:** Drivers and pilots of skiffs, robohorses, and hoverpads.
- **Empathy:** Healers of body and mind.
- **Fight:** Soldiers and general toughs.
- **Investigate:** Police or the local equivalent.
- **Lore:** Archaeologists, Runekeeper, and mages.
- **Notice:** Reporters, scouts, and seers.
- **Physique:** Laborers, miners, brawlers.
- **Provoke:** Diplomats and dissidents. Folks who force others to act.
- **Rapport:** Entertainers, singers, dancers, celebrities.
- **Resources:** Traders and caravans.
- **Shoot:** Hunters, mainly, but also snipers.
- **Stealth:** Spies, or perhaps guerilla fighters. Don't tell anyone.
- **Will:** Spiritual leaders, retired heroes.

POWER

Power is a catch-all term to designate a site's size and scope through a skill rating.

Here are some recommended rankings:

- **Mediocre (+0):** An estate
- **Average (+1):** A village/castle/town
- **Fair (+2):** A city/city-state
- **Good (+3):** A country
- **Great (+4):** An empire
- **Superb (+5):** A massive empire

Most of the locations on your map will be in the Average (+1) to Good (+3) range, including most of the Dread Domains; however, the territory of the MegaMaster, who's the Big Bad villain for the entire campaign, might be a Superb (+5) or even higher.

Power does two things: it makes the Site better able to swing its weight around and even attack other communities, making it harder to deal with issues. After all, a larger, richer, and more complex settlement has more moving parts from internal factions, governing bureaucracy, and pure cultural inertia.

Similarly, organizations of high influence, like a mighty Cult, Secret Society, or Witch's Union might be powerful enough to register a number (even without a physical site). However, players are generally too small to even show in the Power ladder; if they insist on trying, we recommend placing them at Terrible (-2) or Catastrophic (-3).

EXAMPLE: ELAZAKU, ISLAND OF SANCTUARY

Elazaku, Island of Sanctuary

ASPECTS

High Concept: Rocky Island And Refuge of the Weak
Population: Humans, as well as Bird people and Marine Bioforms.
Values: Protection over Independence
Trouble: Are they Growing OVER-Protective?
Status: The Fresh Water is Running Out

Aspects: Always Room For More (For Now); Hidden Wonders Everywhere; Nigh-Impregnable; Rainbow Drawbridge

SKILLS

Will

POWER

Empire: Great (+4)

SITE VS. SITE INTERACTIONS

Sites can interact with each other as like characters, but that isn't likely to impact play often. After all, the PCs are individual people—the movements of entire communities are big and abstract. In a battle between two Sites, no one person will know all the movements of both sides—people will merely know the fallout.

That being said, places have skills and can roll against one another, just like characters. When this happens, the Site rolls: they have their signature skill equal to their Power+1 (see below), and all other skills equal to its power. For example, a Site with Fair (+2) Power with Stealth wanted to send spies to report on enemy movements. They would add +3 to their roll. The winner can place new Status aspects to reflect the result.

Sometimes we go to war

Communities don't have stress or traditional consequence slots, but they can still attack and be attacked. They might Fight with a load of soldiers, Deceive with a propaganda campaign, or use Stealth to assassinate political figures. Sites can likewise defend themselves in ways that make sense, whether that means Fighting back, using Rapport with the citizens to keep morale high, or having detectives Investigate where assassins could be hiding before they become a problem. Because communities are big and a bit abstract, we can be pretty forgiving for what can be used to attack and defend, so long as there's justification for it. The Sites will add their Power to the roll; the advantage is always with the bigger Site.

Whichever Site wins the exchange gets to modify the Status aspect for the losing community. In this rare situation, the Defender wins any ties. This means attacking is risky—if you don't overwhelm your opponent on the attack, you will suffer for it! If the defender already has a negative Status aspect, the GM may pick one or more of the following:

- Resolve a negative Status aspect or problem afflicting the attacker.
- Underline or add an extra unfriendly invoke to the Bad Status if appropriate.
- Change the nature of the Status to something worse.
- Add a second negative status.

PCs can't attack an entire Site by themselves; even a small one is too large for a band of adventurers to directly impact. However, they can attempt to guide the Continent's actions. Convincing your Continent to strike at one of the Masters could give the Master's Continent a problem aspect for you to take advantage of later! However, convincing a Continent to launch a full assault against the Big Bad Master halfway across the continent would require lots of planning, allies, and exploring the lands between—it can't be attempted on a whim!

MAKE DRAMA, NOT WAR

We encourage GMs to resist the urge to turn a Campaign into a tactical board game. The map is there to help you plan your next RPG adventure. When in doubt, think of an attack less as, "This is one site attacking another," and more "This action will determine which world aspects are introduced into the next adventure set there."

INTERACTING WITH YOUR CONTINENT

Having created a Continent, what do you do with it? How does it impact gameplay?

DOWNTIME

To help the Continent serve as "the place you return to," the player characters will alternate between Adventures and Downtime.

Most of your time will be spent on some Adventure or another.

Downtime is smaller, cozier. You're likely to spend no more than half a game session in Downtime, although your particular group can vary. Some groups may spend a whole session letting characters relax; others might finish in five minutes. Conversely, in terms of in-game time, Downtime can represent days or even months as the PCs rest and recover between Adventures.

Downtime begins when an Adventure is over, and the PCs return home. When you've figured out what your next adventure will entail, Downtime ends.

But what do you do during Downtime?

Start of Session

This is an optional subsystem that GMs can consider for their parties. At the start of every session, assume that everyone is already idling about in their hideout or doing day-to-day activities in the commune. This can fast-track things, ensuring that all characters are in place before the action starts or at least reachable.

Have one player start by asking them, "So, what are you up to?" Once they have responded, have them turn to the player seated to their right and ask, "What about you?" Encourage, but don't require your playgroup to throw in details for their characters or each other as they build the scene together. Working in teams of two or more may be best. For example:

> **GM:** What are you up to?"
>
> **Player:** Well, I'm tossing around that mysterious ball we got from our last exploration adventure.
>
> **GM:** Okay, who are you playing catch with?
>
> **Player2:** Ooh, that sounds like something my character would do. I'll join them.

Keep both questions and answers brief. The cycle completes as soon as everyone has answered the questions.

End of Session

After the Wrap-up, every PC gets to take one downtime activity of their choice. This is a brief, one-on-one vignette with the GM. Tell the GM what you want to do, where it is taking place, and, more importantly, how you're doing it—if you're gathering resources, for example, where can those resources be gathered or what communities can help? Follow the fiction: if your Alliance only consists of a farming village on the borders of the Wildernexus, you need to justify how you're finding a jet pack.

Downtime Actions will generally take one of the following forms:

Overcome: Try to remove or change something harmful. For example: heal from an injury; repair a crumbling friendship; make a minor improvement to a negative Status aspect; solve a minor mystery; finish any remaining leftover parts of the wrap-up.

Create an advantage: Try to discover or create something useful for yourself or another. For example: research a peripheral site; scout ahead to an unknown location; learn about or meet a contact for a faction; build a one-use tool or weapon; call in a favor; make a new ally; write a song praising the rebellion; spread seditious pamphlets. Because Downtime can cover days or weeks of effort, the results you get may be somewhat more extravagant than what would be available in a simple Investigation or Resources roll in the middle of a battlefield. This is great for players who want answers to a question or to gain an ally.

Shopping & Supplies: A common RPG postgame activity is shopping. If players feel interested in gathering supplies and want to roleplay it thoroughly, (i.e., talk to the smith or shopkeeper, haggle, etc), let them, but they can just as easily skim over things and assume they got what they wanted. They don't even need to provide a list of things they want to buy—during the adventure, they are assumed to have all of the things they're likely to need. They can declare during the adventure, "We have X," and you can agree, assuming it's not an unusual item.

If a Champion wants to purchase something that would aid them in the next adventure, this can be reflected by spending their Downtime action to create an advantage using Resources.

Personal development: You can get the same advantage as a Minor Milestone because you have the time and resources to work on yourself. Tell the GM what you're doing and how that will affect your aspects or skills. In theory, you can do this anywhere, but players are encouraged to pick a site that fits their development best (e.g., a Warrior training at a site renowned for brawlers).

Relax: The player may just take time to enjoy themselves and recover. They might have fun with friends, visit their family, or just sleep until noon. Relaxing is a great activity for absent players. A rested Champion can clear Mild Consequences completely.

Attack: You can try to convince a site to launch an attack. See more on page 242.

Full Defend: In the rare scenario in which one of your sites has been attacked, you may help a site defend.

Compel: A GM may compel a player to spend their downtime in a particular way; maybe they submit to a vice, or make amends for a nasty action they made earlier. (This means they start next adventure with an extra fate point).

When players take a downtime action, they get to pick a single community site or NPC they are interacting with. If that location is an allied site or contains a friendly NPC, they can invoke one of the aspects on the site or an ally for free!

Of course, just as a player can invoke site aspects to help them, a GM may invoke the same site's aspects to make it more difficult. Suppose a site's high concept is **A Hub of Wanted Rebels**. In that case, the GM can compel this to send a Master's minions on your tail, thwarting your downtime activity or adding extra complications.

Foreshadowing and GM Actions

GMs can also take downtime actions to reflect the changing world. You're encouraged to take action during downtime in one of a few cases:

- **Foreshadowing:** Use this opportunity to sow little seeds for the next adventure or the large overarching campaign conflict. Does the Champion feel they are being watched, and/or spot a masked stalker? Is there a strange name scrawled over city walls? Are the frequent earthquakes getting worse?
- **Counter-Action:** If a player takes action against an antagonistic force, have it reciprocate back. Just as they are scouting out a Dread Domain, are enemy scouts observing them? If they're using Rapport or Provoke on a captured lieutenant, are they using Rapport or Provoke to get under your skin?
- **Apply Pressure:** The GM puts pressure on a site's Status. It's not enough to break things by itself, but it's a clear lay-up to future consequences that will demand some action. For example, a site with protests in the capital just had its first riot.
- **Track Countdowns:** The GM may have one or more countdown timers triggered. Is it one week closer to the mythical **Double-Solar Eclipse**? Do the Champions receive word that another Runekeeper has been kidnapped by Queen Mabi (see page 365).

A GM may decide a Master invades a nearby site and rolls to see if the attack is effective; however, they can also declare, "The community is under siege!" Change their Status to match without rolling a die. This can be done during downtime or saved until the start of the next adventure.



Resolving Downtime Actions

Downtime actions are typically described in short vignettes, possibly with an interaction with another Champion or NPC. GM Downtime actions may be presented from the perspective of the Champions (e.g., you can see smoke on the horizon as the Master's army moves closer) or in a cut away scene that the players are aware of but their Champions aren't (e.g., showing a Master barking orders at their lieutenant).

If rolls are required, they are typically single overcome or create an advantage actions, with few optional exceptions noted above.

These vignettes are typically a few minutes for each player, but try not to rush a personal scene between two Champions if the players are having fun; these may be essential to their character growth and relationship.

Downtime actions that cover a lot of activity can be played out as a **montage scene** showing short snippets of action from multiple scenes like a movie montage. Describe how the Champions and the NPCs work, struggle or play together, pausing only long enough at each roll to see the group succeed or fail to improve the Status.

FORGING ALLIANCES

Champions can try to reach out to a specific site on the periphery and see if its inhabitants can be convinced to join the cause.

What needs to happen to form an alliance will vary. There may be residents who need you to solve a problem to prove that you're trustworthy, or perhaps a long-lost friend in the Continent asks you to find a monster stalking the area.

- The kingdom's leadership is eager to ally with you. The real adventure is a hazardous journey to get there (e.g., through treacherous seas, surviving a Master's ambush)
- Your Core Site stole an artifact from them centuries ago. To regain their trust, you must venture into their booby-trapped ruins and put it back!
- The site may be under the sphere of influence of a nearby Dread Domain. By deposing the Master, you'll free two sites at once!

Incorporating the Periphery is always an adventure.

The players want to expand the alliance. Set them up for success—make sure the community has a want or a need that becomes obvious with a little digging. It will likely involve something dangerous that the Champions can accomplish in a way that the community cannot achieve without help.

After the adventure, if you're still in doubt that the community would join your alliance, make it a roll: if they roll well enough, the community joins. They might join if they tie or fail, but with conditions.

Alliances are all about compromise: before a peripheral community agrees to join you, the GM may require you to change an aspect or Status related to your alliance or a site. If the Champions (and by extension, the alliance leaders) are unwilling to compromise, the treaty is off, and they do not join. If players don't like the exact phrasing of an aspect, they can discuss with the GM to find something that suits the entire group but still provides a challenge. If a community doesn't join your alliance, they might become neutral for the time being until you can figure out what they want or need.

> The Treetop Kingdom will join, but only if all of the nearby alliance sites stop their deforestation. If the players agree, these nearby sites gain the Status **Resource Shortage**, which will leave them vulnerable to invasion and the coming winter!
>
> The Hekaton City-States wants to join, provided your core kingdom transitions to democracy. If they agree, the high aspect changes from **Enlightened Kingdom** to **Constitutional Monarchy**. Also, the GM creates an adversarial Face NPC, a Prime Minister who is determined to undermine the Champions!
>
> The Pirates of Ruby Cove join, but only if they are granted free passage through alliance lands—this would create a World Aspect for the Alliance, **Rampant Disorder and Smuggling**.

Once allied, the Site is now a part of your Continent! That means that the people in the allied Sites can now share their resources more effectively. It also means that, during downtime, you can spend your time at the new Site in your Downtime, taking advantage of its aspect or working to solve a bad Status, if it has one.

FOR PLAYERS

When an adventure wraps up, it's courteous to suggest which periphery site their characters might be interested in visiting some future session—this gives the GM advanced notice to prepare an adventure before the next meeting if they don't have a location already in mind!

AVOID SAVING COMMUNITIES CONDITIONALLY

If Champions resort to saving communities conditionally, (ex, "We'll only save you from this monster if you join the alliance,"), they are behaving like Masters and word will spread. This is manipulative at best, and a protection racket at worst. Two good ways of avoiding this situation are:

- Have the community be interested before asking for help. "We heard of your alliance and are willing to join, but that leaves us vulnerable if you don't first clear out that enemy fort nearby."
- Ask the players to help unconditionally, but the community now has an aspect regarding their gratitude invoked during negotiations.

Friendly Face

Whenever they gain an alliance, the players can pick an NPC character they met on their journey, or create a new one, to act as the face for the site. Some examples:

- **Syr Clacksis:** Ambassador and Honorable Knight to the Kingdom of Marra.
- **Gidzo Three-Arms:** Perky Cyborg mechanic from Powerton.
- **"Uncle" Skarpness:** Retired archaeonaut, lovable scoundrel, and spokesperson for the tribes of the Bloomswamp Wildernexus.
- **Baerg Bloodgear:** Former Lieutenant to the Master of Wramp and reformed villain.

You might have the friendly face join the Champions at the Core site. They are the Face of that community and can act as a liaison and carry the skills of their host site. They can also meet you at their home community, should you ever return there.

Neutral States

It's entirely possible that, after the Champions free a site from oppression, it still has no interest in joining their alliance, preferring to become a neutral country instead. Here are some possible reasons why:

- Their religion or culture is based on pacifism and non-confrontation
- A Wildernexus border town where locals have to get along to survive against the rough conditions
- Your core site conquered this community long ago. They are justifiably cautious of your alliance!
- Clever and ambitious merchants and politicians run the community. They hope to play the sides against each other to stay alive and possibly make a profit.
- Their motives are mysterious. The city-state openly claims neutrality but sends you secret messages pledging their support. Of course, they might be sending similar messages to the Masters.

Having a site go neutral is particularly interesting for a Dignitary campaign, as it opens up a lot of interesting topics: the value of sovereignty, the weakness or power of pacifism, whether neutrality is a right or a luxury, etc.

Neutral states are also handy in that they give an ideal spot for dignitaries a chance to meet, debate, and even flirt with the enemy.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

"Alright, one last story, and *then* it is time to sleep," said the father, tucking in his little Cytaur-foals. They bristled at excitement for another adventure and a few more stolen minutes of consciousness.

"I shall tell you the story of the Goatling and the Cyber-tiger. The Goatling was a simple farmer who lived with his family in the hills.

But then, one day, his neighbor, the Cyber-tiger, came to his gate—the Cyber-tiger teased the Goatling, and the Goatling was very upset. The Cyber-tiger apologized for his gruff manner, saying, 'My little neighbor! The customs of the Cyber-tiger are different. You must forgive me.' The Goatling did not want to forgive him, but he wanted to be a good neighbor, so he did not complain.

On the second day, the Cyber-tiger did not stop at the gate, but hopped over it and spent the whole day among the Goatling's orchard. The Goatling was upset that the Cyber-tiger was in his yard, but the Cyber-tiger said, "My little neighbor! It is hot. You must let me stay in the shade for a while." The Goatling bit his tongue because he wanted to be a good neighbor, so he did not complain.

On the third day, the Cyber-tiger and his spouse hopped the gate, and they complimented the Goatling for the sculpture by his door. “My little neighbor! This is beautiful! You must sell it to me!” The Goatling did not want to sell it, but he wanted to be a good neighbor, so he did not complain and sold it.

On the fourth day, the Cyber-tiger brought over his whole family and many friends into the Goatling’s house. The Goatling was furious. The Cyber-tiger smiled and said, “My little neighbor! But you have been so kind to me, and I have been so kind to you. Treat my friends just as you would treat me—to do any less would be unneighborly.” And the Goatling bit his tongue until it bled, but he let them stay.

On the fifth day, it was the Cyber-tiger who started complaining. He said to the Goatling, “My little neighbor! You and your wife always talk to each other in the tongue of Goats. It is rude to my guests, who think you are insulting them behind their backs, and me! We demand you only speak the language we speak!” And the Goatling tried to complain, but they did not listen.

On the sixth day, the Goatling awoke to find that the Cyber-tigers were throwing out the Goatling’s possessions. What are you doing?’ asked the Goatling. ‘My little neighbor! There is so much trash cluttering up my new house. I was just spring cleaning.’ ‘But this is my house!’ cried the Goatling. ‘Are you sure?’ said the Cyber-tiger. ‘This house is filled with Cyber-tigers. Everyone teases as Cyber-tigers do and sleeps in the orchard as Cyber-tigers do. We own the sculpture by the door. No one speaks Goat. We consider this place our home now. If you want to live here, you must act as we do and make yourself useful, or we shall throw you out.’ The Goatling and his family complained, but it was too late, and they were thrown out. The End.”

The two sleepy foals stared at their father, who was not in the habit of telling sad stories. “What happened next?” The elder asked.

“Nothing good, I can assure you,” the father replied. “But it’s important to remember it so bad things don’t happen to you.”

The father kissed the smaller foal on the forehead and whispered, “Little Doah… don’t be like the Goatling. Don’t let others push you, inch by inch, until you lose everything.”

The father kissed the big sister on the forehead and whispered, “My brave Eveh; don’t be like the Cyber-tiger. Remember that you can make friends without making them act just like you. And that when you ask for something from someone smaller than you, they might be too scared to say ‘no.’”

SOLVING BAD STATUSES

Your Continent will usually have one or more sites with negative Status aspects. Statuses, like any aspect, represent truths about your Continent, and life would be easier for you and the people you care about if they weren't true. They are also aspects to be compelled, using your bonds and your better nature to urge you to solve them.

Finally, if a Status of an allied site becomes terrible, the community may be forced to drop out of the alliance altogether. The effort needed to hold together in the face of this new stressor is too much for them to handle!

Mitigating Statuses During Downtime

As a Downtime action, you can try to mitigate one of the negative Statuses in your Continent. If they are successful, they won't be able to fix the problem—however, they might be able to gain a beneficial aspect with invokes or remove the underline from a status, essentially removing some of the pressure.

We discourage completely solving big problems off-screen because it's not much fun. The result of "solving problems" should be something that drives play. The payoff of mitigating a bad Status during Downtime is not necessarily the solution to the problem, but rather it *enables* the solution to the problem. Then actually pursuing that solution is fodder for play.

When players reach a Major Milestone, the table may choose to improve a Status of a site in your alliance if they can justify how (see *Milestones and Advancement*, page 98). This helps represent how the seeds of your heroism are starting to bear fruit and that the allied states are in a better position to help each other. For instance:

- A few adventures back, you gained an ancient terraforming device to save the Treetop Kingdom; they're now stable enough to lend it to the Desert Dwellers to help with their **Water Shortage**.
- Two NPCs you brought to the core site, Rasour the Trader and Clinkscale the Artihacker, have collaborated on getting Replitech force-fields to protect the Southern valley.
- The site you saved from starving in the winter earlier in the campaign just had a bountiful harvest—they can now improve their Status and even help feed their neighbors.

Mitigating in Downtime is handy for tying up loose threads—sites that are still half-fixed, but not so interesting that the group is inspired to make a full adventure out of it.

Solving Statuses on Adventures

Solving a negative Status will likely be the crux of an adventure. If a site is **Overwhelmed by Robotic Rodents**, the PCs can seek out the ancient factory still producing rat-bots and stop it. This will require traveling to the site most of the time, but the root of the issue may lie in a neighboring Site (e.g., a Dread Domain that's invading; a Wildernexus that's encroaching; on the border between two allied sites that aren't getting along).

Treat the Continent's Problem aspects as World Aspects that can be invoked against you during the adventure.

New Problems

New problem aspects can arise, like any Status aspect, when it makes sense for them to happen. If something the players have done has earned the particular ire of one of the Masters, then it would make sense for a Site to become **Targeted for Revenge**. A fresh Status or Issue can be the consequence of an adventure that went completely awry, or even the price of an extremely important success-at-a-cost.

In addition, communities will just develop problems over time. Communities are not stable; they need effort to maintain, and the larger they grow, the more effort they require. We represent that with the Problem Roll.

At the beginning of downtime, the GM has the option of introducing a new problem or escalating an existing one. Use the Continent Map to choose a site at random. If that spot is allied to the Continent, then a problem has cropped up. At the beginning of the game, only a roll of ■■■■ (the Core site) could cause a problem, but as the Continent grows, the likelihood of problems arising goes up.

You can make up an appropriate problem, or roll 2dF randomly on the table below:

2DF	Problem
⊞⊞	An essential resource is running low.
⊞■	An important part of an infrastructure machine must be replaced.
⊞⊟	An internal faction is causing trouble.
■■	An outside faction is causing trouble.
■⊟	A notable person has gone missing.
⊟⊟	A natural disaster is ongoing.

GIVE AND TAKE

Players shouldn't be afraid to ask for help from communities. However, if the players frequently spend no downtime helping the communities, you can compel them to help or foreshadow future problems

- If the community spends too much time and resources helping the Champions, they might neglect their problems, making them escalate.
- Adversarial factions within the community might come to resent your Champions.
- Outside helpers may have limits to how much they help. You might get some Investigation help to find out where Tharvais's gang is holed up, but they won't search inside the gangster's hideout for you.
- Of course, the opposite is also true: brave souls might be OVERLY eager to help. A plucky young investigator might charge into Tharvais's hideout, desperate to prove their courage and need rescuing!

CHANGING A SITE

Don't think that your Continent Sites are immutable. For example, don't be afraid to switch out locations that don't excite the group. Just because a site was added to the continent map in session zero doesn't mean you HAVE to visit it—switch it out for something more exciting. The same with a location you visited once and haven't come back since. Fate is meta-aware enough that you don't need to justify it. But if you want to explain it, here are some options:

- A location you've never visited was never really there before; you had a bad map!
- Two small communities you've visited have merged—their Princes got married! You can now merge them into a single site.
- A location was tragically swallowed into the Wildernexus decades ago.

EXTRA SITES

Sometimes the Champions visit locations that are outside the Continent. Maybe they're whisked into the Phantom Realms, visit a Sky Island that won't stick around, or even travel through a place so remote that it'll never be important again. That's fine!

Most of the time you won't need to stat up these Sites, but when you do, keep it simple. A high concept and a second aspect will define a Site well enough. Maybe, if they are particularly important or the PCs interact with them regularly, give them a skill, a trouble, and Power to represent sites within their Continent. You do not need to give them an entire map and periphery; that only matters for the home Continent.

ENDGAME

What is the goal of a campaign? It can vary, but we recommend a campaign end when:

- All of the sites in your Continent are liberated (i.e., are allied or neutral).
- All communities are safe with no major threats,
- All Masters are toppled, fled, or reformed.

THERE'S ALWAYS A BIGGER FISH

If reforming a Master seems an impossible task, you can always add a bigger, common enemy; some Masters are technically part of the continent, and will side with you before they side with an invader.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Of course, PCs are not trapped in their home Continent forever. There may come a time to move: maybe they achieved the endgame, or maybe the nature of the campaign has shifted. Here are a few ideas:

- You have united your continent and are zooming out to a larger scale; your continent is your new Core, and the periphery is the other continents around you!
- You have discovered a spaceship and a major threat out at the edge of Umdaar's star system; the next campaign is set in space!
- You have helped the Continent save itself or did your best, and it's time to ride off into the sunset and start over somewhere else. (If so, flash-forward a year after you have all put down roots and joined that community)
- Maybe you need a change of scenery, or you've drifted into a new sub-genre (e.g., shifting from "mountains and valleys" to an oceanic pirate campaign).

Whatever the case, the process is the same as starting a new Continent at the beginning of the campaign.

ADVENTURES

This chapter includes a sample Continent *Fellx, The Valley of Spires* and four adventures that could take place there or be adapted to a Continent of your own.

CONTINENT: FELLX, THE VALLEY OF SPIRES

Long ago, the Demiurge seeded the Valley of Fellx with massive buildings of extraordinary height that climbed higher than the clouds. The purpose and function of these Spires have since been forgotten, but their presence remains. They stand like beacons, leading desperate refugees to Freeland capitols; they also serve as portents—warning travelers that they are approaching a Master's stronghold or a chaotic Wildernexus.

- Banner: Dignitaries, Pathfinders, Rebels, or Archaeonauts
- Themes/Moods: Technology; Solarpunk; Making Connections
- The Alliance: The Mended Net

For hundreds of years, the communities of the Valley of Fellx worked and traded together. However, the Masters have discovered that the Freelands are stronger together and have fought to sever their connections. The Masters are working together to interrupt all trade and communication, planning to divide and conquer the communities. The Alliance is a group of communities and pathfinders striving to overcome artificial and natural barriers that are keeping the communities divided.

ISSUES (BY CAMPAIGN)

Dignitaries: The Severed Communities Growing Cold and Isolationist

Pathfinders: Paths Becoming Overgrown with Unnatural Speed

Archaeonauts: What Is the Hidden Function of the Towers, and Could It (Should It) Be Mended?

Rebels: The Masters are Sewing the Seeds of Doubt

THE CORE: THE RED SPIRE

An ancient building of impossible height, towering over the nearby mountain ranges. The once-pristine surface has been ravaged by time, and the entire tower is now a dull rust-red, dotted occasionally by vegetation and cracked windows. Inside, massive machines keep spinning, fulfilling some uncertain function.

The people of the Red Spire are thankfully far from the dangers of the Masters and largely kept safe by the thick walls of Demiurge metal. They know their site's defensible location, incredible height, and copious amount of ancient technology make them a tempting target for would-be conquerors. Centuries ago, the micro-kingdom's population was in the thousands, but now it's in the low hundreds. It has room to house many, provided they can be fed.

WHAT ARE THE SPIRES? WHAT ARE THEY FOR?

Based on the "connection" theme, we recommend the "Secret of the Spires" have something to do with linking the sites together: a communication hub; a teleport system; One fun idea is that the giant spires are "airports" for ancient floating skyships; this means you can alternate the discovery each arc with activating a spire, and discovering a new ship.

Of course, this can really depend on your campaign. It's possible the primary function (or super-secret secondary function) can also be a forcefield, a superweapon or mind control device.

WHERE ARE THE RUINS?

You might notice that most ruins don't show up on the Campaign map except for The Silent Spire. Typically, we recommend the ruins be nested inside a larger location. For example:

- The Tourmaline Tower might be within the neutral Kingdom of Dustball or nestled safely in the Underground City-Hub of Kruxafar
- The site of the Lunala might be in the Icequake Tundra or the Midnight Plains
- The Laya Factory might be the poisonous ruin that corrodes the Sludge Swamps, or a newly-risen ruin that threatens to poison the Infinite Green or the Evergreen Forest of Melinor

The Red Spire

High Concept: Impossibly Tall Tower of Ancient Tech

Skill: Crafts. The abundant technology has made the terrain around the Spire home to many scrapyard scavengers and engineers.

Power: Fair (+1)

GEOGRAPHY

■■■ **Core:** Red Spire
+■■■ **Free:** Flying Citadels of Nimbusinia
++■■ **Free:** The Underground City-Hub of Kruxafar
+++■ **Wild:** The Glowing Sands
++++ **Dread:** The Icequake Tundra
■■■− **Free:** Evergreen Forest of Melinor
+■■− **Neutral:** Dustball Kingdom
++■− **Wild:** The Sludge Swamps
+++− **Dread:** Floating Isle of Lleh'ro Neveah, the Skynarch
■■−− **Free:** Three Countries of Silent Spire
+■−− **Wild:** The Infinite Green
++−− **Dread:** Queen of Heart's House of 10,000 Rooms
■−−− **Wild:** The Midnight Plains
+−−− **Free:** Three Countries of Silent Spire
−−−− **Dread:** Halfdale Valley and Mount Muk

THE SKYSHIPS OF OLD

Skyships are rare, but more are being discovered, hidden in ancient tombs. Each has their own name and theme.

- **CometRacer:** A fast skip for the Champions to travel on.
- **RedSunScorcher:** A fiery glass-cannon of a warship
- **BlueSunSentry:** A shielded sentry ship
- **DawnSailer:** A luxury cruiser (owned by Feromoaner? See page 287).
- **BlackHoleBehemoth:** A mythical warship of unimaginable size and power.

You can add more ships of your liking themed around Umdaar's three moons, the stars, etc.

DREAD DOMAIN ADVENTURE: ASSAULT ON MOUNT MUK

Content Warning: Incarceration, Fascism, Bigotry

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

For countless centuries, the Dik-diklings and the Hyenan people lived in harmony in the isolated Halfdale Valley. That changed when Sparklaw and her warband the Overbites arrived. The Hyenan warlord could not abide seeing "her people" treating Dik-diklings with mutual respect. After Sparklaw's attempts to spread her bigotry to the local Hyenans failed, she turned to violence, capturing many of the Dik-diklings and holding them hostage to force the others to abandon their homes in Halfdale Valley. A group of Hyenans attempted to mount a resistance, but the Overbites viewed them as traitors and responded with brutal violence.

Your friend, Durrik of the Dik-diklings, has come to you, begging you to sneak into the sunken ruin of Mount Muk, Sparklaw's base, and destroy Sparklaw's artifact, the Bodysnatcher, which is keeping them trapped.

THE TIE-IN

How do I connect this story to the campaign banner?

Rebels: Evicted Halfdaleans

A group of former Halfdale Valley residents succumbed to the Sparklaw's threats and relocated to your Dread Domain and tell you their story. Meanwhile Sparklaw, a would-be Master in the making, has struck a deal with the Master of your region, trading food and convicts for weapons. Stopping Sparklaw will help you in your rebellious cause.

Dignitaries: Refugees at the Gate

The normal traders from Halfdale are a month late. Eventually, visitors arrive, but as refugees seeking asylum. Tired and wounded travelers, mostly Dik-diklings but some Hyenan, have fled their valley. They explain the situation and ask you, their neighbors, to help.

PLOT HOOK: RED TAPE

Do troublesome figures try to turn the Halfdale refugees away? Is your rescue mission vetoed by some bureaucrat under the pretext, "This is an internal Halfdale problem. We don't want to get involved." Do you boldly defy orders, or do you sneak behind their backs?

Pathfinders: Wandering the Desert

You find the Halfdale refugees in the wilds, fleeing for their lives. After getting them fed and settled, they share their story. To reach Halfdale, you must climb the Chitin Mountains, formed of ancient exoskeletons. Ask your group: what awaits them on their journey? Hungry insectosaurs? Precarious bridges?

Archaeonauts: Go the Experts

The Halfdale refugees need help ousting Sparklaw, and the experts steered them to you; as Mount Muk was built on a Demiurge ruin, your party is the most qualified to find a backway in.

ADVENTURE ISSUE

Potential Issues: Save the Dik-diklings!; Thwart the Master's Plans

Potential Subplots: Must Rescue My Friend, Spottail!; The Obstructive Prime Minister; I Must Dispel this Propaganda

Adventure Aspect: The Sputtering Flame of Hope

HALFDALE VILLAGE

The village is filled with houses of two sizes—the massive Hyenans and the tiny Dik-diklings. Some houses are entwined, conjoined, or dual-accessible. The Dik-dikling houses are mostly empty or boarded up. Most of the Hyenan houses still have occupants: traders, farmers, and artisans who keep to themselves. Some have been occupied by Overbites.

The Hyenan Villagers: None of the Hyenans you encounter are particularly pro-Overbite and are sad for their Dik-dikling neighbors, but have the mindset, "Don't rock the boat." After their initial attempt as resistance was quashed, they've given up hope. There are few open dissenters left in the village—any Hyenan brave enough to fight back did so weeks ago and were already taken away, leaving behind a village of supporters and fence-sitters.

Hidden Info: The villagers know of a back way into Mount Muk, through the servant's quarter. It has only one to two guards instead of a battalion.

Interacting with the Villagers: They are reluctant to help. You may be able to convince them (i.e., Rapport). You can also intimidate information out of them with Provoke, but the moment you're out of range, they call for Overbite patrols.

Hyenan Contact: If a PC has a good Contacts roll or spends a fate point, they might already know someone in the village, a secret Hyenan resistance member who'll help all they can.

Overbite Patrol: There's an Overbite Shock Trooper patrol in the village, but they're sleeping on the job. They only show up in rare situations (e.g., if the PCs cause a scene; a villager calls for help; as part of a success with cost).

MOUNT MUK

The structure known as Mount Muk was built on the foundation of an old Demiurge ruin; over the centuries, it slowly sank into the bog, with owners merely adding increasingly ramshackle levels to the top. It's an impressive but chaotic fortress of metal, stone, and wood. Sparklaw has redoubled the effort to excavate old floors and find artifacts of the Demiurge.

Front Entrance: Swarming with Overbite guards—two Overbite Captains for every Champion, providing formidable opposition. The PCs can attempt entry, but warn them that it won't be easy and encourage them to concede if they get in too deep.

Back Door: The back door leads to the large kitchen. It's only lightly guarded by one or two Overbite Shock Troop guards.

Alternative: Have an unguarded ancient back door with a Demiurge code to crack; ideal for Archaeonaut focus and letting Runekeeper PCs show off. It leads to a hall near the kitchen.

THE CELLAR

A cellar where the Overbites gave up on their excavation efforts. There are sparking wires coming from defunct control panels in the walls.

There are over a dozen Dik-dikling prisoners and half as many Hyenans who snuck out of the dungeons and are trying (unsuccessfully) to break out of Mount Muk. They are trying to conceal their efforts to fix the control panel, but the Champions hear them race behind crates and detritus when they enter. Once the captives are spotted, the Champions see that they have faint blue halos around their necks.

There's one particularly large Hyenan, Peppersnoot, trying to repair a defunct control panel with a pair of scrounged pliers.

Peppersnoot: A fearless Hyenan Halfdalean who radically opposes the Overbite regime. She and the other bound Hyenans rose up against Sparklaw and her oppression of the Dik-diklings, and were beaten and imprisoned for their efforts.

Dik-diklings: Mostly hiding for fear of punishment by the Overbites, they aid the Champions by telling them where Sparklaw's Throne Room is, but are too scared to fight her.

Bindings: All of the prisoners are bound by the magic blue halos created by the Bodysnatcher (see Sparklaw's profile), which causes excruciating pain if they try to leave, or whenever Sparklaw desires to punish them. Studying the magic blue halos reveals they cannot be broken without the Bodysnatcher artifact.

DUNGEONS

In a deep room with muck up to your knees, you find the cells of Dik-Diklings and rebellious Hyenans.

As far as the Overbites know, all of the captives are locked in these cells and only trotted out when used in the hostage negotiation with Halfdale Valley leaders or for amusement in the fighting pit. The captives have found a secret way out of the cells that lead to the cellar, but most of them are staying in their cells so the Overbites don't become suspicious.

If the Champions are caught, they're disarmed (weapons placed in the Barracks) and thrown in the cells with the other captives.

Guards: There are typically two Overbite Shock Troops in the dungeon, complaining about the muck and how boring guard duty is. If a fight breaks out elsewhere in the ruin, they are sure to abandon their posts.

Ricker: The de facto leader of the group is an elder Dik-dikling. Sparklaw is leveraging the Halfdaleans' love of Ricker to coerce them into abandoning their homes or joining the Overbites. Ricker's arm is in a makeshift sling from her attempts to break free last time she was used as a bargaining chip.

BARRACKS

A large cluttered, stinky room with a wide open door, this is where Overbite guards nap, play cards and games, eat meals, squabble, and drink.

There are always a lot of Overbite troops in here, but they aren't necessarily alert. The Champions may need to sneak past, or they may need to sneak in to find or recover something. Any encounters with the barracks probably involve hiding and subterfuge.

Catch-all: Anything lost or confiscated ends up here.

Off-duty Guards: There are plenty of Overbite Shock Troops and probably a Captain or two here, but they don't really want to get into anything if they can help it. However, if they realize that their space is being infringed upon, they take that personally.

THE LOCKED DOOR

Deep in the catacombs, there's an ancient Demiurge door surrounded by runes.

The door looks mysteriously inviting in the way many ancient Demiurge artifacts do. It's securely locked in some arcane way, but that doesn't mean it can't be opened one way or another.

Lore Check: Using Lore, a Champion can decipher "Warning" in ancient text on the door.

Oops: If the Champions open the door, they realize it was closed for a reason—it houses a trapped hammer-headed crocodilian robeast who hasn't been fed in a long time!

THE FIGHTING PIT

A wrong turn may have you in an oozing fighting pit, where the Overbites force prisoners to spar against robeasts, robots, and each other.

The fighting here is both physical and social—trying to survive, to protect those younger or older or sicker than you, to bide time until a plan for escape can be worked out. There could be several sessions based around the fighting pit if your group wants to do that—there are plenty of action adventure stories that do. Or gloss over it and head straight for Sparklaw. That totally works too.

Gladiator Combat: If the Champions are caught breaking out of the dungeon, or just appear "impressive" to the Overbites, they may be thrown here to fight for Sparklaw's amusement.

Sowing Chaos: Though all the captives have blue halos preventing them from leaving Mount Muk, if the Champions set them free of the fighting pit, they could join them in a final battle in the Throne Room. Most of the "fighters" are poorly equipped, but they would much rather fight the Overbites than each other.

Impressing Overbites: If the Champions want to win over some of their captors, putting up a good fight is one way to do it. Sparklaw sees them as a threat, but some of the Overbites may be impressed and consider changing sides.

SPARKLAW'S THRONE ROOM

A large but squalid room with moldy dishware, table scraps, and puddles from the leaky roof. The ceiling sags, held up by rotting wood columns.

Here, in the biggest room in Mount Muk, Sparklaw sits on her throne. She is typically attended by sycophant Overbites, prisoners she is tormenting, and the occasional neighbor she is negotiating with.

Sparklaw: You find her sitting in the Throne Room; if you've successfully snuck in, her entourage is small and unprepared for battle; otherwise, they're ready and heavily armed. She might monologue a bit, but it's not for your ears—it's to shame and bully her guards into action.

The Bodysnatcher: Sparklaw's artifact. It's a long catch-pole that ends with a pair of pincers. Anyone snagged by it gets a blue energy halo around their neck. Sparklaw can inflict pain on anyone with a halo with a touch of a button; this can be pinpointed or affect everyone within a certain radius. She uses every trick to distract the Champions long enough to grab them and get a hostage.

Talking to Sparklaw: The Master is too wicked to repent—she's immune to persuasion as long as her retinue is with her. If her guards are taken out or turned, she may be open to persuasion (but also gets more desperate).

NPCS

How many NPCs should you use in the fight? That depends on the number of PCs. For a group of three Champions, use Sparklaw and a Captain, plus at least three Shock Troops. For larger groups, add one or two more Captains and extra troops. You might create a sniper hitter to vary it up (see page 356).

Throne Room

Aspects: Dark and Moldy; Trash Everywhere

Zone Aspects: Sagging Columns; Sparklaw's Throne; Secret Tunnels

Sparklaw, General of the Overbites (She/Her)

Boss: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Charismatic Tyrant

Trouble: I'm Powerless Without My Supporters

Other Aspects: I Have the Dik-diklings in my Power; Crafty; I Have You Trapped!

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Fight, Stealth

Great (+4): Provoke, Notice, Will

Good (+3): Physique, Athletics, Empathy, Deceive

Fair (+2): Resources, Burglary, Contacts, Rapport

Average (+1): Every remaining Skill

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1] Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

STUNTS

Head of the Clan: While the other Overbites are still fighting, Sparklaw is immune to Rapport. The first person who attempts to use Rapport on her gets a choice: a free fate point as a compel, or reveals a hidden aspect I'm Powerless Without My Supporters.

Bodysnatcher: The long reach on the BodysnatcherBodysnatcher gives Sparklaw incredible reach, and she can use it to Fight anyone in her zone or the next. In addition, she can use it with create an advantage: anyone snagged gains a blue energy collar.

Collar Control: In addition to her normal action, each round, Sparklaw can use the Bodysnatcher to do one of the following: Deal 1dF+2 stress to a collared enemy of her choice that she can see, or grant all collared enemies the aspect Distracting Pain and adding a free invoke to the aspect. She must be holding the Bodysnatcher to use this.

CONSEQUENCES

[2] Mild:

[4] Moderate:

[6] Severe (For 4+ players):

Overbite Captain

Tank: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Fierce Hyenan Tank
Trouble: I Do What I'm Told
Other Aspects: Armed with Club, Net, and Stun Ray

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Physique
Great (+4): Fight, Athletics
Good (+3): Will, Notice, Provoke, Shoot

STUNTS

Grapplers: Whenever a character tries to get around me, or get out of a Grapple aspect I've created, the difficulty or opposition is increased by +2.
Not Paid To Think: The Overbite Tanks have Armor:1 against mental attacks.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1 Mental 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 Mild:
4 Moderate:

Crocodile Robeast

Boss [Beast]: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Crocodile of Flesh and Artillery
Other Aspects: Hungry for Blood and Bolts

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Fight
Great (+4): Athletics, Physique, Will

STUNTS

Snapping Jaws: If the Robeast causes at least a minor consequence, it can immediately invoke the consequence to pull a Champion into another zone "The Muk Beneath". For others to enter the Muk requires overcoming a Great [+4] obstacle with Athletics or Physique. Otherwise the poor Champion will be on their own.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 Mental 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 Mild:
4 Moderate:

Overbite Shock Troops

Filler: Good (+3)

SKILLS

Good (+3): Stab and Boast
Average (+1): Shoot, Stealth

STUNTS

Axes and Swords: Attacks have Weapon:1

STRESS

1 1 1

POSSIBLE ENDINGS

A Little Help from my Frenemies: If defeated, Sparklaw may attempt to call upon a neighboring Master for aid.

- Will they rescue her, making her their Lieutenant?
- Will they punish her for her failure or laugh in her face?
- Will they send a battalion to free her? If so, your next adventure may be repelling an Invasion into Halfdale!

Impostor: When cornered, Sparklaw's body changes—she's not a Hyenan at all, but the infamous shapeshifting Master, the Facemonger! All of her talk about "our superior Hyenan race" was just bait! She slips away. When will you see her again? Who can you trust?

Turnabout Is Fairplay: The Bodysnatcher survives the fight and proves to be indestructible. It's easy enough to dispel the halos and free the Dik-diklings. But who do you trust with this artifact? Will the Dik-diklings use it unfairly against the Hyenan? Can you trust your Freeland patron with it? Do you trust yourself with it?

Get Out Quick: After the battle or perhaps to cover her escape, Sparklaw sabotages the machines keeping Mount Muk afloat—it starts sinking into the swamp! Can you save the prisoners in the kitchen? What about the Overbites sleeping in the barracks? Do you save an Overbite calling out for help?

Enough Is Enough: When backed into a corner, Sparklaw threatens to use Bodysnatcher to kill all the prisoners, only to be stopped by her captain of the guards. They turn on her, seeing her for the vain charlatan she is.

Broken Community: The convicts are free, the Overbites are in custody. But what can you do to mend the Halfdale community torn in half? What words can you say? What safeguards can you help them put in place?

Red Spire Campaign: Mount Muk doesn't have any ancient spires of its own, but to look impressive, the architects made a jerry-rigged tower from fragments of other broken or stripped ruin towers. The jigsaw tower is ominous (and not just in the way it teeters): it's unclear how the tower might disrupt the Spires system, and the ruins seem to be cobbling together their own twisted AI bots to defend it.

WILDERNEXUS ADVENTURE: THE LAYA FACTORY

by Soup, additional content by Dave Joria

Content Warning: cannibalism, body horror (mutation), and mind control.

THE PREMISE

Until a few weeks ago, the Mangroves of the Laya Tribe were a Wildernexus that was relatively safe (by Umdaar Standards). As their water is brackish and their trees ill-fitted for fuel or lumber, the Laya Tribe were largely overlooked by the Masters, living the solitary lives they preferred. But all of this changed last month, when the ruin of Laya emerged.

Those caught at the epicenter were lost to the upheaval. A few that were on the farther edges of the land escaped the calamity. It is from these survivors that the Freelands learned of the new ruin.

Named after the people whose lives it upended, the ruin of Laya is a megalith of onyx and steel that stands at the center of a crater made up of perfectly spaced concentric circles. These circles and the land abutting them are a barren gray, though noxious vapors occasionally burst out of tiny cracks that litter the ground. A sickly verdigris mist hangs over the area, mocking the verdant vegetation that was twisted by the ruin's awakening.

Toxic green thunderclouds shroud the newly arisen ruin of Laya. Days before its rise, the land heaved and buckled as noxious gases burst from beneath the forest floor. These terribly lethal gases erased most of the local wildlife and contaminated most of their water sources. Those faunas that survived, mostly insects, became twisted into ravenous and aggressive versions of themselves. In particular, Spiders seem to have adapted nastily, as they are larger, faster and weave webs that share the clouds' toxicity. Mercifully, most of the plants were unaffected, save for those already poisonous. The toxicity of those plants has been elevated to extreme levels, making foraging a chancy venture.

Themes: Frequent Peril and Daring Escapes, Survival, Jungle Adventure, Corrupted Wildlife, Cliffhanger, Man vs. Nature, Aftermath of Industrialism

Adventure Aspects: **The Balance of Nature Must be Restored**, **Keep Your Mask On!**

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Here are some possible ways to tie the adventure to your banner:

Dignitary: Your kingdom has often offered help to the Laya tribe in the past. Now that the Laya survivors are at your door, it's time to make good on that promise!

Rebel: The Laya Factory has caught the eye of your arch-rival—replace the villain "Master Ques-tor" with your sworn nemesis. That Master has sent Ked the Krusher and a squad to plunder the ruins. You must stop them at any cost!

Pathfinder: Was one of your members charged with watching over the Mangroves of Laya? Were you there when the People the Laya first made contact with the outside community? Do you feel responsible?

Archaeonauts: For years, you theorized about the "Lost Ruins of Onyx," but your colleagues scoffed; Now that it emerges, you are the leading expert, and have something to prove!

THE JOURNEY

As a survival adventure, the first challenges are making their way to the ruins. These let the Champions soak in the scenery, and interact with it. We have provided two sample scenes The River and The Climb, but you can easily replace a scene with the other, or cut a scene entirely for time.

If the Champions are Pathfinders or otherwise acquainted with these lands, ask them what dangers they've encountered before or heard rumor of. Incorporate some versions of these—either as expected or with a twist—as you present challenges on the way.

THE RIVER

A trip by boat through the mangroves. The river is winding and full of plants, making larger crafts impossible. Instead, the journey must be made on small rafts or canoes (we recommend any party of 4+ be split into two canoes). Sensible Pathfinders wear masks as they have been warned about toxins in the air.

Partway through, they encounter a number of obstacles all at once, resulting in a challenge.

POTENTIAL OBSTACLES

- **Sharp rocks:** Need Drive to avoid the rocks
- **Whirlpool:** Need Physique to overpower
- **Toxo-Spider Attack:** Need Fight or Shoot to hold back.
- **Capsized or Champion overboard:** Need Athletics to Recover

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS

Raging Rapids; Poison in the Water; School of Psyranha; Toxo-Spider Webs; Valuable Gear

The challenge should have multiple objectives, with varying difficulties.

> You could have Toxo-Spider Attack - Difficulty Great (4+); Sharp Rocks - Difficulty Good (+3); Lost Cargo (or lost party member, depending on the previous roll), Difficulty Great (+4)

Potential Stakes: Mental or Physical Harm (stress or taking consequences); losing gear (makes The Climb more difficult); Losing their masks (leaves them more vulnerable to poison in future scenes); suffering poisonous bites.

Alternatively, you may frame the scene as a conflict against the toxo-spiders, with the river rapids being a dynamic environment. This is handy for players that are new to fate, as it lets them see a simple combat against weak fillers before facing a big conflict against Ked.

THE CLIMB

At some point, the party has to abandon the boats (assuming they didn't lose them in the rapids). The ruins are at a higher elevation, and the party will have to scale a muddy cliffside to proceed. The climb is assisted by the use of grappling hooks and ropes, if they still have their gear, or using the naturally occurring but unreliable vines that grow on the cliffside.

When they're halfway up, a group of Ques-tor Raiders spots them from the top of the cliff, a ways down the ridge. If they manage to get directly above you before you finish climbing, they can cut your ropes or vines and have clear shots; you'll be sitting ducks!

HOW TO FRAME THIS SCENE

There are a few options:

- A contest (see page 134), with the party racing upwards, while the soldiers race along the cliff edge to cut them off.
- A challenge (recommended only if you skipped The River or framed it as a conflict).
- A conflict, with a soldier sniper acting as a hazard (see page 374).

POTENTIAL ASPECTS

Muddy Cliff (opens up twist "mudslide"); Tree Branches; Suppressive Fire

Another option is Falling Boulders, pushed off the ledge; see *Hazards* on page 374.

Ques·tor Raiders (with shooting-action laser-bows!)

Filler: Good (+3)

ASPECTS

Puppets of a Mutant-Fungus (Hidden)

SKILLS

Good (+3) Athletics, Fight
Fair (+2) Shooting, Will

STRESS

[1][1]

If the Champions make it to the top, the raiders will flee or surrender. It is at this point that the Champions notice that the soldiers have been changed slightly: moss and fungus seem to be growing out of their ears or noses, and seemingly controlling them. They are puppets of something unnatural!

- **Stakes:** Strong Injury, Capture, falling to their "death".

The Adventure Aspect, **Frequent Peril and Daring Escape**, can give the heroes a thick plot armor against death. If a player seems to fall off the cliff to their death, pull the player aside and let them know, "you're not actually dead—you'll just miss the next scene, and rejoin the party in the nick of time." If the players seem distressed, you can even let the players in on the secret (although their "characters" might still be distraught at their apparent loss).

THE LAYA FACTORY

The Champions finally make it to the ruin itself. The megalith is a multi-forked structure with a solid "trunk" that glitters in the distance. This trunk separates into "branches" of onyx and steel that support opaque globes of various sizes. Closely bunched together, the branches and globes bring to mind images of pomegranate trees cast in basalt.

The ruin constantly thrums a dreadful rhythm that belies the processes playing within it.

RUNNING THE "LAYA FACTORY"

There is likely to be two or more scenes within the Laya Factory, depending on their goals.

- An inquisitive group might be focused on discovering how the factory works; give them some Filler opposition in a quick conflict, and then share the info from the "Workings of the Laya Factory" below. (Great for Archaeonauts).
- It's a ruin, so consider including a few traps (see page 374 for creating traps of your own).
- At the climax, the group will likely meet Ked the Krusher. Formerly a Master's Lieutenant, he's been now twisted into a more nihilistic threat. Establish the stakes as well as a rich environment for the conflict (the cat-walk filled factory in *Make Each Zone Count* on page 383 is perfect!)
- If the Champion's objective was to destroy the factory, perhaps the final scene is a dynamic chase (contest) out of the Self-Destructing factory..

The Laya Factory

ASPECTS

Aspects: Toxic Dumpsite; Mutations Abound; Atmosformative

Issues: Contaminating the Neighbors; The Master Seeks New Weapons; The Demiurges Secret Agenda

SKILLS

Toxic Pool: Block—Good (+3)

OTHER

Weapon:3

See page 376 for rules on blocks.

THE WORKINGS OF THE LAYA FACTORY

The following can be revealed to the players as they progress. This might be obvious (if you're in a rush), or it might be the result of a scene (e.g., The Champions decide that they want to look at a control panel, and fight their way through a horde of mushroom henchmen to reach it).

The Laya Factory is a Demiurge facility built to process and clean subterranean air to make the underground habitable to surface dwellers. The basalt "pomegranates" are filled with concentrated gases, which presumably the Demiurge would safely dispose of elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the Demiurge are gone, but their legacy remains without the benefit of maintenance! The factory's processes have reached critical levels, and the pomegranates threaten to burst over a wider area if not properly handled. It's the near-bursting of these poison "fruits" that has driven the ruin to the surface. Popular conjecture believes that whatever the Demiurge found underground was more valuable than whatever was on the surface.

Masters who are aware of this ruin eagerly claim what is essentially a chemical weapons manufacturing hub. If they could learn to harness gases the ruin processes, they could render rival lands barren. Furthermore, the mutative qualities of some of these gases would interest any Master with a penchant for bioform experimentation. Such destructive capabilities in their hands would make any Master a terrifying force.

The Factory's capabilities could be used for good. Having the ability to cleanse air and make blighted areas habitable would be a boon to any society, and furthers the movement of Umdaar's peoples to places of relative safety

NPCS

Below are some NPCs that might be present: A Mutant Fungrowler (filler), Sporespewer (hitter), Ked the Krusher (boss).

Ked was the lieutenant of Master Ques-tor, sent to investigate the Laya factory. Ked never returned and was presumed dead. Instead, he was lost, wounded, and mutated by the toxins and mushrooms into a half-orangutanoid, half-rot monster. The Champions have stumbled upon him ready to use poison weapons to transform the world to match himself, out of joy or malice.

Alternatively, you can substitute Sorpentra and her reptilian henchmen instead.

HOW MANY NPCS TO USE IN THE FIGHT?

That depends. For a group of three Champions, Ked the Krusher, along with a Fungrowler and Sporespewer for each Champion. You may also wish to create one or more tanks (see page 354).

Mutant Fungrowler

Filler: Fair (+2)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Mindless Four-legged Mushroom

SKILLS

Fair (+2): Bite and Snarl

STUNTS

Mindless & Poisonous: The mushrooms are immune to mental stress and poison stress

Cannibal: Once per turn before it takes its action, the mushroom may devour a wounded Mutant Mushroom near it. If it does, it regains stress equal to the stress it had. If the eaten mushroom hadn't taken an action this round, this NPC may take an extra action.

STRESS

1 1

Mutant Sporespewer

Hitter: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Mindless Mushroom Grenadier

Trouble: Burned by Bright Light

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Shoot

Great (+4): Stealth, Notice

Good (+3): Fight, Athletics, Investigate

STUNTS

Spore Blast: Once per turn, you may target an opponent with a Spore Blast with Shoot. If the attack hits, it ignores all armor and affects all non-mushrooms in the same zone.

Mindless & Poisonous: You are immune to mental stress and poison stress.

STRESS

1 1 1

Ked the Krusher, Reborn

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Orangutan Lieutenant Turned Rot-Mutant

Trouble: Falling Apart

Other Aspect: Rush of Power; Long, Strong Arms; Adept Climber; Poison Grenade Launcher

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Physique

Superb (+5): Fight, Athletics

Great (+4): Shoot, Will, Stealth

Good (+3): Notice, Burglary, Contacts

STUNTS

Choking Miasma: Any non-mushroom who ends their action in close contact with Zed suffers one stress from poison and corrosion. Similarly, whenever Ked successfully shoots someone in another zone with the Poison Grenade Launcher, they likewise suffer an additional stress in the same way.

Corrupted Body & Mind: Ked has Armor:2 against any physical or mental attack.

Cannibal: Once per turn before taking its action, Ked may devour a wounded Mutant Mushroom near it. If he does, he regains stress equal to the stress it had; if the eaten mushroom hadn't taken an action this round, Ked may take an extra action. Ked may not use this stunt to attack the same Champion twice in the same round.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] Mild:

[4] Moderate:

[4] Moderate:

AFTERMATH

If the Champions manage to defeat Ked without blowing up the factory, they are able to temporarily turn off the factory, to prevent short term environmental damage. However, they are left with a big decision: what do they do with the factory in the long term?

- The Demiurge left detailed instructions for how to use the Laya factory to safely detox the underground, and how to safely dispose of the poison "fruits"; though, a large community would have to commit to servicing it.
- The Champions could shut it down completely; but this may have effects for underground communities, such as the Burrow Builders.
- The caves underneath the Laya Factory hold something valuable that even the Demiurge sought. What treasure or horror lies beneath? (Sounds like another adventure!)
- Champions and their allies will have to resist the urge to weaponize the fruit and the factory; the "fruits" serve as effective chemical weapons. This could turn the tide in the war! (But at what cost?) Does it raise the stakes? How does having access to chemical weapons change how your allies and enemies look at you?

A RUINS ADVENTURE: THE PERPLEXOLIS

by Mahar Mangahas

Deep in the southern Wildernexus, a ruin slowly makes itself known to Umdaar. Unlike its brethren, the ruin called the Perplexolis manifested without natural disasters. Instead, stories of great heroism and battlecraft circulated across the land, with rumors flying that the ruin was looking for a Great One to rule it. Now, archaeonauts, scholars, and Masters vie to become the power that controls the Perplexolis' hypnotic array of abilities.

The Perplexolis Adventure is relatively free-form—it works well for GMs interested in making quick NPCs antagonists and obstacles on the fly, using the rules found under *Creating Opposition* on page 342. We included samples for each test, to serve as an example or framework, or to use if you don't feel like creating your own.

Mood, tone: Puzzles, manifestation, power in personality.

THE BACKSTORY

The Perplexolis is a quantum entertainment system. The remaining records hint that Hollenbarque, a noted jester of ancient times, resided there. A creature of japes and jests, Hollenbarque designed the Perplexolis to create media that sang of Demiurge achievements. Many communities enjoyed the Hollenbarque's detailed illusions—affairs so real that none could distinguish between them and actual things.

Today, none of these stories or illusions remain intact, save for the Producer: an artificial construct tasked with ensuring that creative minds rule their Demiurge's favorite place.

Adventure Aspect: The Truths Behind the Stories

PLOT HOOKS

- **Returning Heroes:** Mythological figures are making appearances, cajoling the peoples of the Wildernexuses to send poets to preserve their culture and legacy. Issue: Mysterious Visions of the Past
- **Recurring Villains:** Masters long thought captured or eliminated are seemingly terrorizing nearby communities. While they do not cause fatalities, they destroy property and scare off animals. Often, they taunt would-be heroes to face them if they dared—notably, at the Perplexolis. Issue: Assess the Threat
- **Recording History:** A scholar has returned from his Wildernexuses sojourn. He claims he's seen a tower of glass and lightning, where each windowpane shows a record of what happened from significant moments in history. Eager to commission a group, he will pay anything to secure this repository of Demiurge history. Issue: Explore the Mysterious Ruins

FINDING THE PERPLEXOLIS

The Perplexolis itself is a small affair. Surrounded by groves of bougainvillea and amaryllis, this ruin is a squat white tower that would be picturesque if not for the large crystal hemisphere that rests atop it. Crackling with lightning, the crystal radiates faint blue and yellow light ripples in concentric circles. Daylight washes this light show out, but at night the colors can be seen from miles around. Beings hit by the light report having prophetic visions of personal glory if they find the ruin.

Going through the ivory gate that is the Perplexolis' entry is simple and effortless. The ruin has no locking mechanism. Getting in is easy. It's getting out that's the challenge.

WHEN INSIDE...

The Perplexolis' main interior is a perfect circle lined with glass panels of varied shapes and sizes. These shimmer with granular flecks of white and gray energy. A vast network of cords of slippery, indeterminate black substance links the panels through a dark web. Figuring out where one cord begins and ends would take eons.

Upon entry, the Perplexolis comes alive. The panels will glow with rectangles of sweeping colors, and the PCs will be greeted by the Producer, who welcomes them to the Tests of the Perplexolis. A Master of Media, the Producer's central directive lets it access the ruin's hard-light (tangible hologram) functions to test its visitors. Depending on its mood, the Producer will appear in whatever shape the GM thinks appropriate. Regardless of form, it always sports a harlequin-shaped logo on its body. It will cordially invite and advise the Champions that this is their only opportunity to accept or refuse its Tests.

If they accept, Champions are "brought" into a hallucinatory room of white with no discernible top or bottom. In truth, they are occupying a clear mindscape—psychic characters familiar with psionic travel would locate themselves in the collective id. Should multiple parties enter, they are collated into the same room.

The Perplexolis manages this through its key Aspects: **Hardlight Construction Factory; Hit Maker; Let You Entertain Me**

The Producer

ASPECTS

High Concept: Hardlight Holographic AI of the Perplexolis
Trouble: The Perplexolis Needs A Creative Mind!
Other Aspects: I Crave Drama; Not Programmed for Morality; I Don't Create, Only Embody

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Deceive
Superb (+5): Lore, Empathy
Great (+4): Crafts, Will, Investigate
Good (+3): Rapport, Athletics, Notice, Resources
Fair (+2): Burglary, Provoke, Shoot, Stealth
Average (+1): Every remaining Skill

STUNTS

From Your Brain to My Stage: The Producer gains +2 to Crafts when creating hardlight hologram aspects and NPCs based on ideas taken from a visitor (either from conversations, or discovered with Empathy). Alternatively, the Producer can pay a fate point to create it without rolling with one free invoke.
Rematerialize: If the Producer is taken out with physical stress, treat it as a concession instead; the only way to deal ACTUAL harm to the hologram is to hurt the machine storing it.
Seems so Real: All hardlight NPCs and dangers created by the Producer also have Fantastic (+6) in Deceive.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1
Mental 1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**
4 **Moderate:**
6 **Severe:** (Optional)

THE TESTS

The Producer will then run the Champions through one to three tests (depending on time and interest). Not every Champion has to be involved in every test. For example, if some Champions decided not to enter the room, then they may be the subjects of test 2. Ensure that every Champion partakes in at least one test (or include them all in the final). Anyone not in a test can observe what happens through the view-screens.

TEST OF THE SCREEN

The Test of the Screen determines if a Champion can manage the ruin's hardlight constructions through skill. By calling on an aspect of their belongings, a player may construct a sentient version of their equipment, an **avatar**, to contend with the challenges set. Roll 3d6 three times and consult the table on the next page. Have fun mixing these elements together and encourage players to think out of the box when solving the challenges generated!

This scene can have several formats but is likely to be a contest; see page 134 for rules.

> The GM rolls an eight on 3d6 three times in a row, getting: "Riddle... vs. the Naughty Battlemaster... with the Winner gaining the Most Votes."
>
> Each Champion creates a hardlight avatar based on one of their pieces of equipment; this can be an aspect, but the GM decides to make it a simple NPC character.
>
> The Runekeeper PC calls upon their Heirloom Puzzle Box artifact; the GM gives it a Will of Great (+4) and Lore (+3) to match the wielder, and the high concept **Balanced Talking Box of Mystery**.
>
> The Poet PC doesn't have an aspect for a equipment; they can still create an avatar, but it will be less impressive: they pull off a sock and create an avatar **Stinky Impromptu Sock Puppet** with Rapport of Good (+3), which is less that the Poet's rating.
>
> The GM creates a Naughty Battlemaster to participate in the contest, with the aspect, **Master of Tongues and Innuendo**; they don't want it to be too tough, but it's 2-3 characters vs. 1 NPC, so the GM gives it Great (+4) Will and Rapport, and a stunt that lets it start with 1 victory (the Producer is stacking the deck a little).
>
> The magical "Studio Audience" has the hidden Aspects, **Loves an Underdog** and **Here for the Feels**.
>
> The GM runs it like a contest, each side rolling to tell a more impressive riddle (Likely with Lore, Rapport, Provoke and Will being used), until someone wins.

Table 1: Subjects of the Screen Test

3d6	The Producer shall challenge them to a...	vs. ...	Where the winner is determined by whoever...
3	Race	Minotaurs	Proves they are the most beautiful.
4	Walk off	Faeries	Proves they are the most graceful.
5	Eating contest	Fallen deity	Proves they are the most powerful.
6	Debate	Melancholy	Proves they are the most guileful.
7	Duel	Bevy of critics	Proves they are the funniest.
8	Riddle	Naughty battlemaster	Can get the most votes from the "viewing public."
9	Pageant	Sentient meteor	Has better "name recognition."
10	Sing off	Dramatic fungi	Makes the most puns.
11	Spelling bee	Nascent cosmic awareness	Makes the best catchphrase.
12	Shooting competition	Lost archaeonauts	Shows that anything one can do, they can do better.
13	Marathon	Lost villain	Can accurately guess the cost of an item.
14	Stare off	Enemy commando	Displays more trivial knowledge.
15	Game of chicken	Massive gladiator	Collects more money in five moves.
16	Breath-holding contest	Living storm	Can replicate a recipe the closest
17	Interpretive dance	Grumpy giant	Can best emulate the attitudes of a fallen hero.
18	Memory test	Defiant mob	Shows that "star quality."

HOW DO I ACT THROUGH AN AVATAR?

This can be up to interpretation: you can create an NPC that the Players can control; it can be an aspect that is invoked to help or hinder a player's rolls. When in doubt, think of them like Pokemon; the player mostly has control, but what they can do is limited by the ally they are working through.

THE TEST OF CHEMISTRY

Requires at least two PCs. Are the Champions capable of making bonds with others they will never meet? Mastering the constructs isn't enough to rule the Perplexolis. Since the Producer concerns itself with social programming, it wants a Director who collaborates with others—so well that they create meaningful encounters with their audiences. Characters with relationship-focused aspects can convert these into an Avatar representing their bonds.

> What if the two characters don't have a bond or relationship aspect? Then they must temporarily create one; it's likely going to be awkward if these two characters don't interact much.

This scene can have several formats but is likely to be a challenge; see page 134 for rules.

> The GM rolls a five on 3d6 three times in a row: "Star a Celebratory Ball... with a staff of Dancing Swords... Where success is manifested by the Increased Fertility of the Earth."
>
> The test focuses on two Champions with the aspect, **Siblings from Different Mothers** and create an "Earth Mother Goddess Avatar", with high Empathy Great (+4), and Good (+3) in another skill they share.
>
> Two other Champions with the aspect, **Hot/Cold Rivals**, create an NPC with the high concept **Two-Headed Ice/Fire Giant**; it has one skill they share at Great (+4), and two skills that are unique at Fair (+2). It likely can be compelled to sabotage itself, if the two characters don't pay extra fate points to resist the temptation to squabble.
>
> The Dancing Swords are any number of mobs; they don't have skills, but might have descriptions of their actions: Superb (+5) "Cutting, Flickering", with lower skills like, "Poor: Understanding Complex Instructions / Standing Still." The dancing sword mobs aren't antagonistic, but they don't start under the avatars' control; they must convinced to help.
>
> The GM decides to run it as a challenge in multiple parts (approximately one per avatar). Based on the player's plans, it might be: 1. Convince the Swords to help (empathy, rapport, provoke); 2. Plan a Choreography for the Swords (Crafts); 3. Educate the Swords to Perform it (Rapport); 4. Perform in the Dance yourself (Rapport, Deceive or Athletics).
>
> The difficulty of each task will vary, but generally between Good (+3) and Superb (+5).

Table 2: Subjects of the Chemistry Test

3d6	The Producer shall ask them to...	With a staff of ...	Where success is manifested by the...
3	Organize a wedding	Night-clad nymphs	Adulation of the masses.
4	Arrange an election	Robotic sheep	Positive regard of a monarch.
5	Star a celebratory ball	Dancing swords	Increased fertility of the earth.
6	Parley with a betrayer	Dragons	Falling of stars at dawn.
7	Ratify a law where all must sacrifice	Salamanders	People fluorescing their auras.
8	Inspire a horde	Obtuse villagers	Outcome of a battle.
9	Memorialize a poet	Nightmarish visions	Rise of the Chosen One.
10	Revive the economy	Owls	Wealth of legions.
11	A pageant of naval ships	Evaporating moods	Rise of one's station.
12	Make a treaty	Musical instruments	Marriage of influential people.
13	Divide the spoils of war	Winged dwarves	Summoning a primal being.
14	Distribute a king's ransom	Wild revelers	Signs of hideous disaster.
15	Host a psychic symposium	Flitting shadows	Director's eyes glowing.
16	Broadcast a monologue	Self-arranging	Crows gather.
17	Conduct a choir of spirits	Newborn deities	Disintegrates all weapons.
18	To choreograph angels	Lawyerly genies	Eruption of a volcano.

WHAT ABOUT "INCREASED FERTILITY OF THE EARTH?"

This can be interpreted several ways: it can simply be a visual cue to mark the end; alternatively, it could be that the ball is a sacred Fertility Dance, and it must be done perfectly to let the rain fall (maybe a book-smart character might investigate or use Lore to see how the dance was traditionally done, or ways to further improve the yield through scientific means).

THE TEST OF IMPROVISATION

The Test of Improvisation demands working with the world and making the most of its opportunities. By drawing on an aspect that defines their individuality, generating an Avatar representing the PCs' can-do spirit.

Like the scenes before, this may be a challenge or a contest. To shake things up, consider running as a conflict (see page 136), or a Countdown (the players must achieve a certain number of successes within a certain number of rounds—see page 363).

> The GM rolls a four on 3d6 three times in a row, and gains "Forge a Mighty Sword... with nothing but a Dragon's Tear... Where success is acknowledged and manifested by a Phoenix resurrecting."
>
> For avatars, the GM decides to keep the stats more or less the same as their host PCs; however, it's a chance for a character with hidden aspects to temporarily change up. For example, a cleric that's sweet on the outside and feisty inside might have an avatar that's all "Fire and Fury."
>
> The GM interprets this as a challenge mixed with a Countdown; they have to perform several tasks within a certain time frame, before the phoenix egg hatches. This allows them several tries should they fail, or extra time to create aspects to help each other.
>
> Some tasks might include:
>
> 1. Getting the dragon to cry (Provoke, Empathy, Rapport, or Fight)
> 2. Designing a mighty sword (Lore or Crafts)
> 3. Manning the Billows and Stoking the Flames (Physique, Athletics, or a skill related to magic)
> 4. Withstanding the heat of the forge (Will or Physique)
> 5. Hammering out the blade (Physique, Crafts, or Fight)
> 6. Cooling the blade (Investigate or Crafts).
>
> A party of four might have to accomplish four successes in two rounds with difficulties around Superb (+5), or six successes in three rounds with difficulties around Fantastic (+6) and Epic (+7). If they succeed in time, the phoenix rises majestically; if they fail, a cold-flame necrophoenix rises instead.

Table 3: Subjects of the Improvisation Test

3d6	The Producer shall ask them to…	With nothing but …	Where success is acknowledged and manifested by…
3	Win the king's approval	a Song	Falling stars.
4	Forge a mighty sword	a Dragon's tear	a Phoenix resurrecting.
5	Cure a new disease	a Dream	a Purple dawn.
6	Curate a gallery	a Rapier wit	an Invitation to paradise.
7	Double the harvest	a Bellowing cow	a Shaft of light.
8	Build walls of ether	Willpower	Rain of precious metals.
9	Program a device	an Abacus	a Bloodsworn promise.
10	Capture a lie	an Army of snakes	an Admission of guilt
11	Build fighting simulacra	a Bribe	Sudden changes in seasons.
12	Clean the city's sewers	Spit and a toothbrush	Lifting a curse.
13	Make a gourmet banquet	a Pair of hands	Pardoning a criminal
14	Hide great treasures	a Wheel of cheese	The arrival of a prophet
15	Restore the ducal throne	Fine wine	an End of an empire.
16	Brew a universal antidote	a Rusty needle	a Star of a new dynasty.
17	Strip a general of rank	a Joke	a War's end.
18	Build a new Ruin	a Faint hope	Unearthing a new Demiurge.

RESOLUTIONS

Should the PCs impress the Producer, they could find themselves the key operators in the region. The Producer is eager to continue its directive of creative minds to guide the ruin—to whatever end imagined.

THE COSTS OF SUCCESS

- The Producer finally has visitors with imagination to fuel the constructs, as it refuses to let the PCs go. It has the imagination to fuel its constructs. It must keep the Champions there!
- Creativity is a gift, but it can burn out. If the Producer feels that new ideas are subpar, it will administer the Tests again—or worse, find another being whose imagination "works."
- The Producer is pleased with the PCs' work, but the party has other responsibilities. A worthy guardian must be found to secure the ruin!

THE COSTS OF FAILURE

- The Tests must remain secret! The Producer constructs a maze to prevent the PCs from escaping and will use its knowledge of the PCs' Aspects to its advantage.
- Frustrated with "intelligent life" lacking creativity, the Producer malfunctions. Fueled by frustration, it shifts its programming and eliminates the unworthy bioforms.
- Finding the PCs lacking, the Producer awards directorship to a rival Master. So empowered, the Master begins a campaign of bedevilment.

Red Spire Campaign: The Producer might hint the real purpose behind the Spires: Is it something wonderful, like "TV antennae" for receiving broadcasts from the Perplexolis, or allowing cross-continent instant communication? Or is it something more sinister at the heart, like televised propaganda?

FREELAND ADVENTURE: SAND DANCE

by Helena Real

Content Warning: Seduction; Verbal Abuse

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

It's time for celebration! And politics. Blazinia, Magical Princess and current ruler of the Freeland of Dustball, has invited leaders from across Umdaar to join her at the Sleeping Sun celebration. This festivity commemorates the beginning of Autumn, the best season for the desert-dwelling people. It's the perfect occasion to sway the Princess's mind—and heart—towards any worthy enterprise from the Champions, such as offering support, sponsorship, or even a long-lasting allegiance. However, there are others with Blazinia's ear and the PCs will have to join forces despite their differences or fail individually to the Masters' plan to recruit Blazinia to their cause!

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

If this is the first adventure of your ***Umdaar*** campaign, ask your players to create characters interested in representing their respective communities at the Sand Dance. Maybe they are consummate diplomats or some desperate, last-minute attempts at negotiators. Perhaps their community needs a certain resource, protection, or support that Blazinia could provide.

If this is not your first adventure, look for hooks based on our previous sessions that would interest your Banner in an adventure of socializing and infestation with an optional pinch of physical conflict.

We recommend that you discuss different options with your players to ensure that you create a scenario in which this Autumn celebration—and its corresponding negotiations—are a major dramatic point, relevant to all players at the table. Maybe for different reasons, yes, but relevant all the same.

To ensure this, whether you're just creating the PCs or if you already did, we advise that you tell your players to create an aspect (or change an existing one to be) about their role at the Sand Dance.

KEY EVENTS

Here's a few key events in the Adventure that will happen unless the Champions take action to prevent them. Feel free to move these around or change them based on the actions of the Champions.

1. The Champions arrive in Dustball just before the celebration starts properly.
2. Blazinia makes her first appearance, delivers her opening speech, and the Sleeping Sun begins in earnest.
3. Attendees are encouraged to socialize and the Champions have an opportunity to start conversations and early negotiations with the NPCs present.
4. The Hot-Bots enter the festivity, seducing and otherwise attracting all the NPCs' attention.
5. Blazinia, if questioned, is aware of the Hot-Bots' presence and that they belong to an "esteemed guest" that still hasn't appeared publicly.
6. Gossip Mongers enter the party and use their ability to twist the PCs' actions into offenses against the Sun Sleeping's protocol, particularly if the Champions have disabled or interfered with the Hot-Bots.
7. Unless convinced otherwise, Blazinia expels the Champions from the celebrations because of the Gossip Mongers' lies.
8. Then the "esteemed guest," owner and creator of both the Hot-Bots and the Gossip Mongers, makes his appearance: enter the Feromoaner, who will use his charm to win over Blazinia—and the whole Sleeping Sun—to the Masters' side.

RED SPIRE CAMPAIGN PLOT SEED

The Kingdom of Dustball is noted for being an oasis point in the desert. Blazina's cooperation will do much to connect the trade routes in the Northern part of the continent. The capital also houses the ancient Spire of Glass, which the royalty has kept off-limits to Archaeonauts.

A Treaty with the Freelands

Lock: Blazinia Only Respects Strength
Key: Triumphing over the dangers the Feromoaner brought.
Countdown: ☐☐☐
Trigger (first box): The heroes denounce or disable the Hot-Bots.
Trigger (second box): The heroes clear their names or expose the Gossip Mongers.
Trigger (third box): The heroes defeat the Feromoaner.
Outcome: Blazinia is open to negotiating with the heroes.

MAIN CAST

The Feromoaner (He/Him)

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Cyborg Master of Technocharm and Artificial Seduction

Trouble: Can't Resist an Opportunity to Gloat

Relationship: My Most Recent Romantic Conquest

Other Aspects: Prefers Love to War; The Face Is Mightier Than the Sword—Or the Pen

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Provoke

Superb (+5): Deceive, Will

Great (+4): Crafts, Rapport, Resources

Good (+3): Contacts, Empathy, Investigate, Notice

Fair (+2): Burglary, Lore, Physique, Shoot, Stealth

Average (+1): Everything else

STUNTS

Hot Enough to Melt Steel: The Feromoaner may use Rapport against robots that would otherwise be immune to social attacks. Similarly, he can use Rapport as if it were Burglary to hack any mechanical device he touches.

Your Deepest, Darkest Secret: If a character suffers a consequence from one of his minions, the Feromoaner can pay a fate point to discover a character's Motivation or Trouble aspect.

Until Next Time, Darling: Whenever the Feromoaner takes a consequence, you can pay a fate point to remove him from the scene in an amazing display of technocharm, replacing him with two Well-Oiled Muscles (see page 289). Cannot use in the final scene (unless in a campaign).

STRESS

Physical [1] [1] [1] [1]

Mental [1] [1] [1] [1] [1] [1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[2] **Mild (Mental):**

[4] **Moderate:**

[6] **Severe:**

Blazinia

Boss: Great (+4)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Magical Princess of Dustball (She/They)

Aspects: Protective Ruler Stuck Between a Rock and a Hard Place; Reluctantly Invited Guests

SKILLS

Great (+4): Will

Good (+3): Contacts, Provoke

Fair (+2): Rapport, Shoot, Stealth

Hot-Bot

Filler: Good (+3)

ASPECTS

Too Sexy for Its Shirt

SKILLS

Good (+3): Seducing

Average (+1): Understanding People's Desires, Leather Whips

Bad (-1): Logical Thinking

STRESS

[1] [1] [1]

Gossip Monger

Hitter (Social): Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Social Apex Predators

Trouble: Bound by the Niceties and Hardships of the Spoken Word

Other Aspects: Always Has the Best Comebacks

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Deceive

Great (+4): Provoke, Stealth

Good (+3): Contacts, Notice, Rapport

STUNTS

Lie, Cheat, and Steal: You get Weapon:2 when you attack with Deceive as long as your target doesn't know you're spreading lies about them.

Invisible to the Untrained Eye: You get +2 to Stealth to create an advantage when your spotter doesn't know about you.

STRESS

Physical [1] [1] [1]

Mental [1] [1] [1]

Well-Oiled Muscle

Tank: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: My Body's My Temple—What a Beautiful Temple!

Trouble: Dumber than a Rock

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Physique

Great (+4): Athletics, Fight

Good (+3): Burglary, Drive, Shoot

STUNTS

A Bodyguard Before Everything: Whenever the Feromoaner or the Gossip Mongers are attacked, and a Well-Oiled Muscle is in the same zone, you can spend a fate point to redirect the attack to a Well-Oiled Muscle. The Well-Oiled Muscle gains Armor:1 against this attack.

Extra Arms for Extra Hugs: By spending a fate point, a Well-Oiled Muscle manifests extra strongarms equal to the number of opponents in a zone. They can use Physique to make an attack against all of their opponents in their zone.

STRESS

Physical [1] [1] [1] [1] [1] [1]

Mental [1] [1] [1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[2] **Mild (Physical):**

[4] **Moderate:**

INTRODUCTIONS

Probably your first scene; you want to start with a bang. Your primary goal is to establish group dynamics and the Sleeping Sun's mood in this scene. If this is your group's first adventure, use this scene to have the players introduce their characters. Ask them to answer some questions to learn about them; here are some ideas.

- What is the first impression your character makes? Are they strong or subtle or a party animal?
- What is their objective at the Sleeping Sun?
- What are they willing to do in exchange for it? What would they never do?

Describe their entrance to the party, the people they see, and give them a chance to socialize with each other and the other NPCs present.

Sand Dance: Our Adventure

ASPECTS

RED-HOT SANDY MERRIMENT; ANYTHING YOU CAN EAT AND DRINK

ISSUE

Adventure Aspect: UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL.

Potential Issues: THE ALLIANCE NEEDS DUSTBALL; FRESH AND FAMILIAR FACES

Potential Subplots: THE ALLIANCE IS COMING APART; FEROMOANER WRECKED MY MARRIAGE; I DON'T BELONG HERE

HIDDEN ISSUES

The Hostess Is Nowhere to Be Found: Blazinia is negotiating with the Feromoaner to allow her entrance into the festivity. Any enterprising PC who discovers this aspect can get an early peek at the Hot-Bots, so they get access to the aspect, **HOT-BOTS ARE COMING!** with free two invocations when the Hot-Bots make their appearance later on.

THE SUN GOES DOWN TO SLEEP [CHALLENGES]

This is the moment when the plot of the adventure starts properly. Blazinia appears, and she's everything you can expect from a Magical Princess: powerful, charming, strongly connected with her people, and devoted to her leadership role and the common good.

In her opening speech, Blazinia mentions that the people of Dustball live under siege from "the Unforgiving Suns" and yet they still prevail. Not only do they survive beneath its deadly rays—they thrive. That's why they cannot comprehend or accept weakness, for if they are strong under such impossible circumstances, nobody else can give themselves the luxury of not becoming strong.

This speech reveals the aspect **Only Respects Strength**. If the Champions expect to convince Blazinia of anything, they'll first have to demonstrate their strength.

After she finishes her speech, Blazinia leaves the main hall to begin attending a long line of people who want a meeting with her.

The PC's can attempt to talk to her, but she has a row of guards who block anyone trying to use force or stealth to get to her. The only clear way to meet her is to impress her advisors; their role is to act as buffers, weeding out unimportant figures. Champions have to impress them before they can get access to see Blazinia herself.

> Sneaking through should be VERY difficult—but, if a hero succeeds, they will get a few small words in. Keep it brief, as the Hot-Bots will soon interrupt in Part 2.

OH NO, THEY WANT TO TALK!

If the Champions want to mingle with the attendees and you're looking to create an NPC on the fly, see the tables on the next page to generate names and occupations for them.

If the PCs are conducting individual affairs, jump from one to the other as fast as you can. Moreover, run these dealings as challenges to model the back and forth between speakers, the dance of diplomacy, and the bargaining once objectives have been revealed. Remember that every NPC wants something—either prepare some motivations beforehand or improvise them as the PCs are conducting business if you feel comfortable doing so.

Remember that this is still a party and most people are interested in signing treaties or making commitments at the start. Before they can finalize any negotiation, you can introduce the first layer of opposition.

Male/Nonbinary Names

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Ikram	Mundir	Yuned	Modud	Bassam
−	Amru	Ammar	Shamil	Arif	
−−	Misfar	Zahid	Shahin		
−−−	Fatah	Kamal			
−−−−	Mutamam				

Female/Nonbinary Names

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Layali	Sahar	Shakila	Zura	Madiya
−	Farat	Shukriya	Afrah	Nakil	
−−	Muzaina	Fida	Widad		
−−−	Shaiya	Marzuka			
−−−−	Hakima				

Occupation

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Hologram Designer	Runekeeper	Runaway Princess	News Worker	Mediator
−	Prophet	Necromancer	Cyberneticist	Freebooter/ Pirate	
−−	Man At Arms	Clothier	Pet Trainer		
−−−	Air Traffic Controller	Debt Collector			
−−−−	Surgeon				

TOO SEXY FOR THEIR SHIRTS [CHALLENGE, CONTEST, OR CONFLICT]

After the heroes have impressed the advisors (or failed to), but before they can talk to Blazinia herself, the Hot-Bots appear, drawing everybody's attention. Unless the PCs have some idea of what's coming, the Hot-Bots enter the social arena with **All Eyes on Me** with two free invocations on the table. They use them to draw the attention of all NPCs to them—including the ones the PCs were interacting with. Especially them. Here's a few ways you could handle the scene, depending on the approach the players take.

Upstage Them: The Champions try to outmaneuver the Hot-Bots to steal back the attention of the partygoers. Run this as a contest between the PCs and the Hot-Bots. In this case, three or four Hot-Bots oppose each PC's action. The Hot-Bots work together, so winning will be difficult. For rules for contests, see page 134.

Confront the Hot-Bots: Treat as a conflict; two Hot Bots get involved in the conflict for each Champion. If the players stay purely social, the Hot Bots do the same—however, if the Champions use physical or hacking attacks, when the Gossip Mongers enter the scene, the GM gains the aspect **Violent Disturbers of the Peace** with two free invocations against the Champions. For rules for conflicts, see page 136.

Defer to Blazinia: Finally, if the PCs go to Blazinia, run it like a challenge against a group of Hot Bots, treat their distractions as Great (+4). Regardless of the winner the Champions learn that the Hot-Bots are allowed at the Sleeping Sun, and they belong to an "esteemed guest" who is yet to make their appearance. If the Champions win the challenge—or they succeed with style at least once, they discover Blazinia's aspect: **Reluctantly Invited** with an invoke—the Champions realize that Blazinia is uncomfortable with both the Bots and the mystery guest. She hides it well, yes, but she hates the situation. Moreover, she seems sympathetic to the PCs' plight.

When you feel that the PCs have done enough about the Hot-Bots, we recommend increasing the pressure and ushering in the verbal vipers, the Gossip Mongers.

GETTING A REPUTATION [CONFLICT]

The Gossip Mongers have been all around the PCs throughout the Sleeping Sun; it is only now that the PCs notice them—and it's not good. Unless the PCs did things quietly so far, the Gossip Mongers come out in earnest, attacking them as a group and branding them as vicious monsters who attack anybody who attracts other people's attention. We recommend that you present these as random social attacks coming from the crowd; the PCs won't know what they're defending against or why unless they spend time, spend invokes, and roll high enough to investigate the crowd to reveal the well-concealed Gossip Mongers hidden amongst the regulars.

Getting a Reputation

OUTSIDE THE CROWD [OPTIONAL ZONE]

Aspects: Hard to See Much / Hard to Be Seen; Far from Eavesdroppers (I Think)

EDGE OF THE CROWD [OPTIONAL ZONE]

Aspects: Disorientating Throng; Noisy

CENTER OF ATTENTION [OPTIONAL ZONE]

Aspects: Can See Much / Can't Hide

SPECIAL RULES

Any Champion entering the center of attention zone suffers one stress, and takes one stress for each failed action they make in it; Champions who are performers or seasoned diplomats are immune to this rule.

POTENTIAL STAKES

Mental Harm (e.g., Taking consequences); have reputation aspect worsened; Blazinia will see you as weak (reducing chances of signing treaty).

If the Champions use physical violence or threats, they risk being ejected (even if they win the conflict).

In this case, the Champions will have to decide between prioritizing neutralizing the attacks secretly (at the risk of looking weak or fighting openly), or openly fighting (winning Blazinia's respect but forced out by the rules of diplomacy, forcing them to be banished from the party); if they lose, they might be the worst of both.

At the end of the evening, Blazinia will sign a treaty with the strongest force still present: the Feromoaner, the Master pulling the strings the entire time, or the Champions if they can prove themselves.

IT WAS THE FEROMOANER ALL ALONG (CONFLICT)

There's one thing the Feromonaner cannot help himself: to gloat when he wins. He loves to rub it in more than anything else.

Once the Gossip Mongers have done their worst, the Feromoaner appears in the scene and starts mocking and jabbing and teasing the PCs incessantly (possibly as they are being ejected). He wants to kick them while they're down, but, most of all, he wants to make it clear that he is the strongest when it comes to charm and social situations. He has assessed that this was the way to impress Blazinia and earn her heart, so she will join the Masters' cause.

The Champions have one last chance to clear their names and win Blazinia's approval for themselves. They'll have to defeat the Feromoaner in a conflict: the Feromoaner is accompanied by one Well Oiled Machine and two Hot Bots for every two Champions.

In this case, Blazinia will sanction that the PCs have the right to defend themselves against these vicious attacks in whatever manner they feel is necessary.

IT WAS THE FEROMOANER ALL ALONG

Environment: The War Room

Sample Aspects: **The Marble Table; Dormant Dustball Guardbots; Ceiling Fans; The Signed Treaty**

Feromoaner can also manipulate electronics, giving him the chance to turn the dormant Guardbots against you!

Potential Stakes: Mental or Physical Harm (e.g., taking consequences); having the Princess sign the treaty; have YOUR kingdom forced into a similar treaty; being captured.

THE END

The Feromoaner can be defeated in several ways. Regardless of how the deed is done, Blazinia will clear the PCs' reputation and praise them as **Strong People Worthy of Song**. This sticky condition accompanies them, and they can use it as an extra aspect they can invoke whenever their reputation comes into play.

If possible, save the Feromoaner using their **Until Next Time, Darling** stunt. You can have a recurring villain for your next adventure on Umdaar.

TWISTS AND PLOT HOOKS

Here are some other ideas if the story takes a sudden turn or if you want to add some more elements.

Not Banished: What happens if the players beat the Gossipmongers by avoiding banishment and saving face? A few options:

- You've won the respect of Blazinia's lady-in-waiting, who warns you of the treaty signing. Can you race there in time and convince the princess not to sign?
- If Blazinia is ready to sign the treaties with the allies instead, the frustrated Feromoaner decides to storm the capitol with shock troops, armed with mind-control gas.
- Blazinia berates you, despite your victory, secretly slipping you a note warning you of what's coming next. She wants to oust Feromoaner but can't without a good pretense. Best to lay a trap quick!

Adding Other Elements: If you don't mind the adventure running long or broken into two sessions, you can add elements that focus on some of the other Champion's strengths

- Maybe the banished players have to sneak their way back in, past the palace guards
- When the Feromoaner starts losing, he calls in his Hot-Bot Attack Squad to take the capital by force
- Have a Daredevil in the party? The treaty gets caught by the desert wind, and you must run to pam pcatch it before a Hot-Bot can get it.

RED SPIRE CAMPAIGN

The Dustball ruin tower, the Spire of Glass, seems to react to the proceedings. When the treaty is signed, a purple beacon at the top of the spire inexplicably turns yellow; if Blazina later joins you, it inexplicably turns red. If Dustball joins your Alliance, she even grants you permission to explore it and study it.

WAYS TO CUSTOMIZE THIS ADVENTURE

If the treaty plot doesn't excite you, you can use the same setup to tell different stories.

Intrigue and Mystery: Add more royal dignitaries from other lands, and have them disappear one by one. Can your party solve the mystery? Is the Feromoaner to blame, or is he a red herring? Is there a shapeshifter like the Facemonger involved?

Desert Heat: Do the players want romance? Dignitaries arrive to find the event filled with cute nobles ready to mingle. Do you bump into your current crush or an old flame? The attractive young scion of a Master? Is the Feromoaner there to lead people astray; or is he taking a break from evil plans, and is there to offer some shady (but honest) advice on the ways of the heart?

FEAT FIT FOR A WEDDING GIFT

by Pam Punzalan, additional content by Dave Joria

THE PREMISE

Hope and joy have lit up your corner of the Freelands as the communes of Caelum, Umbraholm, and Wavebreak celebrate a three-way wedding between their most beloved heroes, the Warriors Three! Another significant source of happiness is that this trio of childhood friends managed to recover the Cobalt Emblem from a Master. The Cobalt Emblem is a wondrous relic, once enshrined in the treacherous ruins of the Silent Spire, an underwater Legacy of the Demiurge located just off Wavebreak's coastline.

The newlyweds hope to return the Cobalt Emblem to its rightful place. However, the Silent Spire's defenses activated when the Emblem was stolen two generations ago, and no one has managed to make it past them alive. Their respective communes have pressured the trio into sitting still, insistent on letting their heroes enjoy a bit of time to themselves. And so, they've turned to your Champions for help.

Mood, Tone: A Reverse Tomb Raid—Return What Was Stolen, Defying Danger All the Way!

Adventure Aspect: Wondrous, Unpredictable World—The Demiurge's Legacy belongs in the hands of Umdaar's denizens, safe from the grasping, greedy hands and machinations of the Masters. Some of these Legacies remember the terrible sins that have been committed against them. They may indiscriminately act against anyone who dares to steal from them—failing, even, to determine a friendly force from an evil one.



WHAT'S THE ISSUE HERE?

Returning the Cobalt Emblem to the Silent Spire will be a huge morale boost for Caelum, Umbraholm, and Wavebreak. It may even be used to protect the communes against the Dread Domains in the future. Legend has it that the Emblem was both a power source and a transformative relic in the area, defending the three communes—especially Wavebreak—from hostile forces and terraforming this section of the Freelands. The Emblem was stolen during a terrible invasion two generations ago and has been abused as a tool of one of the Masters for decades—until the communes' three heroes snuck into the Dread Domains and stole the Emblem back.

The three heroes made multiple attempts to return the Emblem to the Silent Spire months before their wedding. Unfortunately, the Silent Spire's guardian AI has gone rogue and doesn't seem to recognize friend from foe. Now that the trio is married, their communes want them to go on furlough and take a break from their resistance efforts against the Dread Domains. There are some practical reasons behind this, the biggest being that the heroes are also recuperating from their previous expeditions into the Spire.

The Cobalt Emblem attracts trouble and is a deeply coveted piece of the Master Grenvy II's personal collection. It's risky leaving it exposed for too long, especially since the Dread Domains know who stole it and the thieves' origins.

PLOT HOOKS

Based on your group's banner, create 2-3 adventure aspects. You can pull from the list below for inspiration. As GM, you start the adventure with two free invokes on each aspect created, and may use any of the aspects to compel Champions to get them started.

- The Master Grenvy II is the troupe's recurring "big bad" in their campaign.
- One (or more) of the happily married polycule is an old friend of one (or more) members of the troupe.
- One (or more) of the happily married polycule is an old flame to one (or more) of the members of the troupe.
- One of you owes a favor to the Mayor of Wavebreak.
- One of you wishes to impress the newly crowned Magical Princess of Caelum.
- One of you wants some leverage over the arrogant Magical Princess of Umbraholm.
- One of the three communes supported your troupe during a tough time, and never asked for a reward.
- One of you has seen visions of the Silent Spire in their dreams.

THREE COMMUNES

Three moderately-sized communes in the Freelands with an intertwined history. Caelum's settlement is nestled between the massive roots and vibrant canopy of a massive tree, while Umbraholm built their homes into the underground nooks and crannies beneath them. Wavebreak, in the meantime, is right along the coast, within sight of the sunken Spire.

The people of the Three Communes are hardy, dauntless, and serious, and also sticklers for tradition. Many Freelands heroes were born in these communes out of necessity, for the Three Communes are dangerously close to the borders between the Freelands and the Dread Domains. While the Silent Spire was still active—namely, while the Cobalt Emblem rested within the Throne Room of the Spire—the Three Communes were protected rather well against the Master, for the Emblem drew upon the power of the very land to shield the Communes from hostile forces. However, the Spire turned hostile ever since the Emblem was taken.

LEUCISE, HERO OF CAELUM (SHE/HER)

The Viridian Maiden of Caelum, is revered as the greatest warrior of the Three. Impossible to miss, given her dazzling green armor, flowing platinum blond hair, and iridescent eyes. The gentle aura she gives off is indirectly proportional to her fearsome demeanor on the battlefield. Feels personally responsible for the failure of previous expeditions into the Spire. Many have tried to (rightfully) tell her that such failures aren't her fault, but Leucise is a compassionate and sensitive soul.

SIEWARD, HERO OF UMBRAHOLM (SHE/HER)

The oldest member of the polycule and a healer of renown. Nicknamed "Sieward the Immortal" because of their prowess in a firefight, which has proven to many that she isn't "just" a doctor. Sieward suspects that their spouse Moore is still dead-set on helping the troupe restore the Emblem but is unsure how to tell Moore that without hurting their feelings.

MOORE, HERO OF WAVEBREAK (THEY/THEM)

The Tidemaster of Wavebreak, the latest in a line of Keepers of the Spire—although that title has become more honorary than anything else since the Spire's guardian AI went rogue. Nothing, however, can take the breadth and depth of knowledge they possess about the Spire and Demiurges away from them. Unsurprisingly, Moore is a little obsessed with returning the Emblem to its Cradle, so much so that it's made them reckless. While they trust the troupe, the Emblem means so much to them. They may unwittingly get in the way despite best intentions.

THE SILENT SPIRE

Believed to be the final resting place of a Steward to the Demiurge. It is a sprawling labyrinth not too different from a cathedral, complete with statues of winged creatures; their expressions are a mix of vigilance and mourning. The only visible part of the Spire above the waves is a sphere of swirling shadows with a transportation device at the center. The Spire is thus effectively an elevator shaft that brings its riders down to the labyrinth's center. Light shining through the waters pours through the large glass windows of the Spire, and explorers get a startlingly clear view of the marine flora and fauna that teems about the ruins.

This ruin is called the Silent Spire because of its Guardian AI, a ghostly robed figure in a mask that seems to drain all sound from the area whenever it appears. Previous expeditions are convinced that the Guardian AI must have been a beloved companion to the Unknown Ruler whose tomb is somewhere in the Spire, based on the beautiful murals and light displays that adorn the walls, hallways, and ceilings of the Spire.

Aspect: A Giant Water Puzzle. The ruins include powerful water walls and columns, blocking hallways or shooting in every direction, or held up purely by magic. Some of the statues have silver chalices that catch flowing water from unknown sources or are empty when the adventurers find them. Each chalice is connected to small mechanical nodes. Adventurers can match the nodes to a chalice based on their symbology with one another.

Aspect: Actively Hostile Place. All the statues have surveillance systems installed and are connected to a control room somewhere within the Spire. While this surveillance network is active, the labyrinth rooms will keep shifting around, effectively changing the path that the troupe is taking even as they walk it. Listening to the strange, almost musical chimes of the system in place may give the troupe clues on the pattern of the shifts.

Aspect: Teeming with Robotic Guardians. These creatures look like black, mechanical sea-scorpions, with debilitating poison tipping their pincers and stingers. The robotic guardians travel in packs of three to five and move with impossible swiftness. In actuality, they are blind: they rely on the Spire's surveillance system to be their eyes.

Aspect: Mysterious Safe Rooms. Upon entering a safe room, the troupe will always hear a voice ask them to "tell us a story." The rooms feature small altars in dedication to someone, and marked by their beautiful murals (see page 301). These rooms do not shift with the rest of the Spire and provide supplies and rations for its occupants (and possibly a secret passage; see page 303).

THE MURALS

In each of the safe rooms are murals, none of them identical. All of them focus on one to three of the following figures.

- **The Ruler:** A powerful figure; scholars recognize the trace artistic symbols that denote a Demiurge figure (radiant beams, godly hand gestures). The Ruler's symbol is found all over the spire.
- **The Mortal:** A figure that doesn't have the visual cues of a Demiurge, suggesting they are mortal. Despite this, the murals depict them of equal size and importance as the Ruler.
- **The Guardian:** A cloaked figure that is likely the Ghostly Guardian. One picture of it is maskless, revealing a face not unlike the Mortal's (but this could be coincidence?).

What are they doing in the murals?: The exact pictures are up to you—or, ask the players to help you come up with ideas. Don't forget, GMs: Fate works best as a collaborative game!

Example prompt: The Ruler is in the mural. Uncharacteristically for a god, it's kneeling on the dirty ground. The Mortal is also in the picture. What is the mortal doing? What's their pose or emotion?

Also, every other mural has something in the background that looks familiar to the Champions. Ask the players for suggestions. Daemons? A crowd? Crashing waves? The Silent Spire?

Discovering the Story

Hidden in the murals is a story. This can be useful one of two ways:

- If the Champions can reach the final room the long way (i.e., besting a large number of traps and enemies), they will be confronted with an empty room—there is no obvious location to place the Armiger. The voice will prompt "Tell us a story" until a valid story is provided, revealing a pedestal or tomb to lay the armiger on.
- If the Champions piece together the story early (see *Secret Passageway*, above). The path leads to a final room with a pedestal, statue or tomb to lay the Armiger on.

What is the real story?

There is no "true" story that the GM has to create—rather, you provide a number of pictures, and anything the party can more-or-less agree on is the correct story.

The table created the following murals:

- The Ruler alone (with daemons in the background).
- The Mortal and the Ruler standing, facing each other
- The Ruler kneels before the Mortal. Mortal shows shock.
- The Ruler the Mortal, and the Guardian
- Ruler and the Guardian (with the Silent Spire in the background).

Several possible ways the players might interpret it (all of them equally valid)

- The ruler and mortal fall in love; the ruler proposes; they build the Guardian together; When the mortal dies, the Ruler builds the Silent Spire as a tomb, and has the Guardian watch over it.
- The ruler fights in a battle with the daemons; the mortal joins the fight; the ruler is wounded; the mortal builds the Guardian to watch over the wounded ruler and their tower.
- The ruler and the mortal fall in love, but the guardian is more than just a program. Perhaps it is their surrogate child; or perhaps it is a three-way relationship (just like the Warriors Three).
- Perhaps the pictures are out of order (as some Demiurge script is in the opposite direction); the Ruler lived in the Spire with no one but the Guardian; the Mortal coaxes the Ruler out; The Ruler falls; the two are together in death (leaving an empty Spire behind).

GM TIP

If the players have trouble connecting the prompt to "tell as story," with the murals, perhaps the final room has a copy of all of the murals (found with a little investigating or luck).

After the players piece together the story, the room reveals something that confirms it: it might be a tomb for the Mortal and/or Ruler, with a perfect holder for the Armiger. The Guardian may appear and fill in the gaps of the story, removing it's mask.

In addition, returning the Armiger does something positive for the three communities. Discuss with the players what magical benefit it could provide (e.g., the waters recede to reveal a sunken castle; a dying food source returns; a magical force field protects them.)

THE SECRET PASSAGEWAY

There's actually a secret passageway through the safe rooms. The Champions can activate this quick path to the Tomb by accurately piecing the story of the Ruler and their Companions together based on the murals in all safe rooms. They can gain access to the passageway by responding to "tell us a story" by speaking the tale into the room. Any of the safe rooms will do, as long as the story is complete.

IN A TIME CRUNCH?

If your session is limited for time, eliminate the safe rooms. Instead every room has a mural and the prompt, "Tell us a story." If the story is completely unrelated (ex. The Champion tells a joke, or Goldilocks), the voice responds, "Invalid entry," and something dangerous is triggered (traps, scorpions, etc).

SPIRE ROBOT GUARDIANS

These creatures look like black, mechanical sea-scorpions, with debilitating poison tipping their pincers and stingers. The robotic guardians travel in packs of three to five, and move with impossible swiftness.

Types of guardians include:

- **Lobstroids:** The smallest of the mechanical guardians, they are about the size of a large dog, and resemble eyeless lobsters or ancient sea scorpions.
- **Crabbots:** The largest, bulkiest spire guardians. They resemble massive horseshoe crabs, except with pincer arms, and a semi-upright, slouched posture. They have dangerous sword-like tails, but infrequently use them (except on those sneaking up behind them).
- **Scorpioids:** Long, thin robot assassins that resemble massive scorpions. They often appear in the rear of a robot cluster, waiting for the perfect opening to strike. Alternatively, they will climb on the walls and ceilings, stinging unsuspecting opponents from the shadows.

Spire Lobstroids

Filler: Fair (+2)

ASPECT

High Concept: Robotic Arthropod Defenders

Hidden Aspect: Visionless - The robots don't have any visual sensors, and rely on the Weeping Angel statues or the Ghostly Guardian to act as their "eyes." However, they can hear, and are decent at detecting motion in water.

SKILLS

Fair (+2): Pinch and Snare

STUNT

Mindless: Lobstroids are immune to mental stress and manipulation.

Aquatic: Spire robots suffer no penalties for moving in water.

STRESS

[1] [1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

Spire Crabbots

Tank: Great (+4)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Huge Crustacean Defenders

Aspects: Stubborn

Hidden Aspect: Visionless - The robots don't have any visual sensors, and rely on the Weeping Angel statues or the Ghostly Guardian to act as their "eyes." However, they can hear, and are decent at detecting motion in water.

Hidden Aspect: Weak Belly and Rear

SKILLS

Great (+4): Physique

Good (+3): Fight, Will

Fair (+2): Athletics, Notice, Provoke

STUNTS

Horseshoe Shell: The Crabbot's metal shell is amazingly thick. When attacked from the front, side, or above, it may use Physique instead of Athletics to defend against missiles and fighting, and has Armor:2. (Does not protect from back or underneath).

Swordtail: The Crabbot's rear is protected not by a shell, but by a deadly barb! Anyone attacking from the rear at close range takes 2 physical stress from a counter-attack.

Aquatic: Spire robots suffer no penalties for moving in water.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1] Mental [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[4] **Moderate:**

Spire Scorpioids

Hitter: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: MECHANICAL SCORPION SQUADLEADER

Trouble: WEAKEST FIREWALL

Hidden Aspect: VISIONLESS - The robots don't have any visual sensors, and rely on the Weeping Angel statues or the Ghostly Guardian to act as their "eyes." However, they can hear, and are decent at detecting motion in water.

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Fight

Great (+4): Stealth, Athletics

Good (+3): Notice, Physique, Will

STUNTS

Pincer Movement: The Scorpioids are cleverer than most robot guardians, and other guardians feed off of their intelligence to create cunning traps. If a scorpioid is in a battle, all other robots gain +1 to attempts to use create an advantage when grabbing or incapacitating opponents.

Tranquilizer Barb: If facing an opponent one-on-one, or it finds an opponent incapacitated (grabbed in its own claws, or another robots'), it will make a tail strike. This barb carries a strong tranquilizer drug: against non-robots, it has Weapon:2, dealing 2 physical AND 2 mental stress. This attack is always non-lethal.

Aquatic: Spire robots suffer no penalties for moving in water.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

TWISTS

The following are some optional twists to introduce:

- The Champions may discover that if they stay very quiet and avoid the gaze of the statues around them, robotic guardians within the Spire may not perceive them.
- Early in the adventure, the party discovers what appears to be the final room. It is actually not the last room at all—the armiger belongs in another important location (e.g., The Armiger isn't meant to return to the Cradle—it's supposed to be placed within the stone hands of the Unknown Ruler, right on top of the lid of the massive tomb. Placing the Armiger on the pedestal of the Cradle won't do anything.)
- A lieutenant of the Master Grenvy II sneaks into the Silent Spire! They will try to sabotage you along the way, or ambush you in the final room.
- Inevitably, especially if the adventurers did not directly invite them, one of the heroes of the Three will join the party. Due to their personal investment in the Silent Spire and the Cobalt Armiger, It will be difficult to convince them to sit this one out.

Ticking Clock: The wedding is at nightfall! Can the troupe make it back in time, or will they miss the festivities? This is critically important if one of the Warriors Three joins you on the quest.

RED SPIRE CAMPAIGN

After helping the Three Communes, they decide to lift any restrictions on travel between them and the alliance locations, opening up trade and travel all along the coast. In addition, The Silent Spire rises from the depths, spreading a pale blue beacon into the night. Could the Mortal or Unknown Ruler be the designer behind the spires? Do they appear anywhere in the murals?

THE HAND OF RAG-NATOR

by Soup

Themes: Ruin Race, Stop the Baddies, Puzzles, Cartoonish Adventures

THE BACKSTORY

Master Artificer Rag-Nator recently conquered the great library city of Libratopolis and kidnapped Grand Scholarch Nier. However, he has also sent his right-hand man B3-TR4YZ0R off to acquire a powerful artifact along with the Blitz Brigade, a squadron consisting only of the most elite Blitzborgs. With Libratopolis itself only lightly guarded, the heroes may be able to get inside and rescue the Grand Scholarch.

PLOT HOOKS

Use the following questions to establish the characters' connection to the adventure and the adventure issues.

- Did Rag-Nator hurt you or someone you care about?
- Do you have a connection to Rag-Nator or someone in his forces?
- Does Rag-Nator hold something you need or want?
- Does Libratopolis contain knowledge you need or want?
- Do you seek the liberation of the knowledge monopolized by Rag-Nator?
- Do you have a connection to Libratopolis or the Grand Scholarch?
- If you are motivated by something else, what is it and why are you invested?

ADVENTURE PREP

It can help to have a good idea of potential adventure locations you might want to use; this will help you run an adventure without many pauses and gaps. Since this adventure is based on Saturday Morning Cartoons, you can think of this adventure to stop Rag-Nator, the "master of the week."

PREVIOUSLY ON ADVENTURES OF UMDAAR...

The devious Master Rag-Nator has conquered the great library city of Libratopolis and taken Grand Scholarch Nier hostage. Our heroes moved in to confront Rag-Nator, only to fall into one of his elaborate traps. Will our heroes be able to escape this pit of tacticalligators and bring Rag-Nator to justice? Tune in to find out. [Cue Theme Music]

PRESS START TO BEGIN

The adventure starts with the heroes on the back foot, already inside Libratopolis. As stated in the "Previously on..." they have fallen for one of Rag-Nator's numerous traps and found themselves in a moat full of tacticalligators. They must overcome this obstacle to progress.

Alternatively, the start of the adventure can have the heroes surrounded by Blitzborgs with either Rag-Nator or B3-TR4YZ0R to engage in a dialogue. This can help establish the villains before the brunt of the adventure begins.

PROGRESSING

After they get through the first encounter, you can mix and match challenges depending on what threads your players want to follow.

- Rag-Nator is in his lair, with minimal guarding by Blitzborgs. Pursuing Rag-Nator means more traps and navigating around Libratopolis without being caught. Traps should be the primary threat to the heroes until they encounter Lieutenant Krieg in Rag-Nator's lair. The traps become more elaborate the farther one advances. By the end, the players should face Rag-Nator.
- Lieutenant Steel is in charge of the Blitzborgs in Libratopolis. General B3-TR4YZ0R is out of the city with the Blitzborg army obtaining a Demiurge artifact. Pursuing the artifact means fewer traps as the heroes leave the confines of Libratopolis and head into the wilderness.

> The GM decides to start play with the heroes surrounded by B3-TR4YZ0R's troops in the Outskirts. They can fight or persuade their way out (a conflict), or they can "surrender" (to learn more of Rag-Nator's plans). Either of these outcomes could lead to:
>
> - Gardens filled with Quicksand (a challenge)
> - The Library is trapped by the G.A.M.E. glove (a challenge)
> - Defeating or escaping from a Robeast in the research lab (conflict or contest)
>
> Ending in a final conflict with Rag-Nator in the Deep Archives. If the players consider saving the Grand Scholarch a major priority, they might find them in the final room, or in a side room (e.g., Chained up over the Lair of the Laser Robeasts).

SETTING: LIBRATOPOLIS

Libratopolis is a Freeland city carved into a massive library headed by one Grand Scholarch Nier. Few people live in Libratopolis, as it's mainly a location for scholars and researchers to look for research materials. The library was built on top of a Demiurge data archive, though no one knows how to access all of the data. Supposedly, even the Grand Scholarch themself has no idea how to decrypt and view the data stored by the Demiurge so long ago, save a few rare fragments.

PLOT SEED: RED SPIRE CAMPAIGN

The Blitz-borg siege was a fast one; it's possible you were traveling to the city for research (to study the Spires), and stepped into the dangerous situation unawares!

OUTSKIRTS

The outskirts of Libratopolis are where the stairs leading to the city gates meet the dense brush of jungle foliage. Robeasts frequently roam through this area, though few ever enter the city of their own volition.

Possible Aspects: Wild Cries; Thick Leaves

THE LIBRARY

The Library encompasses all of what is inside Libratopolis. Its high walls and glass ceilings shine natural light upon hundreds of thousands of books arranged in beautiful harmony. Everywhere you go, a book is within arm's reach.

Possible Aspects: Millions of Books; Labyrinth of Shelves

THE GARDENS

Libratopolis has its leisure areas like any city. Since the entire city is covered in books, it's natural to take a break and experience the casual natural feel of a garden. These are home to a plethora of plants and even some robeasts native to the city. Since Rag-Nator's arrival, these gardens have become overgrown. Who knows what lurks in there now.

Possible Aspects: City & Wild Clash; Something Hidden

THE RESEARCH LABS

There is an abundance of research that occurs in the City of Knowledge. Experiments and data are plentiful in its robust labs. However, Rag-Nator has repurposed them for darker intentions, developing more weapons and robeasts to conquer the rest of Umdaar.

Possible Aspects: Replitech Lab; What's He Planning?

THE DEEP ARCHIVES

The area directly below Libratopolis, where the data stored by the Demiurge sleeps undisturbed. The area looks as one would expect of a Demiurge construction: cryptic, glowing sigils, inexplicably floating metal tablets, and no real indication of how anything works. Currently full of traps and occupied by Rag-Nator.

Possible Aspects: Cryptic Prophecy; Tech of the Gods

NPCS

General B3-TR4YZ0R

Boss: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Handcrafted Artificial Warrior (He/Him)

Trouble: The Heart of a Man Beats Inside Me (a Treacherous Man, but a Man)

Other Aspects: Right Hand of Rag-Nator; Now *I* Am Leader of the Blitzborgs!

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Athletics

Great (+4): Fight, Deceive

Good (+3): Stealth, Will, Notice

STUNTS

Heavy Defense: B3-TR4YZ0R has Armor:1. If he has the high ground, it's increased to Armor:2.

Mock Surrender: B3-TR4YZ0R may attempt to use Deceive to trick others into thinking he's given up. Anyone deceived gains the aspect Thinks He's Harmless which can be compelled to prevent them from attacking him until he drops the charade. B3-TR4YZ0R also gains a +2 on the next physical attack he makes against a fooled opponent.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[4] **Moderate:**

[4] **Moderate:** (Optional for 4+ players)

GENERAL NOTES

Reason for capturing the Heroes alive: Wants to bargain for the overthrow of Rag-Nator!

Laser Drone

Filler: Average (+1)

SKILL

Average (+1): Flying and Zapping

STRESS

[1]

Lieutenant Krieg, Elite Blitzborg Commander

Hitter: Superb (+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Cyborg Pugilist (They/Them)

Trouble: Honor Amongst Warriors

Other Aspects: The Red One Goes Three Times Faster; Lives by the Blitzborg Code

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Fight

Great (+4): Athletics, Notice

Good (+3): Provoke, Empathy, Contacts

STUNTS

Lethal Weapon: All attacks with Fight have Weapon:2

Power-Surge: All Blitzborg Filler NPCs in the same conflict as Krieg gain either Weapon:1 or Armor:1.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[4] **Moderate:**

GENERAL NOTES

Fighting style: Fast, flexible, and dynamic. Utilizes Blitzborg troops in sophisticated ways to gain tactical advantages. Unlike B3-TR4YZ0R, they are a straightforward and honorable fighter that prioritizes minimizing casualties and leaving enemies with their dignity intact.

Reasons for taking the Heroes alive: Krieg swears absolute fealty to Rag-Nator, their creator, and is under orders to capture the heroes alive. Likes to fight strong people. Nothing makes them happier than a defeated opponent retreating and returning more powerful than before.

Blitzborg Troopers

Filler: Fair (+2)

SKILL

Fair (+2): Hit and Run

STRESS

[1] [1]

Master Rag-Nator the Artificer, Conqueror of Libratopolis

Boss: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Master Rag-Nator the Artificer, Conqueror of Libratopolis (He/Him)

Trouble: I Must Possess All, or I Possess Nothing

Other Aspects: Master of One Thousand and One Plans; Curious is the Trapmaker's Art; Wielder of the Glove of Authorial Mastery over Entropy (G.A.M.E for short)

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Stealth

Superb (+5): Drive, Lore

Great (+4): Fight, Will, Burglary

Good (+3): Athletics, Empathy, Fight, Notice

Fair (+2): Rapport, Contacts, Resources, Deceive

Average (+1): Every remaining Skill

STUNTS

Stealth Suit Strike: If Rag-Nator used Full Defense to slink into the shadows, he may defend with Stealth. Also, if no one successfully attacks him before his next action, on his next turn, he may reappear in any zone and may take an extra action. He cannot attack the same person twice nor use full defense.

Drone Lazer Strike: If Rag-Nator has the gauntlet and there are functioning Lazer-Drones, Rag-Nator may use his action to shoot through them; he uses Drive as if it were Shoot. If controlling multiple Lazer-drones, they add Teamwork as normal.

Gravity Defying: If Rag-Nator has the gauntlet, he may use it to levitate objects. He may use Drive as if it were Physique to overcome or create an advantage when moving objects or opponents, which can be multiple zones away.

Trap Master: If Rag-Nator has been in this room, whenever an opponent enters a new zone, he may spend a fate point to add a trap in that zone, causing harm or attempting to block their way once per zone.

GENERAL NOTES

Rag-Nator's Fighting Style: Prefers fighting indoors to outside. He allows traps to do the heavy lifting. Likes to isolate and attack one enemy at a time or use the flying drones to attack while he's behind cover.

Reason for capturing the Heroes alive: Rag-Nator loves to scheme, gloat, and monologue. The more time he has to toy with the heroes, the better.

STRESS

Physical 1 1 1 1 1 1 Mental 1 1 1 1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild:**

4 **Moderate:**

6 **Severe:** (Optional for 4+ players)

TRAPS

Traps are the bread and butter of The Hand of Rag-Nator, as the adventure concerns adventuring into the conquered city of Libratopolis to face Rag-Nator. However, traps can very easily devolve into impersonal, ever-present annoyances.

There are four rules you should keep in mind when creating traps for this adventure:

1. Rag-Nator has a flair for the dramatic. The more steps a trap has, the better. Especially if the heroes get a chance to fight back and attempt to dismantle the traps along the way, rather than disarm or die, traps should be set up so that players can react to a changing situation. Spike pits and poison traps are okay, but a puzzle that opens a trapdoor that sends unsuspecting heroes into a moat full of laser-crocodiles is way cooler.
2. A trap is only as interesting as the person behind it. The traps laid by Rag-Nator should feel like traps laid by a greedy, overthinking control freak with too many shiny things to hide and too big an ego to go the easy way.
3. Traps tell a story, not halt it. One of the most annoying aspects of a trap is that it feels like hitting the pause button on the story until the heroes can get out of it. There aren't stakes and decisions to be made, just resources to be drained. That might be fun for some, but most would agree that it's just exhausting. Instead, traps should be designed to move the story along by changing the hero's location, revealing vital information, or otherwise providing forward momentum for the narrative. A great way to do this is to add some kind of time limit, like slowly closing walls or growing pillars of flames (see *Countdowns* on page 363). These traps are also a great way of setting up cliffhangers to end a session.
4. It's okay for traps to fail, and they should do so spectacularly. One of the joys of Saturday morning cartoons is that the heroes always look like they are stuck at first but traps can't stop them for long, and things always explode when they're defeated. Sometimes you should show a trap activating only to go completely sideways and not as intended. A trap does not have to exist simply to be an obstacle. Sometimes it may be a boon.

Trap: Would You Like to Play a G.A.M.E.?

Location: Anywhere in Libratopolis.

Description: A trap that moves objects in space much like Rag-Nator's signature artifact, the anti-grav G.A.M.E. Glove.

Purpose: To demonstrate the power of Rag-Nator's Artifact.

Type: Obstacle

POSSIBLE GAME STEPS

Spot the Source: A shiny red gem set into a golden casing on the far side of the chamber. Recommended Skills: Investigate. Difficulty: Average (+1).

Pits: Cross the chamber without falling into the pits. Falling: Weapon:3. Recommended Skills: Athletics. Difficulty: Fair (+2).

Platforming: Dodge the platforms and objects thrown at you. Failure: hurts further rolls, and/or knocks you into a pit. Recommendations-Skills: Athletics, Notice. Difficulty: Fair (+2). Other skills can be used for this challenge, but increase the difficulty by one or two.

Disable the gem: Recommended Skills: Lore or Burglary. Difficulty: Fair (+2).

Side-note: It's impossible to take the Gem out COMPLETELY with Shoot without crossing the room and getting in close; but if someone wants to shoot at it from afar, they can weaken or temporarily disrupt it; treat it as create an advantage.

Trap: Quicksand

Location: Anywhere in Libratopolis

Description: Here or there, you'll always run into the dreaded quicksand, and someone will always step in to it before anyone realizes it's there. It can be in logical locations like the jungle outskirts of Libratopolis, the gardens inside the city, or it could be in comically nonsensical places, like in the Q section of the library.

Purpose: I've never seen a cartoon that didn't have quicksand for some reason.

Rules: We recommend using the Stinkhole on page 197 or a Countdown (see page 363).

Trap: Laser Robeasts

Location: Anywhere in Libratopolis

Description: Either the release of laser robeasts into the heroes' current location, or more commonly, displacing the heroes into the lair of the laser robeasts (ex. Falling through a trapdoor). Exits should be accessible with some amount of work, and the next area should always be relevant to the progression of the heroes. The robeasts also do not differentiate from ally or foe and attacks blitzborgs or even Rag-Nator himself.

Purpose: To show the possibility of utilizing the traps to create an advantage. Robeasts may thin troops of Blitzborgs, making them easier for the heroes to defeat them.

Laser Robeast

Boss [Beast]: Fantastic (+6)

ASPECTS

High Concept: DINOSAUR/BULL OF FLESH AND ARTILLERY

Other Aspects: BLIND-SPOT, CHAAAAAARGE

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Physique

Superb (+5): Fight, Shoot

Great (+4): Notice, Athletics, Will

STUNTS

Horns: If the Robeast charges with its horns and moves a zone before overcoming a barrier or attacking, it gains +2 on the overcome roll or Weapon Rating +2.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[4] **Moderate:**

Trap: You've Activated My Library Card

Location: The Deep Archives, the innermost chamber of Libratopolis where Rag-Nator resides

Description: A progression of increasingly complicated steps during a confrontation with Rag-Nator. The actual purpose of the trap is mutable: It might be a huge robotic creature for the heroes to deal with, a power-up for Rag-Nator, a detriment to the heroes, or Rag-Nator's escape mechanism. The only important thing is to describe it occurring over time and have at least some of the steps be capable of being delayed or stopped entirely. Making fighting Rag-Nator requires hard decisions between actually engaging in combat and disarming the most elaborate trap of all.

Purpose: To make a "boss" encounter more interesting and deep than just straightforward combat.

Rules: See *Hazards* on page 374, *Environments* on page 383 or *Distractions* on page 380.

TWISTS

Here are some possible twists to consider as you run the adventure:

- **I, B3-TR4YZ0R, AM LEADER OF THE BLITZBORGS:** General B3-TR4YZ0R betrays Rag-Nator to take control himself. This can occur before or after Rag-Nator is either defeated or escapes, or in the middle of the final conflict (resulting in a three-way fight). He may be convinced to fight with the heroes for the sake of his ambition.
- **Bad Guys Always have the Coolest Stuff:** The research labs in Libratopolis contain all of the data and experiments run by Rag-Nator to understand and utilize Demiurge artifacts' power and create more advanced arms for his blitzborgs. This may cause blitzborgs to receive upgrades throughout the adventure. Or the information and technology to use against Rag-Nator.
- **Some Things Are Not Meant to Be Unleashed:** An experimental robeast is dormant somewhere in Rag-Nator's lair. Whether the heroes activate it accidentally or not, it should prove a fearsome and unpredictable problem for allies and enemies alike.
- **The Road Less Traveled By:** B3-TR4YZ0R and the Blitzborg army are obtaining an artifact under orders from Rag-Nator. The heroes may choose to pursue and stop them. Or find that Rag-Nator is not the only one searching for this artifact. Perhaps they may find that B3-TR4YZ0R is willing to negotiate.
- **Paradise Lost:** The artifact that Rag-Nator got his hands on was the Satoordei Mourning Cartouche. With it, he can change reality itself and finally bring an end to those meddling heroes. This ending is useful if you want to shift the tone to something more mature and transition into another adventure.

POTENTIAL ENDINGS

The following are suggested endings that may or may not be used as guiding beacons for the narrative.

- **Sometimes Today's Enemies are Tomorrow's Frienemies:** The Masters are always at war with each other. Perhaps Rag-Nator offers a ceasefire (and the Grand Scholarch) to the heroes to fight an ostensibly bigger threat. What could compel Rag-Nator to conspire with heroes he so despises? What could convince the heroes to side with a hated foe?
- **Mission Accomplished:** The Heroes rescue Grand Scholarch Nier and escape from Libratopolis. Though Rag-Nator may still rule the city, it is only a matter of time before he may be brought to justice. In the meantime, the Grand Scholarch may have some insights to help the heroes.
- **Next Time on Adventures of Umdaar:** Rag-Nator escapes to fight another day! There's always a "To Be Continued..." to be addressed. How will Rag-Nator fight outside his ideal trap-ridden environment? Will the heroes pursue Rag-Nator back to his lair, the dreaded Razorspine Peak?
- **The End of Rag-Nator's Reign of Terror:** The Heroes fight Rag-Nator in his chambers and end his grip on Libratopolis. The City of Knowledge is now freed from the clutches of the Masters. Rag-Nator's stash of artifacts is ripe for the taking and will undoubtedly provide a boon for the heroes as they move on.

UMDAAR TOOLKIT

The following sections are for GMs interested in creating their own elements for ***Umdaar***, or for their own fantasy, sci-fi, or sci-fantasy settings.

CREATING A REGION

An adventure without a setting would be relatively flat. Umdaar depends on having interesting countries and ecosystems to explore; while this book contains many, it's often more fun to create your own. Here's the steps:

1. Pick a Terrain
2. Pick a Population
3. Create the Community
4. Compile the Aspects
5. Important Faces (Optional)

> If you're playing a Continent Campaign, also create a trouble aspect and a status; you also have the option of a site skill and power (see page 240). When in doubt, you don't need a full section to create a region; sometimes a simple sentence or aspect will be all you need. This is particularly true if you don't plan to visit the region this session (ex. The Champions meet a knight who hails from Sargentia, the Shining Tundra).

Steps 1-3 give you the bare bones: but if you want to expand your region further, there will be links to the other sections for creating Freelands, Dread Domains, Wildernexuses, and Ruins respectively.

Don't worry about scale: a region can be as big or as small as you need. Think of their size as "big enough to fulfill their part in a story." Most regions are going to be so large that they'll spend a whole adventure traversing through it; alternatively, the dangerous region might be just the dramatic "middle part" of the story, acting as a buffer between your starting part and your final destination.

TERRAIN GENERATOR

Need to create a quick location? Here's a generator for creating basic terrain and biomes: roll 2D6, or pick any result you like.

For more terrain generators, see

- *Freeland Campaign Map* on page 236.
- *Dread Domain Campaign Map* on page 236.
- *Wildernexus Campaign Map* on page 237
- *Ruins Campaign Map* on page 237.

2d6	Terrain
2	Volcano / Lava Field
3	Tundra / Steppe
4	Swamp / Mangrove
5	Island / Coast
6	Savanna / Plain
7	Jungle / Rainforest
8	Caves / Mountains
9	Desert / Wasteland
10	River / Sea
11	Hills / Valley
12	Forest / Taiga

POPULATION

When you create a bioform, consider a cross-section of bioforms that live there. A few options:

- See if someone in the party has a connection to the community—maybe it's where they came from or have close family there (which may share a bioform with them).
- Look at the biome of the community for inspiration: A forest community might be populated by bioforms inspired by forest lifeforms, like squirrel-people, robo-bears, and mushroom-people.
- Go random—pick 2-3 bioforms in the *Bioform* section on page 57.
- In a rush? Just add dinosauroids in various forms and humans who have a habit of showing up everywhere.

A NEW NARRATIVE-AVOID THE "CITY OF [RACE]"

A classic fantasy trope is an entire community filled with one genetic type: The Valley of the Elves. The Hall of the Dwarf King, etc. However, on Umdaar, it's virtually impossible to find a place with only one bioform in it.

Unless a story's conflict focuses on confronting racism, consider having lots of bioforms, even in the Dread Domains (see *Interrogating Old Stories* on page 414 for more).

THE COMMUNITY

Everyone comes from a community that defines a person's culture, history, and priorities. A community might be as small as a village to as large as an empire.

Some ideas of communities include:

- **Freelands:** A citadel; a nomadic clan; a fishing village.
- **Dread Domains:** A mining camp; a wizard's tower and serfs; a mobile fortress.
- **Wildernexus:** An oasis town; a borderland outpost; a hidden glade. Although, not all Wildernexuses are inhabited by sentient beings.

A community should have:

- A Name
- A High Concept: An aspect describing what they are.
- A Value: A principle they find important.

HIGH CONCEPT

The rules for creating high concepts for communities follow the same basic rules as high concepts for characters (see page 61); however, you're describing a town as a whole, rather than a person.

We recommend including at least one flavorful adjective. Some examples:

> A BRACKISH BACKWATER FISHING VILLAGE; A SHADOWY CITY OF SECRETS; A COBBLED-TOGETHER REFUGEE TOWN; A COLORFUL NOMADIC COMMUNITY OF HOPE.

COMMUNITY VALUES

While no two sentient beings are completely alike, members of a community will often have many cultural elements in common; they'll have signature dishes, signature art, even share overlapping values. These values can come organically through important hardships of the past, or could be intentionally guided (by benevolent activists or sinister propagandists).

When you create a community, pick a set of opposed values, or roll 2dF of differing colors, and then decide which value they prioritize (and which they don't).

2DF	Values
−−	Strength vs. Tenderness
−■	Beauty vs. Truth
−+	Unity vs. Individualism
■−	Security vs. Liberty
■■	Knowledge vs. Faith
■+	Justice vs. Mercy
+−	Family vs. Meritocracy
+■	Tradition vs. Innovation
++	Joy vs. Temperance

One value being prioritized doesn't mean the other is completely absent. In a healthy community, both values exist and people hold either in high regard. However, people who appreciate the undervalued concept are a minority. For example, in a community that values faith over knowledge, you might have a building full of priestesses for every single scientist; the opposite is true in a community that values knowledge over faith. If creating a Dread Domains community, see page 328 for how these values can be skewed into a dystopia.

A community might hold both standards in equally high regard—this leads to a unique community that is very rich, but can be perfectionistic. Alternatively, the community itself might be having an internal struggle over which is more important; this might be a new struggle between generations or an old debate that's raged for a thousand years.

REGION ASPECTS

Once you have the essential idea behind your region, combine them into one or more aspects, similar to character aspects.There's no minimum number of aspects besides the high concept.

> The group collaboratively rolled and created a Region with Lava Field; The Population is Volcano-Snailians, Fire Elementals, and Vulturoids (which happens to be where an Avian Champion's aunt lives). The Community values unity over individualism.
>
> The result is Lava Lake, with High Concept **Tightly-Bound Volcano Smithing Town**.
>
> They could add more aspects, like the different bioforms and troubles, but they decide to leave those for when they become important.

IMPORTANT FACES

A community may also include one or more NPCs that are important to your mission, or merely important to the Champions (such as their family). Use the same set-up as a Contact (see page 27).

MORE TOOLS

Now that you have a solid core for your region, you can personalize it however you want. Here are further tips for fleshing out the region, depending on what type of location it is.

- For Freelands, see *Creating a Freeland* on page 322
- For Dread Domains, see *Creating a Dread Domain* on page 326
- For Wildernexuses, see *Creating a Wildernexus* on page 329
- For Ruins, see *Creating a Ruin* on page 333

CREATING A FREELAND

If you want to create your own Freelands, here are some random tables that should jump-start your imagination. You can roll or choose any result that catches your attention.

NAME

Freelands follow a pretty standard naming pattern: adjective + natural world noun + of + proper name. Below, you'll find a table for each element. Roll 4dF or choose an element on each of the following tables to generate a name similar to the ones shown above.

Name Element: Adjective

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Warm	Far-reaching	Illuminated	Hidden	Exploding
−	Frozen	Bountiful	Unconquerable	Arcane	
−−	Gargantuan	Boundless	Expansive		
−−−	Ancient	Labyrinthine			
−−−−	Roaring				

Name Element: Noun

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Volcano	Forest	Fen	Savanna	Caves
−	Temple	City	Island	University	
−−	Oasis	Mountain	Jungle		
−−−	Mangroves	Steppes			
−−−−	Caverns				

Name Element: Proper Name

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Etineria	Al Lepin	Wer-jon	Velidan	Kera Ker
−	Kas	Varile	Nar'Gundia	Le Nagen	Janegal
−−	Kin'Vert	Esquafer	Igdad		
−−−	Les Sier	Ha-i-thiz			
−−−−	Deriven				

LEADER

Although Freelands' culture and traditions are usually far more important than any leader, these leaders are the NPCs the PCs will probably have most interactions with. These tables are designed so you can generate one on the fly with a few rolls or prepare one in advance by choosing or rolling, depending on your preference.

For an alternate list of names and backgrounds, see the tables from *Sand Dance* on page 292.

Name

4dF	■	⊞	⊞⊞	⊞⊞⊞	⊞⊞⊞⊞
■	Hu-i-ren	Dreas	Phecht	Xi-u-bi	Arar Bon
⊟	Inimun	Zephis	Tryphana	Ja Lirte	
⊟⊟	Gho'Acan	Liu Ming	Ka'Niqet		
⊟⊟⊟	Zelana	Shai'Li			
⊟⊟⊟⊟	Axi Thamon				

Background

4dF	■	⊞	⊞⊞	⊞⊞⊞	⊞⊞⊞⊞
■	Pampered Princess	Retired Archaeonaut	Soldier Turned Diplomat	Scholarly Technopriest	Beast Whisperer
⊟	Ageless Caravaneer	Born at Sea	City Vigilante	Covert Infiltrator	
⊟⊟	Disappointed Elder	Experienced Rabble-Rouser	Fearsome Debater		
⊟⊟⊟	Finder for Hire	Geomatic Architect			
⊟⊟⊟⊟	Indentured to Elementals				

Distinguishing Feature

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Sees All Sides of a Plan	Highly Independent	Focuses on the Task at Hand	Most Trustworthy	Must Know the Whole of Umdaar
−	Follows Their Gut	Thinks Quickly on Their Feet	Always Has the Last Word	Cares for the Weakest the Most	
−−	Pragmatic to the Last	Will Sacrifice for the Cause	Does Not Want Any Attention or Praise		
−−−	Relies Heavily on Others	Well-Considerate			
−−−−	Wants Something Desperately				

Trouble

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Keeps Too Many Secrets	Full of Mental Distress	Irritates Others Easily	Tasteless Sense of Humor	Difficult to Please
−	Has a Hard Time Adapting	Cold as Ice	Shows No Gratitude	People Don't Trust Them	
−−	Has No Strength of Character	Their Feelings Control Them	Hungry for Power		
−−−	Terribly Timid	Has a Hard Time Making a Decision			
−−−−	Always Speaks Their Mind				

DEALING WITH THE MASTERS

Every Freeland has a recognizable tactic in the struggle against the Masters. These are often more of a problem than an asset, though, as they are not sufficient to liberate the Freeland from the Masters' oppression.

Current Strategy

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Diplomacy/ Appeasement	Pacifistic Resistance	Passive Aggressive Cohabitation	Mind-Games	Guerrilla Warfare
−	Stubborn Defiance	Retreat	Techno-War	Sabotage	
−−	Awaiting Allies' Support	Bluffing	Scorched Earth Policy		
−−−	Targeted Terrorism	Neutrality			
−−−−	Double Agents				

ISSUES

As with any Umdaar campaign, issues are perhaps the most important aspects. They establish both the tone and agreed fiction that you and your players may want to explore. Write them by mutual agreement with the entire play group instead of using a random generator.

If you need inspiration, consider the community's values. Perhaps there is an internal conflict based on what they undervalue (Ex. A community that values beauty with crumbling infrastructure.) Or, perhaps there is an external threat that is diametrically opposed to their value (ex. A community of pacifists being at the mercy of violent marauders).

TROUBLE

Each Freeland should have at least a trouble aspect or a leader with a trouble aspect. You can even create one for each—and they may be similar, or contrast wildly. Trouble is a permanent problem that's internal. Conversely, an issue or status aspect is an internal or external problem that can potentially be solved.

CREATING A DREAD DOMAIN

Create a Dread Domain like any other Community. The only difference is that while most Freelands and Wildernexus communities are relatively healthy, Dread Domains tend to be negative, toxic communities. Here are a few things to consider:

- Is this a Dread Domain that has been under the heel of a Master for hundreds of years? Or is it only recently conquered (years, maybe even months ago)?
- What concepts do the community value? Are they suppressed by the Master (who doesn't share them), or are they twisted and warped to a harmful extreme?
- Was the community idyllic, and a Master turned it toxic? Or was the community toxic first, and anointed a Master to lead them?
- Create at least one aspect addressing, "How does the Master keep control?" (see notes under the Master and Lieutenants for suggestions; see page 343). Does the Master treat all of their subjects equally bad, or is it a two-tier society?
- The Master puts little value on people or places beyond what they can produce; What do the facilities in the Dread Domain create? Food? Weapons? Fuel? Luxuries? At what cost?

Most Dread Domains have diverse heterogeneous communities but, it is possible to have Dread Domains that isolate or abuse a certain sub-community, like the Dik-Diklings in the adventure, *Assault on Mount Muk* (see page 258). However, issues like racism and bigotry should be carefully considered with your table before they are introduced: see the *Game Worksheet* on page 19 for more.

WANT TO CREATE YOUR OWN MASTERS?

Of course, you do! However, we thought it was so important that it deserved its own section: see page 342.

For creating Lieutenants, see page 352 for description, and use the stats for a boss (page 343) or a tank (page 354).

For creating stats for lesser troops serving the Master, see the following (from smallest to biggest):

- Fillers on page 358
- Hitters on page 356
- Enemy Vehicles on page 186
- Tanks on page 354

DREAD TERRAIN

Want to generate a Dread Domain? Roll 2D6 for each column: the first describes the main community, the second is the Master's stronghold, and the third is the adjective used. You might have the Jungle of Pain, and the key location, the Charnelhouse of Pain.

Create a Dread Domain

2D6	Domain	Feature	Descriptor
2	Desert	Dungeon	...of Blinding Light
3	Tundra	Oubliette	...of Temptation
4	Island	Charnelhouse	...of Blood
5	Jungle	Cairn	...of Secrets
6	Plains	Boneyard	...of Midnight
7	Mountain	Armory	...of Pain
8	City	Pit	...of Despair
9	Caves	Wreck	...of Hunger
10	Swamp	Fortress	...of Treachery
11	Grotto	Vault	...of Pestilence
12	Scrapyard	Machine	...of Undeath

COMMUNITY IN THE DREAD DOMAIN

A recently conquered community might resemble a Freeland in its values. However, a community dominated by Masters for an extended time, or had a Master arise from within, might have skewed values.

You might be tempted to ask, "which trait is the 'evil' trait?" Don't think of communities as evil. Villains like the Masters tend to see themselves as the heroes of their own stories. While a community may have eager supporters of a Master, most of the people suffering under their heels are victims, often forced into making impossible, harmful choices for their own survival.

Feel free to use any of the following for the basis of a Master's Dread Domain dystopian society.

Dread Domain Community

D6	DF	Values	Descriptors
1	−	Strength (no Tenderness)	Despotism, Warlike, Boastful
	■	Tenderness (no Strength)	Unprotected, Cowardly, Parasitic
	+	Beauty (no Truth)	Fake, Baroque, Propaganda-driven
2	−	Truth (no Beauty)	Joyless, Artless, Clinical
	■	Unity (no Individualism)	Uniform, Stifled, Brainwashed
	+	Individualism (no Unity)	Divided, Selfish, Short-sighted
3	−	Security (no Liberty)	Police State, Martial Law, Spies
	■	Liberty (no Security)	Anarchic, Splintered, Dog-Eat-Dog
	+	Knowledge (no Faith)	Obsessive, Pessimistic, Unethical
4	−	Faith (no Knowledge)	Blind, Ignorant, Zealous
	■	Justice (no Mercy)	Cruel, Bloodthirsty, Rigid
	+	Mercy (no Justice)	Spoiled, Lawless, Unfair
5	−	Family (no Meritocracy)	Nepotism, Xenophobic, Tribalism
	■	Meritocracy (no Family)	Disloyal, Backstabbing, Blind Ambition
	+	Tradition (no Innovation)	Stagnant, Bigoted, Inflexible
6	−	Innovation (no Tradition)	Reckless, Amoral, Consumption-driven
	■	Joy (no Temperance)	Hedonistic, Derelict, In Debt
	+	Temperance (no Joy)	Morbid, Repressive, Depression

CREATING A WILDERNEXUS

Wildernexuses are unique in ***Umdaar***: they are the only large area that may or may not include a community.

If you decide to have a Warden community, create it using the same rules as other communities, rolling or picking a value that fits for them. They might be smaller or slightly more isolated than the average Freeland, but are similar in most other ways.

DOES A WILDERNEXUS WITHOUT A COMMUNITY HAVE A VALUE?

While not required, they certainly can. It never hurts to pick a value for a Wildernexus; it may inform what type of flora or fauna appear. Some choices are obvious (e.g.,. Strength), but others can inspire you to alter things. Perhaps a wilderness inspired by Beauty might have hypnotic flowers that test the will; animals inspired by joy might have a positive reaction to laughter, while temperance inspired animals might be irrationally goaded by sounds or mirth. Alternatively, this can inform what kind of mood or moral you want: a foggy bog about Individualism might separate the Champions, and teach any self-conscious PCs that they aren't so useless on their own.

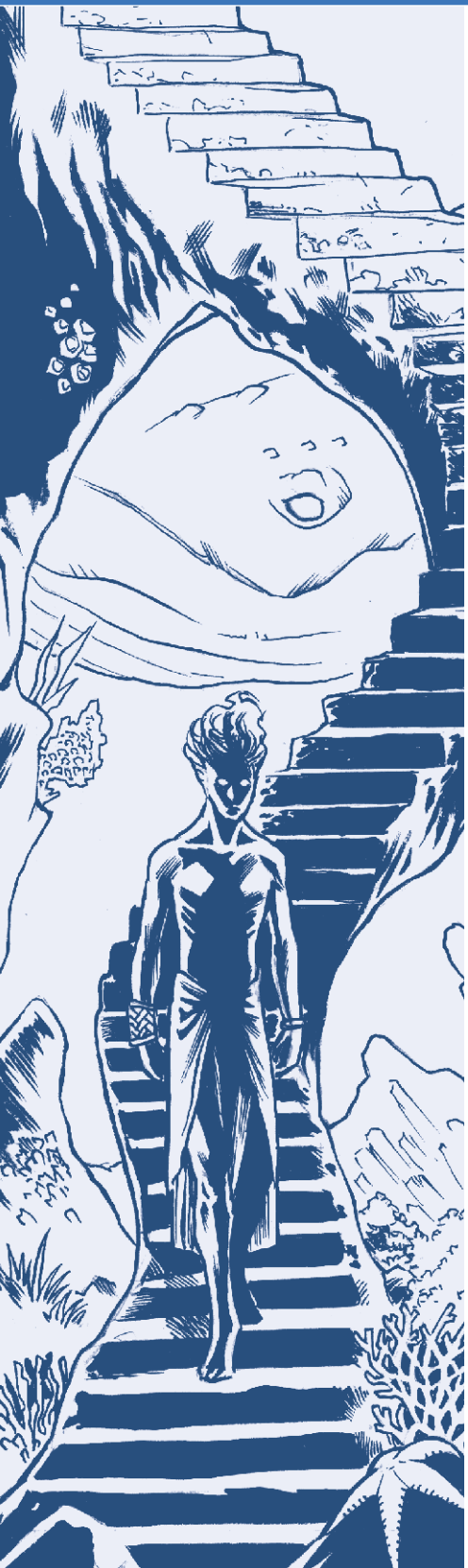
Wildernexuses can serve two different purposes in the story. Are they:

- The final destination of the story?
- An obstacle between the players and the final destination?

If the Wildernexus is the final destination, pick something interesting and the eye-catching focus of your story: the frozen peak of the mountain, the smoldering remains of a Warden village, a hidden grove of jewel-berry trees, the cave lair of the Rustwurm. It should feel distinct and concrete, contrasting with the amorphous Wildernexus trees and dunes.

If the Wildernexus is not the final destination but rather a midpoint to something else (such as a distant Freeland, Dread Domain, or ruin within the Wildernexus), then the Wildernexus locations serve as more of a narrative bridge.

It must be dangerous enough to create tension, but not so much that it outshines any big threats coming later (like a Master or a powerful ruin guardian). Any hazards they face should be hard enough to eat up some fate points and maybe deal a minor/moderate consequence or two, but not take them all out of action; use a difficulty of Superb (+5) or less.



Consider picking contrasting scene types:

- If your final destination is filled with conflicts, fill the Wildernexus with non-conflict scenes, such as challenges and contests. We recommend cliffhanger countdowns—see tips for building your own on page 363.
- If your final scene is mostly obstacles and puzzles, fill your Wildernexus with dangerous threats to fight. These can be dangerous plants and animals, but they could just as well be raiding parties from the Dread Domains with the dangerous terrain and wild animals acting as an X-factor. Fate's combat system isn't very complex. To avoid feeling repetitive, give the players a vista of different environments, with lots of scene aspects. Never have a scene occur in a vacuum. See *Zones* on page 131.

PLOT SEED: BAIT & SWITCH

You can also play with party expectations. For example, the Champions might be asked to escort a sheltered priestess through a Wildernexus to an Abbey, only for her to find a kinship with the wild spirits and remain in the Wildernexus.

TERRAIN GENERATOR

Need to create a quick Wildernexus location? Here's a generator for creating basic terrain and biomes.

Title

2D6	1st Adjective	Biome	2nd Adjective
2	Crystal	Volcano/Lava Field	...of Fire
3	Frozen	Tundra/Steppe	...of Time
4	Fungal	Swamp/Mangrove	...of Bone
5	Infinite	Island/Coast/Reef	...of Tears
6	Floating	Savanna/Plain	...of Machina
7	Hidden	Jungle/Rainforest	...of Chitin
8	Glowing	Caves/Mountains	...of the Void
9	Underwater	Desert/Wasteland	...of Metal
10	Underground	River/Sea	...of Memories
11	Quantum	Hills/Valley	...of the Giants
12	Haunted	Forest/Taiga	...of Midnight

Once you have a biome, think of some small subdivisions or events you might find.

- Along a road, you might find: a fork, a bridge, a barricade (natural or artificial), a toll, an ambush, or a caravan.
- A desert track could involve dunes, a cactus patch, an oasis, a canyon, a boneyard, a wrecked sandship.
- Just like the old kid's song, "Going on a Bear Hunt," think of obstacles which require different approaches: go over, under, around, and through.
- Change the time of day. How does the environment change from high noon to deep night?

FLORA AND FAUNA

Much of the obstacles and hazards of the Wildernexus are its flora and fauna. Dangerous, powerful, cybernetically enhanced plants and animals. Many circumstances warrant having to ward off aggressive creatures. However, flora and fauna are pieces of a larger ecosystem. This list is not a combat roster but an inspiration for alternative problems and alternative solutions. The wildlife of the Wildernexus does not exist to be tamed nor conquerede. Plants and animals behave according to instinct and should always be played like such. If a creature is injured, it will often attempt to escape unless it has a compelling reason not to.

Here is a brief list of ways to use flora and fauna to provide challenges that do not necessitate overwhelming them with violence:

- A wounded creature is lashing out in pain. Find a way to soothe or heal it.
- A harmless-looking plant turned out to expel a dangerous gas when approached. Look to the surrounding environment to find some way to cure a party member who inhaled it.
- A group of creatures has been forced out of their natural habitat by a Master's forces, causing problems in their new environment.
- A defensive mother acts aggressive because people are drawing too close to its den and must be calmed before it begins to attack.

> If you're going for a lighter tone, you can also use the method found in ***Samurai Jack***: any injury done to an animal is dealt to a cybernetic limb (which can regrow with time, thanks to their natural nanobots), or the target is a mindless robot (made to emulate an animal). This works well with the Saturday Morning Cartoon dial.

When creating flora and fauna for the Wildernexus, consider four major principles:

1. What is its role in the ecosystem? Apex predator, grazer, recycler, biofuel, etc. Think about what kind of damage would be caused if it disappeared entirely. Or, is the animal invasive, and removing it would save the ecosystem from collapsing?
2. What are its strongest instincts? These are as flexible as in our own world's diversity of creatures. Some predators will flee upon being spotted, and some prey will fight to the last.
3. What is its social structure? Usually, you can tell where and why you find a creature somewhere and how many. These structures inform their behaviors: ants will form rafts to cross water, naked mole rats will create elaborate brainwashed kingdoms dedicated to a queen, and ivy can scale and strangle trees. Plants and animals are weird, so have fun with them.
4. What cool cybernetics does it have? Everything is cooler with cybernetics. Give the bear a laser eye. Give the vines nanometer blades. The world is your cyborg-oyster.

CREATING A RUIN

Creating a ruin involves its own little mini-story, compartmentalized. When you create a Demiurge ruin, don't feel that you have to over-plan it. However, before the adventure starts, consider some of the following:

DEFINING THE DEMIURGE

Were the Demiurge gods? Demons? Mortals that gained immortality by super-science?

The answer is yours to define—or if you prefer it, to leave undefined.

However, one of the few certainties is that there were not many of the Demiurge: they were somewhere between a dozen and a hundred. Theirs was not a grand race that populated the entire planet—they were individuals, each with specific goals, styles, and ethics.

A good way to create a particular ruin or castle is to think of the specific Demiurge that created it, or it was built in honor of. For inspiration for your Demiurge, consider a classic archetype: these can come from Tarot, Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, ***Persona*** video games, or whatever you like.

- Maiden, mother, crone
- Scholar, Prophet, Hermit
- Knight, Hunter, Berserker
- Nurturer, Warden, Death
- Lover, Devil, Widow
- Trickster, Tyrant, Vassal

The players might know this archetype before they go in. They might discover it partway through, piercing the mysteries together. Even if it's just in the background and the players never discover it, it will help you provide a theme to build around.

Before the Champions enter a ruin, you should have a decent idea of what general function the ruin served and its status. We recommend you roll or pick one from the table below.

Also, remember: almost every ruin contains something. It might be a machine, or knowledge, or a prisoner. What is Demiurge's attitude towards sharing this?

- Is it open to all? If so, is this out of benevolence? If the contents are dangerous in the wrong hands, was the builder hopelessly optimist, a sadist, or a chaotic trickster?
- Is it open to none? Were they covetous? Or protecting people for their good?
- Is it open to a select few? Did they only trust people who shared the Demiurge's qualities? Or did they only trust their followers, and do you need to trick the ruin into thinking you belong?

Once you've rolled the following chart, you'll have a better idea of the stakes, what the Champions need to do to improve things, and whether other NPCs might need to be involved.

However, it's a good idea not to be too rigid—it's important to let the players contribute to the story in Fate. Some clues you'll want to plant yourself, but you can always let them fill in some of the sights and details along the way. They might give you something better than you had expected!

D6	Function	Before	Now	Notes
1	Produced something bad	Was On	Is On	Could be the cause of a dangerous Wildernexus
2	Produced something bad	Was Off	Turning On	Champion must stop it
3	Produced something bad	Was Off	Is Off	NPCs show interest
4	Center of Knowledge	Was Off	Is On or Off	Provides Knowledge that can harm or help
5	Produced something good	Was On	Off/ Haywire	Could explain recent catastrophe or change
6	Produced something good	Was Off	Is Off	Fixing it could change things for the better

Most of the statuses above are interesting in isolation—the exception is "Produced something bad —Was Off— Is Off," as this means the status quo is relatively safe (ex. The Weapons Factory is turned off). However, this status CAN be interesting when you get powerful NPCs involved. If your Champions discover the weapons factory shortly after a Master does, your heroes must race to stop them. It can also be an interesting factor in a Dignitary campaign: how does having a deadly Superweapon Factory paint a target on your back? Do friendly NPCs feel the temptation to use it for the "greater good"? Does it cause tension with your allies?

> Tara the GM created a ruin that falls under "Produces Bad/was off/is off." Tara's rough, secret outline is, "The ruin is an ancient prison; the Champions will be freeing three nasty beings (through accident? Compel?)" She has the rough stats for three bosses ready.
>
> When the Champions enter the key room:
>
> Tara: You see crystal pods. In them are the shapes of random humanoids; organic. There's a control panel. What else do you see?
>
> Petra: Probably lots of wires and tubes.
>
> Wally: Oh my gosh, they're mutawarriors, just like my character. This might be the factory where I came from!
>
> Tara realizes that a mutawarrior factory still counts as "Produces Bad/was off/is off" and would give them a chance to delve more into Wally's character's past and personality. This sounds like a much better adventure! Tara asks for a short break, and she rewrites the three "escapees" as three Masters descending on the factory, hoping to claim it. The new objective: the players must stop them from turning it on and creating an army!

TRAPS AND PUZZLES

A classic adventure trope is the "ruin filled with traps." One of the most famous examples is the opening scene in ***Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark*** which includes:

- A beam of light (which, if broken, launches spears from the wall)
- A bottomless pit trapfall
- Pressure plates (which shoot poison darts)
- An idol security system (based on weights); if sprung triggers rocks to fall (pushing you onto the pressure plates), a hidden stone wall to cut you off, and a rolling boulder (to squash you/trap you in).

Don't bother with the logic of, "Who maintains and resets the trap from millennia ago?" It's all super-science.

Keep the traps specific and diverse. Tailor them to different skills—this will keep them unique and let different characters participate and show off. If a player suggests a reasonable solution that involves another skill, allow it, either at the same value or one level higher; the GM's role is to challenge them, not make them read your mind.

Some examples of traps that might encourage different skills (conveniently numbered if you want to roll 2D6):

2D6	Skills
2	**Drive:** Opening a crane, busting a factory door with a hover forklift
3	**Resources:** Recognizing material of statues, spotting fake gems
4	**Physique:** A rock-slide, metal bars on a cage, holding back a chained beast, a slowly closing door
5	**Will:** Traversing a crumbling ledge without panicking, a wall of illusions or nightmares
6	**Athletics:** A race to or away from an object, a closing door, an arrow trap, a rolling boulder, or a pit trap; burning rope you must climb up
7	**Burglary:** A locked portcullis, a booby-trapped chest, a secret door, removing a data crystal from a statue, hacking a trap mechanism
8	**Lore:** A deadly artifact, a riddle, a code to decipher, a mirror maze with laser-eyed sentries
9	**Stealth:** A robot sentry that only catches fast movement, a pressure-sensitive floor, a minefield, a laser-grid
10	**Crafts:** Fabricated a key, fixing an broken statue to unlock a door, building an elemental ramp to the next door, dissembling a bomb
11	**Rapport:** A bored sentry, a musical puzzle, a beast to tame or lull to sleep
12	**Investigate** or **Empathy:** Deciphering meanings from murals or pictographs

IN CASE YOU DIDN'T "NOTICE"

You might observe that Notice isn't on the list; this is because Notice gets lots of use in a trapped ruin! When in doubt, players can use Notice instead of a different skill to defend against any surprise threat. If a Champion steps on a plate that shoots poison darts, they could defend with Athletics or Notice. However, Notice can't defend against threats that the Champion is already aware of unless they have a stunt.

Mechanically, traps often appear as one of these:

- A simple task to overcome, like fixing the cables to a broken door (see *Overcome* on page 109).
- Simple or dangerous blocks to overcome, as an acid pit (see *Blocks* on page 376).
- Harmful automated hazards to avoid, like a sentry gun (see *Hazards* on page 374).
- Automated deathtraps like a locked room slowly filling with sand (see *Countdowns* on page 363).
- A fully automated Guardian to fight (see *Enemies* on page 342).
- A race or mental duel, like downloading info before it is purged (see *Contests* on page 134).

It's possible to add several in the scene at once, such as a challenge (see *Challenges* on page 134).

> The GM creates a challenge where the Players encounter a particularly tricky hallway. They have to cross a booby-trapped floor while dodging swinging razor pendulums to pick a locked door. As icing on the cake, the walls are studded with giant ruby skulls and have the distraction aspect *Priceless Ruby Skulls*.
>
> To succeed, at least one Champion must complete all three steps: however, should a Champion pass one of the tests and succeed with style (or attempt to dismantle the trap at +2 Difficulty), the Champion can stop their tracks and let the others pass that portion of the challenge automatically (or, if they rolled already, retroactively turn their failures into successes.)
>
> The muscular tank of the group asks if they can use Physique to hold a razor pendulum in place, allowing others to pass by. While this is an unorthodox approach, the GM agrees, provided the tank agrees to a higher difficulty and a minimum of two stress. The tank rolls and succeeds, taking two stress, but manages to hold the blades in place. The other team members scurry past, attempting to open the door before the tank's strength gives out.

Alternatively, the GM may choose to run as a one-sided conflict:

- Use the Razors mechanism as a hazard that actively attacks one or more Champions each round (see page 374).
- Allow the players multiple rounds to overcome the door; however, the difficulty to solve is Good (+3). The longer they take, the more damage the group takes from the razors.
- Instead of the door being a block, it's a barricade (see page 378); meaning the Champions can make incremental damage to the door each round.

Sample Traps

Booby-trapped Floor

Block: Great (+4)
Recommended Skills to Avoid: Stealth or Athletics

NOTES

A burst of hallucinatory gas hurts anyone who fails, gaining the "Hallucination Gas" aspect with one unfriendly invoke. If the Champion is not organic or doesn't breathe air, the gas obscures their vision and counts as an unfriendly boost instead.

Razor Pendulums

Block: Good (+3), Weapon:3
Recommended Skills to avoid: Notice or Athletics

Locked Door

Block: See below.

CONDITIONS

Difficulty to hack (Burglary) or solve (Lore): Fair (+2)
Difficulty to break open (Physique or Crafts): Superb (+5)

Priceless Ruby Skulls

Distraction: see below

NOTES

Can be invoked to compel a Champion to take the wrong action or offer a -2 to a greedy Champion.

Mysteries and Surprises

There are certain times when it is clear to use overcome (e.g., using Burglary to disarm a trap), when to create an advantage (e.g., using Lore to research an artifact's past), and when to use defend (e.g., you are attacked by bats!).

However, there are some situations when the lines blur, particularly with hidden traps.

Which action is used to resolve it? Generally:

- If the PC is looking for a trap they haven't spotted yet — a hidden aspect, in other words—they can create an advantage. If they fail, it is revealed and gets a free invoke or against the unlucky explorer.
- If the PC is trying to disarm or otherwise circumvent a trap that has been spotted—an existing known aspect—use overcome for a quick resolution and lean hard on success at a cost if they roll a failure.
- If the PC has unwittingly sprung a trap, the trap takes an action, and the PC reacts. The trap rolls to create an advantage upon or outright attack the PC, depending on the nature of the trap. The PC rolls to defend with an appropriate skill, such as Notice to realize the trap's about to trigger or spot the exact right place to stand, Athletics to move quickly before the blades descend, Physique to hold their breath or endure a poison, etc.

However, these distinctions are not so rigid that they should be used to harm or penalize players. For example, if a rogue has a stunt with "+2 to Burglary when using overcome to find and bypass traps," go ahead and let them receive the +2 bonus when creating an advantage to find the trap. Or, if a stunt is specific enough (narratively), you can leave out which action it applies to, such as: "+2 to Burglary when finding and bypass traps."

Self-Springing Traps and Dead-ends

In some non-Fate RPGs, the entire narrative flow can depend on the players on a character successfully investigating. If they fail to find the secret door, the plot cannot progress, and you hit a narrative dead-end.

Luckily, Story-focused RPGs like Fate have ways around that:

> The players are investigating a room. If they roll high enough, they'll reveal a secret passage. If they roll too low, you can let them succeed at a cost (good news, they opened the passage; bad news, bats fly out and attack, dealing a minor consequence).

But there's still a small hitch: what if no one thinks to investigate in the first place? However, we have a solution. If the players fail to create an advantage to search for a room and are stuck, don't be afraid to turn a hidden aspect into a trap NPC that acts against the PCs.

> **Bronze Rule of Fate:** you can treat anything in the game world like it's a character.

If the players investigate a room, it's the same as above (finding a passage or a passage with bats). If they don't investigate and start leaving the room, tell them a Champion accidentally flipped a switch, opened a passage, and bats attack them.

RUIN GENERATOR

Need a random ruin? Roll 2D6 on the charts below.

2D6	Name	Epithet	Function
2	The Nest	...of Flax Whips	Data center/archive
3	The Centrifuge	...of Sharp Unguis	Preservation
4	The Prism	...of the Ninth Lightning	High agricultural yields
5	The Spiral	...of Copper Pinioned Angels	Waste segregation
6	The Hive	...with Rooms Infinite	Terraformation/climate adjustment
7	The Lotus	...So Restful	Entertainment
8	The Dome	...From the Frost Beneath	Energy production
9	The Tessellation	...Most Damned	Siege weapon
10	The Solarium	...Reeking of Life	Animal sanctuary/Specimen collection
11	The Parapet	...of Empty Virtue	Memorial
12	The Zenith	...of the Lowest Born	Military border

2D6	Portents
2	Volcanic activity, escaping gases
3	Random petrification
4	Time moves backwards (people get younger, move in reverse, etc.)
5	Metal rusts upon entry
6	Unprotected objects bust into flame upon entry
7	Rain falls with the sound of chimes
8	Unstable gravity, shifting from crushing to weightlessness
9	Lightning that coalesces into a human face
10	Trees or rocks animated into semi-intelligent constructs
11	Shield of impenetrable force renders the space inviolate
12	Cloak of doom removes all senses

CREATING ARTIFACTS

Simple Artifacts: Each of these artifacts is built like a single stunt. See *Magical Item and Demiurge Tech Stunts* on page 87.

Strong Artifacts: Each of these artifacts is built like two stunts. We recommend that it grant two complementary bonuses simultaneously, giving the feeling of a power surge—for example: once per scene, gain +2 to a Fight attack and move the defender away by two zones. However, complementary is not the same as cumulative: don't create a weapon that adds +2 Fight and +2 Fight for a +4 Fight bonus. You can also build Strong Artifacts as Mega-Stunts. See ***Atomic Robo*** rules at fate-srd.com/atomic-robo.

Giving an artifact that plays on a group's banner is a great way of reinforcing the theme.

For example, a Dignitary campaign might have a Locket of the Heart that grants a cooperative stunt (see page 94).

However, don't feel like you have to hold to this: keep an eye on your players and what situations they're sitting out (unable to help). For example, you might give a support character a magical artifact that lets them manifest a rare-but-powerful attack, turning them into a badass (in small doses).

When in doubt, ask the players what they want. Let them have a say in what direction they want a boon to go.

Artifact Name Generator: Prefix

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	Ring of	Mask of	Dagger of	Cube of	Crown of
−	Compass of	Sword of	Runestone of	Javelin of	
−−	Veil of	Staff of	Shield of		
−−−	Quiver of	Bracer of			
−−−−	Horn of				

Artifact Name Generator: Suffix

4dF	■	+	++	+++	++++
■	the Creator	the Stars	the Sun	Blood	Eternal Life
−	Arganath	Light	Shadow	the Beasts	
−−	the Deathbringer	Flame	Frost		
−−−	the Skylord	Zhan-Tok			
−−−−	the Celestial Twins				

For the full section on artifacts, see page 218.

CREATING OPPOSITION

As we talk about adversaries in this book, keep in mind the Fate Fractal: **everything is a character**. An adversary is not necessarily a person, monster, or other kind of creature you can punch. Rather, it's a thing that exists to hinder, challenge, or oppose the players.

There are three main types of adversaries: **enemies**, **obstacles**, and **constraints**.

- **Enemies:** Opponents with agency that can be attacked (see below).
- **Constraints:** Modifiers on enemies and obstacles that make them more difficult. See page 362.
- **Obstacles:** Dangers that must be avoided, circumvented, or dealt with. See page 373.

ENEMIES

Enemies have one thing in common: you can defeat them by attacking. All enemies have aspects, skills, and stress tracks. Some have stunts, and some have consequences.

Enemies are the most familiar type of adversary because they are similar to player characters. The NPCs opposing the PCs are typically enemies, but enemies don't have to be people, robots, cyborgorillas, or whatever. It might be an idol in a magic circle that pulses with malevolent energy—as long as you can defeat it by dealing it stress, it's an enemy. A fire raging out of control could be an enemy; it attacks nearby PCs and takes stress whenever they hose it down or combat it with other firefighting techniques.

Enemies are your bread and butter as a GM. They're the lion's share of the adversaries you'll use because fighting things in Fate is dramatic and interesting, whether it's a fistfight or an argument before a Court Magistrate.

There are four main types of enemies: **bosses**, **tanks**, **hitters**, and **fillers**.

For an example of pre-made bosses and henchmen, see *Necrokadnezzar and the Skeledrones* on page 181.

When creating a Master and their minions, it's better to start with a Master (to get the theme) and work your way down. However, if you're trying to acquaint yourself with the rules of Fate, it's simpler to start with the henchmen first.

CREATING BOSSES

Where tanks and hitters are specialized enemies, and fillers are generic bad guys, bosses are those special enemies who the PCs can't wait to take down. Bosses are the focal point of a set-piece battle, the big personalities that drive the adventure, the antagonists that hound the PCs at every turn. Most of the bosses a group encounters will be Masters (or, during a campaign, a Master's Lieutenants.) However, the same rules can be used for a powerful NPC, like the leader of a Freeland, or a strong ruin guardian.

MASTERS

Deciding on the Master that rules a Dread Domain is just as important as the Domain itself. Things to consider:

- What drives them? Money? Power? Revenge? Villains who are just mustache twirlers for no reason are boring.
- How do they control their Domain? Force? Seduction? Extortion? Trickery? Why haven't rebellions against the Master succeeded? Why do minions flock to the Master?
- What is distinctive about them? What's their personality like? Do they dress flamboyantly? Do they sing off-key on purpose?
- Avoid tropes that rely on physical characteristics such as weight, disability, or height.
- A villain can be of a marginalized gender or ethnicity, but their villainy shouldn't be about that marginalization. Try to avoid race-based puns or queer villains whose only distinguishing characteristic is their queer identity. Also, avoid giving them physical or mental handicaps—we've seen too many villains with dwarfism or obesity. Of course, mutations, like snakes-for-hands, are fine.

If you need inspiration or just want to generate something on the fly, here's a table to roll on (roll twice).

2D6	Master	Dread Quirk
2	Glowbot	Sings bawdy tunes
3	Vampire	Very specific diet
4	Sorcerer	Grooming peculiarity
5	Inventor	Special jewelry
6	Mutant	Talks to a skull
7	Warlord	Speaks in verses
8	Thief	Talks in riddles
9	Trickster	Exotic pet
10	Seducer	All-consuming hobby
11	Lich	Tantrum-prone
12	Monarch	Completely unremarkable

AWW, BUT I WANT TO MAKE A MUSTACHE-TWIRLING VILLAIN!

For the occasional Pure Evil villain, here are a few tips:

- **Keep Them Simple:** Keep their motivations simple and their backstory simpler; don't convolute or over-explain or worse justify it. Either go full-evil villain or full-complex villain—don't do it halfway!
- **Make Them Love What They Do:** Complicated villains do bad things because they are forced to do them. Pure Evil villains do it because they enthusiastically love their jobs.
- **Keep Them Rare:** One mustache-twirler is fun; a world of them is boring. For example, take the Joker. He works best in ***Batman: The Animated Series*** as he is the one villain without a tragic, sympathetic backstory; that's what makes him stand out! By contrast, ***Batman (1989)*** had a giggling pure-evil Joker; and in ***Batman Forever (1995)***, they introduced two more giggling pure-evil villains that were forgettable.
- **Epic Rise, Meteoric Fall:** Watching a mustache-twirler about to succeed is fun, but the only thing that is more fun than that is wiping the smug look from their face. Make sure your villain gets part of their plan off the ground, and make sure their downfall is dealt out by the heroes themselves so that they can see the villain's epic breakdown in front of their eyes.

Mustache twirlers are best used in one-shot adventures. Campaigns work better with complex villains.

PLOT SEED

Rumors have it that even the Masters have someone controlling them, a shadowy Overmaster manipulating them from behind the scenes. What could be so fearsome that the mighty Masters fear it? An ancient spirit of evil, trapped in Umdaar's core by the Demiurge? An eldritch being from the Phantom Realms?

ON EVIL AND ITS NATURE IN UMDAAR

Even if a villain has been wronged or has some altruistic goal they are seeking through terrible means, they exist in the story to be confronted by the Champions. They may be defeated in battle or convinced to change their ways, but the damage they do needs to be stopped.

ASPECTS

Bosses have a full spread of five aspects.

- **High concept:** Give your boss a high concept that drives home what she's all about. Are they the **Stern Human General of the Frostblood Army**? Or the **Scheming Necrotek Mantis-tiger Artificer**?
- **Trouble:** Your boss's trouble should be a closely guarded secret that the PCs can exploit if they find out about it. Examples: **Transplanted my Heart into the Staff; I Must Be Feared As Nobody Loves Me; Cannot Bear My Own Reflection**.
- **The rest:** For the other three aspects, come up with some unique shticks that your boss relies on, things that'll make them memorable. Maybe the General has a **Secret Final Dragon Form**, or maybe the necromancer general carries a powerful Demiurge artifact, like the All-Seeing Staff.

BOSS DYNAMICS

If the Champions are sneaking around the Dread Domains, use the opportunity to show what the Master is like through their interactions with their minions and lieutenants. Have the Champions overhear looping propaganda broadcasts or eavesdrop on vid-screens conversations. Does the Master give their lieutenants empty promises and tell each of them secretly, "You're my favorite"? Does the Master berate their minions and threaten them? Is the Master fair but coldly calculating? If you hint at how Master keeps control, you can help the Champions uncover hidden aspects and weaknesses, allowing them to break their hold over their minions.

SKILLS

Bosses have highly rated skills, and lots of them. Bosses are far more versatile than either hitters or tanks and, unlike those two types of enemies, it's entirely within your purview to make a boss who's both good at dealing damage and good at taking it.

Based on the Champions' highest skill rating capped at Great (+4), either give your boss:

- One skill rated at Fantastic (+6), and two skills at Superb (+5).
- Two skills rated at Superb (+5).

Either way, give the boss three skills at Great (+4), four skills at Good (+3), and four or five at Fair (+2). All of her other skills are Average (+1).

If your Champions have their highest skill at Superb (+5), add +1 to all stats; similarly, if you're using ***Fate Accelerated***, lower all boss stats by -1.

Your boss should prioritize skills that support their personality.

> The Frostblood General probably has high social skills, good combat skills, and skills like Drive, Lore, and Crafts toward the bottom of her pyramid.
>
> The Necrotek Artificer general probably prioritizes Lore above all else, then goes on to prioritize things like Crafts, Resources, Provoke, and Contacts, which leaves more physically-oriented skills for the bottom of her pyramid.
>
> Both of them likely have Will in the middle. They wouldn't have risen to their current status if they were easy to scare or distract!

If you need inspiration for a Master, pick one or two character archetypes at random from page 51. Champions aren't the ones who can get cool archetypes, like Princess Sharpshooter, or Elementalist Ruffian!

BOSS BEASTS

In some cases, you might need a powerful Boss that's less well-rounded, such as the guardian automaton of a temple or a wild Woolly Mammothaurus Rex. A Boss Beast is a general term used for a very large, dangerous animal. In these cases, don't worry about filling out the skills after the first three rows; give them important skills like Fight, Physique, Provoke, Athletics, Shoot, Will. Like a Filler minion, you can lump any remaining skills into a single phrase like "Brainy Stuff" or "Everything Else" and give it a low rating—e.g., Mediocre (+0) or Terrible (-2).

Generating Boss Beasts

You can roll on the chart below for additional flavor. Roll 2dF (of two different colors—designate one as the first die—or roll individually) to find your result. Bioform stunts are on page 77.

2DF	War Beast
−−	**Warm-blooded Sauroid:** It's part dinosaur and part (mammal/bird)!
−■	**Mutant:** Pick an animal as a base; it also has a strange mutation.
−+	**Robeast:** A mechanical or cyborg beast grafted to a deadly weapon! Pick an animal and grant a weapon.
■−	**Cold-blooded Sauroid:** It's part dinosaur and part (fish/invertebrate/amphibian).
■■	**Chimera:** Pick two random animals.
■+	**Amorphous:** The creature is an amorphous blob of plasma, pollution, or raw DNA. It starts in the vague shape of a random animal, but may shift to other animal forms.
+−	**Swarm:** It's part invertebrate animal and part something else (pick another animal or feature). Treat it as a gang of mooks or a mob with the ability to use Teamwork up to Fantastic (+6).
+■	**Mythicanimal:** Pick a mythical animal (e.g., dragon, unicorn, vampire, yeti) and mix it with another quality (another animal, sci-fi trait).
++	**Necromera:** A rotting undead chimera from the past. Pick two animal bases and an undead type (zombie, skeleton, mummy, ghost, etc).

BOSS STUNTS

A boss always has at least one stunt and as many as three. Create stunts that make the boss memorable, stunts that bring in more bad guys to fight, stunts that make the boss hard to deal with, and stunts that represent her social status or allies. Here are some examples:

- **Connected:** Once per session, the boss can draw on their contacts to bring in reinforcements. These reinforcements take the form of either one hitter with an apex skill rating equal to their Contacts, two tanks with apex skills rated one step lower than your Contacts, or Fair (+2) Fillers equal in number to your Contacts. Using this stunt, they can spend one fate point to gain +2 to Contacts, to a maximum of Great (+4), to bring in these reinforcements.
- **Escape Plan:** Once per session, if the boss gets taken out, they can spend a fate point to concede instead.
- **Mook Shield:** The boss can spend a fate point to divert the attack to nearby filler enemies whenever they are attacked.
- **Uncageable:** Whenever the boss successfully uses overcome to remove a physical obstacle, they may pay a fate point to make a second action once per turn.
- **Artifact Weapon:** The boss may loudly invoke the name of their weapon on an attack. If they do, I may either gain Weapon:2 or may attack two opponents in the same zone. Roll a 4dF attack roll separately for each defender. May not use two rounds in a row.
- **Army of One:** If the boss is the only threat in the conflict, they may take two actions each turn instead of one; they may not attack the same target twice in a single turn.

Tailoring the Experience

Boss Stunts are also a perfect way to encourage players to try a certain play-style. They can help introduce new approaches to novice players, or add variety.

Encourage Invokes: To encourage players to use invokes and create an advantage, give a boss Stunts that boost defense or increase armor rating.

- **Heavy Shield:** I gain +2 to Fight or Athletics when defending against physical attacks I can see.
- **Escalating Defense:** Each round, I gain a bonus to Fight or Athletics when defending against physical attacks equal to the number of times I have already been attacked this round.

Encourage Creating Aspects: To encourage the use of aspects, use the invoke stunts above or conditional aspects such as the one below:

- **Fancy Footwork:** I gain +3 to rolls to defend against attacks with Athletics if I have no aspects inhibiting my movement.
- **Mental Ward:** I gain +3 to rolls to defend with Will against mental attacks until someone discovers and invokes my secret trouble.

Encourage Cooperation: You can build stunts on encouraging players to work together if you're running a pro-cooperation campaign such as Dignitary game.

- **Focused Defense:** Whenever a Champion attacks me, I gain +2 to defend against all physical, mental, and magical attacks. This stunt has no effect if the attacks are made via Coordinated Stunts, I am burdened with a negative aspect from a different Champion, or the attacker has a Teamwork bonus.

Also, see *Resistances* on page 369 to create interesting stunts that challenge the players and drive adventures.

See page 361 for *Quick-and-Dirty Enemy Stunts*.

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Bosses have stress tracks of varying lengths based on their skills, but all bosses have at least a mild and a moderate consequence slot, and a particularly nasty boss has a severe consequence slot too.

You can scale consequences based on the banner size. Often with four or more players, it's a good idea to add another moderate consequence slot.

USING BOSSES

Bosses have personalities and goals of their own. Taking a boss down should always be a big deal and probably shouldn't happen every session. You can let the PCs fight a boss frequently, but be careful with your bosses—don't be afraid to concede. They're not as disposable as other kinds of enemies are, so it's a viable tactic to concede so that the boss can threaten the PCs later. But don't rob the PCs of their victory, either. When the PCs defeat a boss, make it a big deal, and reward them accordingly.

Most fights with a boss contain only one, though you could have two or even three in a climactic encounter. That should be the exception rather than the rule, though, and it's often useful to call out which boss is a bigger deal than the others. Use your boss's personality to inform how they behave in an encounter. An aggressive, combative boss will get right up in the PCs' faces, while a cautious, politically-oriented boss will hide behind minions.

> Also note that a full conflict with multiple bosses, henchmen and four or more Champions can take a lot of time, sometimes two hours or more.

WAYS TO BREAK THE RULES FOR BOSSES

Between combining skills, creating advantages, and teamwork, a banner of Champions can often overwhelm a single opponent. This is fine if you want to respect the advantage of numbers, but not great if you want to present a "big bad" that equals the whole group.

For big threats it's acceptable to break the rules by looking at ways to counteract the group's usual advantage of numbers while still giving them a chance. You can use one or more of these ideas in combination for especially difficult or terrifying final bosses.

Challenge or Contest Immunity

Both of these methods are about drawing out the final confrontation by running the group through a clock-is-ticking-down activity before they can go after the big bad directly.

Challenge Immunity: Your big bad has a complete resistance (mentally, physically, or both) until the group beats a challenge (e.g., dismantling the source of its power, figuring out what its weakness is). Meanwhile, the big bad can act freely and may attack them during their efforts, oppose their overcome or create advantage efforts with its defend rolls, assail their free invokes with its own overcomes, or prepare for their eventual breakthrough by creating advantages of its own.

Contest Immunity: The group must win a contest to directly attack the big bad—and the big bad gets to attack them while they're trying. If the big bad wins the contest, it gets to pull off its scheme and get away unscathed.

Expendable Minion Armor

Surrounding yourself with minions is one way to balance a big bad's side against the PCs, but it only goes so far if the players can decide to go after the big bad directly and ignore those pesky minions for a while.

But with expendable minion armor in play, a big bad may always succeed at a cost on defend rolls against attacks by forcing a minion into the path of the attack. That minion doesn't roll to defend; they just take the hit that would have landed on the big bad otherwise. This option forces the PCs to chew through the big bad's army before the final confrontation.

These defenses don't have to be literal minions. For example, you might write up one or more "shield generators" each with a stress track and perhaps a skill for creating defensive advantages for the shielded big bad.

Reveal True Form

Okay, the group has thrown everything they've got at the big bad, and—awesome!—they just took him out. There's just one problem: that just frees him from his cage of flesh to reveal his true form!

With Reveal True Form, your big bad isn't just one character. It's at least two characters that must be beaten sequentially, each one revealing new capabilities and stunts, higher skill ratings, fresh stress and consequence tracks, and even new "rule breaks."

If you want to gently ease into this, carry the consequences the big bad has already taken forward between forms, dismissing the mild ones and downgrading the moderate and severe ones by one step each.

Scale Things Up

Using the scale option from page 442, you could scale things up to let your big bad operate at a higher scale than the PCs. You could do this even if scaling isn't normally in play in your campaign—these rules need only apply when a big bad takes the field!

Solo Bonus

Players may enjoy a teamwork bonus, sure—but why not give your big bad a complementary solo bonus when they're the only one facing the heroes?

There are a few ways you could implement a solo bonus. You could use more than one of these, but be careful when combining them as they'll add up fast.

- The big bad gets a bonus to skill rolls that are equal to the group's maximum potential teamwork bonus (page 143) — the number of PCs acting against the big bad minus one (so a +2 vs. a group of 3, etc.). This bonus can't do better than double the big bad's affected skill, though, just as with PCs (or maybe you'll break that rule too).
- Whenever the boss takes a consequence, it clears ALL stress from a single attack. (i.e., using a Minor consequence to absorb a 4 stress).
- The big bad may reduce the stress of successful attacks by the number of opposing PCs divided by two, rounded up. If you're worried this will make the fight run too long, then hits reduced this way can't be reduced below 1.
- The big bad has amplified invokes. When paying to invoke an aspect, their bonus is equal to the number of foes they face. No such luck with free invokes, but this makes every fate point spent utterly terrifying.
- The big bad may suppress invokes. When facing two or more foes, the opposition's invokes only provide a +1 bonus or allow rerolls only, when used directly against the big bad. Optionally, the big bad might also remove the PCs' ability to stack free invokes.

CREATING A LIEUTENANT

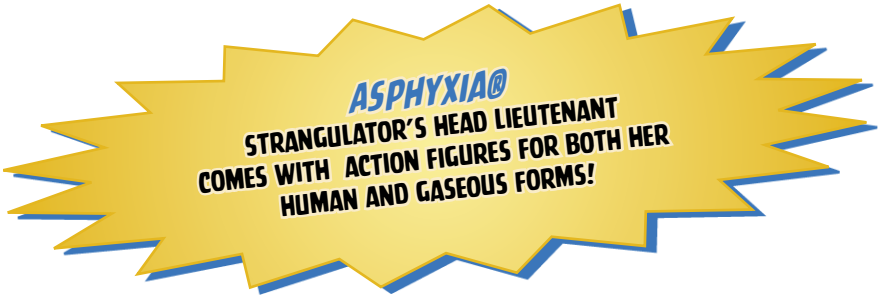
A boss cannot maintain control alone; they need subordinates to help them by necessity. The exact title will vary, but they are referred to in this document under the collective name as Lieutenants.

Lieutenants are recommended in most campaigns, in which defeating a Master might take multiple sessions—the players are likely to encounter a Lieutenant long before they encounter the final boss, and will be the first dramatic encounter the players have with the Master's legions. This way, the lieutenant can help set the tone.

Typically, a lieutenant and a boss can have many reasons to serve a Master, including:

- **Loyalty or Love:** personal devotion to the leader
- **Personal Gain:** money, status, prove their prowess
- **Shared Goals:** Similar goals/ideologies
- **Fear or Coercion:** held in check by fear/leverage

Reasons also make for great troubles for Lieutenants for the players to exploit. For example, a lieutenant with the aspect **I Love the Master and She Loves Me!** will be fiercely loyal at the start, but if the Champions can provide proof to them that the Master is a cold manipulator using the lieutenant, they might be able to turn them to their side.



MIXED MOTIVES

You can have all of the minions and lieutenants serving the Master share the same motivation, but, we do recommend varying them up. If one lieutenant is loyal to the Master's cause and a second lieutenant is a mercenary motivated by money, then it gives the Champions twice as many weaknesses to exploit. However, it also means it's that much harder to flip all of the lieutenants, ensuring you still have some opposition for the Champions.

If a particular motive was the Achilles' Heel last arc, avoid using that same motive in the next arc, to vary up play.

Here are tropes to consider when making your lieutenant.

The Starscream

A particularly fun lieutenant trope to use is "The Starscream," named after the ***Transformers*** villain. The Starscream is a sassy but useful minion overflowing with ambition and treachery; they would gladly mutiny against the Big Bad at the first sign of weakness. These make great potential allies for the heroes if they're willing to take the risk. Be careful, though, as the lieutenant has dreams of becoming a Master themselves!

The Elite Four

It's also important to vary the skills of the Lieutenants—if the Masters and everyone who serves them all have identical skills, then all of the fights are likely to feel the same. But a smart Master builds a crack team with various useful skills: the brute, the sniper, the cursemage, the shapechanging spy, etc. (We call this "Elite Four," but it can be any number).

LIEUTENANT STATS

Lieutenants are made in a similar fashion to Bosses, usually with their apex skill one step above the PCs' highest-rated skill, typically Superb (+5). For aspects they should have a High Concept and Trouble, and then additional aspects as appropriate. Lieutenants have 1-3 stunts that reveal their special abilities, how they complement the Master, or that make them particularly dangerous.

For creating stats for a weaker Lieutenant, see *Tanks* on page 354.

CREATING HENCHMEN

This section covers how to create minor NPCs: the tough tanks, the dangerous-but-fragile hitters, and the disposable fillers.

TANKS

Tanks exist to threaten. They draw the PCs' attention, hold it, and soak up punishment. They're not necessarily the hardest hitters, but leaving them to their own devices is dangerous. They get up in the Champions' faces and make them want to get rid of them. Tanks are your mini-bosses; they're decent opponents on their own, and they're meat shields when paired with the important or nasty enemies in the fight. The brute from "The Elite Four" above is usually a tank.

In a one-shot adventure, a tank might be the Lieutenant of a Master, the first or second-biggest Robeast in a herd, or the first Guardian blocking their way into a ruin.

Note: Tanks are called threats in the ***Fate Adversary Toolkit***.

Aspects

Tanks have a high concept and trouble. If a tank's particularly important, give them a third aspect. Emphasize their physical size, toughness, immovability, or stubbornness. Give them an Achilles' heel that the PCs can exploit.

> Example Troubles: **Weak Knees; Blinded with Rage; Obey Commands to the Letter.**

Skills

Set the tank's apex skill to one step above the PCs' highest-rated skill, typically Superb (+5). If you want a particularly tough tank, two steps above, i.e., starting at Fantastic (+6). Then, give your tank two more skills rated one step below the apex skill. If you want to define the tank further, give them three more skills rated one step below that.

A physical tank prioritizes Physique; they likely have Fight or Shoot in the middle. Skills like Athletics and Will are useful for getting out of the way or resisting mental or social attacks.

As an alternative, you can have the nimble dex tank, with high Athletics instead of Physique. However, make sure they still have the ability to figuratively throw their weight around and cause havoc, such as Judo Throws or telekinesis.

A social tank prioritizes Will, then some combination of Empathy, Rapport, Provoke, and Deceive. Lore is useful for creating advantages.

Stunts

Tanks need at least one stunt that they can use to make the PCs want to deal with them. A tough tank could also have a stunt that makes her tougher, giving her an Armor rating or extra stress boxes. Here are some examples of threatening stunts:

Grenadier: By spending a fate point, the NPC can use [Shoot/Fight] to make a zone attack against all opponents in a zone; can only target their zone or the next over.

Bodyguard: Designate a character, place, or object to guard. Whenever that thing is attacked, and the tank is in the same zone, they can spend a fate point to redirect the attack to the tank. The tank gains Armor:1 against this attack.

Underminer: The tank gains +2 to create advantages with Provoke by fomenting arguments that undermine the PCs or make them look foolish.

See page 361 for *Quick-and-Dirty Enemy Stunts*.

Stress and Consequences

Physical tanks have large physical stress tracks because of their high Physique, while social tanks have similarly large mental stress tracks because of their high Will.

In addition, all tanks have at least a mild consequence slot. Particularly tough ones also have a moderate slot.

Using Tanks

Tanks get right up in the PCs' faces. They don't let up and don't go easy. They constantly attack, relentlessly, making nuisances of themselves. When a tank gets taken out, the PCs should be relieved. Don't be cautious with your tanks—they exist to soak up punishment and have the chops to do so.

Put at least one tank into most fights. An easy fight has one, a standard fight has two or three, and a climactic encounter probably has four or five. Any conflict with a boss should have at least two tanks to take the heat off of the boss, and any fight with a hitter should have at least one tank to distract the PCs. You can adjust these numbers based on party size as well.

When you're describing tanks, play up their menace. The bodyguards are big and tough, brandishing nasty-looking weapons. The king's chamberlain brooks no-nonsense, does not tolerate fools, and is looking for an opportunity to get the rabble-rousing Champions tossed out of the palace. Tanks get in the way of the PCs' plans—they exist to thwart and impede. They're roadblocks. If you give a tank the keys to the locked door, they are literally an impediment to overcome.

HITTERS

Hitters are often easily overlooked, but they can strike with devastating effects. They don't necessarily hit hard every time, but under optimal circumstances, they can make the PCs hurt.

Hitters can dish it out but typically can't take it. Often, the PCs won't know that a hitter is a threat until it's done some damage, but once the PCs know about it, they should be able to take it down fairly quickly. Hitters are glass cannons.

The sniper from "The Elite Four" above is usually a hitter.

Aspects

Hitters have a high concept and a trouble aspect. If a hitter is particularly important, give them a third aspect. Emphasize how dangerous they are or why they're difficult to notice. Give them a weakness that points to some oversight, overconfidence, or other exploitable flaws.

Example Troubles: No One Will See Me Coming; Glass Jaw; You Can't Rush Perfection; Coward

Skills

Set the hitter's apex skill to one step above the PCs' highest-rated skill, typically Superb (+5). If you want a particularly dangerous hitter, two steps above, i.e., starting at Fantastic (+6). Then, give your hitter two more skills rated one step below the apex skill. If you want to define the hitter further, give them three more skills rated one step below that.

Prioritize skills that deal stress to the PCs. For physical hitters, Fight or Shoot are the most important. Other skills should focus on mobility or keeping attention elsewhere; Stealth, Deceive, and Athletics are all good choices. Provoke, Deceive, and Rapport could all be used to good effect for social hitters. Other important skills are Empathy, Notice, and Contacts. Don't give hitters skills like Physique or Will. If an enemy is both tough and hits really hard, it's a boss, not a hitter.

Stunts

At the very least, a hitter always has a stunt that confers Weapon:2 on their primary attack. If you want to make her particularly dangerous, give them a stunt that makes them harder to spot too. Another excellent type of stunt to give a hitter is a way to hit hard with a non-standard skill under the right circumstances; this way, the hitter can do their job but becomes less effective when confronted directly.

Here are some examples:

Lazbazooka: All Shoot attacks with the lazbazooka gain +2 to the attack roll. However, the hitter cannot fire again once they fire the lazbazooka until they spend an entire round doing nothing but reloading (count as "Full defense" action).

Sneak Attack: Provided the hitter hasn't been spotted by their target yet, the hitter can attack with Stealth instead of Fight/Shoot (pick one).

Portal Mage: The hitter can make themselves vanish from the scene entirely by spending a fate point. Then, at the end of any later turn, they can spend another fate point to make themself reappear anywhere in the scene and immediately attack.

Holo-Camo: I gain +2 to my Stealth; however, whenever I attack, I temporarily lose this stunt (until my next action).

Stress and Consequences

Most hitters will have the bare minimum stress track. If you want a hitter to be particularly important or nasty, give her a mild consequence slot. Otherwise, don't give her any consequence slots. Hitters show up, hit hard, and die off quickly.

Using Hitters

While tanks are all about relentless assault, using a hitter effectively is a game of patience and opportunity. At first, the PCs might not even clearly see a hitter in the scene. Keep your hitter unseen or unnoticed, maneuver her into position, and then strike without remorse. Don't be afraid to spend a fate point or two to make a hitter's attack count—they may not get a second chance. One option is to have them alternate between attacking and not-attacking (e.g., reloading, aiming). It will also force the players to think about timing and break the expectation of attacks every turn.

Once the PCs start focusing on your hitter, don't spend a lot of resources trying to protect them. Let the PCs feel awesome. Hitters are meant to be fragile, and protecting them isn't worth it, especially once they've pulled their trick off.

Don't use hitters in every conflict. If you put a hitter in a conflict, a PC will likely take a consequence. Putting two in a fight means you might put down some serious hurt. Three could mean that a PC gets taken out.

When you use hitters, put in other enemies to distract from the hitter. Tanks are perfect for this, and fillers can be good too. As for obstacles, a distraction or a block can make for good camouflage, too (see *Obstacles* below).

Utility Hitters

Hitters are also good for representing specialists working on completing an important task. These may include burglars making off with the crown jewels; runehackers breaking into a temple; Wolfbot scouts sent to Investigate hiding rebels; Runekeepers completing a dangerous ritual; and getaway drivers operating the hovertank. You have to stop them before they can finish! They are particularly useful tools when combined with *Challenges* (page 134), *Countdowns* (page 363), or *Distractions* (page 380). Alternatively, a cursemage utility hitter might throw hexes at the Champions; this is a great way to demonstrate to players how to use "create an advantage."

Utility hitters also make good friendly NPCs for escort missions. They may be very knowledgeable in their specific field, but will have no chance of staying alive without the Champions protecting them!

FILLERS

When you want to fill your scene with enemies, but you don't want the complexity of adding more hitters, tanks, or bosses, then **fillers** are what you need. Fillers are easy to run and keep track of, and they let the PCs feel like badasses as they take down hordes of bad guys.

Aspects

Give your filler enemy a name that encapsulates its function in the scene, like Robot Trooper, Crazed Velociraptor, or Flamethrower Turret. A filler's name is an aspect and the only aspect.

Skills

First, decide on your filler's quality: Average, Fair, or Good:

- An Average filler has one Average (+1) skill.
- A Fair filler has one Fair (+2) skill.
- A Good filler has one Good (+3) skill and one Average (+1) skill.

You can use skills from the normal Skill list or make up brand-new skills specific to your fillers. Robot Troopers might have Fair (+2) Lasers, while the Raptorborgs might have Good (+3) Claws & Fangs and Average (+1) Dodge. If a filler enemy ever does something that isn't covered by its skills, it rolls at Average (+1), Mediocre (+0) or automatically fails.

Stunts

Fillers usually don't need stunts. They exist to be simple, and stunts make them more complex than they need to be. You can, at your option, make them dangerous fillers, giving them Weapon:1, or use the EZ stunts from page 89 (this helps make identical Filler groups feel slightly different).

> Fillers are also good choices for Quick Resistance stunts, like making a Robot trooper immune to mental attacks; see page 361

Stress and Consequences

A filler has one 1-stress box per quality step—so a Good filler has three 1-stress boxes, for example. By default, fillers never have consequence slots, but you may choose to turn a stress box into a mild consequence in response to an emotional attack with lingering effects.

Optional Rule—Overkill: Fillers are easy to take out. As a general courtesy, if a player takes out a filler with stress to spare, you can apply the extra stress to another enemy filler of equal or lesser value nearby.

For more optional rules for Fillers, see *Advanced Filler Rules* on page 360.

Using Fillers

Fillers are there to be color. They fill out the ranks of the enemy team, but they're not particularly dangerous or durable. They also might serve as a minor obstacle in a non-conflict scene, such as a small group of guards that can be overcome with a single overcome roll.

Don't be afraid to drop a bunch of them into a fight, grouping them up to keep things simple and make them a little more threatening. Fillers are easy come, easy go; don't go out of your way to protect them. You can also put fillers in a support role, creating advantages that they pass to more powerful enemies. A group of goons laying down distracting covering fire can make the hitter sneaking up behind the PCs that much more dangerous by passing him a free invoke or two.

Mindless Henchmen

Umdaar encourages players to resolve situations without violence, using problem-solving and even conflict resolution to interact with the Umdaarians. However, RPGs can also be about escapism, and sometimes you can't beat the escapist fun of reckless violence!

To help this, we encourage GMs to seed their adventures with Mindless Henchmen—opponents that have neither mind nor soul. These aren't conscripted soldiers with loved ones at home, nor are they sentient Glowbots: these are the equivalent of brainless toasters programmed to kill.

Why have Mindless Henchmen? For characters who are good at fighting, it gives them a chance to cut loose. They don't have to hold back or pull their punches; they can get as destructive as they want without the complication of killing.

For non-violent characters, Mindless henchmen present the opposite problem: an opponent immune to charm or reason. These characters might have to take a backseat and concede that their violent teammates have a point: sometimes violence IS the answer!

Examples of mindless henchmen:

- Replitech robots (not Glowbots)
- Zombies and raised skeletons
- Crystal sentries defending a ruin
- Carnivorous Plants
- Awakened Statues

Mindless Henchmen often use *Quick Resistances* from page 361.

Advanced Filler Rules

Here are some optional rules for Fillers for when you want to add more complexity.

EASY K.O.

If a player uses overcome to get past a group of Fillers or creates an advantage to inhibit a filler, the GM alternatively may remove the Filler entirely.

> A Champion uses their powers to create a vine net over a pair of weak fillers. The GM COULD add an aspect for them and roll for them to break out every round, but it's a lot easier to say, "They're trapped for the battle," and have them taken out.

This works particularly well when the player succeeds with style or faces a much smaller threat, like a single Average (+1) filler.

GROUPING FILLERS

To make fillers easier to manage, you can group a number of them into a single enemy. A filler group has all of the skills that its fillers have. If the group has three or more individuals, they all gain a single +1 teamwork bonus on all relatively compatible skills, to a max of Great (+4). This group takes only one action each round, likely using the skills from the strongest member.

> A Raptorborg joins up with a Robot Trooper, so the group has:
>
> Good (+3) Claws & Fangs, Fair (+2) Lasers, and Average (+1) Dodge.
>
> Later, when a second Robot Trooper joins, the group's skills increase by +1.

GROUP STRESS

If you have multiple fillers with different stress amounts, you may combine the individual stress tracks of each filler in the group into a single track. Divide up the track to figure out when each filler in the group gets taken out, with weaker fillers on the left and stronger fillers on the right.

> The group of two robot enforcers (2 stress boxes) and a raptorborg (3 stress boxes) would have a stress track that looks like this:
>
> 1 1 – 1 1 – 1 1 1

When the group takes stress, start ticking off boxes on the left and move to the right until all the stress has been absorbed or the entire group has been taken out. Because the track is divided by each filler, you'll be able to tell when each filler gets taken out, letting you reduce the group's skills appropriately. When fillers are grouped, PCs can take out multiple fillers in one go.

QUICK-AND-DIRTY ENEMY STUNTS

If you need a stunt for an enemy quickly, pick one of these and call it a day.

Don't feel like your stunts have to be on the same level as a players' stunts. You're allowed to make them a little simpler or stronger for villains, particularly if the boss likes to work alone.

- When you attack with your apex skill, you get Weapon:2.
- When you defend with your apex skill, you get Armor:2.
- You can use your apex skill twice per session in place of any other skill.
- Once per session, you can attack everyone in a zone with your apex skill.

See page 89 for more EZ stunts to give your enemies a quick upgrade!

QUICK RESISTANCES

Compared to other Fate worlds, ***Umdaar*** is a little more generous with letting Champions use social skills like Rapport and Provoke to deal stress in physical conflicts. To balance this, it's good to occasionally throw in enemies resistant to certain types of attacks.

- **Animalistic:** The NPC is immune to any Rapport attacks, as well as any Provoke attacks that rely on dialogue or mental manipulation
- **Emotionless:** The NPC is immune to Rapport and Provoke attacks
- **Ethereal:** The NPC is immune to physical and kinetic-energy attacks

Quick Resistances are meant for weaker enemies who can be beaten easily with other skills. If adding to Bosses, we recommend reading the whole section on *Resistances* on page 369.

Quick Resistances stunts are handy but not always necessary. The rule of aspects and permissions means that an action is simply impossible if it doesn't make narrative sense.

> The players face a raging wildfire, and the GM decides to represent the Fire as a character with stats. It's naturally assumed that you can't deal stress to a fire by talking to it with Rapport (unless they're a fire elementalist); no Quick Resistance stunts are required to make it immune to conversations!

Rather, quick resistance stunts are useful in fringe cases (like animals, ghosts, or robots) in which it's not immediately clear if a specific skill would work.

CONSTRAINTS

Constraints aren't so much a type of adversary as they are a way to modify other adversaries. They make it more difficult or complex to deal with enemies or obstacles. You can use constraints to create urgency, make particular adversaries more threatening, or force the PCs to deal with an adversary in a way they otherwise wouldn't.

There are three types of constraints: **countdowns, limitations, and resistances**.

- **Countdowns** create urgency. The ruin will self-destruct in thirty seconds! The hover-stagecoach will go off the cliff in two exchanges! The ritual will finish in one hour! You decide what unit of time you'll use to create that urgency, but countdowns typically work in days, hours, minutes, or exchanges. The important thing is that there must be a consequence for the clock striking zero. It could be the arrival of more enemies or obstacles; someone's death, capture or transformation; or some sort of dramatic change to the status quo, making a new aspect.
- **Limitations** prevent the PCs from taking certain actions, make them less effective, or make them dangerous. Maybe the Champions are fighting in a Glowstone Reactor and firing off gunshots could be disastrous. Maybe the monster is a PC's brother transformed. Maybe the villain has a dead-man switch. Again, it's all about consequences that will happen if an action is taken.
- **Resistances** make other adversaries hard to handle in a particular way. The space-dragon's scales are impervious to mortal weaponry. The evil ambassador is protected by diplomatic immunity. The ruin's self-destruction device is so complex that it will almost certainly detonate it by disarming it using conventional means. Resistances force the PCs to vary their tactics to develop a Plan B. A really good resistance fuels the bulk of the session: because the quantum dragon's scales are immune to normal weaponry, we must go on a quest to find the one sword that will hurt it.

You don't have to use constraints at all, but they can add texture to an encounter or nuance to a villain. Note that adding constraints to an adversary can make that adversary a lot more difficult. There's advice on this in each constraint entry.

COUNTDOWNS

A countdown is a constraint that adds urgency to an adversary: deal with it now, or things get worse. Whether you're talking about a ticking bomb, a ritual near completion, a coach teetering on the edge of a suspension bridge, or a soldier with a com-device who's about to call in reinforcements, countdowns force the PCs to act quickly or face a worse outcome.

Countdowns have three components: a **countdown track**, one or more **triggers**, and an **outcome**.

The countdown track looks a lot like a stress track: it's a row of boxes that you mark from left to right. Every time you check off a box, the countdown gets closer to being over. When you mark the last box, the countdown ends, and the outcome happens, whatever it is.

A trigger is an event that marks a box on the countdown track. It can be as simple as "a minute/hour/day/exchange elapses" or as specific as "the evil villain takes a consequence or gets taken out."

You can give your countdown more than one trigger—perhaps the countdown proceeds at a predictable pace until something happens that accelerates it. If you want a specific series of events to set off the outcome, you could also give a different trigger to each box on the countdown track.

You can find some examples of countdowns attached to enemies and obstacles below.

Ruin Self-Destruct Device

Type: Obstacle
Opposition: Good (+3)

COUNTDOWN

☐☐☐☐ LITERALLY A COUNTDOWN
Trigger: An exchange elapses.
Trigger: Someone tries to disarm the device but fails.
Outcome: The ruin explodes!

IF THE RUIN EXPLODES, ARE WE ALL DEAD?

Not necessarily. You may choose to rule out character death at your table (see the *Saturday Morning Cartoon Dial* on page 424). Some alternatives:

- The explosion takes everyone out of action (your friends dig you out of the rubble later)
- Cause automatic stress to everyone in range
- Let the players succeed at a cost: they survive, only because the villain saved you at the last minute (you're captured!)
- Create an anomalous rip into the Phantom Realms—the next adventure is about getting back to your dimension!
- As a rare, tragic touch, you might have an NPC sacrifice themself to save the Champions.

Tigerbot Scout

Filler: Good (+3)

ASPECTS

Animal-shaped Replitech Robot Sentry; Avoids a Fair Fight

SKILLS

Good (+3): Investigate

Fair (+2): Sneak, Fight

STUNTS

Metal Armor: The scout has Armor:1 against small-arms fire and melee weapons.

Emotionless: The tigerbot is immune to Rapport and Provoke attacks

STRESS

1 1 1

CONSEQUENCES

2 **Mild (Optional):**

COUNTDOWN

☐ Summon Help

Trigger: The scout is attacked OR the Tigerbot detects an enemy.

Outcome: On the Scout's next action, it signals for help.

COUNTDOWN

☐☐☐☐ Reinforcements are Coming

Trigger (first box): The Scout can send off a signal.

Trigger (remaining boxes): One conflict round or one minute elapses in-game.

Outcome: Reinforcements arrive.

PLOT HOOK

The Champions need to capture a Tigerbot to learn the frequency of the Master's vidcom system. Capturing before it can send a distress signal would be ideal, but it's more important to take it out and run before reinforcements catch up!

Queen Mabi of the Blood Coast

Boss: Superb(+5)

ASPECTS

High Concept: Manta-Rayian Tech-Loving Master

Trouble: I'll Do It Myself!

Other Aspects: Respects Science and Violence; Fearsome Death Raygun; "I'll rule the ocean one day."; Loyal Bloodcoast Raiders

SKILLS

Superb (+5): Contacts

Great (+4): Will, Crafts

Good (+3): Provoke, Rapport, Shoot

Fair (+2): Deceive, Fight, Lore, Physique

Average (+1): Everything else

STUNTS

Manta Raygun: Queen's Shooting attacks have Weapon:2. If the target is in water, it grants +2 to the Shooting attack instead.

Contingency Plan: Whenever Queen Mabi takes a consequence, you can spend a fate point to remove her from the scene (i.e., in a puff of smoke or ink), replacing her with two tanks.

STRESS

Physical [1][1][1] [1]

Mental [1][1][1] [1][1][1]

CONSEQUENCES

[2] **Mild:**

[4] **Moderate:**

[6] **Severe:**

COUNTDOWN

☐☐☐☐ Device Activation

Trigger: A week passes

Trigger: Each time the Queen kidnaps a Runekeeper/Artihacker or steals a major component.

Outcome: I activate my brine-spray mind-control device to control everyone who lives near the ocean!

HOW LONG IS A "WEEK" IN-GAME?

A: That depends. Generally, one complete adventure in a single location, likely one to two sessions is a good default. Also consider having another week pass if the players are spending time in a session or in the postgame phase working on big projects, like repairing a community or researching an ancient mystery.

USING COUNTDOWNS

Countdowns are all about urgency. They force the PCs to deal with particular threats or escape them before things worsen. Use them sparingly; sometimes, you want the PCs to be able to deal with threats at their own pace so that they can highlight their competence. But when you want to put the screws to them, countdowns can help.

Countdowns are also useful for threatening PCs who are hard to threaten. If your PCs are incredibly efficient in every fight, give them a fight with a countdown or two that threatens to make their lives incredibly difficult. Or, better yet, give them two countdowns that are difficult to deal with simultaneously. Force them to choose.

Countdowns can also be strung together:

> The scout has two countdowns: sending a signal and reinforcements. If the Champions are discovered or reveal themselves, they have a single round to take out the scout. If they fail, the scout will start the second countdown: sending out a signal, forcing more enemies to come!
>
> If the players take all of the scouts out of action after it sends a signal, but before the reinforcements arrive, give the players an option:
>
> - If they choose to stand and fight the reinforcements, they can use extra rounds to prepare.
> - If they choose to run, treat it as a contest (see page 134).

You don't have to confine a countdown to a single scene.

> Queen Mabi has a countdown that would last multiple sessions. Each box represents a stage in her attack plan. Doing this adds both structure and urgency to your adventure or campaign, impressing upon the Champions that if they don't act, the villain will go ahead and realize her plans. Adding two or more campaign timers also forces the players to prioritize: are we investigating the rumbling Floating Volcanoes to the East or dealing with Mabi's abductions?

One word of caution: tracking many countdowns at once can be difficult, particularly if they all have different triggers. If your scene has three or four countdowns that all trigger at different times, you might forget to check off some of their boxes.

LIMITATIONS

A Limitation is a type of constraint that is a fictional element that alters how PCs deal with a particular threat.

- Maybe they can't just kill the were-allosaurus that's been terrorizing a small town because he's the son of one of the Champions and doesn't know what he's doing when he's a were-allosaurus.
- Maybe the scheming ambassador who's undermining your capital is protected from on high by powerful politicians and by diplomatic immunity, and the direct approach is untenable.
- Maybe the Glowstone reactor that's in meltdown is nearly impossible to repair because it vaporizes any organic material near it.

When creating a limitation, give it either an aspect or a fact. A fact is true: the reactor vaporizes organic material when it comes near. If you want to make a limitation more concrete and mechanical, use an aspect instead. Aspects are always true (page 117), just like facts, but you can invoke and compel them.

But be wary of giving something too many aspects. For most adversaries, you can just add the aspect and be fine. For adversaries that already have five aspects or are complex, you may want to replace an existing aspect with the limitation aspect.

WEAPON RATING IN LIMITATIONS

You can make a limitation dangerous by giving it a Weapon rating, which presents a constant threat the Champions must contend with. They look like "Weapon:X" where X is the stress they inflict when the Limitation aspect is compelled. In this way, you can create situation aspects that have hard mechanical consequences attached to their compels.

For example, if the Champions are battling on the edge of a pool filled with carnivorous telepathic fish, you might impose a limitation of Filled with Psyranha with Weapon:3. There's no roll involved with getting attacked by the psyranha; instead, entering the pool of water acts as a special sort of compel. In this case, you'd offer the player a fate point, and if they accept it—psyranha, damn your luck!—they'd take 3 stress.

A common place to find Limitations is in the dangerous Wildernexus. See more examples starting on page 195.

USING LIMITATIONS

Limitations don't outright forbid actions—they simply discourage them. Nothing is saying that the Champion can't kill her were-allosaurus son to stop the threat to the town, but she's unlikely to because she cares deeply about him and because he doesn't realize what he's doing.

When you add a limitation to an adversary, you're doing two things. First, you're creating an interesting wrinkle for the players. Limitations are best when you reveal them unexpectedly—they work well as surprise twists. Second, you're making that adversary more important to the story. A limitation forces the players to deal with a threat other than the most straightforward method. This approach means the players will likely have to spend more time dealing with the threat, making it more important in the fiction. They might spend a few extra exchanges taking out a particular bad guy, ensuring they remember that bad guy more. Or they might spend the entire adventure figuring out how to deal with something. Either way works.

Limitations like these are particularly good at shaping the adventure to match your group's focus:

- A Dignitary game might have an enemy protected by politics or diplomatic immunity, forcing Champions to use their words and look for proof.
- A Rebel game might have an enemy protected by a vast army. You can't just charge in headfirst. You have to use guerrilla tactics to keep yourself (and your neighbors) safe!
- A Pathfinder game is full of treacherous hazards, forcing the players to choose between success and security; do I use my lazer-blunderbuss, knowing it might start an avalanche?
- An Archaeonaut game is full of religious taboos. Yes, you could smash open the sacred artifact to see how it ticks, but what repercussions would you suffer?

Try not to use more than one or two limitations in an adventure. If too many issues need to be dealt with in atypical ways, you'll risk frustrating players with characters built for handling regular tasks. If you've got an Artihacker character, but every machine the PCs encounter is a Demiurge machine too advanced to comprehend, the Artihacker will feel pretty useless. If only one such un-hackable machine exists, though, the engineer gets to keep doing his thing, and that one machine becomes a focal point of the adventure.

RESISTANCES

Resistances are a type of constraint similar to limitations, except they effectively forbid a particular course of action.

- The quantum dragon is immune to the weapons of mortals, so you can't fight it in physical combat.
- The Sky Elemental, awoken from its millennia-long slumber, does not understand the modern language, so you cannot reason with it.
- The castle walls surrounding the Slimeking are unnaturally smooth and slick, so you cannot climb it.

Where limitations encourage the PCs to deal with an adversary in a new way, resistances force such an approach. There is, however, always a chink in the armor, embodied in the resistance's two parts: its lock and key.

The resistance's lock is an aspect that states the adversary's immunity. Aspects are always true, so you don't have to spend fate points to make the lock affect the story. If the PCs attack the dragon with their swords, it's **Immune to Mortal Weaponry** means they have no chance of hurting it.

The key is the one thing that can bypass the lock, allowing the PCs to deal with the adversary in the way they want to. The key can be an aspect, an extra, another character, another adversary, or just a fictional element. It varies by adversary and by resistance.

Here are some examples:

The Quantum Dragon

Lock: **Immune to Mortal Weaponry**

Key: The Atomcleaver, a glaive weapon created by smith goddess Se'ela, can harm the dragon.

The Elemental

Lock: **Doesn't Understand Your Modern Communication**

Key: Tedra, The Speaking Bristlecone Pine, is the only living being old enough to speak the ancient language. (See page 154 for more on Tedra).

The Walls of Castle Slime

Lock: **Unnaturally Smooth, Can't Be Climbed**

Key: If you can get a device that'll vibrate at the right harmonic frequency, you can walk right through the slime wall.

The Loyal Lieutenant

Lock: **My Master Loves Me**

Key: The Lieutenant cannot be convinced to surrender or change sides unless you can prove their Master is lying to them or planning to betray them.

USING RESISTANCES

One danger of using a resistance is that it is, effectively, a roadblock. A limitation encourages the players to think creatively, while a resistance forces them to find another way or find the one thing that lets them address the problem directly. This means two things:

- First, never have more than one resistance in play at a time unless you have a very good reason. Resistances can frustrate players even more than limitations do, so don't overuse them.
- Second, unless the players decide to give up on addressing the adversary, they'll likely need to go on an adventure, or at least a series of scenes, to get the key to the adversary's lock.

Resistances can be good adventure hooks. A quantum dragon threatening the village is an easy way to get the PCs to buy in, but if you want the Champions to visit the other side of the world, sending them off on an adventure there to get the key to the dragon's lock can be a sneaky way to do it and can add some urgency to boot.

MAKING RESISTANCES FEEL FAIR

The first time resistance prevents a player's attack, it can feel like they've been cheated. To ease this, we recommend giving the player who discovered it, and wasted their action, a fate point, as if it were a compel.

CONDITIONAL RESISTANCES

These provide perpetual protection but with a simple, easy-to-meet key. These are recommended for tanks and Lieutenants.

Perfect Defense: The NPC is immune to stress from any attacks unless the attacker invoked an aspect to aid in the attack.

Shielded: While the Forcefield Rune-Generator is operational, the NPC cannot take any physical stress. Another NPC character represents the generator, or with a challenge or contest immunity. See page 350.

Cocky: The NPC is immune to stress from mental attacks. This resistance only works until they have taken either three or more points of physical stress or have taken a consequence.

Fearless: The NPC is immune to all stress from Provoke attacks, so long as no one has uncovered or exploited their secret fear.

Dedicated: The NPC is immune to all stress from Rapport attacks, so long as no one has uncovered or exploited their secret desire.

PAID RESISTANCES

Paid resistances give NPCs immunity at cost. By paying a fate point, the NPC can ignore all stress of a certain type. This encourages the players to try different methods, but still rewards players who persist—after all, the GM's fate pool is limited!

Resolute: Whenever the NPC is attacked with Rapport or Provoke, they may pay a fate point to ignore all stress.

Telekinesis Wall: Whenever the NPC is hit with a physical attack, they may pay a fate point to ignore all stress.

Runic Ward: Whenever the NPC is hit with a magical attack, they may pay a fate point to ignore all stress.

NIGH-INVULNERABILITIES

These work similar to Paid Resistances in that they prevent damage, but let some slip through. We recommend using Nigh-Invulnerabilities stunts infrequently, and never have an NPC be nigh-invulnerable to physical AND mental stress at the same time.

They are recommended for slowing down a player's attack long enough for something interesting to happen. For example, a Champion could punch a doomsday device as it counts down, provoking an angry ruin guardian.

Nigh-Unshakable: The NPC ignores all but one stress whenever they are attacked with Rapport or Provoke.

Nigh-Invincible: The NPC ignores all but one stress whenever they are hit with a physical attack.

Nigh-Invulnerabilities also lets you flip the script on the challenge or contest immunity (see page 350). Perhaps the "support" characters are doing all of the fighting using Rapport, Magic, and Will to hold off a horde of photon-phantoms. At the same time, the fighters attempt to destroy a nigh-invisible Cursed Menhir using the stress to mark successes.

USING CHALLENGE OR CONTEST IMMUNITY WITH RESISTANCES

You can design a resistance by combining a key with challenge or contest immunity (page 350), a "rule-breaker" for bosses.

The challenging part of it shouldn't be too easy. Generally, three rounds at Good (+4) opposition for each brainy team member is a good place to start. Or two rounds each if the key removes the resistance for a strong opponent, rather than eliminating the opponent.

Challenge or contest immunity is a great way to keep "support" Champions, such as Artihackers, Runekeepers, and ambassadors involved in a conflict while playing to their strengths.

PLOT SEED: THE OPEN-ENDED KEY

Resistances work great in a three-act structure adventure, particularly if you have Champions that focus on research and problem-solving.

- **Act I:** Players encounter a Boss villain who is immune; the cocky villain leaves the conflict early without killing the Champions, proving their superiority.
- **Act II:** The Players discover a possible Key (e.g., a ritual, a machine to build or deactivate). They must spend one or two scenes overcoming obstacles to get the necessary components or knowledge.
- **Act III:** The boss and the heroes meet once more, with the problem-solvers completing a challenge to assemble the key while the others defend them (see *Challenge or Contest Immunity* on page 350).

The best part is: it doesn't matter WHAT the secret key is in Act II, so long as it's difficult to acquire. Let the players suggest ways they could overcome the resistance and provide them a challenge (and a change of scenery) to find it.

> In Act 1 the GM introduced a kaiju-sized ruin Elemental that rampaged through the village; the Champions fought it and learned of its resistance to all damage. After the scene, the GM asks for their next step. (If the players are out of ideas, the GM is ready to introduce an NPC to steer them to a magical axe, capable of slaying the elemental, located in a heavily trapped ruin.)
>
> **GM:** Your weapons had no effect on the creature. What do you want to do now?.
>
> **Player:** I don't think we should try to hurt it. I'm a druid with a high Lore; maybe I've heard of some spell that can put it to sleep?
>
> **GM:** Why you have! There's a magical grimoire that might contain such a spell. Sadly, it's in a heavily-trapped ruin in the Dread Domains.
>
> Thus, the GM tailors the Key, and the challenges of Act II, to match the players.

OBSTACLES

Unlike enemies, obstacles can't be attacked directly. Instead, they must be avoided, circumvented, or dealt with. They always have skills and aspects and never have stunts, stress, or consequences. Obstacles can't be punched into submission; they must be endured or avoided.

There are four types of obstacles:

- **Hazards** hurt the players or threaten to do so—fire jets, spinning fan blades, or bombs that might explode at any second. A hazard has a skill and an aspect that define its purpose.
- **Blocks** get in the PCs' way. They can do damage, but mostly they deny access. A steel door with a complex keypad, a sophisticated AI counter-hacking measure, or a magical force field. A block has a skill and an aspect that define its purpose.
- **Barricades** are the same as blocks, except that they have a stress track (like an NPC). These represent tough but not indestructible obstacles, like hedge walls, wooden doors, or supercomputers. A barricade has a skill and an aspect that define its purpose.
- **Distractions** exist to make the PCs think about what they need to accomplish in a scene. Distractions give them a difficult choice: the villain is getting away, but there's a bus full of innocent civilians about to go off the cliff! Distractions don't always have stats. When they do, it's typically just an aspect and a roll against passive opposition. Distractions are more about the narrative challenge than the mechanical challenge.

Obstacles are a perfect fit for Wildernexuses and ruins; they feel different from fights, and are great at representing dangerous environmental hazards and ancient booby traps.

WHY USE OBSTACLES?

The defining quality of enemies is that they can be attacked and taken out. By contrast, the defining quality of obstacles is that they cannot. Obstacles make scenes demonstrably more difficult on PCs, but they cannot simply fight them. Obstacles must be circumvented, endured, or rendered irrelevant.

While most obstacles are features of the environment, some might be characters that can't be taken out using conventional methods. The centikraken might be a boss, but it might easily be a hazard obstacle. The animated statue keeping you from getting to the Warlock Master might be a threat, but it could also be a block or a distraction. It all depends on the adversary's function in the scene and how PCs must deal with it.

In general, obstacles don't appear in every scene. They serve to accent enemies in the scene, to make them more threatening or memorable, but overuse of obstacles can be frustrating to the PCs, particularly those focused on combat. You can use them to give less combative PCs something to do during a fight.

HAZARDS

If an obstacle can attack the PCs, it's a hazard. Fire jets, rolling boulders, or a sniper too far away to be dealt with directly—are all hazards. Every hazard has a name, a skill rating, and a Weapon rating of 1 to 4.

The hazard's name is both a skill and an aspect; that is, the name defines what the hazard can do, and its skill rating defines how good it is at doing that, but the name can also be invoked or compelled like any aspect. Generally speaking, a hazard's skill rating should be at least as high as the PCs' highest skill rating, if not a little bit higher.

Here are some examples:

- Great (+4) **Magical-Missile Turret**, Weapon:3
- Fantastic (+6) **Whirling Spike Apparatus**, Weapon:2
- Superb (+5) **Distant Laser-Sniper**, Weapon:4

A hazard acts in the initiative like the PCs and their enemies do. On its turn, a hazard acts accordingly and rolls with its rating each exchange. If it attacks and succeeds, add its Weapon rating to its shifts. Hazards can attack or create advantages; they can't be attacked, and they don't overcome obstacles.

If players want to overcome or create an advantage against a hazard, they'll face passive opposition equal to the hazard's rating.

> Joan is near the window, and there's a **Distant Laser-Sniper** out there, a hazard with a Superb (+5) rating and Weapon:4. At the beginning of the conflict, the GM decides the sniper goes first since it has the element of surprise. Now it attacks Joan, rolling an Epic (+6) result! That's a tough attack to defend against, and if Joan can't, the sniper's Weapon:4 will deal a lot of stress to her.

WHICH WEAPON RATING?

Which Weapon rating you choose depends on how lethal you want to make your hazard. A hazard with both a very high skill rating and Weapon rating will likely take out a Champion or two. You could also make a hazard with a lower skill rating but a high Weapon rating, making for something that doesn't hit often but hits hard when it does. Reversing makes for a hazard that hits frequently but doesn't do much damage—more of a nuisance than a hazard, but that might be what you want!

- Fair (+2) **Falling Boulders**, Weapon:5
- Superb (+5) **Annoying Piranhabees**, Weapon:1

USING HAZARDS

Hazards, like enemies, can attack the PCs, and they're very simple to run, so you might be tempted to use them often. That's not necessarily a bad instinct, but keep in mind that hazards can't be attacked or taken out, while enemies can. A hazard might stay in play for the entire scene, continually causing the PCs stress that they can't mitigate effectively. There are a few ways you can offset this, should you wish to.

First, you could make a hazard situational. The **Magic-Missile Turret** will attack, but only when the Champions are in the hallway. The **Lone Lazer-Sniper** will try to pick people off, but there's a lot of cover that can confound her sightlines. Giving the PCs actions they can take to avoid being attacked by hazards can make for interesting, complex tactical scenes, particularly when the PCs must leave their safe spots to accomplish their goals. Difficult decisions can be a lot of fun.

Second, the Champions may find a way to overcome the hazard. Maybe they can shut off the **Magic Missile Turret** by getting to the control panel. Perhaps that **Whirling Spike Apparatus** will stop if they jam a giant piece of metal in it. To disable a hazard, you must first take a risk, putting yourself (or someone else) in some danger, and then roll an overcome action against passive opposition equal to the hazard's rating. So, you have to run down the hallway guarded by the missile turret to get to the control panel you can use to shut them off, or you have to get dangerously close to the whirling spikes to jam the hunk of metal into the apparatus.

Third, you could let the PCs turn a hazard into an enemy under the right circumstances—this will require taking risk and time or an overcome roll. Maybe the PCs want to blow up that **Magic-Missile Turret**, but the turret is behind a metal shield. Hacking a console to disable the shield—a console in the hallway it's firing on—could transform the **Missile Turret** from a hazard into an enemy, letting the PCs attack it. If a PC is willing to run right at that **Distant Lazer-Sniper**, spending an exchange and drawing her fire, he could attack her in single combat as a hitter rather than a hazard. This is similar to simply disabling a hazard but requires the PCs to take an extra step. It can be more exciting, but it takes more time and effort on the PCs' part.

BLOCKS

Whereas hazards exist to hurt the PCs, blocks prevent them from doing things they want to do. Blocks can cause stress. The chief difference between blocks and hazards is that blocks don't take actions, while hazards do. Blocks provide passive opposition in certain circumstances and can threaten or cause harm if not heeded.

Like hazards, blocks have a name and a skill rating, and the name is both a skill and an aspect. Unlike hazards, a block's skill rating shouldn't be much higher than one step above the PCs' highest skill rating—otherwise, things can get frustrating quickly. A block can have a Weapon rating as high as 4, but it doesn't need one. Here are some examples:

- Fair (+2) **Ironspider Metal Web**
- Good (+3) **Vat of Acid**, Weapon:4
- Great (+4) **Animate Statue**, Weapon:1

Blocks only come into play under specific circumstances. **A Vat of Acid** only matters when someone tries to cross it or gets thrown into it. An **Ironspider Metal Web** only affects someone who tries to get past it. The **Animate Statue** only prevents entry into a specific room.

Blocks don't attack and don't have a turn in the initiative order. Instead, whenever a block interferes with someone's action, they'll have to roll against the block's rating as passive opposition. If the block can't cause harm, like if it's an **Ironspider Metal Web**, it prevents the PC from taking the action they wanted to. If it can cause harm—like if it's a **Vat of Acid**—and the PC fails to overcome the block, the PC takes a hit as if the block attacked the PC, and the PC failed to defend by the same margin by which it failed to overcome the block.

> Meriander the Merborg attempts to use Athletics to overcome the **Vat of Acid** by jumping over it. Meriander rolls badly, getting a total result of only Average (+1) effort, which is lower than the Acid's passive difficulty of Good (+3)—a failure! If Meriander's player doesn't invoke an aspect to save, she'll fall into the acid, using her roll result as a Defend against acid's difficulty. In this case the difference between her roll (+1) and the acid's rating (+3) is two shifts of stress pulse four from the Weapon:4, for a total of six stress!

Also, characters can try to force someone into a block as an attack. If you do this, you'll roll to attack as normal, but add a Weapon rating equal to half the block's Weapon rating (rounded down, minimum 1). So, anyone trying to cross the Vat of Acid would need to beat Good (+3) opposition. If someone tried to force you into the acid, they'd attack you with Physique and, if they succeeded, add Weapon:2.

Finally, depending on the situation some blocks can be used as cover or as armor. For example, you can't hide behind a **Lagoon of Acid**, and an **Ironspider Metal Web** won't stop a bullet (too porous).

But that **Ironspider Metal Web** effectively protects against a wooden club, probably preventing the attack altogether. And if the evil wizard is hiding behind the **Animate Statue**, it might soak up some damage.

When using a block as cover, decide whether it mitigates or negates the attack. If it negates it, the attack simply isn't possible. If it mitigates it, the defender gets an Armor rating equal to half the block's skill rating (rounded down, to a minimum of 1). So, if the evil wizard used the **Animate Statue** as cover, he'd get Armor:2.

USING BLOCKS

Blocks make it harder for PCs to take certain actions, so they can be frustrating if you overuse them. But they can also force the PCs to think creatively or figure out how to use the blocks to their advantage.

Sometimes, a block is what you want, and they're pretty simple to use. If your players are getting frustrated with a particular block, you can give them the option to disable it.

REMOVING BLOCKS

To disable a block and remove it from the scene, you must take a risk, put yourself (or someone else) in danger, and make an overcome roll. The overcome roll is against passive opposition rated two steps higher than the block's rating.

> Meriander wants to remove the threat of falling into the Good (+3) **Vat of Acid**, so she decides to try to drop the vat's lid down on it. "You'll have to scramble over the vat to get to the lid," says the GM. "Give me a Superb (+5) Athletics roll. If you fail, you're going to fall in."
>
> **Tan'naT Two Souls** is facing down a Great (+4) **Animate Statue**, an enemy they can't seem to damage, but that has no problem attacking them. They need to get rid of it. They know that etching a rune in the statue's forehead might disable it, but it requires getting pretty close. "Okay," says the GM. "Give me a Fantastic (+6) Fight roll to get close enough to etch the rune without getting clobbered."

GETTING CEREBRAL

Blocks don't have to be literal. They can represent mental or social blocks instead, where failing to overcome them may result in mental stress.

> A dream-elementalist attempts to gather intel from a sleeping lieutenant. However, the lieutenant has experience with mental magic too! Before the Champion can get the info, they must overcome a block: Great (+4) Mental Barrier, Weapon:1.
>
> The mood at the Embassy Ball has turned against the Champions in response to their recent social gaffs. If the Champions are going to be allowed into the Treaty Room, they must overcome the block Good (+3) Chilly Reception, Weapon:2.

PLAYER-CREATED BLOCKS

Players won't typically create blocks during play, but they may with certain stunts.

> **Earthen Wall:** As an earth elementalist, I may use Crafts to create an advantage by shaping an earthen wall that's treated as a block with difficulty Fair (+2). If I succeed with style, treat the block as difficulty Great (+4) instead.

BARRICADES

In ***Umdaar***, we also recommend adding a new subtype of block: a **barricade**. Treat this as a block, with a few differences:

- They have a stress track, and can be attacked (as an alternative to being overcome).
- Some barricades also have a defense rating which may be higher or lower than their overcome difficulty.

Barricades are handy with small parties, allowing players with attack stunts to still help out. Barricades work best in conflicts (when used along with real threats), providing obstacles that will last a round or two.

PICK YOUR BATTLES

Barricades are sometimes useful when a player, who might be new to Fate, insists on using attack and their attack stunts to get rid of an obstacle, despite your suggestions to use overcome. Sure, you COULD spend precious time repeating the mechanics of Fate and how you don't use the attack action outside of conflicts, but sometimes it's easier to avoid an argument, add a stress track onto the block, and get back to the fun.

Using Barricades

Barricades are likely to be used less frequently than blocks, as most blocks can do what barricades do just as well but are simpler. Still, there are a few instances when barricades might be useful:

- For a player stunt that creates a small, Fair (+2) barricade. (e.g., an Ice Wall spell).
- It lets the GM differentiate or combine overcome and attack actions as necessary (e.g., letting a puncher and hacker measure successes together).
- When a barricade has the potential to become an NPC (e.g., a statue that becomes possessed). This also works if a player makes a multiple-target attack against a character and a block (e.g., Throws a bomb to blow up a short wall and the minion behind it). For more on multiple targets, see page 441.

Locked Door

BARRICADE

Difficulty: Good (+3) to pick the lock
Defense: Superb (+5)
Armor:2
Stress: 1 1 1

Alarmed Jewel Case

BARRICADE

Difficulty: Great (+4) to deactivate the alarm
Defense: Fair (+2)
Stress: 1
Trigger: A failed attempt to use overcome to burgle the case will trigger the alarm. A failed OR successful attack will always trigger the alarm.

Doomsday Device

BARRICADE

Difficulty: Fantastic (+6) to disable the device
Defense: Good (+4)
Armor:1
Stress: 1 1 1 1

COUNTDOWN

☐☐☐☐☐
Trigger: An exchange elapses.
Trigger: Someone attempts to attack the Device and fails.
Outcome: The weapon explodes, harming everyone in the radius.

DISTRACTIONS

Where hazards attack the PCs directly and blocks prevent them from taking certain actions, distractions force the PCs to figure out their priorities. Of the obstacles, distractions are often the least mechanically defined. They also don't necessarily make the scene mechanically harder. Rather, they present the PCs with difficult decisions.

Here are the distraction's parts:

- A distraction's name is a brief, punchy representation of what it is. It can be an aspect if that makes sense.
- A distraction's choice is a simple question that codifies its decision to the PCs.
- A distraction's repercussion happens to the PCs if they don't deal with the distraction. Some distractions might have multiple repercussions.
- A distraction's opposition is passive opposition against PCs rolling to deal with it. Not every distraction needs to provide an opposition.

There are a few simple ways to structure a distraction:

COUNTERHAZARDS

Counterhazards are Threats to other things the Champions care about (e.g., allies, resources, friends, hometowns, and the like). These might be direct threats like a raider attack while you're exploring that ruin, but they're usually more possibilities. Do you leave the town exposed to raider attacks to go explore the ruins?. These sorts of decisions are often tied directly to the stakes and hard choices because the stakes make one course of action worthwhile over the other.

Sinister Ritual

COUNTERHAZARD

Choice: Do you deal with the enemies attacking you, or do you stop the ritual?

Repercussion: The cultists complete the ritual and summon the vile demon.

Hovercoach Full of Orphans

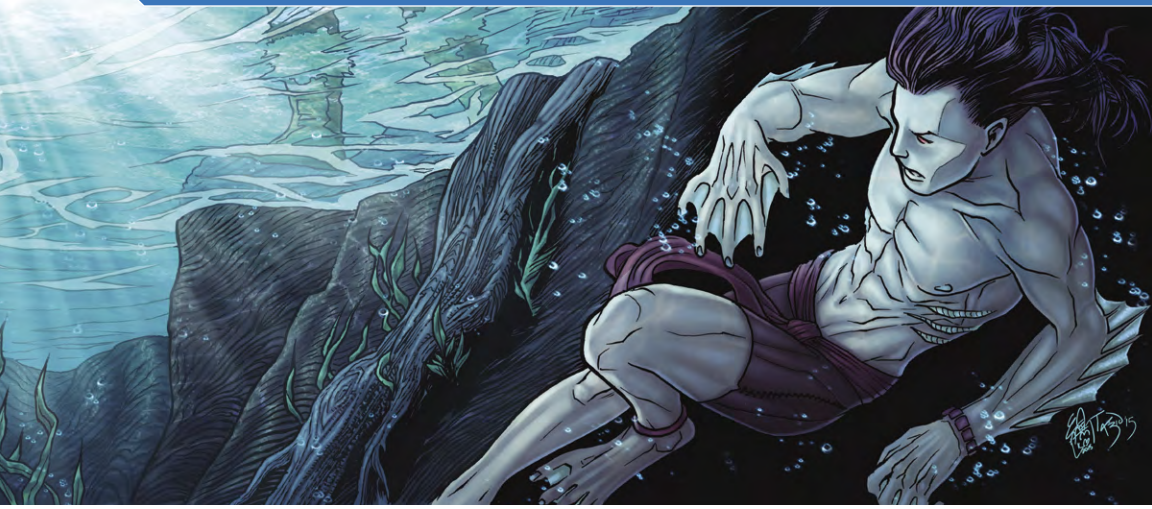
COUNTERHAZARD

Opposition: Good (+3)

Choice: Will the coach plunge off the bridge?

Repercussion: All of the orphans on the coach die if you leave them.

Repercussion: You save them, but the villain gets away!



OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities, on the other hand, are the quintessential shiny objects. You could explore the ruin, but the thousand-year alchemist has been spotted in the next town. If you don't go now, they may be gone before you get there. What to do? In a delightful combination, opportunities are paradoxically generous and unkind of the GM.

The Glittering Gem

OPPORTUNITY

Choice: Will you take the gem from the pedestal?

Repercussion: You don't get the gem, which is incredibly valuable.

Repercussion: You activate the traps in the temple when you take the gem.

MYSTERIES

Finally, **Mysteries** round this out with the allure of the unknown. Many distractions give the players reasonably clear information to make their decisions, but sometimes life is not so simple. A mystery might be a counterhazard or an opportunity, but there's not enough information to be sure. The distraction is, of course, to see if they want to go find out more.

The Lever

MYSTERY

Choice: A lever materializes in the middle of a fight in a ruin. Will you throw the switch? Will it summon guardians to aid the user? Reveal the ruin's secret? Activate the self-destruct?

Repercussion: If you leave it alone, you risk missing vital information or the enemy exploiting it first, thus gaining guardians to help them.

Repercussion: You activate the traps in the temple and summon guardians that attack everyone when you pull the lever.

USING DISTRACTIONS

Distractions are a great way to put more pressure on a scene. If you're afraid the PCs will deal handily with a fight you've got in store, adding a distraction or two can force them to decide whether it's more important to trounce the bad guys or deal with the distractions.

Dealing with a distraction should always have a clear benefit or, failing that, not dealing with a distraction should always have a clear consequence. You don't have to let the PCs know about any negative outcomes dealing with the distraction.

Distractions are why you shouldn't do something and you should be doing something else. They're usually some form of opportunity-cost as they represent the price of the hero's chosen action.

Unlike other hazards, the GM can be pretty free with distractions. After all, as soon as the players choose to pursue a particular distraction, that is now the game, and the previous idea is now the distraction! Distractions are also opportunities.

The one thing to be careful about is that distractions can paralyze some groups, especially when the opportunity costs are particularly painful. This isn't automatically a bad thing: if the decisions are hard, players tend to be invested in making them. It only becomes an issue if the players can't move forward. To that end, keep a generous spirit—remember that the heart of much heroic fiction is presenting a hero with an either-or choice and for them finding a way to do both. Your goal is to make choices meaningful, not to police them for mandatory fairness.

It's also worth noting that distractions can turn into pressure under certain circumstances. If the players opt to rescue the dashing prince while letting the mechashark rampage through town, the damage the mechashark does may itself become a countdown to track how long we have before the whole town is destroyed. This is the best kind of pressure because it's rooted in the player's choices.

Not all choices require life or death stakes. If the players are forced between "Explore the drumming sound from out in the darkness" or "Keep to your promise to Captain Nam to help guard the walls," and you pick the former, it doesn't mean Captain Nam will die horribly. However, she might get hurt in the nightly raid, or worse, she might feel betrayed and find her friendship and trust in you starting to dwindle. Better work hard to repair it!

ENVIRONMENTS

In Fate, the environment can often play as big a role as the pack of lazer-wolves or trio of robot soldiers you're fighting. The enemies in a scene are the most obvious, active opposition to your goals. Still, a conflict in a dark warehouse is different from a conflict on the median of a busy marketplace, and both of those situations are, in turn, very different from a tense negotiation in the Queen's Court.

Fate uses zones (see page 131) to divide up conflicts and scenes. Each zone represents a discernable part of the location, for instance the ballroom in a manor or the memory of a first kiss when exploring the dreamscape of fallen Companion trapped in eternal slumber.

Here are a few easy tricks to give zones both mechanical and narrative importance and make your players sit up and take notice of their environment. These will help the come alive!

MAKE EACH ZONE COUNT

When setting up a conflict, it's tempting to think of the physical space and divide up every bit of it into zones. Suppose you're planning a fight in a Master's weapon factory. In that case, it might seem obvious to make three or four zones on the first floor, another few on the upper floor, a zone or two to represent control rooms, and a couple of zones to represent streets and alleys outside, and leave it at that. That will divide the space up logically, but you'll find many zones won't get used, leaving the factory to feel a lot like the village green the PCs fought in during the last session, just with slightly different window dressing. Instead, consider something like this:

- One zone for the general floor space in the middle of the factory. This zone has lots of Crates for cover.
- A zone for the area near some **Industrial Equipment**. The equipment becomes a block if switched on: Great (+4) **Mashing Gears** with Weapon:2.
- There is a zone near the windows where the lazer-snipers surrounding the building can see PCs. The snipers are a hazard: Superb (+5) **Lazer-Snipers** with Weapon:3.
- A zone up on the **Precarious Catwalks**. The fall from these catwalks is a limitation with Weapon:2.
- There is a zone for the area near the **Assembly line**, where captives are forced to work. Henchmen could use them as human shields (a narrative limitation). If liberated and motivated, they could be becoming a block or hazard for the enemy.

And that's all you need. If people go outside or into a control room, that's fine—you can improvise a zone that doesn't have much special about it. Or, you can apply the effects of another zone to it. For example, the snipers would likely have a clear line of sight to anyone outside. The trick is to develop three to five zones, each with narrative importance. If you can't think of something interesting about a particular zone, don't bother including it or mentioning it in your description. It's not a place where the story's likely to go.

TYING GAME ELEMENTS TO ZONES

The previous example illustrates how to do this, but it's important to realize that you've been doing it simply by putting enemies in zones. The foreman is over here, by the tables full of Replitech rifles. His henchmen are spaced around the room, guarding the exits. So on and so forth. All you have to do is take that kind of thinking and apply it to all the other stuff you can put in a scene. Ensure that there's an aspect, an obstacle, or a constraint associated with each zone. Also, make sure there's a reason to interact with or avoid each zone, that something interesting can happen in each one.

OFFER ZONE ASPECTS WITH FREE INVOKES

If you distribute aspects around your zones, you might give the players some free invokes on these aspects, encouraging them to interact with their environment. Here are a few ways to do it:

- Give the PCs, collectively, one free invoke on an environmental aspect in each zone. After using this free invoke, they can continue to invoke environmental aspects in that zone by spending fate points as usual.
- Give each PC two free invokes on environmental aspects only.
- Give each PC one free invoke on each environmental aspect, after which they must invoke it by spending fate points or advantages.

Option one makes the PCs compete for the free invokes, which can create a sense of urgency—or to increase it further, allow the free invoke for the first PC or NPC. The Champions will rush to use those invokes so that the environment will get a lot of attention early in the conflict. By encouraging this kind of play early, you'll help the players to continue interacting with the environment throughout the fight. (This is great for Rebel banner games).

Option two gives the PCs much more flexibility: they get to choose which elements to interact with in the environment. This method doesn't add any urgency, though, and it effectively gives each PC two more fate points to play with, which can skew their power to the high side. (This is great for experienced Champions).

Option three is the most generous, will make for a significantly easier fight, and is best for groups that just aren't in the habit of paying attention to their environment. Once the PCs get used to interacting with their environment, consider scaling back to one of the other options. (This is great for starting Pathfinders).

TYPES OF ZONES

It's easy to think of zones as discrete physical spaces, but they don't have to be. They can be fluid, movable, or even conceptual. A zone is, at its core, a mechanical way to represent fictional positioning. As long as you're accomplishing that, you can bend the nature of a zone in many directions.

Relative Zones

You might define zones relative to another zone or to each other rather than tying them to specific places. This works well in a chase scene. The characters are constantly moving throughout the city, never staying in one physical space for very long. In a case like this, you might have the following zones:

- Near your quarry
- Within sight of your quarry
- Out of sight of your quarry
- Above your quarry
- Below your quarry
- Falling behind

Moving from zone to zone might require rolls, with attacks representing trying to catch up with your quarry and stress representing becoming exhausted and being left behind.

OCCUPYING MULTIPLE ZONES AT ONCE

It might seem a little counterintuitive, but there's nothing to say you can't be in multiple zones at the same time, if the fiction allows it. In the chase scene mentioned earlier, you might be running on the rooftops while your quarry is in the streets below. This might mean you're both above your quarry and within sight of your quarry, gaining whatever benefits and disadvantages come with each zone.

Mobile Zones

You might have an environment primarily of static zones that represent physical spaces but have one or two zones that can move around. Perhaps a crane is moving around wildly, or you're navigating a dark cavern while huddled around a lantern that radiates light—both the crane and lantern could be mobile zones. Most importantly, you'll want to keep track of where the mobile zone is relative to the other zones. The easiest way to do this is to let the mobile zone occupy another zone at any given time, allowing people to occupy multiple zones at once.

Conceptual Zones

Zones don't have to represent physical space; some might represent conceptual states of being. In a darkened cavern, you might have a zone representing being in the shadows. Because the cave is dark, this zone can exist pretty much anywhere, provided you're sticking to pools of shadow and not calling attention to yourself. This trick can be an easy way to keep track of who's hidden and who's not, or who's in the emperor's good graces and who's not.

Conceptual zones work well during social conflicts, where physical positioning is less important. Suppose your PCs are infiltrating a high-society party to steal back a valuable artifact. In that case, you might have zones that represent blending in with the party guests, pretending to be wait staff, out of sight of the general populace, or under scrutiny.

KEEPING TRACK

Given all this, what's the best way to keep track of all these zones? Write them down! Index cards are great for this, but you could easily use a dry-erase board or battle map. Write the zones down and arrange them in relative positions that make fictional sense. If they have special effects, write those down in the spaces you designate for the zones. Then, players can track their characters with tokens of some sort: dice, colored beads, figurines, or anything else you have on hand.



BUILDING AN ADVENTURE

An Adventure is a story with a distinct beginning, middle, and end. Typically this corresponds to one story arc, but occasionally an arc might comprise two or even three closely related short adventures.

The action follows the characters as they take on a new mission, discover the twist that complicates things, figure out viable solutions, and then attempt to resolve the conflict as best as possible.

The party will, of course, encounter opposition along the way. Usually, it comes in the form of NPCs who, for whatever reason, do not want the problem to be solved or may have some stake in the status quo—these could be your Raymond Chandler-esque "two guys with guns" bursting through the door to kill them, or simply someone with different interests who wants to negotiate with the PCs to get them to deal with the problem differently. However, opposition or difficulty may also come in external forces or tricky circumstances, like natural disasters or community tension. The opposition may also be internal: a Champion who feels they "Have to do this themselves," will have to be convinced that their friends have their back.

The adventure is over when the problem is resolved, or it can no longer be resolved. In the following session, you'll start a new adventure, which can either relate directly to the previous adventure or present a whole new problem.



STEPS TO CREATING AN ADVENTURE

- Pick a Theme and Adventure Aspects (below)
- Name the Mission (page 390) & the Twist (page 393)
- Designing Story Beats (page 394)
- Set the First Scene (page 396)

THEME AND ADVENTURE ASPECTS

To help you create an adventure, you'll want to pick a **theme**, pick at least one **adventure aspect**, and name a **mission**. However, it doesn't need to be in that order: for example, the theme will often let you pick the mission, and the mission often lets you pick the adventure aspect; some missions even have suggested adventure aspects you can use. Alternatively, you might start with an adventure aspect and use it as inspiration, working your way backwards: that's fine!

WHY CONCENTRATE ON ONLY ONE THEME?

Because trying to emphasize all of the themes simultaneously can make it difficult to give any one of them the attention it deserves. If you concentrate on one theme, moral, or trope per adventure, you can more effectively have a story that fits the theme. It also provides more contrast for the next story when you pick a different theme.

THEME

Stories work best when they have an overarching theme. The grand ideas offered by its theme could help inform GMs on the kind of story they want to tell with their playgroup. It will also help them determine the intriguing events that could happen to players along the way, the sorts of communities and NPCs they will encounter, and the sort of adventures that the troupe can go on this time.

Here are a few possible ways to pick one:

Banner: Use one of the themes or moods from that section as inspiration (e.g., In the section *Rebels of the Dread Domains*, themes include "Dystopian"; "Man vs. Society"; "Take the Money and Run," amongst others.)

World Aspect: You can pick a specific world aspect to serve as the theme itself or as something that informs the theme.

For convenience, some default world aspects are:

> Awesome Power of the Demiurge; Frequent Peril and Daring Escapes; Fresh and Familiar Faces; Desperate Times Yet Hope Springs Eternal; Seekers of the Truth on a Planet of Riddles.

Pick a Subgenre or Trope: What's a popular kind of story that hasn't been used yet? Heist? Locked Door Mystery? Standoff of Seven Samurai to save the town?

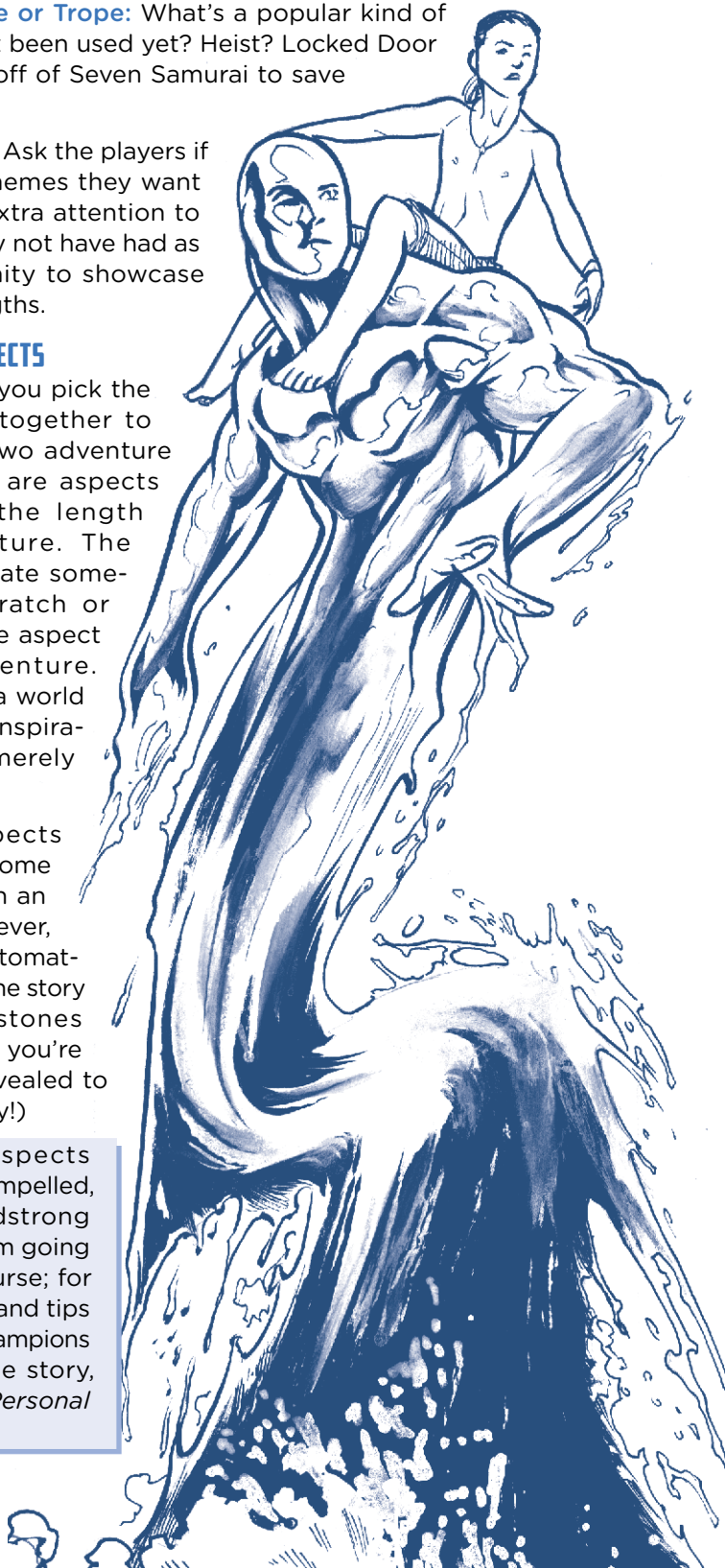
Ask the Players: Ask the players if there are any themes they want to tackle. Pay extra attention to players who may not have had as much opportunity to showcase their PC's strengths.

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

Before or after you pick the mission, work together to create one or two adventure aspects: these are aspects that last for the length of the adventure. The players can create something from scratch or pick a pre-made aspect from the adventure. Alternatively, if a world aspect is your inspiration, you can merely "highlight" it.

Adventure aspects cannot be overcome or changed with an action roll; however, it can change automatically based on the story or minor milestones (ex. If the noble you're protecting is revealed to be an enemy spy!)

Adventure aspects can also be compelled, nudging headstrong characters from going too far off course; for more aspects and tips for keeping Champions involved in the story, see *Now it's Personal* on page 391.



THE MISSION

Once you have a theme, now you'll need a mission. The Champions are presented with an issue that requires their attention. It may be an entirely new problem or an unresolved matter from a previous encounter.

We recommend you consider at least one of each (in no particular order):

- Location (Community and Faces)
- Issues (Main and Subplot)
- Villain

We've provided a list of mission types that may guide GMs to develop a good adventure for their playgroup.

- **Aid Missions** revolve around lending assistance to NPCs in and beyond the adventuring party's community.
- **Defend Missions** revolve around extending your protection towards an individual, a community, or a location within a Freeland.
- **Discover Missions** revolve around unraveling something mysterious or unknown to a community, usually about weird phenomena or the Legacies that the Demiurge has left behind.
- **Escape or Rescue Missions** revolve around retreating away from a dangerous location or individual and back towards a safe location, or saving someone or a group from a hostile force.
- **Escort Missions** revolve around protecting items or artifacts, an NPC, or a group through dangerous territory.
- **Thwart Missions** revolve around undermining or sabotaging enemy systems, structures, or operations.
- **Retrieve Missions** revolve around retrieving items or artifacts and restoring them to their rightful communities or locations.
- **Solve Missions** revolve around tackling a pressing issue or concern that a community has raised.

NOW IT'S PERSONAL

The adventure belongs to your players as much as it belongs to you. Consider following these steps when you're about to introduce a new conflict for the troupe to handle.

The Call to Action

> "Someone has reached out to you. They need your assistance."
>
> Are they...
>
> - Champions from another faction, fighting for the same cause?
> - From your community or the community of someone else in the troupe?
> - Blood family? Adopted family? Found family?
> - A lover, crush, or partner? Current, former, or future?
> - A mentor figure? A guardian? A parent? A surrogate parent?
> - A rival? A former enemy?
> - Someone who has misunderstood you in the past or been misunderstood by you in the past?

The Question

When you're introducing the NPC or NPCs in The Call to Action, GMs ask one of the heroes questions about them or the nature of their relationship. Here's an example:

> "Now that the serious talk is out of the way, Keara appears to be awkward in your presence. Maybe this is because you had a huge argument the last time the two of you spoke. What were you fighting about? How do you feel about it now?"
>
> If players don't have answers to these questions immediately, GMs can tell them that they can answer later. Alternatively, you could decide to leave it a mystery that will be revealed later in another session. Perhaps the player character isn't aware that Keara has a crush on them!

Here's another example:

> A community that has approached the hero's troupe for help.
>
> "As you walk through the streets of the commune, you spot the old bakery store that your mentor used to bring you to after training. Did you have a favorite pastry? Why is it your favorite? Are they still selling it?"

If you're making an NPC from scratch, name them, declare their pronouns, give them a basic role that they will play throughout the adventure, a short motivation (a sentence or two will do), and evocative descriptors that you can use to slip into their skin.

For example:

Keris Silverglade [She/Her]

ASPECTS

High Concept: Reluctant Guide
Motivation: Get Out of These Woods ASAP
Other Aspects: Blue Hair of Wires; Scarred Inside and Out; Impressive Archer

You don't need to have all the answers immediately about any of these characters. They don't need elaborate backstories, nor do any of their details need to be set in stone. GMs can, in this sense, play to discover their creations just as their playgroup is playing to find out what happens during the adventure.

If this is not the group's first adventure, or if this adventure is related to another mission they have done in the past, now may be a good time to check your GM roster of NPCs that the troupe has dealt with before. If you can use things you have already made, that will save you some time. It also reinforces that this piece of Umdaar that your players are in is a living world that grows with them and is populated by familiar people who always have their own concerns beyond being connected to the heroes.

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

The best source for locations and characters that are important to the Champions is the Game Worksheet and Character sheets the table filled out at the start of the campaign. There might be some element that didn't get included until now!

Don't worry if the Call to Action is only important to one or two Champions. Dealing with the problem is not something that a single party member can handle on their own. While the character in question may believe they can or may want to try to resolve things on their terms, the central conflict of the adventure requires them to seek help from their companions. If one of the Champions is feeling less supportive, you can use bond and team aspects connecting them together to compel a character into helping out.

TWISTS

Every mission needs a good **twist** or two to make things interesting for the players. Typically, twists are complicating factors that threaten to impede the party's progress. They aren't always obvious either.

They usually come in important, in-game discoveries related to the mission itself or ones that add layers to the mission's twist. Think of them like plot twists in a classic short story or novel. The artifact the troupe was out to recover is sentient and has no wish to leave. The person who hired you for the job did it so that they could get your team out of town, clearing the way for them to take revenge against the lover who spurned them. The diplomat you want to escort to these delicate negotiations is still full of resentment against the community you're trying to connect with and may be unable to effectively negotiate a truce.

A few ways to create twists:

- **Compels:** Champions have motivations that require them to act in certain ways; compel them! NPCs may have troubles too and can make bad mistakes in moments of weakness.
- **Meddling Masters:** If your adventure doesn't include a Master or lieutenant—add one halfway! They make any bad situation worse. This can even work with scenarios that already have a Master: two rival Masters can give the Champions a boost in the short term (until the rivals call a truce and double-team you!)
- **Ask the Players:** Sure, one GM is creative, but they can't compare to the collective brainpower of a whole table! To keep the suspense, we recommend having players secretly write twists on notecards and pass them in: if any inspire you, reveal them at the right moment.
- **Mission Generator:** These tables have a spread of missions with some sample Twists, which may be useful for other adventures.



STORY BEATS

Story beats are small milestones that the troupe must reach to complete the adventure. It's good to think of them like chapters in a story or scenes in a movie. It's always good to design a story beat with a sentence or two describing what it is, then a small scene that you can play out at the table.

A story beats for an "Artifact Retrieval" mission might be:

- Research who has the artifact
- Journey across the Sulfur Seas to their Dread Domain
- Infiltrate their Fortress
- Overcome the Watchmen
- Get the Artifact
- Battle the Master

You can choose to go a little cinematic because the player characters are watching things unfold in front of them, or you can tie it to a specific Champion or two from within the group.

The end of your adventure should be open-ended to accommodate multiple possibilities. If you have a rough idea of at least two or three potential endings to the adventure, you can save yourself some time and worry by prepping small prompts for scenes that reflect them best.

> A good example of this is Open-Ended Key framework; it has a beginning and an end, with a very flexible middle. See *Conditional Resistances* on page 370.

Don't feel pressured to have all the story beats thoroughly planned out, with in-depth descriptions of each location and statted henchmen. Also, remember that the total number of story beats should depend on how



many game sessions this adventure is meant to cover. Roughly, we'd say one to three story beats are good to cover in one game session or one to two for larger groups.

If you're playing a campaign, it would also be good to leave room for your players to develop their own scenes. Sometimes, a story beat is relevant to one character's growth or motivations.

The "Artifact Retrieval" mission might take on changes based on several factors:

- **Time** If the session starts late, or it's a single-session game at a convention, the GM might skip the first two beats and start with Infiltration or start *In Medias Res* (see page 397).
- **Things Go Well** The players concoct a better way to get inside, like disguising themselves as weapon merchants. This might let them skip several scenes.
- **Things Go Badly** Through bad decisions, compels, or bad luck, the Champions end up in dire straits. Add other scenes or rearrange them; perhaps they encounter the Master first and the artifact second. Or are captured and have to escape the dungeon. They might even have to decide whether to abort the mission and escape with their lives!
- **A Strong Twist** Sometimes, a strong twist is introduced that flips everything around. This can result in the scenes, and even the mission itself, changing completely.

Once the most interesting part of the beat has passed, go ahead and suggest to the group that they fast forward to the next most interesting part. For example, the traveling Champions survived the Harmadillos of the desert road, so skip to them arriving into town.

THE FIRST SCENE

Now for the most important part: setting the stage for the adventure to begin. The most important of all your preplanned scenes is the so-called opening act of an adventure. It sets the tone for your playgroup, and should have most – if not all – the pertinent information that the troupe needs for them to start.

Before starting, you can kick things off with questions for each of your players and the troupe. You can do this TV serial style, like a recap that starts with "Previously, on ***Ruby Rangers of Umdaar***..." or something similar.

- These can be used to review things that happened in the previous episode. This will help you and your players re-immerse yourself in the game world and provide a good, dramatic way to kick things off.
- Alternatively, you can use the "Previously on" framework as a way of keeping the exposition to a minimum; the group creates a fictional "flashback" to a previous episode (that never really existed), allowing you to start the adventure in the middle (see In Medias Res below).

The questions you can ask your players could be relevant to your characters' feelings, what they have been busy with lately, and what's been on their minds. Then, if it works, you can ask each one of them where they are at the moment. Alternatively, you could assume from the start that, for whatever reason, every member of the troupe is in the same place when your adventure begins.

If your playgroup is the sort that loves cinematic cut-scenes, you can shift the metaphorical lens of your camera towards the hooded antagonist of this adventure plotting with their henchmen. You may also paint a scene of "the other night" or "the other day," depicting a peaceful moment before a terrible thing disrupts the community. These are great ways to pique player interest and have them come into your session with questions and plans for the adventure.

IN MEDIAS RES

In Medias Res (literally, "in the midst of things") is a narrative tool of starting a story in the middle. You spot this in movies, as it normally starts with an overwhelmed character surrounded by danger, only to freeze and say over a voice-over, "You're probably wondering how I got here..." In an Umdaar adventure, you can start in the middle, where the action is, and then backtrack.

> **GM:** Let's start in the middle. Your party finds yourself on the jungle road to the Wargrove Orchard, yourself completely surrounded by three dozen armed soldiers, all pointing laser-crossbows at you. From the shadows, Lieutenant Skinpeeler emerges, sneering at you. You're in trouble. But let's skip back a bit. Previously, on ***Power Princesses of Umdaar***...

The GM then describes the mission, in brief, asking questions along the way and letting them fill in the blanks. Who gave you the mission, and how did you feel about it? Is it especially important to anyone? Which of you has a history with Skinpeeler? Who was responsible for letting the enemy get the drop on you? If a Champion's flaws brought them into a bad situation, that counts as a compel, and they get a free fate point!

If players find themselves particularly interested in a "previous" scene, spend an extra minute developing it; perhaps include a simple overcome roll to see if the Champion gains any extra aspects or suffers any costs.

You can use this to fast track the Call to Action, having the Champions already agreed to a mission; however, if an action seems particularly out of character, let them know that they can object.

> **GM:** A minister asks them to eradicate a group of bandits, and your group agrees.
>
> **Hannah:** That doesn't sound like my character, she'd never agree to just kill a bunch of people.
>
> **GM:** You're right. How's this: the minister expresses their preference to stop the bandits dead or alive (preferably dead), but you agree to investigate the bandit situation and help in any way you can (possibly by mediating)?
>
> **Hannah:** That sounds good to me.

ENDINGS

In a perfect world, the session ends with the major issues resolved. If this took up most of the time allotted to the session, you can finish the current scene and consider the adventure over.

If running a campaign, grant the Champions Milestones (see page 98).

If you have extra time, ask the players if they want to continue; if yes, you can introduce another twist, tie up any unresolved subplots, or, in the case of campaigns, spend some Downtime (see *Interacting with Your Continent* on page 243).

> The players retrieved the artifact in a record two hours out of a four-hour session. When asked if they want to continue, the players unanimously decide yes. After a short break, the GM then reveals that the benevolent Matriarch that received the artifact was an evil impostor the entire time! Oh No!

Often a good measure of an ending is: "Is there a New Status Quo?"

> If the issue was "Master Cudgelord attacks the Shining Citadel!", here are some strong and weak examples of status quo changes:
>
> - **Strong status quo** The invaders are driven back to their domain, their war machines devastated!
> - **Strong status quo** Cudgelord succeeds and takes over the Freeland.
> - **Mixed status quo** The first wave is repealed, but the invaders settle down for months of sieging.
> - **Strong status quo** The citizens flee the city but escape their pursuers, taking refuge in the caves.
> - **Mixed status quo** The citizens flee the city and are doggedly pursued by Cudgelord's troops!
> - **Weak status quo** Cudgelord retreats with forces intact, ready to invade any time again.

"Status quo" doesn't mean "happy," it just means "somewhat stable." Your new status quo can be more joyful or more tragic than the old status quo, but it should never be the same as before (unless you're using the *Saturday Morning Cartoon Dial*; see page 424).

If you're running an adventure throughout multiple sessions, you might have a session end without a change of the status quo; and that's fine. However, GMs should try to end the scene to provide a small amount of closure if possible. Alternatively, you can finish a scene and add a small cliffhanger (see page 400).

Stories of hope and triumph don't have to end perfectly. Messy resolutions that could have been done differently make for great heroes just as much as clean victories might. It's also entirely possible that there's no real way to "fix" the problem, and all the troupe can do is circumvent the issue or minimize its impact on those around them. Some adventures can also become setups for a new adventure entirely. The crucial part is that the troupe reached a personal milestone that will make them better at what they do or discover something important about themselves or each other at the end of the adventure.

TAKE BREAKS!

If your game is over two hours, don't forget to take breaks. This is good for dozens of non-gaming reasons but also gives the GM time to do temperature checks and adjust the story as it twists and turns.

WRAP UP

After players have finished the big, exciting part of an adventure (such as rescuing their friend, defeating the bad guy, securing the treasure), the GM is encouraged to spend a few minutes wrapping up the story. In prose or TV writing, this is called a time jump. Unless the GM has a twist or the players have something specific they want to do after, the table can skip to the next essential part of the story. This shouldn't require any dice rolling, and should skip any boring details. They can even describe it in summary rather than in dialogue if it makes it flow easier.

> **GM:** You successfully repaired the broken machine at the heart of the temple. Now the firestorms will be contained from now on. Well done! Any objections to skipping your return?
>
> *The players have no objections.*
>
> **GM:** So, you make your way back through the dungeon and over the Desert of Eyes without any major interruptions. The chief of the Desert Dwellers is overjoyed, and there's a big feast. She agrees to join the alliance and sends Darlaih to go back with you to the Capitol as their ambassador. The next evening, you're back home, and the Matriarch is as glad as ever to see you all back safe.

You can spend a minute with each player to make sure there was nothing they wanted to resolve on their way home (e.g., A Champion finding the wounded lazerwolf from before and making sure its okay; a rebel stealing all the enemy armor they can carry.)

If a player wants to do in-depth measures that involve a community, this is best saved for the *Downtime* phase (see page 243).



CLIFFHANGERS

If you're running a campaign, you can end an adventure on a cliffhanger; this is particularly appropriate, as many of the adventures that inspired Umdaar used this plot device frequently!

However, we caution that a cliffhanger is not the same as "ending an adventure with an issue unresolved." Rather, it ends an adventure with one issue resolving, and a new, greater issue appears. As a status quo, it's important not to bring the Champions back to where they started—rather, things should be WORSE than when they started.

> A weak example of a cliffhanger is: You retrieve an artifact and return it to its rightful owners, the Village of Renwa. However, the artifact is fake! You have to track down the real thing!
>
> A strong example: You retrieve an artifact and return to the village of Renwa, only to discover all the villagers abducted by invaders! You must track them down at once!

Small Cliffhangers

If you're ending a session (but not an adventure), you can add a little tension by adding one last unresolved element immediately before the session ends. It doesn't have to be something big: it just has to provide a new immediate threat or a mystery to leave the players wondering. It's also a great place to introduce the twist if that's where it naturally falls.

> "The ground under Gameri's feet starts to give way, and they fall down the cliff..."
>
> "You open the treasure vault, only to find something you never expected..."
>
> "You unlock the door to see two paths: one following the torches to the left, the other sinking down into the dark depths of the castle..."
>
> "You feel cold metal blade against your throat and a voice whisper, 'Don't Move.'..."
>
> "The tapestry parts, revealing the smiling Ambassador Cursio, saying, 'I Bet you Thought I was Dead'..."

ADVENTURE GENERATOR

The tables in this section contain mission types and plot hooks that we prepared with one-shots or episodic campaigns in mind. Each section has a table of premises that you can either roll for or choose from and presents a shortlist of possible twists to consider if you're stumped.

These stories rely on a lot of classic adventure tropes. However, we caution about reusing some tropes that can be more negative, such as Damseling Maidens, Saving Foreigners, and Tomb Raiding: see *Interrogating Old Stories* on page 414 for more details.

HOW DO I ROLL?

For most of the tables here, when you roll 2dF, either roll two different colors or roll 1dF twice in succession, reading using the results in the order they were generated.

MISSION TYPE

2dF	−	■	+
−	Aid!	Discover!	Thwart!
■	Escape/Rescue!	*GM's Choice*	Retrieve!
+	Defend!	Solve!	Escort!

The tables and lists for each mission provide ideas to use as is or for inspiration. Use results that are helpful and make up the rest.

"GM'S CHOICE"?!

How you handle the "GM's Choice" result is up to you. You can simply choose one that calls to you, reroll, or maybe even roll twice and combine the two mission types you get.

MORE RANDOM GENERATORS

You've generated an Adventure outline. Now what?

Here are a few more generators to help:

- Generator for Freeland names and leaders (page 322)
- Generator for Community Values (page 320)
- Generator for evil lairs and Masters (page 327)
- Generator for Wildernexus landscapes (page 331)
- Generator for a ruin's purpose and names (page 340)
- Artifact Namer (page 341)

AID MISSION

2dF	Premise
−−	There was a recent attack on a community. More able bodies are needed to help rebuild some districts.
−■	A terrible, magical storm is coming! The hero's community must prepare for the worst.
−+	Your community needs your heroes to serve as representatives on a diplomatic mission.
■−	Your community has been selected to mediate between two other quarreling neighbors. They've asked the heroes to represent them because your troupe can handle themselves well.
■■	Someone is being bullied for unfair reasons or things they cannot help. Aid them by looking into things and convincing everyone that this isn't good.
■+	Things have been really tough lately, and morale is low. The community is raring for some light entertainment to restore everyone's spirits.
+−	The community wishes to learn how to defend itself against external threats. Are your heroes up for showing them how?
+■	The community has been having a rise in missing persons. Please help the community find them.
++	An important ceremony signifying love or friendship between two or more communities is scheduled. Any help your heroes can offer towards making this happen would be deeply appreciated.

THEMES

- Teamwork
- Favors
- Underdog Story
- Adapt or Die

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

- The Ties that Bind
- Swallow Your Pride
- When a Rival asks for Aid

TWISTS

- Someone important is unhappy that the heroes are lending assistance because of something the Champions, or the Freeland they work with, did in the past. Their upset is valid: perhaps some collateral damage could have been avoided, or the heroes assisted someone or a group that was harmful to this NPC in the past.
- Prejudice from someone important or within one of the communities will be a serious impediment to this mission.
- Someone will be actively thwarting the heroes' attempts at aiding their friends. They have their reasons, so they'll need to be handled fairly.
- Just as you are eager to help the community, a small band of well-meaning youngsters is overly-eager to help YOU. Can you keep them out of harm's way?

DEFEND MISSION

2dF	Premise
−−	Strange, wild creatures— beasts or mindless robots—have lately targeted the community. Defend the borders!
−■	The inherent defense systems of a nearby ruin - one important to the heroes or their community have temporarily gone offline. Defend the ruins until they're restored!
−+	The group that would normally be in charge of defending the community cannot do their duties for a time. The heroes have been requested to take their place.
■−	The rumbling in the nearby ruins is worrying people. Many in the community blame it for recent strange events. The heroes have been asked to investigate.
■■	There's a thief out and about in the community. Please find out who they are and why they're doing this.
■+	You have received reports of a hostile force from the Dread Domains coming towards the community. Strike out and meet them head-on!
+−	A hulking automaton has wandered into the community's realms and is wreaking havoc on its surroundings. Protect the community!
+■	A resource in the local Wildernexus is being over-harvested by outsiders. Save the wildlife!
++	People in the community have been attacked and injured by a shadowy threat. Bring the perpetrator to justice!

THEMES

- Family
- Heroism
- Perseverance

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

- The Waiting Game
- United We Stand, Divided We Fall
- Desperate Times, Yet Hope Springs Eternal

TWISTS

- Someone whom the heroes thought they could trust will turn out to be a traitor.
- The threat is being coerced against their will or controlled completely by a rival or enemy of the heroes.
- People in the community have harmed the one responsible for the trouble. Their decision to take revenge is inexcusable, but the deeper issues within the commune must be addressed.
- An impetuous Champion or NPC is compelled to break the lines and believes the best defense is a good offense! Can you keep the defenses from crumbling?

DISCOVER

2dF	Premise
−−	Wild, impenetrable storms have appeared around an area just beyond the community's borders. What could they hide?
−■	An unidentified object from beyond the clouds has crash-landed nearby!
−+	The ruin within the community itself has been activated. Your heroes are best positioned to explore it and face any dangers within its labyrinth.
■−	Rumors speak of a reclusive Wildernexus community that has reached out to the outside world. Find their location, confirm if the rumors are true, and make first contact!
■■	Some recent, mysterious shifts in the surrounding area have altered the landscape. Will your heroes check it out?
■+	New flora and fauna have started appearing within the community's realm. Perhaps your heroes would like to study them?
+−	The ruin that the community thought they knew well appears to have expanded? Perhaps your heroes can go and see what's new.
+■	A strange pillar of light appeared on the horizon. The community wishes to investigate this carefully.
++	A new ruin was found close to the outskirts of the community. What secrets and knowledge might be found within its depths?

THEMES

- Discovery
- Nature
- Mystery

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

- **Wondrous, Unpredictable World**
- **Lure of Mystery**

TWISTS

- The troupe will face interference from interest groups who wish to exploit the assets of a discovery for selfish gain.
- The community strongly needs to expand the commune or harvest the natural resources that this discovery can give, but doing so means potentially depleting the discovery or damaging it irreparably.
- Mere contact with the discovery can risk contaminating it.
- The phenomenon you're investigating parallels an incident from ancient history. A coincidence or an omen of doom?

ESCAPE OR RESCUE

2dF	Premise
−−	The people of a recently destroyed community are fleeing from the ruins of their homes. Help them get to a safe place!
−■	It's been a week since someone (or a group) that is important to the community was due to return from their journey. The community fears that they may be in trouble.
−+	A small commune from deep within a Dread Domain wishes to be free from their Masters. Your community has agreed to take them in but needs your heroes to get them out of there.
■−	Former agents of the Master wish to turn a new leaf but are now being viciously hunted down by their former peers. Help them safely defect.
■■	A cell of rebels has sent an SOS to the heroes. They have been discovered by agents of the Master and need to be pulled out of where they've been operating.
■+	In the haste and chaos of an evacuation, many animal companions have been left behind in a commune. The community's leaders have implored your troupe to rescue them!
+−	A research team has gotten lost within the ruins close to the community. Your heroes are best equipped to go there and save them.
+■	A massive calamity that may or may not be a natural disaster is razing a community. Relief efforts are being organized by their neighbors. Perhaps your heroes should join in these efforts.
++	A community has recently re-established itself in a safer location. While taking stock of members, they realized some of their own still haven't arrived. Maybe the heroes can search for them based on their last known locations.

THEMES

- Chase
- Jail Break
- High Stakes

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

- **Frequent Peril and Daring Escapes!**
- **Leave No One Behind**
- **Unresolved Family Drama**

TWISTS

- The distress message or signal isn't real. It was fabricated by a rival or an agent of the Master on the pretense of entrapping the Champions.
- The Champions were given false, fabricated, or outdated information about what they're up against.
- There will be a rival or agent of the Master hidden among the group that the Champions are trying to rescue or aid in the escape.
- The escapees are too blinded by their prejudices and they accidentally sabotage the mission.

ESCORT

2dF	Premise
−−	The community plans on sending much-needed supplies and relief to one of its neighbors. The caravan needs strong warriors to escort it.
−■	An important figure of the community requires a security detail as they embark upon an important journey.
−+	A group of researchers needs the heroes to accompany them on a ruin excavation.
■−	A marriage has been scheduled between someone important to this community and a relative of a Master, and need to you escort one of the betrothed. Is it a trap? Can it lead to peace? "How does the prospective couple feel about this affair?"
■■	A Master's Lieutenant has been taken captive. Can you escort them to the capital without them being sprung?
■+	A family that has been fragmented by strife and conflict wishes to be reunited with one another. Will your heroes help them make their journeys and see their loved ones again?
+−	Judgment has been passed upon a member of a neighboring community of yours, sentencing them to exile; they require a neutral escort group to accompany an NPC.
+■	A large train of civilians—many of them young, aging, or struggling with preexisting conditions or disabilities—are attempting to make a hazardous journey between their old home and a safer area. They need strong protectors during this exodus.
++	The diplomatic representatives of two or more communities seek escorts to the meeting grounds. These negotiations are extremely important, as they could end generations of conflict.

THEMES

- Personal
- Politics
- Faustian Bargains

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

- The Weight of Responsibility
- Do You Trust Me?

TWISTS

- The escort mission is actually a trap that has been prepared by an agent of the Masters to ensnare the NPC and their escort.
- Someone in the group that the Champions are assisting does not want to be on this journey. What could their reasons be? What will the heroes do about it?
- An external group feels that this journey should not succeed for entirely valid reasons. Perhaps the community in question has treated them with prejudice, or they have learned that the reasons for the journey itself are not entirely pure or right.

RETRIEVE

2dF	Premise
−−	A Master took an artifact of high cultural value to the community. Break into the Dread Domains, steal it, and restore it to its rightful owners!
−■	Agents of the Master have seized ruins that are important to the community. The heroes must take this place back.
−+	Injured and harrowed caravan owners from the community have arrived. Something or someone stole the goods they were bringing for everyone. Can you recover them?
■−	An archaeonaut mentor of yours finds a lead to a lost artifact they've been searching for all of their life. Their "white whale" of lost artifacts. Despite their age, they insist on going with you to retrieve it.
■■	A plague rages through the community, and the only cure is a flower found only in a dangerous Wildernexus. Retrieve it before it's too late!
■+	Con Job! The monarch of a nearby kingdom, and a potential ally, has obtained a stolen artifact but has no intention of giving it back. Can you surreptitiously steal it back without them suspecting your involvement?
+−	Someone looted the ruins in your community and stole an artifact. Through great effort, you've managed to retrieve it. Now you'll need to put it back. Be careful, though: the ruins still have all their traps in place.
+■	A community had to evacuate their homes. They've asked you to go back and get the essential items they left behind. But the ghost town is far from empty.
++	A community that has never been hostile to your own before sent a raiding party to the outskirts of the commune and stole some important goods. Find out what happened, and—if it seems apt—take back what the commune needs.

THEMES

- Treasure Hunt
- Dungeon Crawl
- Restitution
- Ancient Mystery

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

- Ticking Clock
- All That Glitters is Not Gold

TWISTS

- The artifact or objects in question are dangers in and of themselves. The heroes must be exceedingly careful and avoid destroying any of the artifacts.
- There is another group that is eager to resolve this situation to prove themselves. They may get themselves in trouble but are being very stubborn about it.
- In actuality, the artifact or object in question was taken because the thieves' needs are as great as the owners, or greater still!

SOLVE

2dF	Premise
−−	Food has become a concern for the community. Your heroes have been called upon to help.
−■	Normally docile, tame, friendly, or neutral wild creatures have started going feral. The community wants the heroes to investigate.
−+	The community leaders are clashing over the development of the city. Perhaps the heroes have some valuable input?
■−	An artifact that the community has recovered requires some testing. The heroes are in the best position to study it.
■■	A mysterious illness is running rampant throughout the community! No conventional cure has stopped its spread. Is there something else at work here?
■+	There's a prophecy of an upcoming cataclysmic event ravages a community later this week. Scribes say it happens every century. Can the troupe anticipate the threat and ward it off?
+−	Two or more neighboring communities are quarreling, and both have been leaning on your heroes' community for assistance. Is there a way out of this diplomatic tangle?
+■	While they were exploring a new ruin, the heroes accidentally activated some failsafe, trapping them within the ruins!
++	Adverse weather conditions—a prolonged heatwave, a terrible cold snap, constant storms—adversely affect the community. How might the heroes help it adjust?

THEMES

- Ancient Mystery
- Procedural
- Problem Solving

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

- Planet of Mysteries
- Words have Power

TWISTS

- External forces—adverse weather conditions or hostile elements in the area—will make resolving this situation tricky.
- This issue exists because of sabotage from somebody on the inside, possibly by ambitious scholars / archaeonauts wanting the credit.
- Old tensions revolving around territorial disputes, family feuds, sexism, or similar prejudice are bound to flare up because of the situation, complicating things further for everyone.

THWART

2dF	Premise
−−	The resistance has pinpointed supply lines used by the Master's agents. Sabotage them, or take them back for the community!
−■	A powerful community remains neutral between the Dread Domain's Masters and the Freelands. Perhaps your heroes can attempt to convince them to fight against the Masters.
−+	Your heroes have learned the location of an important Legacy of the Demiurge - but there are already agents of the Master en route. Make sure the artifact does not fall into their hands!
■−	A Master is gathering artifacts for a Doomsday device. Make sure that they never get what they need.
■■	You've got the drop on an agent of the Master and their cohorts. Time to handle things personally!
■+	Through concerted efforts, the vulnerability of a Master has been exposed. It's time to level the playing field and meet them head-on!
+−	A herd of migrating robeasts threatens to invade a new biome. Keep them from upsetting the balance!
+■	A neighboring community has become hostile to the heroes and their community. Fend off their attacks while the diplomats hit the negotiating table!
++	An automaton that cannot be destroyed has wandered into the realms of the community. Find a way to divert it without triggering its extremely dangerous defense protocols.

THEMES

- Heroics & Supervillainy
- Politics
- Super Science

ADVENTURE ASPECTS

- Machinations within Machinations
- Unfathomable Power of the Demiurge
- Rage Against the Dying of the Light

TWISTS

- A rival of the troupe or an agent of the Master has pressed someone into betraying the heroes.
- Old tensions revolving around territorial disputes, family feuds, sexism or similar prejudice are bound to flare up because of the situation, complicating things further for everyone.
- The Champions must avoid excessive or lethal force against the hostile community (e.g., the locals are mind-controlled or experience a misunderstanding).

GENERAL ADVENTURE ASPECTS

The following are some general adventure aspects that you can include in existing missions, provide subplots, or serve as the foundation of their adventure.

For example, whenever Intimate Journeys is invoked, consider asking your players the following questions:

- What's the episode or arc title of this story now?
- Who is this NPC, community, or faction that is helping you?
- How did you help them in the past—or were they the ones who helped you back in the day?
- If you could name one thing that they taught you, what would it be?

You can set these NPCs up to be one-offs or make room for an extended friendship narrative that the troupe can dive into throughout their adventures. The point is to show how the adventurers have affected the world around them and how the world, in turn, has shaped them to be the heroes they are today. Another great way to lean into tried and tested but ultimately compelling tropes.

Here are a few sample adventure aspects to explore.

The Friends We Made Along the Way

- **Plot Hook:** The party encounters or is perhaps saved by a young inexperienced group of fledgling Champions. It turns out they were saved by the Champions several years ago! Ask the players to recount which adventure it was, like "Remember when you fought the Sluggernaut in the Sea of Trees?"
- **Invoke:** Players can invoke to have the group save them or lend a hand.
- **Compel:** You can compel your group's Champions to get involved in helping the novice heroes attempt a risky mission; alternatively, they might be compelled to be the "adults", weighing their need for support with their desire to protect the novices!
- **Note:** This adventure aspect is great to spring on characters that are suffering from lingering mental consequences, like feeling Disillusioned or Jaded. Help them rekindle their passion! The PCs remember what inspired their heroes to fight the good fight by watching this new group of adventurers.

No Good Deed Goes Unnoticed

- **Plot Hook 1:** Players are saved from a dire situation in the Dread Domains when an enemy guard reveals their identity: he was an injured enemy soldier that the PCs brought back for medical treatment a few sessions back! He can't help in any big ways, but he'll do what he can.
- **Plot Hook 2:** In a Dread Domain a Champion frequently visits, there's an old widow that the Champions always support. Now, the widow is passing that support forward to others.
- **Compel:** Your friend in a Dread Domain is caught and tried for treason because of their association with you. Are you going to leave them to rot?

THE RESCUERS RESCUED?!

A powerful way to introduce friendly NPCs is to have them come to the Champions' assistance in a time of desperation: this can teach the Champions some humility and remind them that not all communities are helpless. It can also make the players feel indebted to their saviors.

But, you think, "What if I make it too easy for the players?" The answer: end the conflict the same way or within the time frame you normally would, but weave the NPC rescuers into the narrative.

The Champions have fought several rounds with a cadre of Evil Knights. They've taken the biggest tanks out of action, and most of the Bots-at-arms have taken stress. Unbeknownst to the players, this is normally the time the GM would have the bots concede; the Champions will win, and having them fight the remaining mobs would be an unnecessary grind. However, the GM spins it another way.

GM: The bots-at-arm seem to rally; what's worse, a teleporter starts to beam more on the scene. DOZENS of new bots appear on the scene. You're suddenly surrounded! But before they can attack, you hear a rallying "whoop" from the trees, and a wave of fighters descend on them. It's the Rebel Cell you've been searching for, coming to drive them back!

Sins (and Virtues) of the Father

- **Plot Hook 1:** The party receives a distress message from the person who is the adoptive father of one (or more) of the Champions, who has helped them in subtle ways even recently.
  - **Compel:** Perhaps the two siblings have different opinions of the parent.

    Perhaps one PC feels that their well-meaning father couldn't help but play favorites between them because that was the way he was raised himself.

    Ask each sibling to pinpoint what lesson they learned from their father (based on a lecture or incident). The two might remember very different interpretations or derive two very different morals. Leave it unresolved who is right until the father is saved.
- **Plot Hook 2:** The party visit a place that has suffered due to the actions of one of their parents or grandparents. Did the kindly grandmotherly monarch wield an iron fist? Was their level-headed father figure a brash youth who killed two men?
  - **Compel:** The characters feel a need to pay back a debt owed or repair damages done, all while suffering guilt or confusion. Is their faith in their family shaken? Is it a mystery to be solved or the first of many skeletons in the closet?

Desperate Times, Yet Hope Springs Eternal

- **Plot Hook:** A Master has taken an allied village under siege, with the Champions inside! If no one surrenders, they'll all be murdered; but if they surrender by dawn, half of them will be spared. Will they fall together, or make the sacrifice? Can the Champions find a path to safety?
- **Invoke:** Players may invoke this aspect to keep the fires of resistance burning, or to get extra strength when backed against a wall.
- **Compel:** Characters may be compelled to do desperate things, like betray their town to save their children. Or compel the Champions to trade their freedom (to save the village).
- **Twists:** This aspect may inspire some interesting twists and turns of allegiance, like an anxious villager betraying the town (only to be a double agent helping the Champions)!

The Ties That Bind

- **Plot Hook:** Master Glacius Coldheart wants revenge, and moves to invade the community that was a Champion's childhood home! However, the Champion ran away years ago—what tangled threads still bind them to the past?
- **Invoke:** Champions may invoke to gain help and trust from the community or NPCs; to help bring a fractured community together; or to inspire Champions to defend their loved ones.
- **Compel:** Compel to persuade a Champion to help old family members who parted on bad terms; to provoke a Champion to reveal their buried past; or to coerce a Champion to compromise themselves to save kin from harm.
- **Twist:** Maybe it's not just a homecoming for the Champion—did Master Coldheart grow up in this community too?!?

INTERROGATING OLD STORIES

Games inspired by the fantasy or science fiction narratives that were prevalent before and up through the 1980s carry the burden of implicit biases that don't speak accurately to lived realities. For an exploration of the history of some of these biases, see *Primitivism* on page 422.

Many of our ideas about good storytelling may also be built on harmful or unwelcoming principles. This is a multifaceted concern with no easy answers; there are many ways to tackle a conversation on real life issues through the radical act of play.

CODING

Coding is the practice of adding implicit cues or subtext to individuals or groups that lead the audience to make associations with particular racial or ethnic groups. Coding also extends to gender, sexual identity, what is neurodivergent or what is typical, disability, and more. Coding happens in fiction through how characters are portrayed, but it's also in the words we use to describe things in real life.

It's crucial to understand the context behind how some words, especially descriptors, are commonly used within a society before you repeat similar words in your own stories. Consider the inherent bias of news reporting around crime. More often than not, when the perpetrator of a gross act of violence in the United States is white, there is almost always an argument "humanizing" them, explaining away their behavior in an attempt to garner sympathy. You rarely see the same treatment given to a person of color; instead, they may be dehumanized through comparisons to unthinking beasts.

> White suspects under 30 are frequently described as young, impulsive, having bright futures ahead of them. Suspects of color are frequently described in terms that suggest they're older even when they're legally children, and every former misstep is reported.

Coding isn't always intentional. Some writers may deliberately draw upon their lived experiences as a member of a marginalized identity as a source of inspiration and state their intentions rather plainly, while others find themselves doing this simply because it's what they know and who they are. Many authors use coding, whether consciously or unconsciously, when describing characters with identities different from their own.

Coding is neither inherently good nor bad. On the one hand, coding can promote diversity and add humanity to non-humans, making them more relatable. On the other hand, coding can lend itself to perpetuating harmful stereotypes against people or cultures, particularly when it's used to imply value judgments about the characters. For example, describing a minor character as fat is a common cue that the character plays a negative role in the narrative, which plays into damaging cultural assumptions about body types.

A Latine-coded woman in fiction is frequently portrayed with a fiery temper and otherwise subject to her passions versus the "civilized" manners of a white-coded woman, or the "submissive nature" of an East Asian-coded woman.

Black-coded men might be complimented with, "You're very articulate," but the unspoken implication is often "...as compared to the rest of your kind."

The coding around neurodivergent characters frequently overexaggerates their traits or infantilizes them for the purposes of humor, drama, or plot twists. There's also the danger of presuming that neurodivergent characters are more susceptible to harmful or criminal behavior because they don't understand what is "normal". Even worse, their neurodivergence is sometimes used as a plot point meant to explain why they're villains.

Coding is often baked into familiar tropes, so it's important to look at old stories with new eyes. In ***Umdaar***, we attempt to interrogate some of these issues and the tropes that accompany them.

BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM & RACISM

Also known as genetic determinism, biological determinism is the belief that a human being's behavior or characteristics are dictated by their genes. For example:

- "Men are naturally dominant because they have stronger physiques than women."
- "Women are natural caregivers because they have the ability to carry offspring."
- "Gay men have more feminine genes and that is why they turned gay."
- "A criminal gene exists, and can be passed down from parent to child."

Many of the foundations of racism are rooted in biological determinism. It's the guiding principle behind the perpetual machinery of imperial conquest and colonialism; the infamous Doctrine of Discovery was grounded on the idea that European peoples, culture, and religion were superior to all others, and its enshrinement as a legal concept continues to do gross harm today.

Here are some of the tropes that lean into biological determinism, as well as some advice on addressing them in game.

[CITY OF [RACE]

We mention this briefly in the *Population* section on page 319. While Umdaar community creation rules recommend having a dominant moral value in a community, this shouldn't be paired with the old fantasy tradition of being a location with homogeneous race. This implementation can imply that any character's traits in that location are a value of that specific race; for example, if the Dwarven City of Thragos values Thrift, then all Dwarves may come across as stingy. It becomes far too easy for players to stereotype a character's behavior based on their genetics. That sort of simplification makes a world less diverse and interesting, and it mimics damaging real-life stereotypes about all members of a given group sharing certain characteristics.

Each community should have a unified value but be biologically diverse; similarly, two neighboring communities might have identical bioforms but entirely different sets of values. GMs are encouraged to create rich, diverse lands and kingdoms.

It's not that there's no relationship between a city and its people: a coastal fishing village is more appealing to amphibious beings, and a settlement built in an ancient scrapyard likely hosts more cyborgs and Glowbots. But people of a given bioform are as variable as all people everywhere. See *Apple from the Tree* on page 63 for ideas on creating rich characters shaped by their community without being uniform.

THE HELPLESS SAVAGE

The trope of an outsider coming in to solve the community's problems can further colonialist narratives. Consider the Mighty Whitey Saviors: an adventuring party strikes out into a new land they know nothing about, saving helpless civilians, providing solutions that "the natives" somehow didn't come up with for themselves, civilizing "savages", facing off against monstrous threats and raiding strange locations in search of treasure. This mirrors the "discovery" and subsequent imperial conquest of foreign lands, with "the natives" often written as though they're exotic, fantastic, and rather glaringly different compared to the adventurers.

It's harmful to assume that the heroes' standards are superior and that they're welcome to act as they please and judge as they will according to their standards in a foreign land. When combined with coding the foreign land in question as Black, Asian, Indigenous, and the like, it renders the community as an "Other" that exists without power or agency; they become tools to further the heroes' story and can thus be subject to all kinds of harm.

Consider two alternatives: making the community that your heroes are trying to help **competent**, or making them **familiar**.

Perhaps the community is very good at dealing with their problems normally, but the Champions' previous efforts caused the Masters to step up their attacks. Or perhaps they aren't in need of saving, but with the Champions' help they can yield positive results faster or with less risk.

Perhaps the Champions come to this new place to help out their friends or loved ones. Portraying the "chieftain of a far-off land" as a bungler could be problematic—but if the chieftain is your Uncle Whoward who repeatedly bites off more than he can chew, now he's a real person with real problems who has a reason to look to the Champions for aid.

BEWARE OF MERCENARIES BEARING GIFTS

There's a famous story from ancient Umdaar, from the time after the Splintering, that explains why a community might call on help from Champions they know from afar: the cautionary tale of Prysa and the Soldiers of Fortune.

Marauders had frequently besieged the city of Prysa. A group of mercenaries, all strangers, approached the city elder and offered to dispatch the invaders for a very modest fee. Two days later, the soldiers of fortune returned with proof of their deed, and the city celebrated long into the night. But they had been betrayed. The marauders had bribed the mercenaries to open the city gates, and the citizens were slaughtered in their beds.

To this day, the people of Umdaar are wary of helpful strangers offering unsolicited help. When a community needs help, its members reach out to distant friends they know and trust. Pathfinders, of course, have contacts in every town and always have a local friend to vouch for them.

TOMB RAIDING

Archeology has a complex relationship with imperial power, war, unethical tourism, the whitewashing of history, and queer erasure. Too often we see accounts of powerful nations, usually white or former imperial powers, making "new discoveries" in the form of "untamed land" or staking their claim upon other cultures' ancestral lands by positioning themselves as the benevolent stewards of the realm. In their eyes, as stewards they have every right to take things that hold deep cultural or religious significance away from their original owners. The history of the conquest is then framed by those in power, rendering the truth invisible in favor of a worldview that suits the status quo.

One way to circumvent this could be that the heroes of your adventure were given express permission to claim an artifact. They could be in this new location on an expedition, bankrolled by the local community. Maybe they've been asked to take back something that was stolen from their home. Maybe they've been invited to borrow a powerful relic that they can use to liberate a Freeland from the Dread Masters—emphasis on the word "borrow." And, of course, there's nothing wrong with rewarding the selflessness of a hero with a relic of great power.

If you want to do an adventure that explores the consequences of raiding, there's nothing stopping you. If a player suggests that their character steals an artifact with the goal of adding complications to the narrative, and they're well aware of the inevitable moral consequences, consider reading *Cursed Objects* on page 222.

ERASING THE OTHER

Much of the harmful codification of people from marginalized identities, genders, or social classes stems from biological determinism, and its nuances deserve their own section. By presuming that the "Other"—in this case, typically someone coded as femme-presenting, queer, a person of color, poor, disabled, or neurodivergent—is helpless and incompetent, a narrative codes all the actions taken by the protagonist (usually male, sometimes white-coded) as justified and interesting.

This is aggravated by the idea that darker plots—more grim, more violent, more fatal—are more complex, necessary, and loftier than their light and "simple" counterparts. There is the sense that hardship and struggle have deeper significance. The greater the tragedy, the greater the triumph. By no small coincidence, one of the primary tragic things that happens to protagonists is often acts of violence towards people they care about—often loved ones of the opposite sex, family members (especially older parental figures or children), or someone otherwise coded as different from the protagonist. This implies that because these characters are marginalized, their natural role in life is to be the victim of forces they can't control, with no power to change their situation.

We've listed some examples of negative tropes that reduce the Other into a plot point, along with some suggestions on how to handle them differently.

THE VICTIM NPC

Similar to the Helpless Savage, this is when marginalized folks—especially women and queer people—are continuously placed in situations where their internal competence is disregarded in favor of giving a protagonist their moment. Never mind that the NPC was supposed to be a competent princess, intelligent scientist, or powerful warrior. Their codification as a victim presumes that they will always have less power than the protagonist.

Just as it's bad to code a distressed community as "foreign," be extra mindful to avoid coding distressed NPCs or communities LGBTQIA+, queer-coded, female, or of a different bioform than the Champions, even if it may not be intentional. Leaning into "folks in distress" stories tends to send this message to the audience: anyone who is not like the hero is ultimately incapable of saving themselves. It also leans into uncomfortable gender binaries (e.g., "men are best at fighting, women are best at nurturing and staying out of the way").

A good way to avoid othering: When you need to create a character to fill a role, take note of the first archetype that pops into your head and ask yourself, "What do I get if I do the opposite?" Look at each trait (gender, race, identity, personality, age) and experiment with flipping them one by one. Keep flipping them on & off until you're satisfied and have a character that defies your expectations. For example, instead of an "exotic, beautiful, crying, princess lover" you have "Your Uncle Marq who's tacky, short-tempered, and apathetic."

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There's a long, terrible trend of using triggering and traumatic experiences such as rape, sexual assault, torture, and murder of female characters for shock value in stories. Worse, they often add the extra layer of the characters involved being romantic partners or the woman being a potential love interest for the male hero. The common narrative practice of "fridging"—killing the main character's lover to further their personal plot—is the biggest example of this. That's a whole new can of worms if we consider how female characters in stories are often relegated to the position of love interest, and play no active or empowering role in the narrative.

The suffering of women should never be used to further the personal plot of another character. Women in stories should not exist merely as plot devices but as their own empowered characters who possess agency over themselves and what happens to them. These narratives perpetuate harmful stereotypes towards women and operate on the misguided belief that tragedy strengthens character.

In the same light, presuming that tragic circumstances are the only way for female characters to grow is problematic. Where male protagonists experience having horrendous things happen to their often female or similarly marginalized friends and lovers, female protagonists experience horrendous things directly in an attempt to show character growth and motivation, to make the plot shocking and exciting. Such narratives tacitly imply that a woman's worth is only measured by their pain.

QUEER ERASURE

In a similar fashion to female characters being fridged, queer or queer-coded characters tend to be relegated to the positions of a helpless friend, lover, a convenient sexual awakening which is usually followed by the main character deciding that they're straight in the end, and comedic relief. They also tend to be cut from the same cloth when it comes to how they're presented (e.g., "gay people dress like this and act like this," "they're queer; therefore they must be hot").

"Bury Your Gays" is an uncomfortable trend that normalizes the idea that only a straight relationship is capable of surviving the passage of time. Queer relationships in most popular media almost always end in tragedy: one or both parties are killed off for shock value, usually after the pair have become lovers.

The terrible message this sends is that queer relationships are forbidden, and can never be happy. It also risks traumatizing demographics that already face a lot of micro-aggression and violence for simply wanting to exist.

In the same vein, turning a queer character into a convenient sexual awakening serves the idea that queerness is merely a phase, or is "unnatural" compared to the straight, binary status quo. Codifying queer people as hypersexual creatures aggravates this, while ignoring the fact that gender and sexual preferences are spectrums. Asexual people exist, and the lack of sexual desire does not make someone less human.

Give your queer characters the entire range of human experience. Some are heroes and some villains; they struggle just as anyone would, but they also know joy and have a place in the world.

EVIL AND VILLAINY

Some actions are simply evil. The abuse of power, the prejudices that are used to justify the oppression and harm of people whose only "sin" in the eyes of others is that they are different or that they simply exist, the weaponization of fear and paranoia, past and present acts of colonial violence. The exploration of all these topics has a place in stories.

Engaging with the complexities of evil in a game can provide golden opportunities for exploration and play. If your playgroup doesn't want to buy into a story that goes into this, it's fine. However, if they do, make sure to have clear parameters for how you'll engage in this as a group.

"BAD GUYS ARE HUMAN TOO!"

We touched upon this briefly in our section on *Coding* (see page 414). Real life news coverage favors criminals who come from a privileged class, whereas criminals who don't come from privileged backgrounds are implied to be evil because they're naturally inclined to be that way.

As a GM, avoid going into territory that has you giving every villain "their own side" of the story. Some popular narratives, for example, have chosen to redeem the heinous or harmful behavior of their antagonists by insisting that they were "only" delivering to others the same kind of harm that was inflicted upon them. The layers of evil may be complex, but there are still some irredeemable thoughts, acts, and behavior. If you spend extensive time exploring how a genocidal villain grew up with abuse, this can move the focus away from the harm they are actively causing, or worse, act to justify it.

GENDER CODED VILLAINS

There's a lot that can be said about popular culture narratives of women wielding their sexuality to get their way with "helpless" men. There are also many stories targeted at children that deliberately associate effeminate or "gay" behavior as evil—or, worse yet, enforce the tropes of "The Evil Queer". It should go without saying that one's actions determine whether someone is evil, not their gender identity or sexual preferences.

Similar to how we need to avoid making a disabled or neurodivergent character's "condition" as their motivation for villainy, we also need to avoid having a female or queer villain's sexuality, sexual acts, or "different" behavior as their defining trait. While we're not saying make all your villains exclusively straight and your good guys exclusively queer, we do encourage keeping in mind that there's a far longer history of codifying villains as women or queer people in stories throughout the world.

THE BANDIT PROBLEM

In a perfect society, stopping crime would be a perfect way to show a hero's goodness. Armed robbery is bad, and you shouldn't take things that aren't yours. Clobbering the bandits and handing them over to the authorities might seem like the only ethical course of action.

However, society isn't perfect. A downtrodden community with no farmable land and no outside relief might result in desperate individuals robbing to feed themselves or their families. Crime may be a symptom of the problem, not the source. Or, to put it another way, morality is for the privileged.

This can be true even if the bandits aren't from the community. Take, for example, the common scenario of "Goblin bandits raiding a human farming village." At surface level, it sounds like black and white morality. But ask yourself: Why are the goblins risking their lives for food instead of farming it themselves, in their village? The goblins came from somewhere. Did they live in the same valley as the humans and were driven out years ago by the farmers? Or did they live in the next valley over and were ousted by their nasty neighbors? Suddenly, the act of "killing half-starved goblins trying to survive" doesn't sound so valorous.

On the other hand, let's consider an example that we've set in Umdaar: a raiding party from the nearby Dread Domain. Their Master is sending the soldiers out to steal from the nearby villages and is hoarding all of the resources. The raiders have more than enough, but they want more, maybe to make sure the peasants know their place or to trade the excess food for weapons and tech. This is definitely a case of the powerful preying on the weak.

That's not to say that you can't add some complications with the raiders or that the heroes can't negotiate. Maybe the raiders are starving too; maybe the raiders are brainwashed by propaganda to think that the loot is helping their own families; maybe the raiders want to quit, but are too scared to do it. This gives the players the option of negotiating with the raiders or integrating the raiders into the community, but it doesn't morally punish the players if they solve the issue with violence.

Framing non-violent options as automatically good and violent options as bad is flawed. Instead, consider the power dynamics that have been introduced in your adventure or campaign. Violence against an oppressive force may be just what is needed.

There are also layers to what we mean when we say "violence". A dehumanizing system that severely limits or removes a person's agency and voice can kill as readily as murder can.

PRIMITIVISM

by James Mendez Hodes

Creating new stories inspired by old pulp adventures gives us an ideal opportunity to move away from the harmful tropes that might ruin your fun if you tried to read Doc Savage or Flash Gordon today. But how and why did those tropes appear in so many media?

We can understand them as part of a European artistic movement called **primitivism**. As Western imperial powers expanded across the world, artists from colonial parent states were fascinated by hinterland societies. Their initially harmless experiments with foreign aesthetic influences soon led many of them to depict "primitive" societies composed of impossible extremes. Some were "noble savages," with a toughness and moral fiber that urban civilization lost long ago, but might regain if colonizers studied, dissected, and commodified savage society. Others were the opposite—perpetual children or ravening barbarians—and Europeans had a "civilizing mission" to repress, control, or reform them.

Their home environments likewise became paradise or hell. The flora, fauna, and terrain itself wanted either to offer up endless bounty or to devour and destroy the weak. Colonizers saw invitations to exploit the former or to conquer and tame the latter. Primitivism applied this same attitude to marginalize non-Western technologies as crude and makeshift, religion as superstition or black magic, and martial arts as the natural talent of "warrior races."

Primitivist art mashed together elements from disparate continents and cultures to create caricatures of "primitive" life, frozen in a mythical past while the West moved forward. Colonizers who spent time in them with too much sympathy or too little integrity might get seduced, twisted, and corrupted—either "go native" or be cursed with some ableist stereotype of mental illness for their failings.

These artworks had little to do with the reality of Indigenous or wilderness living. Instead, they contrasted with how colonizers saw themselves: sophisticated, advanced, complex, in control of their own destinies, but lowkey anxious about their own weakness. Primitivist art, from classical ballet to newspaper comics, attracted vast crowds and profits. When most Europeans thought of Africans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, or Indigenous Americans, they first thought of misrepresentations, not what those groups said about themselves. Those misrepresentations morally justified exploitation and violence against their subjects and the planet itself.

You're probably thinking, "Wait, that's not what I think! I just like old cartoons and I thought a jungle adventure with dinosaurs sounded fun." Me too! But I still need to take care to avoid the primitivist clichés that were so common when I was growing up. Fortunately, those clichés mostly cause harm (and boredom) when they're something you do all the time, or when you only ever show the most exaggerated versions of a thing. Try working with these principles:

- Depict an exciting, dangerous, and bountiful wilderness rather than an endless source of resources, an existential threat to be subjugated, or a malevolent force that gives you mental illness if you screw up in the woods.
- Depict diverse personalities and moralities spanning the full range between nobility, innocence, and wickedness. If you introduce a character who tends toward an extreme of characterization, reflect on and adjust your portrayal as you go. Make your next character different.
- Depict religion as a common, valuable part of practitioners' lives, with different characters engaging—or not—with religion at different levels. If you introduce a religious extremist or ideologue, make extra sure they don't start to embody primitivist stereotypes, or other stereotypes about irrational superstition or ritualized bloodthirst sometimes used to marginalize a religion.
- Populate the world with people who need the PCs' help, but don't render those people helpless without external interference. The PCs solve problems with them, not for them.
- Show creative uses of natural and handmade materials to solve technological problems, even if they didn't come from a mine or factory. If you can't think of any, contact a crafty friend and let them infodump for 20–30 minutes about basketry or plant dyes or whatever their special interest is. They'll like you better and you'll have a cool detail to put in the game.
- Introduce martial or military traditions or chivalric codes as elements of culture rather than inborn traits of the people. An occasional hidebound traditionalist might be okay, but take care you don't describe everyone in a certain demographic as obsessed with honor and/or violence—at that point, they might as well be inborn traits.
- If you check with your players beforehand and you keep safety tools close (see *Foundation* on page 16), you might introduce NPCs (especially villains) who believe primitivist ideas. If you trust each other a lot, PCs themselves might work through and grapple with some of these ideas during their character development; but don't go there if anyone's hesitant or less than enthusiastic.

GENRE DIALS

SATURDAY MORNING CARTOON DIAL

This is an optional set of rules for adding elements reminiscent of classic cartoons. Incorporate or modify these rules to your group's preferences.

WHAT ARE SATURDAY MORNING CARTOONS?

"Saturday Morning Cartoons" is a term used to describe children's cartoon shows, particularly of a past era, and shown during morning blocks on broadcast channels in North America. Here's a brief history of the rise and fall of SMC's "Golden Age".

With the rise of television came the rise of animation aimed at families and, eventually, directly at children. Beginning in the 1960s and reaching its peak in the 1970s, the big three networks (ABC, NBC, CBS) started programming slots of animation on Saturday and Sunday mornings, eventually settling into a block of animation aimed at children from 8am to 1pm on Saturday mornings. With ***The Jetsons, Looney Tunes, Super Friends, The Flintstones, Scooby-Doo, Space Ghost, The Smurfs,*** and many others, kids created rituals of getting up early on Saturday mornings to watch the bright, flashy, comically and bloodlessly violent stories on their TV sets while eating the sugary cereals sold to them in the commercials between the shows.

In the 1980s, regulations changed and companies were allowed to use cartoons to market their toys, but they also needed to include a moral or educational message. This is how we get the classic ***Masters of the Universe*** cartoon featuring action figures and vehicles your kids will clamor for while He-Man reminds them that they should always tell the truth and stand up to bullies. While ***The Care Bears*** and ***My Little Pony*** had more than their share of merch tie-ins, the characters that most apply for the Saturday Morning Cartoon dial are along the lines of He-Man, She-Ra, G.I. Joe, all the superheroes, Transformers, Thundercats, etc.

By the 2000s, recorded media and cable networks had caught on, and the educational requirements on the traditional networks had pushed most children's programming to public broadcasting like PBS. The age of Saturday Morning Cartoons was over.

CARTOON WORLD ASPECTS

Here are some optional world aspects you can add to your Umdaar setting to make them play a little more like an action cartoon.

HOW TOYETIC!!!

A player can invoke the **How Toyetic** aspect to declare a story detail, specifically if it adds a weapon, vehicle, ally, or location that can easily be turned into a toy. If the GM agrees, the group can create a temporary stunt, or minor NPC to represent this with a free invoke.

Example Aspects

- Scuba Diving Gear with Color-Changing Helmet
- Glowbot Handmaiden Miri with Brushable Hair and Holographic Comb
- Castle Danger, with Talking Alarms and Snapping Drawbridge (Batteries Not Included)

GMs can use this aspect too to create toyetic elements like normal on their own.

Villainous Toyetics

- Glow in the Dark Battle Armor with Energy-Disc Launcher
- Hovering Battle-tank with Missiles that Really Fire
- Pekak the Tracker, with Grappling Hook
- The Vultura-Fortress Playset, with Moat, Pitfalls, and Secret Lab (Action figures sold separately)

LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY

Add a world aspect **Live to Fight Another Day** that can be invoked by players and the GM in a number of ways:

- It can force an attack to miss or graze an opponent when it would otherwise hit (you'll notice in ***G.I. Joe***, it's often hard to hit the target in the center unless it's an inanimate object).
- To keep a hero or bystander from dying (similar to the *Cliffhangers* on page 400). Cartoon villains have a penchant for capturing heroes alive, to use as hostages or to gloat.
- To give an important villain, like a Master or their Lieutenant, the ability to escape. When conceding, villains can invoke this aspect to secure their safety. The players can still negotiate what vital items or clues are left behind.

EARN YOUR CORN

If a player makes a particularly corny joke in response to the action—e.g., causing an opponent to fall off a ledge while quipping, "I didn't know you were FALLING for me!"—you can reward the player with a fate point. This can also be used if a character takes a moment to explain a valuable lesson for the kids in the background, such as "We COULD take the Orb while the king's asleep, but that would be stealing, and stealing is always wrong!"

MINI-MASTERS

Unlike the default setting of Umdaar (with the Masters in control of most everything), your world may be more idyllic. Most of the year, the communities of Umdaar are peaceful, with their citizens having full rights and full bellies. The Masters are there to shake this up by launching blitz attacks against border towns, planning secret heists, and tricking peaceful nations to war against each other. In this sense, Masters may behave less like Evil Warlords, more like comic book supervillains—hiding in secret lairs, with followers in the low hundreds instead of thousands.

PLOT SEED

The smallest continent in Umdaar is the continent of Satoo; an area that used to be under the watchful eye of the Demiurge goddess, Satoordei. It is said she suffered the loss of a loved one and then created an artifact that is powerful beyond compare—this relic watches over the continent, shielding both the good and wicked from harm. She is gone now, but is still remembered as the Patron Goddess of Protection and Mourning. The relic has been lost for centuries, but it seems as though it's still intact. Even under the tyrannical control of the Masters, the death count is surprisingly low, and disease is infrequent—it's almost as if the cartouche stays a warrior's hand from killing, or convinces a Master to take their opponents alive rather than execute them. However, if a Master can find her engraved tablet, they could break the spell and unleash a massacre upon the continent. Who will be the first to uncover the Satoordei Mourning Cartouche?

LETHALITY DIAL

Most action adventure stories don't really deal with lethality—the bad guys stay down for whatever reason, while the good guys get back up. They might be hurt, but the plot implicitly keeps death off the table for the protagonists while simply ignoring the issue for the antagonists. If you want to explicitly make your game nonlethal, here are some ways to do that.

Of course, the simplest way to prevent your Champions from killing people is to have the henchmen not be alive in the first place! See *Mindless Henchmen* on page 359.

Consider introducing *Lunula* on page 214. If the Countess can be recruited, she can provide a place to imprison dethroned Masters without the need to kill them.

For ways to make lethality matter in your game, see *Price of Freedom* on page 429.

NONLETHAL WEAPONS

Have each Champion start the campaign with a powerful magical artifact. These provide a stunt bonus like normal (e.g., an axe stunt has Weapon:1).

However, by default, all attacks made from the magical artifacts are nonlethal. This means that no matter how hard a PC swings a hammer at an opponent, the worst that can happen to the target is them being stunned, knocked out, or suffering minor injuries. Yes, being knocked unconscious constitutes a risk of brain damage in real life, but as this is frequently ignored in fiction, we're going to ignore it here too. It feels less egregious than ignoring death.

NONLETHAL ENEMIES

Consider giving the villains nonviolent weapons as well. For example, old cartoons are full of "Freeze Rays" and "Ray Guns."

PLOT SEED: THE SAPPHIRE SENTINELS

Ages ago, the Goddess of the Forge Sa'al'a created seven magical torques, each bearing a rune-inscribed sapphire. If it is worn by a warrior of strong will who believes their cause is just, it manifests a powerful weapon, made of solidified energy, taking a shape unique to the wielder. Can the Sapphire Sentinels find the missing Sapphires before they're claimed by the fallen sentinel, the Ruby Ruler?

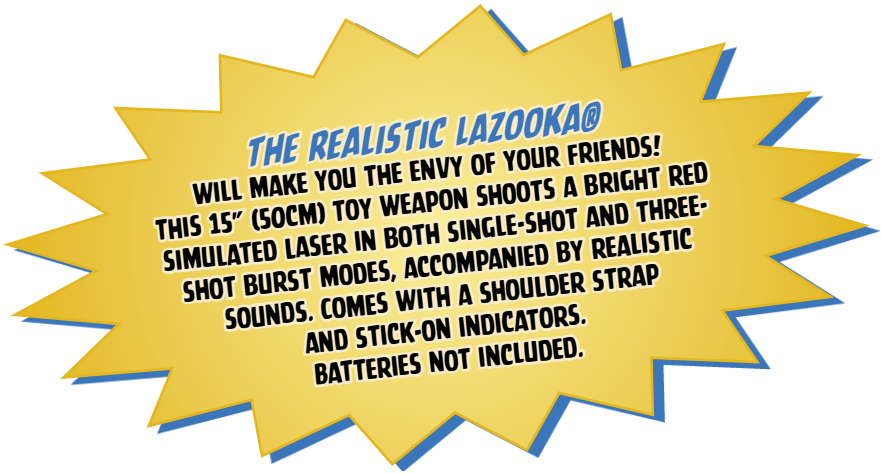
STUN MODE OFF

To add more depth, you could add an extra option: a warrior may **intentionally and deliberately override** this safety feature. This doesn't automatically increase the artifact's power, but it does gain the aspect, **No Safeties** which can be invoked or compelled as normal.

This lethal/nonlethal switch means that the stakes of any action a player takes, by default, are reversible—they might bonk an innocent person on the head, thinking they're an enemy, and suffer short term consequences (like a KO). However, through action and reflection, the Champions can attempt to make amends.

However, if a warrior truly intends to kill, they have the ability. Such an action should not be done lightly and not without consequences! If a Champion's motivation is vengeance, this is a great opportunity to offer compels to a player, to test the limits of their self-restraint.

If a PC does kill someone in cold blood, this would be sure to affect their reputation (see the *Banner Sheets* section on page 452).



SETTING DIALS

Here's a few dials you can turn (or in some cases switches you can flip) to change some of the assumptions about the setting for your ***Umdaar*** game.

PRICE OF FREEDOM

Want to make the flame of hope a bit dimmer? Consider adding some of the following elements.

Before you commit to making things grimmer just for the sake of being grim, we encourage you to review the *Game Worksheet* on page 19 and *Interrogating Old Stories* on page 414, particularly *Erasing the Other* and *The Bandit Problem*, and ensure you're not bringing in tragic elements that players aren't comfortable with or that glorify harm.

World Aspects to consider: **Sometimes Surviving is a Victory; Winning is Quick or Painless, but Not Both; What Doesn't Kill Me, Makes Me Stronger**

Price of Freedom is best suited for desperate situations; for this reason, it's an ideal match for Rebel campaigns (see page 33). It plays upon several themes: High Stakes, Sacrifice, and Ethics.

HIGH STAKES

A Price of Freedom game shouldn't be afraid to set very high difficulties—as a campaign continues, experiment with stepping up the enemy rating or the scale (see page 442) until you have a solid estimation of what's easy, what's challenging, and what's impossible. If the PCs attempt to do the impossible, as a courtesy let the players know the odds before they commit.

> Five warriors want to take on an army of thousands; the GM lets them know that the difficulty is too high for them to succeed, and all they'll be rolling for is how badly they lose.

To raise the stakes higher still, we recommend death is on the table for Champions. This makes conceding very important.

Suggestion: Don't play with the nonlethal weapons dial. This doesn't mean that every time you take an opponent out of action, they automatically die; however, in some cases, the players may have a higher body count than they intended. For example, "death" can be a valuable success at a cost or a compel. Some examples:

> The warriors want to stun a guard, so they can question her and steal her clothes. However, the blow fell too hard, and the guard is struck dead. Now you have no answers and a bloody uniform!
>
> You must infiltrate the palace of an ally. After a failed stealth roll, you are ambushed by a group of palace guards. The party takes the opponents out as gently as possible—however, the GM offers to compel the aspect, **Don't Know My Own Strength** and one of the guards is dead. Now you've killed an allied soldier and risk an international incident!

SACRIFICE

With Price of Freedom, the players won't find a lot of win-win situations. Not every victory comes at a cost, but many victories will make you choose.

This isn't the same as Grimdark, which says "you can't save *anyone*" and "all decisions are equally bad." Rather, in a Price of Freedom adventure, you may not be able to save everyone, and your decisions are between bad and worse.

> The invading Sca'reavers are attacking to the North and the South. Do you reinforce the garrison and help the brave soldiers there, or escort the fleeing villagers to safety?

While quandaries like this are a foundation of this dial, they should be used in equal proportion with more standard adventures. If a campaign is just an endless series of trolley problems, it will be very predictable and soul-crushing.

Of course, sometimes sacrifice means the death of a Champion or a well-established NPC. If players ever find themselves unable to save the day (e.g., they couldn't stop the doomsday machine in time; the ruins self-destruct), a Champion or NPC can sacrifice themselves to be the ultimate succeed-at-cost, making sure all others survive. If a PC is unsure what to do next, ask the players if they want to continue (with the player creating a new character) or want to retire the party and start anew in the postgame phase.

Sacrifice doesn't always mean death. A sacrifice can be losing reputation, a friendship, a childhood home, a library, or a Champion's art studio. These things are important, but they can be rebuilt, while an innocent life can't.

ETHICS

Perhaps the strongest part of the Price of Freedom is that it doesn't let the Champions get away with making flowery speeches about "goodness"—it puts their values to the test. The GM should maneuver the players into situations where they are forced to make decisions about mercy, justice, and ambition:

- **Mercy:** An enemy is at your mercy. Do you take them as a prisoner? What if you are behind enemy lines, and taking prisoners alive is a huge handicap? Who is the aggressor: did they invade your castle, or did you invade theirs? How old is the enemy? How high ranking? What if they beg for mercy, or defiantly refuse it?
- **Justice:** A group of refugees ask for shelter. However, you find evidence that they are deserters from a Master's army. Do you welcome them? Punish them? Take them as prisoners of war, to be exchanged back to a Master, who will likely kill them? How does your judgment change if the Master is still active versus a Master who was just toppled?
- **Ambition:** By circumstance, you have safely captured a Master's young children. Do you kill them to avenge the many children killed by the Master (an eye for an eye)? Do you leave them alone? Do you threaten to hurt them for leverage, and could you follow through if you had to? What if one of them is older? A teen? A young adult? At what age do they stop being "innocent"?

While Price of Freedom is great for Rebel campaigns, the ethical situations are just as interesting in Dignitary campaigns. Nobles may preach to rebels about "righteousness," but do they uphold it when they're in a tight spot? Scenes like these can cause princesses to gain new sympathy with their morally-gray rebel allies and "common criminals." They might see that high morals are a luxury that only the privileged can afford.

LOST IN SPACE

While the default setting for Umdaar doesn't connect it to our world, our Planetary Romance Toolkit would be incomplete if we didn't cover one of the most common tropes: An average Earthling transported through time or space to a strange planet! Similarly, it might involve an offworlder seeing the planet with fresh eyes (like ***Thundercats***'s space cop, Mandora the Evil Chaser).

Here are some ways to include this trope:

- **New Aspect: Stranger to Umdaar** This can be used by an Earthling or other offworlder to look at the world through fresh eyes and see things others might not, or be compelled to misunderstand or underestimate the danger of Umdaar.
- **Reintroduced Skill:** Academics. In a default ***Umdaar*** setup, Academics and Lore are compounded, as science and myth strongly overlap. However, if you want to distinguish an intellectual from Earth from an Umdaarian intellectual, add Academics back on the list. An Earthling might have Academic skills in medicine, physics, and politics, but would be ignorant of Umdaarian Lore, such as myth, history, magic, and Demiurge tech.
- **New Stunt:** Earthling Ingenuity. You're an expert at some field of Earthly studies such as chemistry, physics, or electrical engineering. Once per session you can apply your Earth knowledge to create a novel solution to a problem or answer to a question.

If multiple PCs are from Earth, add the new World Aspect:

- **Far from Home:** Compel to make the PCs feel lost or overwhelmed or force them to take dangerous risks to get home.

CONNECTING VISITORS TO UMDAAR

To avoid tropes about civilized outsiders solving the problems of a foreign place, make sure to connect your visiting characters to the world so they aren't complete outsiders.

Consider adding an aspect describing how they were first lent aid or saved from catastrophe by a community and welcomed in. After your first adventure, skip ahead a few months—the offworld PCs are still unfamiliar with most of the continent and the tech, but have put down some roots and have bonded with at least one community.

PUTTING THE PLANET IN PLANETARY

Want more planets in your Planetary Romance? Here are some ways to introduce that.

Use the same rules for creating a continent, but instead pick a different astral body for each site. We recommend using myth to inspire each astral body (just as myths shaped how we see our planets today).

Examples:

- **Lur, the Silver:** Largest moon of Umdaar (spinning)
- **D'baka, the Mysterious:** The second largest moon (tidal locked)
- **Sleeza, the Treacherous:** The green (potentially false) moon
- **Chronatur, the Hungry:** Purple gas giant
- **Rogo, the Rogue Planet:** Base for interplanetary invaders
- **The Stolen Moons:** Seven moons stolen by the Aethernasts, rich in treasure
- **The Nega-Sun:** A star at the edge of the solar system, spewing anti-light.

The Champions will need a way to get around. See *Smooth Rides* for some easy ways to handle travel (page 219).

OPTIONAL RULES

These are a few optional or alternative rules you can decide to use in your game.

ALTERNATE RELATIONSHIP CREATION

Here's an alternate way to set up relationships between the Champions, which is reminiscent of pulp serials and Saturday Morning Cartoon shows (and, coincidentally, one of the first Fate settings: ***Spirit of the Century***).

Each character gains two relationship aspects. One from the player's character sitting on the left and one from the right. Create each aspect this way:

1. Create a short story describing a previous adventure the two characters shared. It might have been the first time they met, the first time they did a mission alone, or just the first time they learned each other's personalities. Work together to think up a dynamic threat the two of you faced.
2. Have both players each roll a single fate dice to see how you did on that adventure:

Both Dice	Mission Results
[−][−] or [−][−]	Your mission ended disastrously! Do you blame each other? Did you learn a valuable lesson? Are you bound in secrecy to hide your mutual mistakes?
[+][−]	One of you was rescued by the other. Are you grateful? Are you strangely resentful of the fact?
[ ][ ]	Each character started the mission with one opinion of the other, but their opinions radically changed by the end. What hidden side of their personality was revealed? Are you closer or further apart? Did your ideologies match or clash?
[ ][+] or [+][+]	The mission was a huge success, with each of you showing off amazingly. Describe the amazing feats you accomplished and how. Do you see each other as equals? Do you put each other on a pedestal or see each other as rivals?

After you've created a short story together (a few sentences aloud are fine and maybe a catchy episode title), both players create a relationship aspect for their character describing your opinion of the other. This can be a literal callback to the adventure (**I Owe Derro for Saving Me From the Invasion of the Fire Ants**; **Thanks to P'ga, I Still Have this Scar**; **Got Dirt on Red and She Has Dirt on Me**) or something more general (**Geccana Cares for Me Like a Mother; I Will be Stronger Than Mentak!**).

CONDITIONS

Conditions are a substitute for consequences. Conditions serve two purposes: they take some pressure off the players and GM to figure out names for consequences and they allow you to shape the nature of your game by pre-defining the ways lasting harm befalls characters.

The Fate Condensed version of conditions takes each consequence level and splits it into two conditions of half the value.

[1] Hurt (Mild)	[1] Scared (Mild)
[2] Injured (Moderate)	[2] Shaken (Moderate)
[3] Wounded (Severe)	[3] Demoralized (Severe)

These correspond to physical and mental states—but just because you've taken a physical hit doesn't mean you can't also mark a mental condition, and vice-versa, so long as it makes sense. Attacks are traumatic!

Conditions are recovered just like consequences, based on their severity.

If you gain an additional mild consequence, instead gain two more boxes on either Hurt or Scared, as appropriate.

OTHER VERSIONS OF CONDITIONS

Several other Fate games use conditions instead of consequences. Feel free to adapt their implementation instead of this one if it better suits you. Each one achieves much the same purpose for the game: reducing pressure to figure out consequence aspects on the fly and guiding the nature of the game by limiting the kinds of lasting harm characters can take.



ALTERNATIVE SKILL LISTS

When building your implementation of Fate, the first thing to think about is whether or not you'll keep the same skill list. You can often work with the one given, combining, changing, or splitting apart a few of the skills if needed. However, if the granularity of the default skill list isn't to your liking, here are some things to consider:

- The default skill list in ***Umdaar*** has 18 skills, and players rate their characters above the Mediocre (+0) default in 10 of them. If you change the number of skills, you may want to change how the ratings are allocated.
- Our default skills are focused on answering the question "what can you do?"—but your list doesn't need to follow in line with that. You might want a list focused on "What do you believe?", the question "How do you do things?" (see approaches in Fate Accelerated), job roles in a crew of grifters and thieves, and so on.
- Skill ratings in Fate are structured to support character niches. That's why, by default, players start with a "pyramid" shape. Make sure niche protection is possible in whatever new list you create.
- The best starting skill should come in around Great (+4). You can alter this up or down as you see fit, but keep an eye on what that means for the difficulty and opposing skill ratings your PCs will face.

> Fred's group decides they want to do a space-faring ***Umdaar*** hack with a shorter skill list focused on action words. They settle on a nine-item skill list: Fight, Know, Move, Notice, Pilot, Sneak, Speak, Tinker, and Will. They also like the idea of a "diamond" shape for skill ratings rather than a pyramid, so they have players rate their starting skills as follows: one at Great (+4), two at Good (+3), three at Fair (+2), two at Average (+1), and one at Mediocre (+0). Their PCs will have a lot of overlap and core competencies due to the fat middle of their diamond while still enjoying some niche protections from the top of the diamond's "point."

DIY SKILLS

When in doubt, if you really need a skill, just create it.

For example, if you want a Musician character who's good at Performing but is terrible at Rapport, your group can decide to add a Perform skill to the list. Simple as that!

On the flip side, resist the urge to subdivide TOO much. For example, you could create a skill for Cooking or Composing, but the Crafts skill works just fine (with possibly a stunt that boosts cooking-based-crafts even more).

GMs, it's quite common to create custom skills for NPCs. If you're creating a trap that deals fire damage, why bend over backwards to use an existing skill when you can create a new one, Burn?

That standard skill list is structured around a traditional notion of capabilities in various fields of action, essentially addressing the question, "What can you do?" Other skill lists aren't necessarily the same length, arranged the same way, or addressing the same question. With that said, here are some short skill lists to consider, borrow, and modify.

- **Actions:** Endure, Fight, Know, Move, Notice, Pilot, Sneak, Speak, Tinker.
- **Aptitudes:** Athletics, Combat, Leadership, Scholarship, Subterfuge.
- **Attributes:** Charm, Dexterity, Intelligence, Strength, Toughness.
- **Interactions:** Avoid, Boost, Change, Decay, Move
- **Relationships:** Leading, Partnering, Solo, Supporting.
- **Roles:** Driver, Hacker, Hitter, Gearhead, Grifter, Mastermind, Thief.
- **Themes:** Air, Fire, Metal, Mind, Stone, Void, Water, Wind, Wood.
- **Values:** Duty, Glory, Justice, Love, Power, Safety, Truth, Vengeance.

If you want a longer list, try starting with the default list, adding, combining, and removing skills from it as needed. Instead, you could blend two or more lists from the above in some form.

ADVANCEMENT

The smaller the number of skills in your list vs. the default, the less frequent you'll want skill point awards from advancement. Perhaps allow them only during "power-ups" (page 99), or restrict them another way.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PYRAMID

- **Diamond:** A broad middle that tapers towards the top and bottom of the range, e.g., one at +0, two at +1, three at +2, two at +3, one at +4.
- **Column:** A roughly equal number of skills rated at each tier. If your list is short enough, this might be a line, one skill per tier.
- **Free + Cap:** Give players enough skill points to make a pyramid (or other shapes), but don't mandate it. They can buy whatever, staying under the cap.

COVERAGE

Consider how many skills you expect to be rated out of the total. The default Umdar list has ratings in 56% of skills (10 of 18). The higher the percentage, the more overlap players might have. Preserve niche protection.

FATE ACCELERATED

Did you want to play Umdaar with ***Fate Accelerated*** approaches instead of skills? Here's a handy conversion chart:

Approach	What it covers	Equivalent Skills
Careful	Take action slowly, with care and precision. Line up a long-range shot, move across a frozen lake, translate an ancient text.	Investigate, Will, Empathy
Clever	Use quick thinking and ingenuity. Predict an opponent's moves, crack a cipher, jury-rig a weapon.	Crafts, Lore, Provoke
Flashy	Act decisively with flair and attention-grabbing confidence. Lay out a daring plan, impress someone at a party, act as the bait in a trap.	Rapport, Contacts, Resources
Forceful	Use direct, overwhelming force. Throw a haymaker, shout a cutting insult, wrestle a monstrous beast.	Fight, Physique, Drive
Quick	Focus on speed and agility. Dodge an enemy's blow, win a race, flee from an expanding ball of arcane fire.	Athletics, Notice, Shoot
Sneaky	Act with subtlety, stealth, or misdirection. Sneak past guards, lie convincingly, crack open a locked vault.	Burglary, Stealth, Deceive

Alternatively, you could switch Shoot and Drive, but this version separates the "attack" skills more evenly.

Characters can use any approach to take any sort of action, so long as the player can justify how they are acting in that fashion—it's easy to see how you might Forcefully attack an armed guard, but hard to justify Forcefully sneaking away.

The GM may also adjust the opposition to an action based on its approach. It's possible to evade a roving monster by moving Carefully, but easier if you're Sneaky.

APPROACHES AND ADVANCEMENT

At a minor milestone, you may switch the ranks of two approaches. At a major milestone, you can increase the rank of one approach by one step—you do not need to maintain a column structure. However, no approach may exceed Great (+4).

COMBINED STRESS

PCs have a single four-box long stress track from both physical and mental stress tracks. You do not get extra boxes or consequence slots based on your approaches. Each box can take one point of stress, and you may check as many as needed to absorb a hit.

CREATING AND ADAPTING NPCS

When creating NPCs, aspects and stunts work as normal. Give them stress boxes based on how threatening they should be: major opponents will have six boxes, and minor threats might have just one.

Minor NPCs don't need approaches, just a list of one to three things they are Good (+2) or Bad (-2) at—a basic Minion might be Good (+2) at Following Orders and Bad (-2) at Self-Control, for instance.

More potent enemies can use approaches, but they don't necessarily have the entire set of six—if they lack an approach, they never act in that manner. An animalistic robeast is often Forceful but seldom Clever.

The Pre-Gen NPCs in the adventures can be used largely as is—if they need a combined stress track, just make it equal to the highest value of their physical or mental tracks.

For skills, you can keep their skills the same: it's the easiest option, it won't break anything, and especially for minor NPCs, it will save you a lot of trouble. You can also convert it, using the conversion chart above as a guide and deviating from it when appropriate. Give the NPC that approach at a rating one step lower than their highest skill—if their apex skill is Great (+4), their best approach will be Good (+3). Then give them the two next-most appropriate approaches at the next step down, then two more at the step below that, and the last one at the next step down. If at any point you reach Mediocre (+0), stop—any approaches the NPC doesn't have at least one point in are approaches they will never use.

Once assigned, check their stunts and reframe them to use approaches instead of skills. Try to stay true to the spirit of the stunt: a bonus to an attack might seem like it would naturally translate to Forceful, but the stunt might be describing a Sneaky backstab, a Quick sucker punch, or a Clever maneuver.

CHARACTER CREATION AS YOU PLAY

If players are comfortable making creative decisions during game, they may enjoy creating characters as they play rather than ahead of time. The way characters reveal themselves and develop mimics other media. It's not for everyone, but for groups where the method clicks, it can be a real crowd-pleaser.

With this method, characters start with only a name, high concept aspect, and highest skill. As play progresses and they are called on to use an unrated skill, they can choose an empty slot and reveal their knowledge of it. Similarly, aspects and stunts can be filled in when the circumstances call for them, when a fate point is spent or a bonus claimed.

We recommend this method when creating pre-generated characters for one-shot games. Give the players the basics and let them fill out the rest in play!

EXTREME CONSEQUENCES

Extreme consequences introduce an optional fourth severity of consequence to your game: something that permanently, irrevocably changes a character.

Taking an extreme consequence reduces stress taken by eight. When taken, you must replace one of your character's existing aspects with an aspect that represents the profound change to the character resulting from the harm they've taken.

By default, there is no option to recover from an extreme consequence. It has become a part of the character now. At your next major milestone, you may rename it to reflect how you've come to terms with it, but you can't go back to the original aspect.

> A cyborg Champion can only survive a massive explosion by backing up their biological brain on a hard drive. They survive, but their new body is 100% mechanical, and they will never have biological components again; they change their High Concept to match.

MULTIPLE TARGETS

Inevitably, someone at your table will want to affect multiple targets at once. Typically this requires a stunt, spending a fate point to invoke a relevant aspect, or some condition that makes it possible. Here's a few ways you can handle it.

Selective targets: Use this when attacking with a weapon that makes individual but rapid attacks which are each targeted at individual opponents. The attacker makes one attack roll and divides up the total among all targets.

> Sophie faces a trio of goons and wants to strike at all three in a flurry of thrusts with her rapier. Thanks to an invoke and a good roll, her Fight roll comes in at Epic (+7). She assigns a Good (+3) attack to the one that looks the most veteran, and Fair (+2) to each of the other two, for a total of seven. They each then roll to defend.

Area of effect: Use this when an attack would affect everyone in the area. The attacker makes a single roll that affects everyone in the area.

> Sophie recovered the legendary LazBomb5000. As the Champions flee the Master's castle she throws it behind her at the horde of RaptorBot assailants following them. She gets a Great (+4) result that all the RaptorBots have to Defend against.

TIME SHIFTS

When determining how long it takes characters to do something, you may want to use a more systematic approach to decide the impacts of success, failure, and "at a cost" options. How much longer or faster? Let the shifts decide, using these guidelines.

First, decide how long the task takes with a normal success. Use an approximate quantity plus a unit of time: "a few days," "half a minute," "several weeks," and so on. Approximate quantities for use include: half, about one, a few, or several of a given unit of time.

Then look at how many shifts the roll exceeds or misses the target difficulty. Each shift is worth one quantity step from wherever your starting point is.

So, if your starting point is "a few hours," then one shift faster jumps the quantity down to "about one hour," two shifts down to "half an hour." Going faster than "half" drops the unit down to the next smaller (hours to minutes, etc.) and quantity up to "several," so three shifts faster would be "several minutes."

In the case of slower, it's the same process in the opposite direction: one shift slower is "several hours," two is "half a day," three is "about one day."

SCALE

Scale is an optional subsystem that you can use to represent supernatural beings that operate on a level beyond the general range of capabilities of most characters in your game. Usually, you don't need to worry about the impact of scale within your game. However, there may be times where it's desirable to present the characters with a threat bigger than they typically face—or an opportunity for the characters to punch outside their usual weight class.

As an example, you may wish to change the list to something more suitable to your setting—here are five potential levels of scale: **Mundane, Super, Inhuman, Legendary, and Godlike**.

- **Mundane** represents characters without access to supernatural power or technologies that would boost them beyond the capabilities of humans.
- **Super** represents characters who have access to supernatural powers or technologies that reach beyond human capacity but are still effectively human at the core; e.g., a powerful cyborg Master, a large robeast.
- **Inhuman** represents unusual or unique characters whose powers set them apart from the normal concerns of humanity; e.g., an enemy wearing a Demiurge mech suit, a ruin guardian, a legendary beast.
- **Legendary** represents powerful spirits, entities, and alien beings to whom humanity is more of a curiosity than a threat; e.g., a legendary guardian, a Daemon freed from a Demiurge prison.
- **Godlike** represents the universe's mightiest forces: archangels, gods, faerie queens, living planets, and so on; e.g., a Demiurge, an Elder god from the Phantom Realms.

When applying scale to two opposing forces or individuals, compare the sides' levels and determine who is higher and by how many levels. They get one of the following benefits on any rolled action against their lesser:

- +1 per level of difference to their action before the roll
- +2 per level of difference to the result after the roll, if the roll succeeds
- One additional free invoke per level of difference to the results of a successfully create advantage action

Frequent and rigid application of scale rules may put player characters at a distinct disadvantage. Compensate by generously affording those players opportunities to subvert scale disadvantage in clever ways. Viable options include researching a target for weaknesses, changing the venue to one where scale doesn't apply or altering goals so that their opponent cannot leverage their scale advantage.

ASPECTS AND SCALE

Active situation aspects sometimes represent a supernatural effect. In these cases, the GM may determine that invoking the aspect grants the additional benefit of its scale. Furthermore, a supernaturally created aspect may grant scale to some actions when invoked. It may also provide scale even without an invoke, such as in the case of a magical veil or high-tech camouflage suit; you need not invoke **Veiled** to gain Super scale when sneaking about.

THE THREAT IS A MAP

Anything can be a character in Fate, so why not a map? When the threat is a map, your big bad is so massive that it has zones (page 131) that must be navigated to achieve victory.

As you detail your big bad map, each zone might have its skills, aspects, and stress capacity. Some zones might contain simple challenges that must be overcome to move deeper into the creature. Each zone may take an action as a separate character against the PCs occupying that zone, or in the case of a zone representing a limb or similar, may be able to attack adjacent zones as well. If a zone is taken out by one of the PC's attacks, it may be bypassed and no longer gets to take its own actions, but the overall big bad isn't defeated until the heroes can reach its heart and overcome the final threat.

This method works particularly well if your big bad is a truly gigantic monster but need not be limited to that situation. You can use the idea of treating the threat as a collection of interconnected characters without requiring that the PCs enter or navigate the big bad as a literal map. Used this way, you've got a hybrid between a map and expendable minion armor (page 350)—a hive of characters, after a fashion. Some parts of the big bad must be defeated before the players can hit where it is truly vulnerable, and those parts get to take their actions in the exchange.

Whether you fully engage the map idea or simply build the big bad as a hive, you're sure to end up with a more dynamic fight where the big bad acts more frequently, and the players must figure out a plan of attack that eliminates the threat piece by piece before they can finally put it down.

COMPLEX SITUATIONS

COMBINING ENEMIES, CONSTRAINTS, AND OBSTACLES TOGETHER

Enemies, constraints, and obstacles can seem daunting and hard to keep track. The chart below shows the gears underneath and to help you get a better idea of which buttons on the players you want to push.

There are a small number of choices that go into any given obstruction in a scene and that most of them are binary: the ones you flip will determine who is acting on what, how, and to what effect. Enemies are unique in that they act in different ways that are "on/off" and have both agency and flexibility during a scene.

Type	Subtype	Opposition Can			Heroes Can	
		Inflict Harm	Oppose Progress	Take Actions	Overcome	Deal Stress To
Enemy*		Yes	No	Yes*	No	Yes
Obstacle	Hazard	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
	Block	Y/N	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Distractions	No	No (Only Discourage)	No	Yes	No
	Barricade	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Constraint	Countdown	Y/N (per outcome)	No	No#	Yes	No
	Limitations	Y/N	No (Only Discourage)	No#	No	No
	Resistance	No	Yes (No with key)	No#	No	No (Yes with key)

* Enemies are unique because they can take all four actions, including overcome, and have agency.

Constraints by themselves don't take actions. However, it's possible to have a constraint attached to an enemy or hazard that can take actions.

YOUR MENU... OF DANGER!

Now, if we were to take all of the parts, rearrange them, and spread them on the table, it would look like this.

DANGERS Things that will make your life worse if you take action. ☐ Hazards ☐ Limitations (harmful) ☐ Enemies	DISTRACTIONS Things that will pull you away from taking action. ☐ Counterhazards ☐ Opportunities ☐ Mysteries
PRESSURE Things that will demand that you take action. ☐ Countdowns ☐ Stakes	OBSTACLES Things that will keep action from being effective. ☐ Resistances ☐ Limitations (plot)

Okay. This is cute, but it's just a different categorization, right? Well, yes, but also no. The other reason that I am showing it this way is that it underscores a HUGELY important point: these things are all pretty flat on their own, and for a scene really shine, you want *multiple* moving parts. That grid is nearly a template for a satisfying scene, especially if one draws connections between the elements in the different quadrants.

Aside from pulling distractions into a separate category, it rearranges the elements you already have into something more intuitively usable.

HOW TO USE THE COMPLEX SITUATION HANDOUT

The following is a guide of how to balance the above concepts using the Complex Situation handout.

The sheet acts as a prompt for when you feel like there's maybe not enough going on to make a situation interesting. In that case, just start with what you know.

> Protecting the Town from Dread Domain Raiders is a pretty solid staple, but it's also been done more than a few times. How do you flesh it out?

Start from the objective—**Objective: Protect the town from raiders**. Note: that this doesn't speak to means—it could be done by killing all the raiders, but maybe negotiation is on the table. Maybe the raiders have their issues that are forcing their hand. For some ideas, see *The Bandit Problem* on page 421.

A guideline when thinking about objectives: Frame them in terms of ends, not in terms of means. If you do this, they remain flexible vehicles for adventure in your game, not locked in scenarios that you need to discard as soon as the players inevitably go off script.

So, why haven't the players already done this? Well, there's probably an information component—they don't know where the raiders are, much less when they're going to attack. So, that's an obstacle—**Obstacle: "Raider Lair is hidden."**

What happens if they don't do this? Well, bad things will happen to the town for sure. That's generically bad, and I don't want to devalue the suffering of these imaginary villagers, but generic motivations fall a little flat. We have a similar issue about what happens if they do this. Loot, XP, and similar fungible rewards are the earmarks of an obstacle no one cares about.

So, the answer to this should tie into our game and our connections. The village is someone's hometown and provides the stakes, such as **Pressure: Crops needed for the hive's bonding ceremony**. Brainstorm with your group. Whatever you settle on, mark it in pressure. See *Now It's Personal* for more page 391.

The most obvious threat here is the raiders. They might just be fierce and dangerous. That works, though it's a little boring by itself. Write down **Hazard: "fierce raiders,"** but maybe you don't stop there. We've already considered their camp is hidden—maybe it's also trapped? Protected by a **Hazard: Guard Beast?** Adding **Hazard: "Trapped Lair"** to the Hazard's box certainly pads things out.

But at this point, you're looking at this and thinking, "Wow, I'm really just writing up a slugfest. Is that what I want to do?" If so, think about this in fight scene terms, and start spicing up the hazards list with the raider's secret weapon or maybe some thoughts about the **terrain** around the village.

Or look at distractions and think, "What might make the heroes want to do something else"?

You could just put in a shiny object—an enemy or resource that they're passing up by hanging around this village and waiting for a fight. However, that would underscore how generic is this challenge, so perhaps throw in some potentially fruitful distractions (a distraction is also an opportunity). Maybe something about a different approach to the raiders? What about villagers with connections to the raiders? **Distraction: SECRET TRAITOR!** That idea just brought this scenario to life—the presence of a secret traitor in the town is a distraction that could potentially turn into a hazard on its own. This inclusion gives you a hook to flesh out the villagers and gives them some internal dynamic, especially if there's a witch hunt afoot—the problem might not even be the traitor so much as the suspicion of the traitor.

With that in mind, here's (a compressed version of) the filled out sheet.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">THE OBJECTIVE
☐ Protect the Town from Raiders</td></tr>
<tr><td>DANGERS
How will tackling the objective create risk?
☐ Nasty Raiders
☐ Guard Beast at Raider Camp</td><td>DISTRACTIONS
What things draw heroes away from the objective? (Examples: Counterhazards, Opportunities, Mysteries)
☐ Hunt for a traitor
☐ Raider's secret weapon</td></tr>
<tr><td>PRESSURE
Why do this? What are the costs of failure or the rewards of success? (Examples: Countdowns, Stakes to win or lose)
☐ This is my cousin's Home
☐ Villagers hurt, captured, or driven out
☐ This place has the best cakes</td><td>OBSTACLES
What stands in the way of the heroes being effective at seizing the objective. (Examples: Resistances, Limitations, Barriers)
☐ Raider's Lair location is a secret
☐ Atmosphere of suspicion
☐ Past Failures of town defense system
☐ Dangerous terrain</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">OTHER NOTES
☐ Raiders have gotten past the town's defenses in the past. No one is sure how.</td></tr>
</table>

ADDITIONAL FATE RESOURCES

Looking for more inspiration or tools? Here are other Fate resources to consider, and how you might use them.

SPACE AND PLANETS

Fate Worlds ***Sail Full of Stars*** and ***Aether Sea*** add more complex rules for owning ships and ship to ship combat.

Evil Hat has ***the Fate Space Toolkit***, with in-depth options for generating planets, combat, travel, and much more.

Red Planet is a perfect segway from planetary pulp into interplanetary pulp.

Want to investigate the Mysterious Disappearance of the Demiurge? Consider the Fate World ***Ghost Planets***, and follow the clues to other planets.

Make each community a large space ark ship, using the Fate World ***Andromeda***

Use ***Tachyon Squadron*** to give each Champion their own small space ship/chariot and have them engage in aerial combat.

GENERAL

Atomic Robo: Great resource of super-science, mega-stunts, and running episodic campaigns. Also, for building characters based on modes.

Burn Shift: A resource for emphasizing the Post-apocalyptic aspects of Umdaar, as well as advanced rules for Community interaction.

Do: Fate of the Flying Temple: For running more non-violent characters and more family-friendly elements

Dresden Files / Dresden Files Accelerated: For groups wanting a more structured magic system.

Fate Accessibility Kit: Advice for making your game more inclusive and accessible

Fate Toolkit: Optional rules for more complex magic systems, dueling, modes and more.

It's Not My Fault / INMF I'm Fantastic: A lightning-fast resource for generating characters and dropping them into a story *In Medias Res* (see page 397). Uses *Fate Accelerated* (see page 438).

Knights of Invasion: Complete rules for Siege weapons, and a wealth of alternative Bioform stunts

Masters of Umdaar: The book that started it all! We've brought over as much as we could, but some tasty plot seeds remain.

The Clockwinders: A planet full of magic, ancient malfunctioning tech, and hidden ruins; Umdaar and this setting are cut from the same cloth! You could easily port elements of one into the other (great source for a story arch).

Venture City: Make your Champions and Masters have Power stunts worthy of Castle Greyskull.

We *would* have recommended ***Fate Adversary Toolkit***, but we did our best to incorporate it throughout this book.

We also recommend the Fate SRD website; while most of the information is redundant with this book, it's amazingly easy to search, so it's a great reference guide. Find it at **fate-srd.com.**

DIGNITARY FOCUS

Camelot Trigger: Want Dignitaries to be knights in full mech suits?

House of Bards: Add more drama and internal strife to your Freelands and Alliances

Til Dawn: An advanced way to handle interpersonal drama, as well as an alternate way to track social conflicts.

Also consider ***The Way of the Pukona***, an RPG centered around warrior-women defending their community. This book is a great resource for creating dignitary parties or friendly Freelands that do not parallel Eurocentric societal norms. However, as it is based around real-life Mapuche culture, we strongly caution against using it as the basis for a "strange, foreign community," or worse still, an evil Dread Domain.

REBEL FOCUS

Crimeworld: For rebels who specialize in pulling cons and heists

Uprising: The Dystopian Universe RPG: Turn your Dread Domains into full cyberpunk dystopias.

Burn Shift: Worth mentioning twice for adding advanced rules for weapons and armor.

PATHFINDER AND ARCHAEONAUT FOCUS

Blood on the Trail: Alternative rules for overcoming the wilderness and escorting a large train.

Frontier Spirit: A great resource for Wildernexus campaigns: add more depth to your elementals, and a focus on problem-solving.

Masters of Umdaar: The original book focused more on archaeonauts. (Note: includes outdated concepts like stealing artifacts).

FATE MASH-UPS

Want to introduce other elements into Umdaar? Here are some other genres to mash up:

Behind the Walls: Want your first main arch to take place in a Dread Domain Prison? (Also a great resource for Cooperative stunts).

Fate of Cthulhu: For grittier settings, or for introducing the Voidlords from the Phantom Realms

Gods and Monsters: Want to play a setting as the Demiurge themselves in Umdaar's ancient past? Fun on its own, or for running a "prequel" campaign.

Nest: Mash-up Premise: Children dreamed up a pretend world inspired on their favorite cartoons. Decades later, they realize it wasn't pretend and must go back and save it.

Ngen Mapu: Play as Demiurge, walking amongst the modern Umdaarians, healing the damage they (and you) caused. Also, a great inspiration for games based on challenges, not conflicts.

Romance in the Air: Add romance and travelogue to your Dignitary game.

Save Game: Maybe Umdaar is just a sci-fantasy video game? Or to jump on the isekai anime trend, "That Time I Got Reincarnated on the Planet Umdaar" (works with the *Lost in Space* dial; see page 432).

Secret of Cats: Play as magic cat-people (or even magical companions). Umdaarcats, HO!

So the Story Goes: Play as dignitaries or rebels fighting injustice through storytelling.

COMPLEX SITUATION SHEET

THE OBJECTIVE

DANGERS
How will tackling the objective create risk?

DISTRACTIONS
What things draw heroes away from the objective? (Examples: Counterhazards, Opportunities, Mysteries)

PRESSURE
Why do this? What are the costs of failure or the rewards of success? (Examples: Countdowns, Stakes to win or lose)

OBSTACLES
What stands in the way of the heroes being effective at seizing the objective. (Examples: Resistances, Limitations, Barriers)

OTHER NOTES

ARCHÆONAUTS BANNER NAME _____

Reputation

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ Seasoned Ruin Runners
- ☐ Blasphemous Hackers
- ☐ So-Called Penitent Pirates
- ☐ Wild Conspiracy Hunters

Region

A broken realm full of forgotten ruins.
Pick one Ruin and one issue (or create your own).

- ☐ **The Land of Sleeping Giants:** The realm is dotted with ancient temples that lie sleeping. But they have begun to pop up like mushrooms, or open hidden sub-levels full of secrets.
  - ☐ **Issue:** Why Do the Temples Rise?
  - ☐ **Issue:** Those Who Would Abuse the Power of the Demiurge
- ☐ **The Valley of Spires:** A collection of strange Wildernexus biomes, with little in common except the crumbling spires that touch the sky
  - ☐ **Issue:** Ancient Quantum-Dragons Awaken
  - ☐ **Issue:** The Truth of the Demiurge
- ☐ **Infernia's Shadow:** The continent is swept with religious revivalism, and once-forgotten ruins now become living temples (or fortresses).
  - ☐ **Issue:** The Cult of Infernia Topples Freelands and Dread Domains Alike
  - ☐ **Issue:** Heretical Hackers: Exposing Truths or Undermining Hope?
- ☐ **Ruin:**
  - ☐ **Issue:**

Contact

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ **Sv3n**, Trainer of Heroes, Glowbot and Retired Archaeonaut.
  Fair (+2) Contacts.
- ☐ **Mida Tonguewagger**, Raptorborg Black Market Smuggler.
  Fair (+2) Resources.
- ☐

Core Community

An ancient city, with new occupants.
Pick one or create a Community with a High Concept and Value of your own.

- ☐ The Gale Gliders
  - High Concept: The Flying Magi-Tech Citadels of Nimbusinia
  - Values: Individualism over Unity—Individual Freedom at All Costs
- ☐ Libratopolis
  - High Concept: Antique Ruins Turned Great Library City
  - Values: Reflection over Action—Always Looking before Leaping
- ☐ Gildport
  - High Concept: Port Town of Sea and Sky, Filled with Stolen Treasures
  - Values: Joy Over Temperance—It's All for Me Grog!
- ☐ Community:
  - High Concept:
  - Aspect:

Base of Operations

Likely a ruin or a place of learning.
Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ The Tourmaline Tower
  - High Concept: Warden Community & Place of Pilgrimage
  - Aspect: The Siblings' Healing Powers
- ☐ The Perplexolis
  - High Concept: Ancient Ruin Filled with Hard-light Holograms
  - Aspect: The Producer, a Powerful Story-Obsessed Trickster AI
- ☐ Scrap Station
  - High Concept: A Massive Scrapyard and Research Lab
  - Aspect: Eager Lab Assistants Everywhere
- ☐ Base:
  - High Concept:
  - Aspect:

Local Villain

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ The Skynarch, Cult Leader of the Floating Island
- ☐ Rag-Nator, Ruler of the Blitzborgs
- ☐

DIGNITARIES BANNER NAME _____

Reputation

Choose one or create your own.

- ☐ Respected Agents of the Crown
- ☐ The Layde's Lapdogs
- ☐ Those Nosy Little Nobs
- ☐ Rowdy Upstarts
- ☐ Saving Angels
- ☐ Undisciplined Youngsters
- ☐ Malicious Marauders

Group Dynamic

Choose one or create your own.

- ☐ Polite Strangers
- ☐ Found Family
- ☐ Warring Egos Held Together by a Thread (and Captain S'rah)

Region

An alliance of Freelands, struggling to fight off invaders.
Pick one Freeland and one issue (or create your own).

- ☐ **The Six Nations:** Six democratic tribes that live along the coastline, formed of both long-time residents and new refugees.
  - ☐ **Issue:** If We Don't Unite Before the Masters Do, Divided We Shall Fall
  - ☐ **Issue:** The Alliance Leader Is Dead
- ☐ **The Luminators Alliance:** A union of magic users, rune-priests, and scholars who run their nations from their universities.
  - ☐ **Issue:** The Alliance's Reluctance to Act
  - ☐ **Issue:** The Ritual Book of N'xa Is Stolen!
- ☐ **The Former Freelands of Arrn:** Princesses and knights joined to protect or reclaim their sovereignty.
  - ☐ **Issue:** Cracks in the Perfect Knightly Order
  - ☐ **Issue:** Occupying force of heartless Godmechs
- ☐ **Freeland:**
  - ☐ **Issue:**

Contact

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ **Matriarch Menala**, Bunny-Eared Alliance Leader. Fair (+2) Will.
- ☐ **Scribbles**, Cuttlefishoid Royal Secretary and Page. Fair (+2) Contacts.

Core Community

A symbol of safety in an unsafe world.
Pick one or create a Community with a High Concept and Value of your own.

- ☐ **The Freehold of Insafarai**
  - **High Concept:** Bustling City of Refugees
  - **Values:** Mercy over Justice—All Are Welcome and Forgiven
- ☐ **The Burrow Builders**
  - **High Concept:** Underground City Hub of Earth-singers
  - **Values:** Self-Reliance over Interdependence—The Underground Has Everything You Need
- ☐ **The Wood Watchers**
  - **High Concept:** The Forest Guardians of the Woodland Pact
  - **Values:** Tradition over Innovation—The Natural Order is Better than Any Invention
- ☐ **Community:**
  - **High Concept:**
  - **Aspect:**

Base of Operations

A well sheltered location; likely a fort, royal court, or temple.
Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ **Parliament of Outcasts**
  - **High Concept:** Royal Court of the Queens in Exile
  - **Aspect:** Wisdom, Power, and Grace Together
- ☐ **Castle Lazersword**
  - **High Concept:** Ancient Demiurge Fort, Seat of Sleeping Power
  - **Aspect:** Mystic Advisers Consult on the Everchanging Landscapes
- ☐ **The Blackstone Barracks**
  - **High Concept:** A War Room of Old Adventurers and Generals
  - **Aspect:** Knights Studying from Ancient Scrolls
- ☐ **Base:**
  - **High Concept:**
  - **Aspect:**

Local Villain

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ **Cudgelord of the North**, Vicious Marauder
- ☐ **Feromoaner**, Seductive Cyborg Master

PATHFINDERS BANNER NAME _____

Reputation

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ Vagabond Troublemakers
- ☐ Headstrong Youths
- ☐ Bumbling Tourists
- ☐ Trusted Envoys

Region

A frontier region with multiple Wildernexuses to explore.
Pick one Wildernexuses and one issue (or create your own).

- ☐ **The Obsidian Road:** A vast trade route that once ran through the Wildernexuses, connecting the communities. Now, the road is overgrown and impassable.
  - ☐ **Issue:** The Invasive Sea of Worms Devours All
  - ☐ **Issue:** Will Connecting the Communities Lead to Peace or War?
- ☐ **The Archipelago of Mystery:** A string of wondrous isles, separated by time, magical mists, and piracy
  - ☐ **Issue:** Who Dares Seek the Starblades of Su'ul?
  - ☐ **Issue:** Kaiju of the Deep
- ☐ **The Hidden Canyon:** An idyllic valley is targeted by colonizers and plunderers, and only the PCs can keep them in check.
  - ☐ **Issue:** The Discovery of Wondarium, a Mysterious Element
  - ☐ **Issue:** Dread Domains Invade, Freelands Encroach!
- ☐ **Wildernexuses:**
  - ☐ **Issue:**

Contact

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ **Kyla Kloudsurfer**, Space-Dwarf Junior-Pathfinder and Courier. Fair (+2) Drive.
- ☐ **Djamila Starsong**, Humanoid Head of the Caravan Library. Fair (+2) Lore.
- ☐

Local Villain

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ **Ked the Krusher**, Mutated Orangutanian
- ☐ **Sorpentra**, Scientist Turned Serpent Sorceress
- ☐

Core Community

A Wildernexus that the champions are particularly attached to.
Pick one or create a Community with a High Concept and Value of your own

- ☐ **The Infinite Green**
  - **High Concept:** A Primordial Forest of Colossal Insects
  - **Values:** Faith vs. Knowledge—You May Not Find Knowledge, But You May Yet Understand
- ☐ **The Midnight Plains**
  - **High Concept:** A Savannah of Eternal Twilight
  - **Values:** Truth over Beauty—Blunt Words And Sharp Arrows Are Necessary
- ☐ **Glowing Sands**
  - **High Concept:** A Desert of Radioactive Dust
  - **Values:** Unity over Individualism—Stick Together And You Might Survive
- ☐ **Waste Walkers**
  - **High Concept:** Wandering the Glowing Sands in Search of a Home
  - **Values:** Leave No One Behind—Even if it Means We All Suffer
- ☐ **Community:**
  - **High Concept:**
  - **Aspect:**

Base of Operations

Your HQ, likely a small frontier outpost.
Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ **Obelisk Outpost**
  - **High Concept:** A Bunker Outpost on the Frontier Built Upon Ancient Henges
  - **Aspect:** Robust Shelter Against the Elements
- ☐ **Castleblanca**
  - **High Concept:** Neutral Town of Traders and Runaways
  - **Aspect:** Hub of Trade and News
- ☐ **The Skydog**
  - **High Concept:** Hover-galleon That Sails and Flies
  - **Aspect:** Slow and Sturdy Vessel
- ☐ **Base:**
  - **High Concept:**
  - **Aspect:**

REBELS BANNER NAME _____

REPUTATION

Choose or create **two**.

- ☐ DANGEROUS RABBLE ROUSERS
- ☐ FOOLISH DREAMERS
- ☐ SHADY GRIFTERS
- ☐ MERCILESS BUTCHERS
- ☐ URBAN LEGENDS

REGION

An area controlled by one or more masters, which the Champions are fighting to liberate. Pick one Dread Domain and one issue (or create your own).

- ☐ **The Council of Nightmares:** A loose confederacy of treacherous Masters and the various fiefdoms they control.
  - **Issue:** LOSING AGAINST A UNITED FRONT
  - **Issue:** WHICH NEW CULT IS PULLING THE STRINGS?
- ☐ **The Lazerzone:** The northern half of the continent, which is a constant war zone between rival Masters.
  - **Issue:** CAUGHT IN THE CROSSHAIRS
  - **Issue:** WHO'S SOWING THE DISCORD, AND WHY?
- ☐ **The Haunted Empire:** A region with several lesser Masters, all serving under one Overmaster: Necrokadnezzar, the Corpse King
  - **Issue:** THE INEVITABLE MARCH OF THE SILENT THRONG
  - **Issue:** THE TIME OF THE DARK RITUAL APPROACHES
- ☐ **Dread Domain:**
  - ☐ **Issue:**

CONTACT

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ **Naba Turbosmith**, SNAKE-DOG REBEL LEADER & ARTIHACKER. Fair (+2) Burglary.
- ☐ **The Ghost Scribe**, MYSTERIOUS DEEP-COVER SPY. Fair (+2) Deceive.

Core Community

Home location you are trying to liberate.
Pick one or create a Community with a High Concept and Value of your own.

- ☐ The Icequake Tundra
  - High Concept: A Tundra of Dangerous Terrain and Desperate Survivors
  - Values: Strength over Mercy—Survival of the Fittest
- ☐ Hekaton States
  - High Concept: Hundred Tiny Kingdoms, Tangled in a Knot of Politics and Intrigue
  - Values: Security over Freedom—Spies Everywhere, Trust No One
- ☐ Factoryona
  - High Concept: A Lush, Peaceful Farmland Turned into a Toxin-spewing Factory Town
  - Values: Innovation over Tradition—Before We Rested, Now We Toil
- ☐ Community:
  - High Concept:
  - Aspect:

Base of Operations

A small secret hideout.
Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ The Caves of Chitin
  - High Concept: Maze of Tunnels Carved by Scarabasauruses
  - Aspect: Crisscrosses the Entire Continent
- ☐ The Workshop
  - High Concept: Repurposed Massive Laboratory
  - Aspect: Protected by Ingenious Traps
- ☐ The Cloud-Raptor
  - High Concept: Stolen Replitech Airship, Modded for Stealth
  - Aspect: Fast Getaway
- ☐ Base:
  - High Concept:
  - Aspect:

Local Villain

Choose one or create one of your own.

- ☐ Sparklaw, Hyenan Tyrant
- ☐ Queen of Hearts, Gamester and Master Manipulator

NAME _____

ARCHETYPE _____

Aspects

High Concept (Archetype+Bioform):

Motivation:

Background:

Relationship:

Free:

Impact

Stunts

Pick one stunt from your archetype, one from your bioform, and one from your banner. Yo

PLAYER _____

BIOFORM _____

Skills

_____ ATHLETICS	_____ LORE
_____ BURGLARY	_____ NOTICE
_____ CONTACTS	_____ PHYSIQUE
_____ CRAFTS	_____ PROVOKE
_____ DECEIVE	_____ RAPPORT
_____ DRIVE	_____ RESOURCES
_____ EMPATHY	_____ SHOOT
_____ FIGHT	_____ STEALTH
_____ INVESTIGATE	_____ WILL

Fate Points

Starting refresh is 3.

Refresh:

Stress

Physical

1 1 1 1 1 1

Mental

1 1 1 1 1 1

Consequences

2 Mild:

4 Moderate:

6 Severe:

u can gain additional stunts by reducing your refresh one for one, to a minimum of one.

GAME WORKSHEET

INSPIRATIONS
media, genre, subgenre

KEEPERS
themes and tropes from your inspirations that appeal to your group

DEAL BREAKERS
*topics to **completely avoid***

WORLD ASPECTS
3–5 statements describing the world

CONDITIONALS
***maybe** include these elements, but...*

YOUR BANNER

- ☐ **Dignitaries:** Character-forward, knights and ambassadors
- ☐ **Rebels:** Combat-driven, insurrectionists
- ☐ **Pathfinders:** Meta-creation, wilderness explorers
- ☐ **Archaeonauts:** GM-driven, mystery & myth