Awen

The World Begins With You.

-

Alpha Playtest Document

Step Zero: Printing

To get set up for a playtest of Awen, print this entire document (leave off only this page), and then staple it into sections. Don't staple the reference page in section 1 to anything, though. Section 5, being only one page, also doesn't need staples, obviously.

You'll likely want to print a few added character sheets as well.

Leave the map sheet separate; tuck the situation sheet into section 8 (power plays).

1. Starting Out

A playtest session for Awen will run through the eight sections of this document. To start, someone should take the part of the Guide; they'll be running the group through the process of setup, and then running the group through playing a situation built in section 8 – a quick, faction-based intrigue.

Arrange The Bits

Each player should get a character sheet, and the map sheet should go right in the middle of the playing area. You'll want a pile of six-sided dice, some coloured pencils for the map, and some usual pencils, as well.

About Playstyle: Read This Aloud

When using this system, players can and should speak when it isn't "their turn". They can toss ideas back and forth relating to things others are doing; they can suggest cool descriptions for things that others are doing to make the scenes and exchanges being played out better. They can cheer on their friends, sneer at their enemies, and so on; go to it.

This isn't the same as saying that they should decide to crack jokes at bad moments, or otherwise wander off of the focus of the game itself; quite the opposite. Such distractions are unhelpful, and there's no reason for them, since everyone can almost always have their say about what's happening in the game. The reason players in this game should have this freedom is for two reasons - first, it leads to better descriptions overall, which is pretty important when playing in a system like this, and second, it encourages staying focused.

About Game Balance: Read This Aloud

This game is balanced by the group, through play; deciding when set stake and traits are appropriate or not is the act of balance. If someone is pushing their traits to be useful by 'stretching' them, or similar such, then someone at the table can and should call them on it (gently). Let the person doing the describing make their case, or not. Gamers are smart enough to know when someone's pushing the system; when they are, call them on it, talk it out, and fix it. This may very well mean that this system will see changes in play, as your group decides which options fit best in which situations. That's *awesome*.

The Guide Divvies Up The Map

The Guide will pickup the map sheet and shade out the area for 'water' – most map sheets are 'reversible', and are divided so either part can be water or land. Then, the land is divided up into regions (usually about five). The regions are left mostly blank; those are for players to fill in. The only thing to place in each region at this stage are three small symbols – a triangle, a square, and a circle, in each region. These markers indicate three major locations in the region – but what those regions are will be determined during creation.

The Reference Page

Take the reference sheet, read it out, and discuss as needed so you're sure you've got the very basic idea of traits and boons. Leave it in the middle of the table.

Start Creation!

Here's a quick run-through for the creation process:

- **A Premise** for general kind of action is decided on, as above.
- **The Map** is prepped by the Guide, as above.
- **Kiths** are chosen by players. Heritage traits are placed on their character records, as are Kith boons.
- **Cultures** are chosen by players, and terrain types placed on the map (forest, plains, etc). Regions are named, as are 'hub' communities for those cultures. Culture traits are placed on character sheets.
- **Affinities** are chosen by players, followed by praxes. The way in which these affinities and praxes bind or divide the realm are described, and 'hubs' for the praxes are chosen if desired, whether as new locations or existing ones. Affinity boons and praxis traits are recorded and placed on character sheets.
- **Vocations** are chosen by players, and put on sheets. As they are taken, the players taking them describe how those fit into the world, and how their characters fit them. During this step, players should also ensure that their characters are bound together to some degree – working in the same groups, or the same places.
- **Three Further Traits** are chosen by each player – further vocations or praxes that they possess. These are fleshed out and hubs are placed for each, as appropriate. At the end of this step, all the characters should be in the same location, ready for play to begin.

FUNDAMENTALS OF CHARACTERS: A REFERENCE SHEET

Your choices through creation will set a great many things. The main ones that go onto your character sheet, though, are *traits* and *boons*. So, before jumping in to creation, here are the things you absolutely must know about traits and boons.

A Trait is a word or short phrase with a rating attached, like *Polar One 3*, or *Raider 1*. A higher rating means the trait is easier to use, but not that it is more potent than others. To 'place' a trait, you assign it to a spot on your character sheet; these are staggered by rating, like this:

4: _____

3: _____ _____

2: _____ _____ _____

1: _____ _____ _____ _____

Boons are special abilities granted by your choices of kith and affinities. Each boon is a unique special ability that either applies, or does not. The four most common 'types' of boon:

- **Place Dice** are dice you can add to certain rolls, placed with the '5' up; they count on the roll, but not towards what traits you can call.
- **Assist Dice** are 'helpers' for you, but take no actions of their own.
- **Success Boosts** are bonus successes you get on some actions,but only if you win the actual roll.
- **Injury Blocks** reduce the number of injuries of specific types you take from some exchanges.

More on boons can be found in the *Complications* section.

2. Kith & Culture

Kith Selection

Going around the table, each player chooses a kith; more than one player can belong to a kith. Kiths are 'races' of humans, more or less. The kith a player chooses is the one their character was born to. Players record their kith trait and boon, placing these as desired (they can change the placement later).

A player can state during this step that their character is of mixed ancestry, but favours one parent or another. This doesn't affect the mechanics, but can certainly affect the backstory of the character, and other future decisions. However, a player can't be of mixed ancestry with another kith *unless* that kith is one another player has chosen; only the kiths players choose matter to the game.

Culture Placement: Ancestral Cultures

Going around the table, each player places a culture belonging to their Kith, and notes it's presence in a region; if they place it in a blank region, they should name the region and pick the terrain. This will always be their ancestral culture – the one their ancestors are from. It might or might not be the one their character was raised in. If two or more characters share a kith and culture, then those following the first simply pass on this round of culture placement. Whenever a culture is placed in an already-occupied region, the person placing it should decide how it interacts with those already there, in broad terms.

- **A hub community** should also be named when a region is named; this will be the 'central community' for that culture. Note it on the map sheet (as the square, triangle, or circle).

Culture Placement: Home Cultures

Going around the table, each player states which culture they were raised in; this culture must belong to a kith in play (and is usually your own, and usually your ancestral culture, but not *necessarily*). If the culture is part of an existing kith, but not yet in play, the player may place it. Players record their cultural trait, placing it as desired (they can change the placement later).

Culture Placement: More?

The Guide may call for another round (or more!) of picking and placing cultures from the selected kiths, filling in territory types, etc; this should continue at *least* until all regions are occupied.

Duergar

Duergar are a broad-built, and usually fairly short, people; average height is just under five feet. Skin and hair colours vary from one group to another; a Duergar is defined by strength, endurance, and possession of their strange memory.

TRAIT: *Duergar:* This trait can be called for any roll where the Duergar is trying to resist fatigue, or where they are attempting to move heavy weights.

BOON: *Blood Memory:* All Duergar have hazy memories of their ancestors lives. In predictable, slow-moving situations (*not* combat, or social action outside of ritual), these memories act as a 2-die assistant.

DUERGAR CULTURES include the following (the names are traits).

- **Jeweled Ones** are Duergar that mine and trade, and grow lightless crops. Their affairs are almost all arranged around contracts and money. *This trait applies when dealing with underground issues, as well as engaging in any kind of trade.*
- **Edgekind** are Duergar that live in high hills, as herders of goats and aurochs. They often 'whittle' bits of shale and sandstone to make tools and weapons. *This trait applies when dealing with herd animals, or when crafting stone items and weapons.*
- **Diasporae** are Duergar that serve people of other Kiths. They travel the world, seeking always to expand their experiences, as their duty to their descendants. *This trait applies when travelling, bartering their own services, or aiding other by giving good advice.*
- **Stonewalkers** are Duergar roamers over large territories, hunters and gatherers. They build caern-homes of piled stone wherever they go, and sometimes build stone calendars and grand circular 'star windows' of tall stones in their territories. *This trait applies when travelling, hunting, or building with stone.*

DUERGAR NAMES include: Aranrhod, Blaran, Kadfael, Kadogan, Rhonlynn, Shatrys, Truyr. They make no distinction between gendered names, but if asked for their name, a Duergar may well name their whole lineage.

Ghul

Ghuls are a slim breed of people, of moderate height, with bronzed skin and dark hair; they are unusually warm to the touch. They possess an fairly potent internal chemistry, and have comparatively low needs for food and water.

TRAIT: *Ghul:* This trait can be called for any roll where the Ghul is trying to resist toxins or poisons, to resist starvation, thirst, or heat (including fire), or to create chemical compounds (using their own spit and blood).

BOON: *Alchemical Constitution:* Whenever a Ghul calls on their Ghul Heritage trait, they also gain a placed die, set at 5.

GHUL CULTURES include the following (group names are traits).

- **Spice Nomads** are wasteland-wandering tribes living in tents. They often use spices for trade, preferring them to precious metals. *This trait when engaging in trade, working with beasts of burden, packing, and travel in harsh terrain.*
- **Plenteous Ones** live in plains and woods; with such abundant food, they tend toward large populations, with heavy trade, festivals, and all the trapping of a relatively easy lifestyle. *This trait applies when engaging in trade, hosting entertainments, or making music.*
- **Lifebringers** live in wastelands... But have plans to change that, through careful generational planting, irrigation, soil enclosure, and other similar projects. *This trait applies to working with plants and herbs, with civic projects, and for doing heavy labour.*
- **Scavenger Folk** live under the thumb of an oppressor or in some other culturally broken state. These Ghuls are often reduced to petty theft and to eating carrion. *This trait applies to attempts to resist toxins, perform theft, and to interact socially as a lackey or lesser person.*

GHUL NAMES are a personal and family name:
Male: Aban, Farzan, Iraj, Javeed, Khaya, Maboud, Ramtin, Saiar, Zal.
Female: Asfar, Kiana, Ladan, Mahtab, Sadaf, Sanaz, Tarsa, Zarrin.
Family Names: Sharouk, Iban, Tisroc, Fallan, Calair.

Jotunn

Jotnar are a robust breed of humanity, pale skinned, tall in stature, and resistant to frost. A short Jotunn measures six feet; a tall one seven and a half feet. Most Jotnar are also naturally quite strong.

TRAIT: *Jotunn:* This trait can be called for any roll that Chill Giant applies to, as well as to any feat of raw strength or endurance, such as lifting, carrying, or other work.

BOON: *Chill Fortitude:* When a Jotunn would take injuries from cold, fatigue, hunger, or thirst, the person placing the injuries assigns one less injury trait than usual. This *can* reduce the number of injuries gained to zero.

JOTUNN CULTURES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Ice-Dwellers** are tribal peoples of the tundra. With little to gather, they are almost solely hunters, and fishers if near water. They live in homes build of blocked ice and cut, frozen turf. *This trait applies to tundra survival, to tracking, fishing, and setting traps.*
- **Polar Ones** are cultivated peoples of the ice, keepers of a great civilization hewn into glacier and mountain. They grow gardens in strange vaults and know well the stars of their long nights. *This trait applies to research, gardening, navigation, and making music.*
- **Seafarers** a have taken to the ocean, whether they live on islands or shores. They harvest both aquatic creatures and plants from the water, and have exceptionally good balance. *This trait applies to sailing, fishing, navigation, and balancing on precarious surfaces.*
- **Thawed Ones** have remained on the hills and plains left behind after the ice has long departed. They grow crops, and toil with their hands to tame the fertile lands that they occupy. *This trait applies to long labour, farming, and getting along in common company.*

JOTUNN NAMES include: Alfr, Askr, Bolvar, Frea, Jantrun, Heidrun, Hel, Idunn, Njell, Svan, Sigr, Torvrun. Jotnar use surnames based on the name of their same-gender parent. Alfr Bolvarson is thus Alfr, so on Bolvar. Fjell Readotr is Fjell, Rea's daughter.

Striga

Striga are both thin and relatively short, with olive skin, dark hair, and golden eyes. Striga also have extraordinarily heavy fingernails, and many practice at fighting unarmed with these as aid.

TRAIT: *Striga:* This trait can be called for any roll where the Striga is attempting to perceive or spot things, as well as to exchanges where they are attacking unarmed with their near-claws.

BOON: *Owlkind:* When a Striga calls on their Striga Heritage, they gain an added place die, set to 5.

STRIGA CULTURES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Night Lords** build tall, tower-like keeps up in the hills, ringed by fertile and tidy fields. There, they study the natures of spirits and of magic, which they use for the great majority of tasks. *This trait applies when using magic, and dealing with spirits, god, or the like.*
- **The Unseen** are a sedentary herding folk who live in low-built open-plaza towns atop tall plateaus; they manage their herds mainly by night, and drive off the unwelcome through snap attacks and similar tactics. *This trait applies when working with animals, when concealing people or places, and intimidating others with tricks.*
- **Carved Ones** are tribes of hill-dwelling fishers, hunters, and gatherers that, at adulthood, carved ones reinforce their nails with metal and bone. *This trait applies when tracking, waiting in ambush, or fighting with your claws.*
- **Oathbanded** are mountain-dwelling herd-keeping folk. They are bound in tight units by crafter's oaths of all kinds – shifting miniature guilds, each with their own unique, self-reliant steading built to suit their skills. *This trait applies when working with animals, crafting with wood or metal, or understanding contracts.*

STRIGA NAMES include: Azao, Akala, Cuzia, Dali, Jaka, Jif, Kozma, Raddia, Siffi, Tiri, Trika, Virko, Valia, Zad, Zakia. Male names end with 'i', 'a', or 'ia'; female names are truncated (Virk, Zak, and so on). Names ending with 'o' or 'io' are androgynous.

Tuatha

Tuatha are well-formed people, tan and smooth-skinned. For the most part, the Tuatha who others are familiar with are the youngest of the race; the prowess and powers of Tuatha who survive to notable ages are often matters of story and song.

TRAIT: *Tuatha:* This trait can be called for any roll to made to heal your own physical injuries, or to resist age, as well as to exchanges where a pleasant appearance or fair voice would be an asset.

BOON: *Regeneration:* A tuatha gains a place die on any roll made to heal their own physical injuries or to resist age.

TUATHA CULTURES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Immortals** have tamed entire forests into secure mazes. Testing the limits of their ageing, these societies are cautious about the security of their elderly – often to the point of paranoia. *This trait applies when attacking from ambush, navigating mazes, and forest survival.*
- **Green Hunters** are wanderers formed into kin groups and hunting with bows. They tend to have seasonal camps within their area, and move among them as the weather changes and the creatures that they hunt move about. *This trait applies towards all outdoor survival, use of a bow, and tracking.*
- **Sun Dancers** are tribes that live in brutal environments, and who have come to glorify their own abilities. They hunt, trap, and keep gardens. They are best known to outsiders for their trials of will, ritual self-tortures undertaken for social and spiritual purposes. *This trait applies when resisting physical injury, engaging in outdoor survival, or performing or resisting torture.*
- **Pleasurekind** have fallen under the rule of some other group. With their naturally better-than-usual appearance, even in hardship, Tuatha almost inevitably end up in personal service, including as concubines and prostitutes. *This trait applies when engaging socially as an servant or seducer.*

TUATHA NAMES include: Eavann, Derval, Ealatha, Falaan, Melan, Ossan, Una, Urard, Tanaide, Segnat, Seorlaith

3. Affinities & Praxes

Affinities

Going around the table, players choose affinities (two apiece). As before, multiple players can choose the same affinity. However, in this case, it may be best for each player to have one affinity entirely to their self, and one shared. Players then record affinity boons.

Praxes

Again, going around the table, players pick and describe one praxis for each of the affinities they possess– ways that their cultures handle the things an affinity is related to. When they do so, they should also note where that praxis is centralized in the culture, and note that on the map sheet (under 'this location is a hub for'). After noting the praxes they gained in early life, taking another trip or two around the table to place hubs for other praxes related to those affinities (which characters still might learn, at the end of creation) can be helpful in fleshing out the cultures set down.

On Praxis Hubs

When you're placing a 'hub' for a praxis, you can either place it in a cultural community, or pick a map marker that hasn't yet been used. When choosing a fresh marker, take a moment to think about what that site will be. It doesn't have to be a community – a hostile and deadly grove that acts as a hub for primal spirits is just fine.

Questions From The Guide

The Guide may wish to ask questions whenever a praxis is chosen and linked to a culture, either for that player to decide or for the group as a whole. Some examples:

- How common is this affinity and this praxis in this culture? If it's common, is it industrialized, or central to the culture in some way?
- How are practitioners of this praxis organized? Are they a religious faith, a guild, and so on? Will we be linking them to one or more professions when we reach the vocations stage?
- How are practitioners who trained at this hub distributed? Do most of them stay here, do they return often? Why? What does that mean about the character?
- Are there any props associated with this affinity or praxis as practised here? Symbols, clothing, masks, tattoos, implements?

Abyssal

Abyssals are death-spirits. They might be natural ghosts, distorted and unnatural wraiths, or some kind of 'shepherding spirit'; the group should decide this when the affinity is taken. An abyssal spirit can be send out to plague and curse someone, sent into a corpse to animate it, or used to assist in binding undead creatures.

BOON: *Abyssal Familiar:* A character with an affinity for Abyssals has a familiar spirit; this is a death-based power (a ghost of spectre) that accompanies them, and aids them when they employ abyssal praxes. In most cases, a familiar spirit provides two assistance dice, but the exact application of these can vary by praxis. The spirit is normally invisible except to those with this affinity; still, the player should name what kind of person this spirit most often appears as.

ABYSSAL PRAXES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Cursemaker:** You are part of a legacy of people who send their abyssal companions to seek out and plague targets. When you do this, you call in this trait and any other applicable magic using-traits you have against the same kind of traits possessed by the target. If you succeed, check your successes as if you were 'taking them out of play' – that's how long your companion harasses them for, assisting anyone who tries to harm them, in any way. You can recall your companion at any time, but can only try to curse a given target in this way once, ever.
- **Corpselord:** Your tradition of power exercises the ability to send their familiar spirits into dead people. As such, your familiar spirit is generally embodied as an animate corpse of skeleton, and can assist you or others with it's dice in any way such a being could (but can't aid you in other ways); you can use this trait when it (or another undead) is assisting you in such a form.
- **Deathbinder:** You come from a tradition of abyssal magicians who bind undead to their service. This is treated exactly as if you were a fell binder (see the fellbeast entry), and the subject such a beast.

Alchemy

Alchemy is the ability to wind and combine 'wakeful agents' – natural ingredients that are in some way ascended, blessed, infused with power, or the like – to create powerful goods.

BOON: *Alchemist:* When using any of the praxes below to build temporary traits or place dice, double your successes. You must first win the roll for this boon to have any effect; it just means that when you do win, you gain far more succeses.

ALCHEMY PRAXES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Poisonsmith:** Your alchemical tradition allows you to create poisons and coatings, and you can call on this trait when doing so. Poisons grant an added success if you wound a target (and that success may be used to place a slightly different injury to reflect this, if desired); coatings cause a weapon to ignite, or fume, and grant a place die on attacks. The place die for a coating starts at it's created rating, and degrades by one each time it is used; if used at all, it is lost at the end of the conflict.
- **Apothecary:** Your alchemical tradition allows you to create potent salves and potions, and you can call on this trait when doing so. Each such item grants a place dice when attempting healing – salves to heal physical wounds, and potions to heal mental and spiritual injuries. Once used, they are lost.
- **Death-flinger:** Your alchemical tradition allows you to create grenados and flasks, and you can call on this trait when doing so. These are temporary traits, which allow you to make ranged attacks to burn an enemy with acid, or to set a person (or environment) ablaze. Such items are one-use.

THE DANGERS of alchemical crafting typically involve setting off materials explosively (with coatings, flasks, and grenados), or poisoning yourself (from potions, salves, and poisons) – most medical ingredients, refined and in quantity, can be highly toxic.

Awakening

An awakened person is one whose own spirit has total control over their body. If you have this affinity, you have taken the first steps along the long road to awakening. Awakening may be a religious practice, a meditative one, or a mystical one, as you prefer.

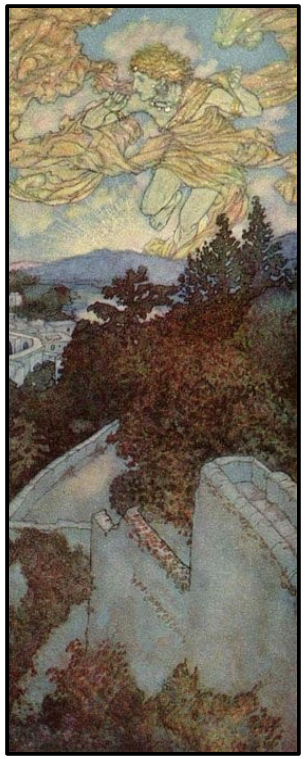
BOON: *Awakened:* A character with this boon can learn to perform feats far beyond the usual human ken, represented as praxes. When you call on any of the praxis traits associated with this affinity, and succeed at the roll, you gain an added success.

AWAKENED PRAXES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Edgerunner:** Your training in Awakening includes control over your balance, and over whole-body movement. You can call on this trait when running, jumping, climbing, swinging, and so on, building successes to get somewhere inaccessible This trait doesn't normally help when attacking to deal lethal injuries, unless you're trying to push someone off a cliff or the like. However, when your athletics would result in a target being winded, pinned, or otherwise taking 'soft' injuries to another, it helps. This trait may also be used to dodge and escape.
- **Stonebreaker:** Your awakened training includes the capacity to strike with your body far more effectively than usual. Anytime you are attacking with your hands, feet, knees, or the like, this trait applies.
- **Steelfinger:** Your awakened training allows you to use tools and weapons just as if they were extensions of your body. You can thus catch a thrown object by hooking it with a staff just as easily as by doing so with your hand, walk on stilts with ease, 'grab' things with a whip, and so on. You can call this trait on any exchange where this ability is directly helpful. In addition, if you have this trait, you can use Stonebreaker (if you have it) with weapons.

RESTFUL is an injury that an Awakened character risks taking if they spend time carousing, living falsely, or enjoying a dissipated lifestyle. Awakened aren't naturally ascetic, but it can be a close thing. This injury can be called against an Awakened making use of their Praxes; it is healed by days of purification and vigil.

Empyreals



Empyreals are celestial spirits that consort with physical allies. Empyreals are synonymous with 'angelic spirits' – they are beings of light, healing, and fire, and faiths that revere them make sense in almost any region.

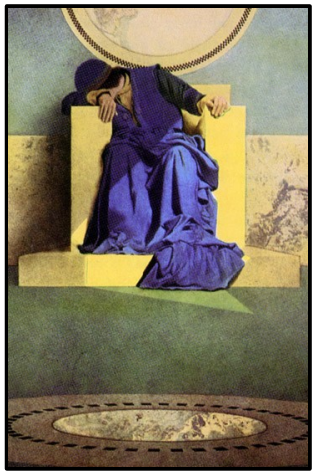
BOON: *Empyreal Ally:* A character with an affinity for Empyreals has an allied spirit; a lesser being that accompanies them, and aids them when they employ Empyreal Praxes. In most cases, an Empyreal ally provides two assistance dice, but the exact application of these can vary by praxis. The spirit is normally invisible except to those with this affinity; still, the player should describe the appearance of this spirit – in general, luminous and mostly-humanlike are the common trait, but strange abstractions are not unknown or out of place.

EMPYREAL PRAXES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Mender:** Your tradition of power practices channelling the power of their Empyreal ally to heal physical injuries by touch. With a few minutes, you use this trait to initiate an exchange against any physical injuries to remove them.
- **Luminous One:** The mystical network you associate with channels their Empyreal allies to surround themselves with heat and light; you can use this aura to aid you in darkness, and can call on it as a means of burning or intimidating others in close combat.
- **Firecaller:** Your legacy of Empyreal magicians has learned to channel the power of their companions to cause fires to erupt within sight. You can use this as an attack, to create fire in the environment, to aid others by distracting and burning foes, and so on.

FALSE-MARKED is an injury Empyreals will inflict on someone who abuses the presence of their Empyreal companion, such as by offering healing and lying. It never takes you out of play, but can be called on by any other Empyreal using Luminous One or Firecalling to harm you. It can only be removed *by the Empyreal that inflicted it.*

The Game Of Runes



The game of runes is an immensely complex simulation of military and courtly affairs, which allows for uncanny insight into those matters, for those that can manage to consider the whole multitude of details that it models and describes.

BOON: *Rune-minded:* You have a talent for the maddening linguistic rules that comprise the game of runes. When you call on any of the praxis traits associated with this affinity, you gain a place die, set to 5.

GAME OF GLASS PRAXES include (the names are traits):

- **Rune-General:** You have an uncanny ability, gained through long play of the game of runes (likely among warriors and those able to relate the moves to real situations), to 'see through' tactical situations. Where you are assisting others in physical conflicts, you can call on this trait.
- **Court-Scribe:** By long comparison of the ways that the game of runes maps and 'encodes' courtly behaviours, you are able to engage intrigues on many levels. You can call on this trait when plotting and moving in such ways.
- **Rune-Duelist:** You are extraordinarily competent at playing the game of runes in itself – not for any special purpose, but simply to win. In places where the game is played for high stakes, whether for money or even lives, this skill can be invaluable.

THE SIDE EFFECTS of dueling with runes are many. In such a duel, each player models their own assets within the game, and the two players engage in a 'simulated war' over stakes. The objective, in rules terms, is for a player to reach a set number of successes first. However, it's entirely legitimate in the course of play to look for outcomes *other than successes*, placing one injury trait on a roll, and then applying the rest to successes. Placing injuries such as 'desperate' and 'enraged' is common. The game includes an array of dirty tactics, and it's possible to lure a foe into dishonoring themselves in front of an audience by driving them to these tactics in the game. It's also possible to drive a foe to despair over their *real* existence by way of their *simulated* existence in the game.

Oathbinding

Oathbinding is a process by which a character is tied directly to a pattern of action. This binding has both positive and negative effects; it can either easily aid or hinder the character.

BOON: *Oathbound:* This boon takes the form of two "Oathbound" injury traits, placed at 9 and 10. When someone wishes to entice you to act against your oath, and you call on your praxis trait to resist them, these injuries are instead treated as *your own traits*, and can aid you. However, if someone is attempting to convince you to obey your oath (even in an insane, life-threatening, soul-crushing, or otherwise awful fashion), they may call these injuries against you. These injuries can never be removed short of death and rebirth, or a similar-scale transformative event.

OATHBINDING PRAXES include the following (names are traits):

- **True-Speaker:** You may call on this trait to resist any temptation to break the following oath: *"Never will I betray an ally, go against my word, plan to deceive, or knowingly speak a lie."*
- **Calm-Keeper:** You may call on this trait to resist any temptation to break the following oath: *"Never will I act from rage, nor from sorrow, nor hate, nor envy, nor lust, nor greed. Always shall I work to keep my mind at peace."*
- **Pure-Bodied:** You may call on this trait to resist any temptation to break the following oath: *"Never will I become contaminated with magic or with it's effects."*

OATHBREAKING, for one of the Bound, can threaten the character with shame, and drive them out of play to renew their vows; if an Oathbound breaks their oath deliberately, the Guide should initiate an exchange with this possible outcome. Oathbound can be incredibly resistant to social and emotional manipulation, and to magic; keeping to their vows is the cost they pay, and the Guide should be merciless in enforcing it.

Primal

Primals are natural animal-spirits that bind themselves to other beings. They exert power directly over host creatures, either for transformation or mastery. Primals are synonymous with 'totem spirits' – there might be a wolf-totem in a forest that is revered by both humans and wolves in the regions.

BOON: *Primal Familiar:* A character with an affinity for primal spirits has one as a familiar; this is an animalistic power that accompanies them, and aids them when they employ primal praxes. In most cases, a familiar spirit provides two assistance dice, but the exact application of these can vary by praxis. The spirit is normally invisible except to those with this affinity; still, the player should name what kind of animal this spirit most often appears as and favors.

PRIMAL PRAXES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Beastlord:** Your tradition of power exercises the ability to send their primal familiar into real animals. As such, your familiar spirit is generally embodied, and can assist you or others with it's dice in any way an animal could (but can't aid you in other ways).
- **Skinchanger:** You are part of a legacy of people who host primal spiritss in their bodies, and use them to take on animalistic features. You can declare that you are taking on such features at any time – when you do, this trait can be called in exchanges where such traits would help, and your familiar spirit may assist you with it's dice.
- **Totem Hunter:** You come from a tradition of shamans tied to predatory spirits, and yours is no different. You and your familiar hunt non-predator spirits, and can bind them to your service for individual, one-time tasks. You injure them with 'binding' conditions, which control them until the task is done, then fade.

SPIRIT-TORN is an injury an insubstantial spirits can inflict on a shaman or other spirit. If this takes a shaman out of play, they fall into a coma. If it takes a spirit out of play, it dissipates for a time.

Sigils

A sigil is a symbol worn by it's creator (often painted on their skin), which allows that character to 'carry' an environmental condition with them, in he form of a swarm of summoned spirits.

BOON: *Sigilite:* If you possess this boon, you can create the environmental conditions that you have sigil praxes for, can direct them to your advantage, and always use the 'easy' costs for building them; they last only for a scene. In addition, you are immune to the *direct* effects of any of the sigil praxes you know (but not to backlash while making them). This immunity doesn't extend to secondary effects; if another sigilite uses their thunder aura to light fires, those fires can burn you.

SIGIL PRAXES include the following (the names are traits):

- **Green Caller:** You are able to draw the sign to call up an Green-Waking Aura, under the effects of which plants around you write and twist. Calling on this trait (and that condition), you can wrap enemies in vines, cause trees to animate momentarily to strike at your foes, and similar feats. You can also sculpt wood to craft items while this sigil is in place.
- **Ice-fog Walker:** You are able to draw the sign to call up an Ice-Fog Aura, a freezing fog that hovers around you. Calling on this trait (and that condition), you can freeze water, inflict frozen wounds on foes, and spawn larger fogs that block sight.
- **Thunder-Handed:** You are able to draw the sign to call up a Thunder Aura, a field of crackling bolts jumping through your clothes and grounding out around you. Calling on this trait (and that condition), you can start fires, blast foes with electricity, melt sand into black glass, and so on.

BACKLASH is the usual outcome that you're fighting against when you build environmental conditions with sigils. This means that the condition you're trying to build will attempt to affect you as you make it – freezing you with ice-fog, sizzling you with electricity as you build a thunder aura, and shaking plants into attacks as you build a Green-waking Aura.

The Steel Sign

The steel sign is a discipline of movement and conflict. Students learn defence as a basic reflex, and several paths of attack, each as it's own art.

BOON: *Steel Defence:* On exchanges where physical injuries are on the line, and you use a steel sign praxis, but *lose*, your opponent places one less injury than they would otherwise (to a minimum of one); if they *still* deal two or more injuries, they must give at least one a rating of four or less, and another a rating of five or more.

STEEL SIGN PRAXES include the following (names are traits):

- **Duellist:** When you are fighting an opponent, and both declared actions (yours and theirs) are close-up attacks, you can call on this trait. If you do so, you cannot accept assistance, however.
- **Team Fighter:** When you are fighting in close combat, and are either accepting or giving assistance, you can call on this trait.
- **Steelbow:** When you are attacking or assisting in combat, with ranged strikes from a bow, you can call on this trait.

THE SIGN ITSELF is a sweeping diagram of arcs and notations, sketched out on the ground, which can be found wherever practitioners study. Those who study it step onto the symbol, and trace it's path with their steps, while moving the rest of their body in accordance with the notations along that arc.

4. Vocations

Vocations

Each player will gain three vocations, which will flesh out the history of their character, as well as varying cultures and peoples. At this point, the 'round the table' setup isn't as helpful; a general scrum of picking things, discussion, and detail-setting is pretty usual.

This stage represents young adulthood (and beyond, if the character is older). When vocations are taken, a player will need to order them into a 'career path', either placing them one after another, or describing how they moved seasonally among them, or both.

As with earlier stages, it can be a good thing for multiple players to share vocations, but it's potentially even more valuable to share *groups* – a smuggler, agitator, and rebel can all be part of the same resistance (for that matter, they can all be the same character). Vocations do not come with boons; instead, each vocation is represented by a single trait which has the same name as the vocation itself.

Vocation Categories

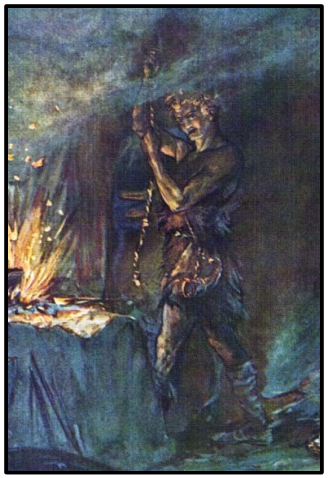
There are six categories of vocation – commercial, conspiratorial, martial, menial, mystical, and political. These categories are used to condense the way the information is presented, and to avoid a long 'shopping list' where things can be easily glossed over. The categories aren't, in and of themselves, the important things.

The Questions

After picking a vocation, each player will need to further define that choice by placing it into the world. This is done by answering a series of questions; the questions given below should always be answered, along with the ones listed with the vocation category and the vocation itself – and other players or the Guide can ask you further questions in the same vein for you to answer as well.

- Where did you practice this vocation? In what culture?
- How did you come to practice it?
- What vocational group did you practice with (in the small scale – your immediate colleagues), and how tightly or loosely were they associated?
- How did you relate to that vocational group?
- What does your relationship with that group look like now?
- What does that group want?
- How did you exit this vocation (if you did)?

Commercial Vocations



The following vocation traits can all be called upon when engaging in mercantile action – buying, selling, negotiating contracts, and the like. In addition, each has their own specialities.

QUESTIONS: *Who did you generally buy supplies from, and who did you sell your services to? Did you have any clients of particular note? Were any of your relationships with your clients significant enough that they're worth noting?*

COMMERCIAL VOCATIONS include (the names are traits):

- **Armourer:** An armourer is skilled in smithcraft – most especially armour, but also weapon-crafting, general blacksmithing, and so on. This trait can be called when engaging in or when appraising such work. A player choosing this vocation should be asked: *Who was using the weapons and armour that you made, and for what?*
- **Chemist:** A chemist is someone skilled in creating and using chemical agents, including dyes, medicines, glues, acids, and combustibles. This trait can be called on when crafting or using such items, whether mundane or mystical (though a Chemist can't create mystical items without alchemy praxes). A player choosing this vocation should be asked: *What projects of significance have you been hired to work on in the past?*
- **Chiurgeon:** A chiurgeon is a medical practitioner, skilled in treating all forms of physical injury. This trait can be called on when working to heal any physical injury. It can be used socially, in a number of situations - "Let me through, I'm a chiurgeon" is a well-respected cry. A player choosing this vocation should be asked: *What class of people have you most often healed – and who harmed them?*
- **Engineer:** These are people who design, build and maintain any form of engine – ranging from waterwheels to siege engines. This trait can be called on for such construction, as well as to use and repair such items. A player choosing this vocation should be asked: *What kinds of engines have you built, for who, and how were they used?*
- **Smuggler:** Smugglers conceal goods (and people), bribe bureaucrats, and sneak across borders. This trait can be called on for all these tasks. A player choosing this vocation should be asked: *What have you been smuggling, from where to where, and why was it prohibited?*

Conspiratorial Vocations

The following vocation traits can all be called upon when attempting to quietly determine if someone is part of the same secret group as you are – or if they're interested. They're also used to give false answers to such enquiries and to *fake* being a member of such a group (even one you made up on the spot).

QUESTIONS: *What secret groups have you worked with? What are their agendas, and how do they hope to fulfil them?*

CONSPIRATORIAL VOCATIONS include (the names are traits):

- **Assassin:** Killers, for pay and politics. Call this trait to set up ambushes, fight in small-scale combats, deal with poison, and move with stealth. *Who have you killed? Why? Who paid or sponsored you?*
- **Cultist:** Adherents to faiths deemed unsavoury or illegal. Call this trait to find local cult circles, speak on matters of faith, and assist in cult mysticism. This can mean assisting use of praxes, even ones you don't have (to perform such praxes, see Heretic). *What kind of people are in your cult? What does the cult believe? Why is it disreputable?*
- **Fraudster:** Shysters, con men, rogues. Call this trait to falsify records of investment, and find and bribe any assistance you need to set up a mark. *Who was your biggest score, and who was your biggest flop?*
- **Rebel:** Those who fight the established system. Call this trait to scout out where the current order can be hurt, to plan attacks, and to organize actions secretly. *Who have you attacked successfully? Who hunts rebels?*
- **Spy:** Agents sent to form cabals and seek information. Call this trait to engage in stealth, to memorize detailed lists, and to plant evidence and frame others. *Which sides were in the intrigues you've been part of? Which side were you on?*
- **Thief:** Burglars, pickpockets, and fences. Call on this traits to lift items from targets, move in stealth, bypass locks and guards, and perform commerce with illegal goods. *What was the biggest heist you've been involved in? What was the biggest slip-up you've made that still haunts you?*

Martial Vocations

The following vocation traits can all be called upon when engaged in physical combat, or when the holder is in a social situation with clear lines of command, protocol, and orders being given and received

QUESTIONS: *Who have you fought for, who against, and where? What happened in that conflict, in general – and what happened to you personally?*

MARTIAL VOCATIONS include (the names are traits):

- **Bravo:** Warriors who also look to put on a show, often including gladiators and pit fighters. Call this trait to attack or defend yourself in audience-affecting ways, or to terrorize you foes. *What onlookers have you sought to influence? Why?*
- **Crusader:** Fighters of their faith, often far from home. Call this trait to discuss matters of your faith capably. *Why is your faith militant? Towards what ends?*
- **Enforcer:** Guard, patrol forces, and criminal brutes, working to keep the rules in working order. Call this trait while moving in your appointed circles to build conditions of peace (or fear). *Whose rules were you enforcing?*
- **Hunter:** Tribal and team hunters, doubling as militia for their peoples. Call this trait when assisting in combat, or when attempting to knock out, drive, or capture a target. *What did you most often hunt? Who else hunted it?*
- **Legionnaire:** Regimented warriors, fighting in disciplined blocks. Call this trait to build camps and fortifications, and when assisting in combat. *What long tradition of war led to the creation of combat groups like yours?*
- **Raider:** Fighters for spoil and plunder. Call this trait to plan and spring sudden assaults, to travel as raiders of your kind do, and to traffic in plunder, buying and selling. *What kind of spoils did you most often seek? How did your group travel from place to place?*

Menial Vocations

The following vocation traits can all be called on when performing feats of significant stamina – standing watch overnight, long days of labour, and so on. They can also be called on to interact social as a servant, tribe member, or whatever status is applicable.

QUESTIONS: *Is this labour considered lower-class, or is it something else? What status in society is held by those who employed you, if anyone?*

MENIAL VOCATIONS include (the names are traits):

- **Apprentice [Vocation]:** Those who have long training towards a vocation. This trait it a bit unusual; when you take it, name the vocation you were apprenticed towards. Call this trait to assist in any of the actions that vocation can perform; in addition, if you also take the full vocation, you can call this trait on any roll so long as you also call the main vocation. *Who was your mentor, and what were they like?*
- **Bodyservant:** Personal lackeys, butlers, and the like. Call this trait to when engaging in close service to another, or when interacting as a servant or with other servants. This trait may also be used to infiltrate serving situations. *Who was your employer, and how were you treated?*
- **Gatherer:** People who harvest foodstuffs from the wild (or near-wild). Call this trait to forage and survive in any natural environment, and to move in stealth in such environments. *Who were these foodstuffs for, and why was it your duty to gather them?*
- **Seneschal:** Those who manage the money, papers, and other dealings of the wealthy or powerful. Call this trait to deal with bureaucratic systems, accounting, or complex mercantile schemes. *What in specific were you managing? Did you assist or discover anything of interest – injustice, lies, hidden assets?*

Mystical Vocations

The following vocation traits can be called upon when engaging in mystical pursuits favoured by the tradition the character belongs to (whether praxes, or rituals for the sake of ritual). They can also all be called on to speak and argue from the authority of that tradition – which can be as substantial as a state church.

QUESTIONS: *What praxes does this mystical tradition favour? Why those? What's the social position of the tradition?*

MYSTICAL VOCATIONS include (the names are traits):

- **Arcanist:** Academic and scientific students of mystical teachings. Call this trait to perform research on mystical knowledge, either in existing texts or through experimentation. *How does your tradition interact with more faith-oriented ones?*
- **Counsellor:** Discrete consultants, ranging from the village elder to the high confessor. Call this trait when healing spiritual, as well as when dealing with spirits that are harassing (or hunting) a person or a place in some way. *What brought about the problems you have been called to dispose of?*
- **Healer:** Those who seek to dispel hurts of all types. Call this trait when working to remove any kind of personal injury – physical, mental, or spiritual. *Who inflicted the injuries you fought?*
- **Heretic:** Magicians whose practices are outlawed (often found in the company of Cultists). Call this trait when attempting to quietly determine if someone is part of the same secret group as you are – or if they're interested. *Why are your beliefs or practices outlawed? Is this a reasonable measure? If not, who benefits from it?*
- **Missionary:** Travellers taking the good word around the world. Call this trait when attempting to convert outsiders to your faith, or when dealing with the normal hazards of travel. *Why does your faith seek to expand? Who have you converted?*
- **Preacher:** Those who maintain and direct the faithful. Call this trait to create environmental conditions based on the public opinion of the faithful, or to prompt those same faithful to give wealth, time, or effort towards some cause. *What have you asked the faithful to do for their faith? Who gained, and who lost, as a result?*

Political Vocations

The following vocation traits can all be called upon when dealing in attempts to inflict or remove injuries relating to reputation, or to create environmental conditions related to public opinion.

QUESTIONS: *What system of politics is used in the place you gained this vocation? Who is at the top of this system, and who is at the bottom? How do the people at the top stay there?*

POLITICAL VOCATIONS include (the names are traits):

- **Agitator:** Outspoken opponents, bent on stirring up trouble. Call this trait whenever you're speaking to or dealing with a large group as if they were a single entity. *What have you convinced crowds to believe or to do? Who was it meant to benefit and to harm?*
- **Courtesan:** Those who use sensuality for both personal and political gain; this may (or may not) include sex. Call this trait when attempting to hook' someone on your presence, injuring them with emotions tied to you, as well as when attempting to fight emotional injuries. *Was there a tradition of courtesans you were part of? If so, how was it tied to sex, gender, and public perceptions of these things?*
- **Courtier:** Those who hover at the edges of power, seeking approval and sponsorship for themselves and the concerns they represent. Call this trait when attempting to obtain a meeting with a person of note, or when attempting to make the agenda you represent a 'hot topic' in local politics. *What interests did you forward, and how were you related to those interests?*
- **Elect:** The local authorities, created in the local fashion. Call this trait to call in favours from your time as one of the elect, or to learn and negotiate based on the present issues that the elect are concerned with. *How did you come into power? What did you do with it, and how was that taken?*
- **Satirist:** Destroyers of reputation, distributors of scandal. Call this trait whenever you're attempting to convince someone to share negative gossip with you, or when using such gossip in a public fashion. *Whose career have you ruined in the past? Did they deserve it?*

5. Creation Wrap-Up

The Starting Location

If players have been sharing cultures, praxis groups, or affinities, there may already be a location that has a significantly higher 'load' of such sharing than otherwise. If so, that might be where the game should get rolling. If not, then the guide should pick a location, state that this is where the game will begin. Once it's picked, do a review around the table of vocations, cultures, and praxes, to see if anyone wants to add a little more to that place.

Each Character Has Three Final Trait Spots

At this point, each character will have three remaining spots for traits. These can be filled by any mix of praxes (for affinities they already have) and further vocations. Taking more vocations typically means that the character is more experienced, while taking further praxes often means either that the character has powerful raw talent, or has spent time travelling and working to explore their powers, whatever those might be. However, there's a hitch!

These Can Only Be Used To Build Common Experience

These three last traits must be used in ways that create common groups and actions between the characters. These experiences don't need to be entirely friendly – two warriors who fought on opposite sides of a war, and earned one anothers respect by doing so? Awesome. Exactly what 'common experience' means is up to the group, but by the end of these decisions, all the characters should be in the starting location, and together – even if they only sat down at a table moments before play began, meaning to catch up after years of seeing each other from moment to moment across their lives.

Broadening Traits With Personality

Once all traits are picked and placed, if the Guide and the group wish to, each trait can be given a one-word descriptor, adding personality right into the traits. So, “Jotunn” might become “Taciturn Jotunn”, and “Thief” might become “Charming Thief”. If this is done, then the style of each character will be far more obvious in their traits. In addition, it can mean that each trait will become broader and much more open to interpretation, which will mean players will top out their dice pools significantly more often. And that's okay! But it's something to be aware of if you go this way.

Wealth & Exceptional Gear

A starting character has 50 wealth. This is an abstract measure, but a universal currency (gold coins, goats, or some other currency or trade good) can be implemented if desired. Normal equipment doesn't need to be bought, and has no mechanics – it's just there. These rules are for better stuff than that.

Buy Effects, Add Descriptions

When you buy equipment, you don't buy an item, and then figure an effect. You buy the effect, and then give it a name, to indicate when it can can can't be called on. This means that players and Guides can create new equipment immediately and flexibly – you can decide to buy an outfit for the masquerade, and have it grant you bonuses, just as easily as you can decide to buy a fine-quality sword. Of course, if what you want to buy is “blackmail material on the Duke”, that's legitimate, but the Guide might make it a bit of a trick to find a seller.

The Effect-Cost Chart

Below are reference charts of effects and their wealth costs. For explanations of what these terms *mean*, see the Complications section.

Place Die	Rating 1	Rating 2	Rating 3	Rating 4	Rating 5
• **One-Use**	1 W.	1 W.	2 W.	4 W.	7 W.
• **Degrading**	1 W.	3 W.	6 W.	10 W.	15 W.
• **Permanent**	30 W.	90 W.	180 W.	300 W.	450 W.

Assist Dice	1 Die	2 Dice	3 Dice	4 Dice	5 Dice
• **One-Use**	3 W.	6 W.	9 W.	12 W.	15 W.
• **Degrading**	3 W.	9 W.	15 W.	24 W.	36 W.
• **Permanent**	180 W.	300 W.	450 W.	630 W.	710 W.

Success Boost	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
• **One-Use**	1 W.	8 W.	27 W.	64 W.	125 W.
• **Degrading**	1 W.	16 W.	36 W.	125 W.	216 W.
• **Permanent**	90 W.	150 W.	300 W.	630 W.	710 W.

6. Action!

The basic mechanic used by this system is the exchange. An exchange is a fast trade of words, blows, or what-have-you between two participants. It might be the trading of insults back and forth between two vitriolic debaters, a quick flash of swords in a duel, a moment climbing the cliff where the climber is blasted by wind while pulling around a hard corner – for that matter, it could be a single battle in a long campaign between armies. Some conflicts require a number of exchanges to play out properly – extended conflicts involving more than one character should always be extended to multiple exchanges.

Opposition

After an action is declared, the opposition has a chance to respond. The opposition will then describe their response. A response must be activity of the same general type as the action – if the action is a physical attack, the response must be physical, social for social, and so on. If someone attempts to intimidate you, then you can't oppose them by pulling out a knife and stabbing them; that's your action, when your turn comes. First you need to deal with the insult.

Backing Up Your Action

After you declare your action or response, you need to back it up with your traits. To do this, you name one or more traits that you believe are relevant to the action; things that indicate that you 'should' be able to do this. For each one, you gain a single die. Name your applicable traits one at a time, and pick up a die after each when others agree that they apply. If the other people at the table don't agree that the trait applies, then it doesn't; pick again.

However. There's a limit on which traits you can name. You can only name (of 'call') a trait in this way if it has a rating greater than the number of dice you have when you name it. So, if you don't have any dice in hand, you can call a trait of any rating. If you have a die in hand, you can no longer call traits with a rating of one. If you have two dice in hand, you can't call traits with a rating of one or two. And so on. This means that high-rated traits are ones you can call in even if you already have a big stack of dice in hand.

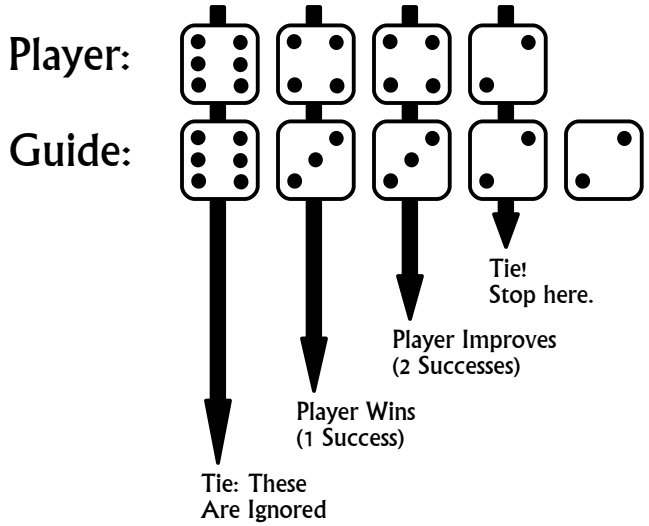
Threat

The guide doesn't name traits in this way. Instead, the Guide just decides how many dice should oppose you, and picks them up. They might say a bit about why they think that's the right number, or not.

Roll!

When both sides have made their calls and described everything, they roll their dice, and then compare them. Here's how that works:

- **Throw the dice:** Both participants roll all the dice they've gathered.
- **Compare the highest:** Each side puts out their highest-rolling die. If those two show the same number, they are both removed from comparison, replaced by the two next-highest; repeat this if needed. Once a pair of dice are put out where one is higher than the other, the person whose die came up highest has won the exchange, with 'one point' - points matter more on some exchanges than others, but they're always counted.
- **Check for more successes:** Once a winner has been established, continue comparing dice; if the person who won the exchange keeps winning comparisons, each one that they win gives them one additional 'point'. As soon as they lose or tie on of these comparisons, stop; that's their end result.
- **Running Dry:** If, while comparing dice, one side doesn't have any dice left, it's treated as an automatic point for the player that *does* have dice left. Having more dice than your opponent means, sometimes, you win big.
- **Dead Heat:** If all the dice come up as tied, and both players have the same number of dice, roll them all again. This usually only happens when each player is rolling only one die, but that's the rule to cover it.



Outcomes...

Depending on the action described, and the winner of the exchange, the Guide then sets to outcome. Some players will want to "check up" on the outcome before rolling (and if they wanted something very different, the Guide might adjust the threat to suit). Some groups may prefer to take this even further, explicitly declaring their desired outcomes in a 'set the stakes' fashion. That's good, too! But for most exchanges, the desired outcome can just be left implied, and gotten to at the end. Here are some basic outcomes...

- **Yes Or No Outcomes:** Some exchanges have a simple yes-or-no result; if you win, you grab the idol first; if not, your rival grabs it first. In these cases, the winner of the exchange wins, and that's it.
- **Building Progress:** In many cases, the object of a roll is to create something – crafting an item, sealing an arcane doorway, preparing an ambush, putting out a fire... When this is the case, a running total of successes is kept towards this goal, and when the desired total is reached, the project is complete. In some cases, such progress-building will affect the threat as you go along. If you're working to put out a bonfire, you might slowly reduce the threat it poses as you go along. One the other side, if you're working to put out a housefire, you might need to go into the smouldering building to gain further successes after a certain point, *increasing* the threat even as you get closer to ending it completely. In most cases, the Guide will be able to improvise notes and requirements on tasks like this, but some further notes are also given in the complications section.
- **Inflicting and Removing Injuries:** In other exchanges, you're attempting to injure an opponent in some fashion. This could be stabbing them, slandering their good name, confusing them with a puzzle, or any other inflicted problem that makes sense. When this is the right outcome, you give the target "injury traits" - for each success you gain, you give the target one such trait, and assign each such trait a rating from 1 to 10. You can then call on the injury traits your opponent has for dice, as if they were traits of your own. In addition, injury traits can drive a character or threat out of play. Injuries can also be manipulated with further exchanges; this is all covered in detail in the complications section.

7. Complications

Assistance

It's possible to use your time helping with some task that's being resolved with one or more exchanges. In a scene where people are taking turns, this is your turn. Describe what you're doing to help your ally or allies with the task, call traits, roll your dice, and set them aside. Then, when someone you're helping makes a roll, pick one of the dice you rolled, and give it to them, set to the same number, as part of *their* roll. There's a limit on this: A person can't get more than one die of help per helper, and can't receive more than one die showing any given face – if your friends with bows are both harrying the giant, and you attack, one of them can give you a 6. But only one; the other must give you a die set to 1-5, even if they have a 6 to give.

Assistants

A character with the right praxis can have a 'permanent assistant', which could be anything from a familiar spirit to an undead minion to a roaring and terrifying fellbeast. In general, these beings will act as assistants to the character – or, sometimes, the reverse. A familiar spirit with one threat die can still be a great aid in times of need. Contrarywise, a character who has managed to get mounted up on a giant fellbeast with six threat dice is pretty likely to act as an assistant for their beast, when 'working together' is called for, rather than the reverse. Such assistants can often have their dice rolled in the same handful of dice as the character, using dice of another colour, as a reminder to treat them separately after the roll.

Building And Buying Assistance

Temporarily bound spirits, mechanical devices, and hired servants can all be had in the world. These are assistants, just as above. They might be one-use (vanishing after use), might degrade (rendering one less die each time they are called on), or they might really be permanent. Permanent assistants can still be stolen, lost, or slain – they are not immune to action *in any way*. Gaining such assistants takes effort; in general, one roll a day to build up successes towards such a gain is usual (though you can often spend wealth to boost successful rolls – one wealth per added success).

Assist Dice	1 Die	2 Dice	3 Dice	4 Dice	5 Dice
• **One-Use**	3 S.	6 S.	9 S.	12 S.	15 S.
• **Degrading**	3 S.	9 S.	15 S.	24 S.	36 S.
• **Permanent**	180 S.	300 S.	450 S.	630 S.	710 S.

Place Dice

Both boons and preparations (including equipment) can grant place dice. These are dice that are called on, and set facing a specific number. They then count towards the user's dice on that roll. There is a limit on this, as on other benefits: *You can only gain one place die per roll, regardless of it's source.*

Building And Buying Place Dice

Weaponry and tools are often best modelled as place dice, as are equivalent items outside of combat. Like assistants, they might be one-use (vanishing after use), might degrade (and be placed as one number lower each time they are called on), or they might really be permanent. Again, permanent place dice can still be stolen, lost, or slain – they are not immune to action *in any way*. These dice can be built just as assistants are, though the 'success costs' vary:

Place Die	Rating 1	Rating 2	Rating 3	Rating 4	Rating 5
• **One-Use**	1 S.	1 S.	2 S.	4 S.	7 S.
• **Degrading**	1 S.	3 S.	6 S.	10 S.	15 S.
• **Permanent**	30 S.	90 S.	180 S.	300 S.	450 S.

Success Boosts

A success boost is a grant of additional successes on certain rolls, which can be called on if, and only if, the user succeeds in the first place. Some boons are given as success boosts, and some items are also best set up that way – poisons, for example. As with place dice, you can only call on one success boost in an exchange, regardless of the source.

Building And Buying Success Boosts

Just as with assistants and place dice, success boosts can be both created and purchased.

Success Boost	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
• **One-Use**	1 S.	8 S.	27 S.	64 S.	125 S.
• **Degrading**	1 S.	16 S.	36 S.	125 S.	216 S.
• **Permanent**	90 S.	150 S.	300 S.	630 S.	710 S.

Injuries

Injuries can include trauma of any kind – wounds, bad reputation, and so on. In rules terms, injuries are 'temporary traits' which are used *against* you, as if they were traits your opponents possessed; if you're "Bleeding 3", your opposition can note how that works to their advantage, and get a die for it. Injury ratings function the same way trait ratings do, and the dice that they grant to your opponents are just the same as dice gained from traits. If your opponent has an injury rated at two, and you already have two dice, you can't use that injury against them. So, when placing injuries on a target, you'll may want to choose high numbers, to get lots of bonus dice. However, there's also a reason to place injury traits at low numbers...

The Injury Series

Injuries can also, if built up, take on an intent of their own, at which point they may force your character out of play, or even out of your control, in a variety of ways. Once you have an injury trait, or a few very similar ones, that have more than three ratings, in series, *starting with a rating of one* (1, 2, 3, 4, and any further of numbers afterwards), the injuries themselves take a turn as often as reasonable. The outcomes of this exchange are always "take the character out of play for a time" for it's side and "hold off the injury for a time" for the character. Both oucomes scale up by successes (see the chart at the bottom of the page). If the injury gets 4+ successes, the character is out of play until others find a way to resurrect them, break them out of jail, have the emperor lift their exile, or whatever suits.

Removing Injuries

To remove injuries, someone must start an exchange with them. This must be described *and timed* in a way fitting the injuries – instant healing is usually not believable. The stakes are 'remove the injuries' for the healer and 'delay the amount of time before the healer can try again' for the injuries. Successes by the injuries stop that healer from trying again for a period, just as with removing someone from play. Each success for the healer removes an injury trait, starting with the highest-rated and working down.

Fighting Injuries

Winner	*Stakes*	*1 x Success*	*2 x Success*	*3 x Success*	*4 x Success*
Injuries	Out of play for a...	...Scene	...Day	..Week	...Ever
Character	Injuries held off for a...	...Round	...Scene	...Day	...Week

Sample Injuries

Here are some potential injuries that might be worth using:

- **Wounded:** The most basic injury; physical hurt. Takes character out of play by sending them into unconsciousness and death.
- **Out of Favor:** In a campaign centred around activities in a specific social venue, such as a royal court, a school, or the like, injuries liker this can be given with accusations, lies, 'whispering campaigns', and the like. Could take a character out of play in the sense of forcing them out of the social venue itself.
- **Mentally Strained:** In a campaign where characters meet unearthly horrors, this injury could take characters out of play by forcing them into catatonia, actual flight from the scene, or the like.
- **Convinced of _____:** It's possible to use these rules to convince another character that something is true, and cause them to act accordingly. A revolutionary put through indoctrination might be made into a royalist; of course, rejoining their comrades might put them somewhere that their indoctrination would be broken...
- **Bound To Serve:** Through clever manipulation of oaths of fealty, a clever leader forces an honourable warrior into his employ. Through powerful magic, a sorcerer forces a demon into service. In both cases, the service will often have specific limits, usually chosen by group discussion.

Fun With Social Injuries

A bad reputation or other social injury, such as *Enemy Of The Poor 8*, often seems like it's only use is in further social exchanges. This isn't actually the case, though. If a character has time to do the legwork, they can let the Guide know that they're 'prepping' the trait for other uses. So, a character might let the beggars of the town know that their enemy is coming around – and in the ensuing ambush, might state "Around this time, the beggars should be tossing rocks at him, so I'll take a die for *Enemy of the Poor*, too, yeah?".

Binding And Unbinding

A necromancer, fellbeast rider, or shaman will almost universally need to bind the dead, monstrous, or spiritual in order to have a lasting ally stronger than a single die. This is, effectively, a set of injuries (typically a series going all the way from 1 to 10) that is holding that being bound. If these injuries are partly removed, that subject may begin to attempt to remove more of them, and when freed, act in ways the binder would.... not prefer, ranging from petty trickery to blind rampages.

Environmental Conditions

Conditions are 'local traits', which can be called for or against anyone in the environment. For example, a ship on the high seas might be operating in *Hurricane 5*, which is a pretty hefty condition. A condition can be called in to help multiple sides in the same round; if two combatants are rolling in a fight a burning building, they might both call it in to harm their opponent. In addition, during that same fight, the Guide might also treat the burning building as an independent threat, and give it dice to roll on it's own, to injure the characters.

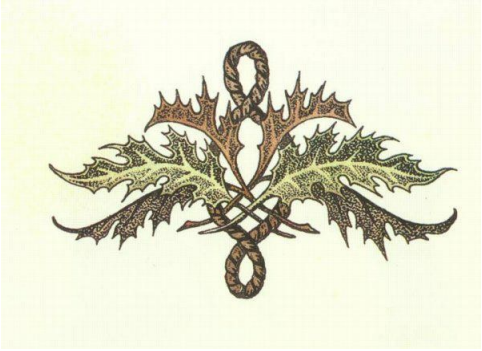
Hostile Environments

A series of injuries going from 1 to 4 (and possibly higher) takes action to eliminate a character – but it's also possible to state that environmental conditions are hostile. If so, then those conditions count towards injuries, and can spur injuries into action more quickly. So, while smoke might be a threat, there might also be an environmental condition kicking around - *Choking Smoke 1* might combine with *Winded 2, 3, 4,* and suddenly the character is fighting to stay conscious. If only they could get out of this smoke...

Mucking With Conditions

Often, players will want to mess with the environment. This is good! As with building up successes towards gaining place dice, success boosts, and so on, this can be done as a project, with it's own costs:

Condition	Rating 1	Rating 2	Rating 3	Rating 4	Rating 5
• **Easy**	1 S.	3 S.	6 S.	10 S.	15 S.
• **Difficult**	3 S.	9 S.	36 S.	100 S.	225 S.



8. Power Plays

"I've come to believe that the recent temple desecrations are being performed by the Hidden Ones, in order to stir up sentiment against the Fomor spirit cults. And it's working. If someone doesn't do something, we're going to see lynch mobs."

Feuds And Intrigues

Situations like the one quoted from above can be a bit of a trick to set up believably. It's often even more of a trick to make sure that the players care about them; many Guides have spent enormous amounts of time creating intricate scenarios nobody was all that interested in. This is a way to put together such situations that faces down both of those concerns. You'll need the record sheet for power plays, and a blank piece of paper (which can be the back of that sheet).

First, Build The List

Grab the blank piece of paper. On the top of it, note down the location – where the characters are based, or a place they'll be right quick in the campaign, and where they'll hold still long enough for you to grab them.

Now, rummage through what you know about those characters, and start noting down their relationships to groups. This can include implied groups just as much as known ones. If they have special training, what group did they learn from? If they've seen some action in the past, who was it with, and against who? Where were they raised, and among what people? Things like that. You might want to have their character records on hand, so you can go down the list.

As you consider this, any time you think of a group that should or could have a presence in the target area, write them down. These can be subsets of that group rather than the whole – a guild office for a profession one character has, people who follow the same mystical tradition as another, and so on. These can also be fragments of groups that you decide to change up in some way - retired members of a mercenary troupe one character travelled with, who now run a fighting school,

Once that's all down, you have your raw material; those people are all in the area, but they won't all necessarily matter right off. Figuring out which groups are central to the immediate action comes next.

Second, From Group To Faction

Picking up the list from the last step, walk through it one group at a time, and note next to each of them a few things that they might want in the area, and who might oppose them. So, if you had noted "Fjell's Raiders" in your list, you might add "Want to sell their loot; opposed by the authorities".

As you go along, look for places where groups on the list have common general opponents, especially if those groups would also oppose each other. The goal here is to find a tight cluster of about five groups, each of whom would find the others problematic (not all the groups in that clump need to be from the original list; it's pretty usual for one of the common ties to be "law enforcement" or "the local nobility" or other vested interests.

When you think you have that cluster of groups, it's time to formalize them into factions. This is done by giving each a spot on the power play sheet, and noting in the following...

- **Group:** The name of the group, or at least a name *for* the group.
- **Connection:** How does this group connect to the player characters? Not all groups will, to be sure, but most should.
- **Resources:** What kind of troops, money, and other resources does the groups have in the area? How can they exert political force (or real force)? Think creatively here; it can help later on.
- **Agenda:** What's the agenda of this group? What things do they want?
- **Opposed By:** Which of the other listed factions blocks the agendas that this group has, and which ones?

Here's how that might look:

Group: *The local Assassin's Guild.*

Connection: *Jaka's old mentor just took over this hall.*

Resources: *A couple dozen Assassins, loads of blackmail material.*

Agenda: *They want to be an 'open secret', ignored by the law.*

Opposed By: *The city guard, and Gavva's Enforcers.*

Group: *Gavva's Enforcers.*

Connection: *They defended several towns from Fjell's raiding.*

Resources: *Lucrative contracts guarding nobles, noble contacts.*

Agenda: *The Enforcers want to displace the city guard entirely.*

Opposed By: *The city guard, the High Temple.*

Third, From Factions To Strife

With the tension neatly compiled, it's now just a matter of making things happen. To do that, you'll just finish off a series of sentences...

- **The instigators were:** Decide who made the first move. Not what it was or why, yet – just who.
- **They acted against:** Which of their opponents did the group take action against?
- **The time was right:** What made this happen *when* it happened? Is there a new leader out to make their mark, something distracting the opposition, some new resource in the area the acting group thinks they can get, some upcoming gain for their opposition that the group fears?
- **What happened was:** Now, it's time to decide what the action was. As with any such action, it should fit the motive (the agenda of the group), the opportunity (the reason the time was right), and the means (the resources the acting group has on hand). The action can be overt or hidden, a direct hit or a frame-up; consider the trusty levers of bribery, blackmail, and intimidation.
- **Which prompted:** How did the targeted group react? And, equally important, how was this an overreaction, or an action that caught others in the crossfire?
- **And this will lead to:** This activity should lead to some kind of opportunity for the other groups to jump in and poke the situation. How will they do that? If the characters do nothing, how will things get *worse?*

Here's how that might look:

The Instigators Were *The local Assassin's Guild.*

They Acted Against: *The city guard.*

The Time Was Right: *Jaka's mentor arrived with this plan.*

What Happened Was: *The Assassins killed the guard captains who couldn't be bought, and had the corrupt ones claim that Gavva's enforcers were behind it.*

Which Prompted: *Gavva to proclaim his innocence, with strong oaths, naming the attacks evil and diabolical in public.*

And This Will Lead To: *The Temple is preparing an inquisition to 'delve the depth of the matter', which is making most of those involved very worried, even the innocent.*

Fourth, From Strife To Appeal

Now, there's action and reaction, but the characters aren't stuck in, yet. People need to come to them and get them in on it; at least two people, over the course of events. Again, fill in the blanks.

- **The [first/second] visitors are:** Who is going to try and get the characters involved?
- **They want:** What do they want the character to do? Be specific, here, and make sure that the action will have repercussions.
- **They know:** What do they know? It shouldn't be everything, but enough that a bit of action will reveal more of the truth.
- **They can offer:** What assistance, favours, or benefits will they offer the characters?

Here's how that might look:

The First Visitors Are *Gavva, the Enforcer leader, and a couple men.*

They Want: *To turn and old, but honourable enemy into a friend; they want Fjell to investigate the guards that blamed them.*

They Know: *The names and routes of the guards that fingered them for the murders, by not why, or who really did it.*

They Can Offer: *Future favours, assistance in battles yet to come, almost anything the group dreams up that they can do.*

The Second Visitors Are *Temple inquisitors.*

They Want: *To put Jaka to the Question; they have some idea that assassins are involved, and she has few friends.*

They Know: *That the Enforcers didn't do the killing themselves, But they believe the Enforcers were behind it.*

They Can Offer: *Threats, violence, and will happily call out the city guard to capture Jaka as a rogue assassin.*

Character Record Sheet

Basics

Character: _____

Player: _____

Traits

4: _____

3: _____ _____

2: _____ _____ _____

1: _____ _____ _____ _____

Boons

_____

_____

_____

Current Wealth

Injuries

10: _____ _____ _____ _____

9: _____ _____ _____ _____

8: _____ _____ _____ _____

7: _____ _____ _____ _____

6: _____ _____ _____ _____

5: _____ _____ _____ _____

4: _____ _____ _____ _____

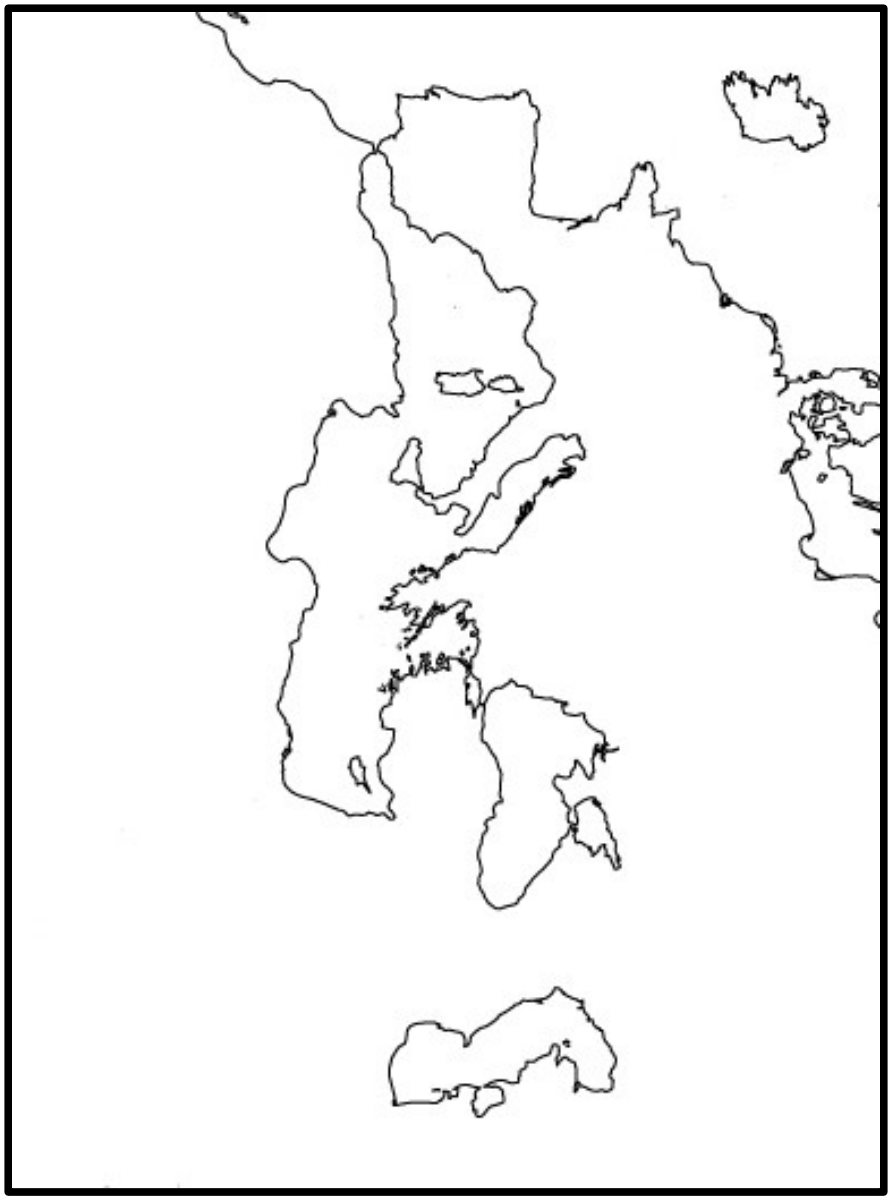
3: _____ _____ _____ _____

2: _____ _____ _____ _____

1: _____ _____ _____ _____

Present Benefits, Exceptional Gear,
And Other Notes.

MAPSHEET



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Power Play Record Sheet

Factions

Group:
Connection:
Resources:
Agenda:
Opposed By:

Group:
Connection:
Resources:
Agenda:
Opposed By:

Group:
Connection:
Resources:
Agenda:
Opposed By:

Group:
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Agenda:
Opposed By:

Group:
Connection:
Resources:
Agenda:
Opposed By:

Strife

The Instigators Were
They Acted Against:
The Time Was Right:
What Happened Was:

Which Prompted:

And This Will Lead To:

Appeals

The First Visitors Are
They Want:

They Know:

They Can Offer:

The Second Visitors Are
They Want:

They Know:

They Can Offer:

From *Awen: The World Begins With You.*