

BERENGAD GAMES

ANIMA
PRIME

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1 INTRODUCTION

Foreword

Welcome to Anima Prime!

This is a fast-paced, spontaneous roleplaying game inspired by the *Final Fantasy* series of video games as well as *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and other animated shows and movies. The game works best with groups of 3 to 5 players.

Anima Prime combines narrative freedom in character scenes and combat maneuvers with elemental powers, Soulbound Weapons, and the summoning of eidolons to allow you to create your own stories and action scenes rivaling those usually seen in video game cut scenes and anime battles. A flexible goal system lets you infuse any fight with meaningful story decision points and unlimited tactical options.

I very much believe in customizing a game to your likings. The setting and powers provided are just examples, and the game includes guidelines on how to create your own. While I suggest that you start out playing with everything that's provided in this game, I think sooner or later you'll feel the itch to make it your own, and I hope I've provided enough guidance to make that an easy task.

This game text is Creative Commons licensed. The complete text—rules, setting, powers, eidolons, and everything else—will always be available for free. You can distribute the free version as you like. However, the images in the commercial versions are licensed only for use in the game, so please respect the rights of their owners and distribute neither the game with the illustrations nor the images on their own without the artists' permission.

The website for the game is www.AnimaPrimeRPG.com, where you can download the character sheet, more example characters, drafts of add-ons (including rules for items and faction battles), and more. If you've created a cool setting, with or without special powers, factions, and so on, it would be great if you could post about it in our forums.

Head over to www.celstyle.com, where you'll find a bunch of other great anime-inspired games from indie designers.

Thanks, and have fun with the game!

Book Structure

This book is structured in chapters with individual sections. I've tried to arrange the chapters in a way that allows you to create and play, if you want to, as you read through the game.

After the basic chapters for playing the game are out of the way, we get into explanations, options, and lists. These provide details on some aspects that were already introduced, contain essays to help you make the most out of the game, and finally list your options during character creation (mainly powers) all in one place for ease of reference.

The following is a quick walkthrough for the whole book, to give you an idea of what's ahead.

Part I: The Basics

1 Introduction

You're most of the way through it already.

2 Roleplaying

This chapter introduces you to roleplaying with Anima Prime, whether you're new to the hobby or have some preconceived notions from other games about how roleplaying works. Some things might be a bit different in Anima Prime.

Part II: Setup

3 Setting the Stage

This chapter describes how to choose a mood and a setting (background world) for the game, determine the type of content you want to see, and create a "group story seed" that will tie all of the main characters together.

4 Player Characters

Now you get to make the main characters of the story and figure out who they are, what they can do, and how they are connected to each other and the setting.

Part III: Playing the Game

5 Character Scenes

Characters interact in various ways. In Anima Prime, this often plays out in character scenes, which are comparable to cut scenes in video games or dialogue

scenes in movies. This chapter tells you how to set up scenes and gain character benefits from them.

6 Conflicts

Sometimes characters fight monsters, antagonists, giant robots, fiends, evil summoners, or even each other. This chapter tells you how to set up conflicts, establish goals, and figure out who wins and at what price.

7 Goals

The key to getting the most out of your Anima Prime experience lies in mastering the use of goals. This chapter introduces some different categories of goals and shows many examples of how to use them well.

8 Running the Game

This chapter gives some advice for the GM on running the game. It includes some techniques for spontaneous play so that the GM won't have to spend too much time on prep work.

9 Character Development

In some stories (and most games), characters grow in power over time. This chapter provides several options on how that can be handled in Anima Prime, depending on the kind of story you're telling.

Part IV: The Ghostfield Setting

10 Ghostfield

The world of Ghostfield is provided as the default setting for the game. It includes places, people, factions, setting seeds and more.

11 Passive Powers

This is a listing of passive powers in the Ghostfield setting that characters can possess. These powers are always active and include resistances, expansions of limits, immunities, and similar things.

12 Charge Powers

Charge powers grant special abilities and effects that the character activates with charge dice earned during a conflict. They include elemental powers such as Blaze and Ice Hurricane, condition-inflicting ones such as Poison, helping powers such as Rise of the Phoenix and Quicken, and special abilities like Vampiric Strike.

13 Soulbound Weapons

Some characters in Ghostfield own weapons that are imbued with special effects.

This chapter tells you how to acquire, create, modify, and use these Soulbound Weapons.

14 Summoning

Some characters summon creatures from the Beyond to assist them in conflicts. This chapter explains how to become a summoner and bond with these so-called eidolons, as well as how to conjure and use them during a conflict. I've also provided a detailed listing of many common eidolons as well as rules for making your own.

15 Conditions

Some powers, as well as goals and other circumstances, inflict or grant conditions on characters. This chapter explains how to deal with Blinded, Poisoned, Quickened, and other conditions, and how to tie them into goals in a conflict.

16 Adversity

There are many foes that the characters can face in Ghostfield. This chapter gives you plenty of examples that are ready to be used in your game.

17 Game Modifications

Once you're comfortable with the basics, you might want to introduce more complexity to your game or create your own setting. This chapter contains some optional rules and an outline of how to create your own world to play in.

2 ROLEPLAYING

The Basic Activity

Roleplaying has its historical roots in miniatures war gaming, but it developed into a creative endeavor that has a lot more in common with shared storytelling, collaborative writing, and method acting, depending on your play style. Most of the time, playing a roleplaying game consists of two equally important activities: listening and talking.

For this game, all of the players in your group are going to sit around a table (or somewhere else that's comfortable and has a surface for rolling dice). One player at a time gets to contribute to a story you're creating together. The players all imagine what's happening, and then they react to it. Most of the players are in charge each of a specific character in the story, which all together make up the group of protagonists, while the Game Moderator is in charge of the protagonists' enemies, minor characters, and the rest of the world.

Example

Here's an example of what roleplaying might look like when two players are involved in a scene between their protagonist characters. Zoe is going to set up the scene and play her character Syjika, and Alan is playing his character Egere. If you're curious, you can find the character sheets with all of the information for both of these characters on the website. Read this example as a dialogue between the players.

- Zoe: Syjika is sitting on the wreck of the steambot, surrounded by the still smoldering ruins of the houses that were wrecked in the fight. She is tinkering with one of the gadgets she used in the battle. Next to her is an open flap in the steambot where she took out some parts.
- Alan: Egere is looking up at her from the street below. He calls up to her: "We need to get going."
- Zoe: She doesn't even look up from her little device as she bites her lip and very carefully inserts a tiny screwdriver into a crevice. She says: "Not yet. I have to fix this first."

Alan: He looks over his shoulder in the direction of the incoming mechanical footsteps, which are shaking the ground beneath him. “No, really. We need to go.”

Zoe: Syjika curses under her breath as she breaks something inside her gadget. She says: “You’re always in a rush. Just leave me alone for a minute.”

Alan: “The city guards are coming. I don’t think they’ll be too happy to see that we turned their expensive steambot into your private workbench.”

Zoe: “Can’t you just go talk to them or something?”

Alan: Egere looks around again and takes a deep breath as the soldiers in power armor appear at the other end of the alley. “Talk to them. Sure. No problem.”

Zoe: Her large eyes look up for a moment to look into his and says: “Thanks! I really appreciate it.”

Alan: Egere just nods and heads for the guards. “Anything for you,” he mumbles quietly. Clouds of shadows form around his fists, like jet black smoke. He calls back. “Oh, and Syjika?”

Zoe: “Yes?”

Alan: “I hope you have night vision goggles in that backpack of yours.”

Who Determines What?

Characters

The players will each take on the responsibility of creating and controlling one of the protagonists in your story. In roleplaying games, a protagonist character (which many games also call a player character) is usually abbreviated as PC.

PCs tend to group up. Examples of grouped PCs in other media are Yuna and Tidus in *Final Fantasy X* and Aang, Katara and Sokka in the outstanding animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. And just like Toph joined the PC group later on in *Avatar*, you can always invite more players and play a session about how their PCs joined in.

The players of the PCs create them with the rules in Chapter 4 and then play them during the game. This means that each player tells the other players what her PC does, says, looks like, and so on. Some of the things that happen to a PC will be determined by other means (such as using the conflict rules to see if the PC gets hurt by an attack during a fight), but even then, what that specifically looks like in your story is still up to the player of that PC.

The previous section introduced you to Syjika and Egere, two of the example PCs that I created for purposes of showing how the game works. As you saw in that dialogue, Zoe described everything that Syjika did, and Alan described everything that Egere did. In addition, they both added some details to the scene that they just made up, which is perfectly fine (see below for more on details).

One of the players will be the Game Moderator, or GM. The GM sets up the backdrop of the story and controls all of the other characters in the story that oppose or assist the PCs. These other characters are traditionally called non-player characters or NPCs.

Examples of NPCs are Seymour, fiends, and everyone else not in Yuna's group in *Final Fantasy X*, and the vast array of firebenders, outlaws, earthbending wrestlers, and others in *Avatar*. Notice how these NPCs don't show up in every episode, unlike PCs, and their involvement is always in relation to the PCs.

Details

In many other roleplaying games, the players have to ask for permission from the GM for every detail that they want to see in the story. "Is there a ___ here?" is a frequent player question in those games. That's not the case with Anima Prime.

As long as something is reasonable, the players can describe it as existing in the story. If they're in a forest, they can introduce sticks, stones, wild animals, and so on into the scene. If they are in a city, they can describe cracks in the street, ladders at the side of a building, and anything else that could be found in such a place, even if it's unlikely. Notice that the standard is reasonable, not probable. As long as it's possible and its introduction doesn't ruin other players' fun, it should stand.

The players can even describe their PCs' effects on some NPCs to varying degrees; the details on that are included in the section on maneuvers in the conflict chapter.

Example

The following is an example of two players and the GM (Maura) playing together.

Alan: So... Egere is heading for the city guards.

Maura: Alright. There are a dozen of them, fully armored in steam-powered battle suits. You can see their faces through bowl-shaped helmets criss-crossed with metal reinforcement bars. One of them has a higher rank, judging by the red insignia on his chest. They are armed and look quite unfriendly.

Alan: Great, and we only had one character scene to freshen up after the last fight. Alright, is there a carriage anywhere near?

Maura: That's up to you. You're in the middle of the city, so that sounds possible.

Alan: Oh yeah. I jump up on a carriage and spread my arms. I yell out: "The city guard! The protectors of all that is good and right! I'm so glad you're here."

Maura: The leader steps forward and eyes you carefully while the other guards aim their weapons at you. He says: "You're under arrest. Give in peacefully and no one gets hurt."

Alan: I guess it's not been a minute yet, huh?

Zoe: Hah, yeah, Syjika is still sitting up on that steambot, fixing her thing. Are there any soldiers near her?

Maura: No, they're all with Egere.

Zoe: I'll just keep on doing my thing then. He can take care of them.

Alan: Okay, so... what's the weather like?

Maura: I think we said earlier that it's sunny and bright. A nice spring afternoon.

Alan: Perfect. I'll hit them with Darkness.

As you might have noticed, sometimes the players refer to their characters as "I" or "we." That's a habit you can adopt or not, as you feel like it. Most of the time, it's just a useful shorthand for saying "my character" or "all of the PCs."

There are things that neither the players nor the GM directly determine, such as the outcome of conflicts (like the clash with the city guards that's now coming up in our example), and those are handled by the mechanics.

Using the Mechanics

There are several groups of mechanics in this game. Mechanics are rules that involve dice, stats, and so on, and that change or resolve something connected to those. Character scenes have one at the end, which allows the players who were involved to get a specific benefit from the scene (such as healing or recovering from exhaustion). These types are quick and easy.

The conflict mechanics are a bit more involved. Whereas character scenes are like cut scenes in a console RPG that you make up on the fly, conflicts are the moments when the game switches over into battle mode. Usually it's obvious when that switch needs to be made.

In the above example, Alan is about to use a power against his opponents. That's something that can only be done in a conflict, so the GM sets up the conflict and then Alan can use his character's power. Conflict mechanics are explained in detail in Chapter 6.

Most of the time, you also should know when not to use the mechanics. For example, the conflict mechanics are only used when two or more characters are opposing each other. You do not need to roll dice for any other actions, such as when a character tries to climb a building. Even if it's a difficult action, the PC's player gets to determine whether the PC is successful or not.

There are four main reasons why things are handled like this in this game, and knowing them will help you decide when to use mechanics and when to let the game just flow.

First, this is a spontaneous game. Relying on mechanics to determine whether a character succeeds at some random task slows down the game too much.

Second, the action isn't that important when it's not aimed against other characters. The game is concerned with conflicts between characters and creating a cool story rather than representing how probable the outcome of any given action is.

Third, the PCs are highly competent and most likely capable of acrobatics and other acts far beyond the abilities of most normal humans (they're anime characters, after all). This means they're likely to succeed at many difficult tasks, and having mechanics that frequently turn out failures wouldn't fit.

And fourth, the players are as responsible for everyone's fun as the GM. They can keep track on their own whether what they have their characters do and succeed at is adding to or subtracting from the fun of the group.

What You Need to Play

First, you need one or more friends. The game is mainly set up for groups of 3 to 5 people. Playing with 2 (a GM and a PC player) means missing out on character scenes among PCs, giving each other dice for maneuvers, and all sorts of other things, but it can still be fun. Playing with 6 or more people will slow the game down considerably, but you can give it a try and see how it works out for you.

Second, you need printouts of the character sheet and the rules summary sheet for each player, a story seed sheet for all to share, and a couple of adversity sheets for the GM. You can find all of these sheets on the game's website.

Third, you need dice. Lots of them. All dice used in this game are regular 6-sided dice. I suggest having 20 dice per PC in your group on hand, plus 10 for the GM. The dice should not be too big, so that you can stack them up in the pool circles on your character sheets, but if they're too tiny you'll have a harder time reading them during conflicts, so I tend to pick a happy medium.

You can play with just a few dice instead, but then you need to keep track of action dice, charge dice and so on with some other form of token (like glass beads or poker chips) or by writing the changing numbers down inside the circles using pencils and erasers. This works fine, but it's not as intuitive and slows the game down a bit.

You'll also need a couple of tokens to represent Awesome Tokens during conflicts. You can use anything for these, from coins to buttons.

Player and GM Responsibilities

Many other roleplaying games and groups distribute the workload in a very imbalanced way. The GM does a lot of preparation work, which includes drawing maps, creating NPCs with dozens of stats, making up plot points in advance,

preparing encounters and battles, and so on. The players simply show up. Then the responsibility to entertain the players lies with the GM.

Not so with Anima Prime.

In this game, the responsibility for the group's enjoyment is evenly distributed among all of the participants. As a PC player, you are responsible for entertaining the other PC players as well as the GM, just as if you were playing a friendly non-competitive game of soccer, where you pass the ball to the other players without looking at who's the best shooter, to make sure everyone gets a chance to play together equally.

Anima Prime is meant to be picked up and enjoyed with little to no preparation. The key to doing this is to provide each other with usable materials—such as seeds, links, and traits—and then spontaneously riff off them during play. I call these things “flags” (a term coined by Chris Chinn) because they mark what each player would like to see brought into the game. The GM as well as the PC players can use each other's flags to play in a spontaneous way that keeps everyone interested.

Each player drives the story forward. It's not just the GM who keeps on bringing up things for the PCs to do. Instead, the players of the PCs need to make sure, at any point in time, that their characters have something they're striving for and some action they could take to get them closer to their goals. And if they can somehow tie those into the other players' flags, you're really starting to cook with high-powered gas.

3 SETTING THE STAGE

Mood and Content

The mood of your game is very important. The rules do not predetermine whether you play a dark urban game or a humorous adventure game. The group as a whole should discuss what mood you would like your game to have. Once you've agreed to it, you should try to stick with it when you pick the setting, make the characters, create your story seeds, and most of all play the game.

Here are some things to think about when setting the mood:

1. What's the overall feel of the game? Is it gritty, funny, dark, romantic? What kinds of movies, series, novels, and so on would fit this mood? What would you pick as the game's theme song?
2. What kind of content would you like to see in your story? Lots of intense fights, introspection, romance, intrigue, exploration, or anime slapstick comedy? Are the combats wall-running, somersaulting action spectacles with no real blood or gruesome shotguns-and-tentacles gore fests?
3. What kind of content do you *not* want in your story? This comes in two flavors, labeled in the game *Sorcerer* (by Ron Edwards) as lines and veils, which I find very helpful. What kind of stuff can happen but only off screen (veiled), and what kind of stuff isn't brought up by anyone at all? For example, you might agree that characters in your story sometimes have sex, but do you fade to black before the clothes come off or actually play out parts or all of the event? Would it ruin the game for you if children got abused or killed during the story? What is over the line and not okay at all, and what is fine but shouldn't be played in detail?

You might want to write down the mood and content guidelines you've come up with somewhere. Usually these things are large-scale enough that they're easy to remember, but it can help to have a few written lines in front of you when you go on from here.

I'll create an example setup throughout this chapter rather than just using Ghostfield, just to show you how that works. Let's say my group decides that we want something a little grittier than the standard Final Fantasy fare. Not quite Vampire Hunter D, but definitely not Kingdom Hearts. We decide that our mood can be

summed up as “Gritty, but not gory, and with hope.” Something that would probably get a PG-13 rating if it was a movie.

We figure there’ll be some romance, and characters might hook up, but any actual sexual content will be veiled. There’ll be lots of violence and some descriptions of blood and mean injuries, but no exploding heads or tearing out of guts or the likes. Children either don’t show up much at all, or when they do, they won’t get hurt.

Some joking around is fine, but slapstick is right out. That could ruin the gritty mood we’re going for.

Discomfort During the Game

Chances are that at some point, one of the players (including the GM) might do something that goes against your established mood and content. This can go by without effect or it can have a negative impact on one or more players. It could be offensive, off-putting, boring, annoying, mood-breaking or hitting a vulnerable nerve.

It also could be something you thought you’d be okay with, but it turns out you’re not. This is especially the case when you jump into a dark mood without being sure just how far you’d like to go. For me, this can happen when I agree to play in a gruesome setting without specifying that anything really bad that happens to children has to be out or at least behind the veil. Maybe I thought I’d be okay exploring those things this time, but once it comes up I realize just how much that hits me—too much to let me enjoy the game.

If you are only a bit uncomfortable, it’s best to wait until the end of the session before bringing it up in a “Oh, and by the way” sort of fashion. Alternatively, you can bring it up at a later point, if you’re too uncomfortable with doing it right then. Often these things are more easily discussed with some distance, for example via email. If you don’t feel like you can write your group an email telling them that you were uncomfortable with something, then there’s a problem with your group trust that needs to be resolved.

If something really hits you, then you should be able to call time-out, take a break, and then talk about it right then or agree to do it later. Again, doing it via email or posts on a forum can add needed distance here. Every player in your group needs to be okay with this kind of reaction and with talking about it. Caring about each other’s fun and feelings is what makes this whole thing work.

If you see one of your fellow players having a negative reaction, you should give them a chance to make their choice about how to approach it. But if you think they're too shy or otherwise incapable of bringing it up, you should think about how to help out.

Overall, it's a good idea to revisit your discussion of mood and content every now and then. It'll help give your game a coherent focus and prevent anyone from feeling annoyed, hurt, bored, or otherwise uncomfortable.

Selecting a Setting

The setting is the backdrop for your story. It includes a core concept and lists some locations, NPCs, influential groups, special powers, the level of technology, different cultures, and so on. When the PCs act, they do so within the context of the setting. The setting often includes adversity for the PCs as well, though you should definitely add more personalized adversity based on the PCs' links and seeds.

For example, the setting for *Vampire Hunter D* is the far future, in which vampires have enslaved humanity. We see only a snapshot of that world, a town and the nearby vampire and demon lairs, so the defined setting is pretty small, but you could easily make up locations and people from the mood and the inspiration of what's there. Vampires and their demonic minions are the built-in adversity.

The setting for *Avatar*, on the other hand, is a completely different world with four element-based nations and lots of NPCs, cities, and legends of things past. These are introduced bit-by-bit throughout the show, which you can do with spontaneous setting development. The firebenders are the main adversity in this setting.

The default setting for *Anima Prime* is known as Ghostfield, which is described in Chapters 10 through 16. Directions for creating your own are included in Chapter 17. While I suggest starting out with using Ghostfield, there are hundreds of worlds in which you can set your game. These worlds are filled with all sorts of cultures and creatures. You can use any one of those worlds, or even just a snippet of one, and don't have to worry about doing it "wrong." Then you can develop it as you play, spontaneously. Take a look at the *Final Fantasy* video games, too, which almost always introduce a completely new setting with each iteration and develop it as the story progresses.

Settings in Anima Prime are supposed to be evocative rather than canonical. That means there won't be page after page of information that you're supposed to memorize and then recall during your game. This is a spontaneous game, after all, and you should be able to play without that kind of work beforehand and with the ability to make up the details of the setting during play. This is *your* fantasy, *your* story, *your* game. For that, I suggest making the setting yours, too. So even if you play using Ghostfield, don't hesitate to spontaneously add your own places, people, and events into the mix.

When you select your setting, you should figure out how that interacts with the mood you picked. Some settings are more geared toward certain moods than others. The powers available in the setting should fit in, too.

My group decides to develop the setting on our own. We're going to start with a very rough sketch and just fill in the blanks as we play.

Our gritty game will be set in a post-apocalyptic world. There's a lot of wasteland, full of ruins with valuable items from earlier ages. This means there's still 20th-century technology around, but it's rare.

There are demons in our setting. They are not just mutants, but something otherworldly that invaded and led to the apocalypse. Now they roam the wastes, and every survivor needs to either be able to fight them off or find others to protect them. Communities are small, outlaws abound, and so on. It's a dangerous place with lots of opportunities for conflicts.

This kind of setting allows us to get away without much detail up front, because it's based on a common trope and has no overarching politics or societies to worry about.

We're going to use all of the powers from the Ghostfield setting, minus Summoning and the ones that relate to Beyond (gating, skipping, and so on)..

Setting Story Seed

The setting story seeds are listed in the premade setting or created by the GM. Setting story seeds are occurrences in the setting that go against the usual events. They can range from the blatantly obvious and aggressive (an invading force) to the subtle (the water from the river has started to taste metallic) to the weird and

ominous (a black skyscraper just appeared in the middle of the city, and most people act as though it's always been there).

Feel free to create more than one if you want to give players lots of choices of what to look into during the game, though that might make your game less focused. Just be aware that this is not a group seed—it cannot be something that directly and only affects the PCs like the other story seeds. It's something that makes the whole setting dynamic and changing and allows the players to choose whether they want to help shape those changes.

The GM tells us that the story seed for our wasteland setting is as follows: Someone has started gathering demons and human followers in a large ruined city. No one knows why they group up or what they're planning, but something's about to happen.

Even the GM doesn't know yet why this is happening. I'm sure there'll be ways to tie it into our group seed and the events of our story later on. Until our PCs actively get involved, there's no need to flesh it out any further than this. We may never get to that city and ignore the seed, or we may set out to walk right into the middle of it—that's up to us.

Group Story Seed

The group story seed is created by all players (except for the GM) for their group of PCs. It's an event that changes the circumstances of the group and keeps them together. It can be a simple mundane thing (our group of elite soldiers was just given a new commanding officer, and we don't trust him), a mystery (we all woke up with matching crimson tattoos on the back of our necks), a disaster (the organization that protected our identity and allowed us to live a normal life was just wiped out), or anything that the group as a whole needs to address.

Use this as a tool to make sure the group has a good reason to stick together and find common ground to act upon. Usually this seed is created before the characters, so that you can create the PCs to fit into the seed. But you can also create it afterwards, which requires some tinkering and a willingness of each player to alter their PCs a bit to make it all fit.

The group story seed works as the “crucible” for the PCs. It is the reason they stick together even if they have diverging interests or have personality issues with each other (which makes for good dramatic roleplaying during character scenes).

The stronger the seed is, the more the PCs can struggle within it (all in good fun, of course). Examples for strong group story seeds often have one or more of the following ingredients:

- The PCs share a powerful enemy that they each can't defeat on their own. They are either actively hunting the enemy or vice versa.
- An opportunity for gaining something the PCs desperately want or need has sprung up, and they can only get it together.
- The PCs are together in a situation from which they cannot escape, either because they are physically constrained or because their personalities won't let them back off.
- A higher authority has called upon the PCs and ordered them to work together. This requires either a very strong sense of duty on the side of the PCs, or an authority that severely punishes insubordination. Great stories can come out of eventually breaking free from the authority together.
- The PCs are tied together through near-unbreakable relationships. Family relations, love, honor, duty, oaths, debts, or something along those lines.

When your group story seed comes to a close, such as when the PCs escape their situation or defeat their common enemy, you should all consider together whether you want to make a new one with the existing characters or just start over with a new group of PCs. Sometimes their shared experiences will keep the characters together from here on out, and they can help each other with their character story seeds. But other times you'll need something new to keep them together, and that new group story seed needs to be developed by the PC players as before. You can always decide to skip ahead a year or ten before something brings the group back together.

Our group seed is that we're all part of a caravan across the wasteland when it gets nearly wiped out by demons, and now we need to find and rescue the people from our caravan who got kidnapped by the demons.

This seed kicks us into action. We've got a goal right from the start, something to do that involves our PCs directly. All of the PCs that we create need to have a reason for being on the caravan as well as for sticking with the group when we're setting out to find the

survivors. It is each player's responsibility to make sure their PC fits those criteria.

4 CHARACTER CREATION

Character Overview

For all of the players except the GM, their protagonist character (“PC”) is the tool with which they contribute to the story. As such, PCs need to be well suited to be protagonists, like the main characters of other stories, novels, shows, movies, and so on.

The most interesting protagonists often have several aspects to them. They are at least in some way likeable and ultimately good at heart, even if they are grumpy or sometimes mean (otherwise they end up being antagonists). They care about things. The characters with the most potential are those who care about one particular thing (person, issue, goal) more than they care about themselves. They try hard and are active instead of hanging back and letting things happen. And they are affected by the events around them, instead of being emotionally cut off from the world and other characters.

You can express the personality and issues of your character through your character’s passion, traits, links, and character story seed. But first, you need some basic components to build your protagonist character around.

Use a character sheet from the website (or a sheet of paper) to keep track of your PC as we go through this creation process, starting with name, concept, and mark.

I’m going to create a new character as this chapter goes on. We’re playing in the post-apocalyptic setting that we developed in the previous chapter. My PC needs to fit the mood (gritty, but not gory, and with hope) and the group seed (the attack on the caravan).

Name, Concept and Mark

Pick a name. It should fit the mood, the setting, and your vision of your character. You’re probably stuck with the name for a while, so make it something you’ll still like after a few sessions.

For our example character’s name, I’m going to pick Zadie. It sounds nice at first, but it also has a certain zing to it.

Make up a concept. An overall concept could be something like Spirit Warrior, Biomechanoid, Vengeful Ninja Bunny, or whatever. You'll find that having a 2- or 3-word concept in mind helps when picking powers. The mood, setting and group story seed should give you a good idea on the kind of concepts that are available and a good choice. If you're at a loss for ideas, the factions in the Ghostfield setting (Chapter 10) provide a good starting point for concepts.

Zadie is a survivor. She scavenges what she can. But she doesn't like going hand-to-hand against demons, so she's going to rely on keeping them at bay and picking them off from a distance. I'm picking "Hardened Scavenger" as her concept.

Anyone with powers has some non-human aspect to them, which is called their mark of power. In settings where powerful characters live among regular people, marks can be something that can be disguised, but usually it's more fun if it's something obvious. Examples of marks range from the subtle (birth marks, stars hidden deep in the pupils) to the flamboyant (sparks crawling over the PC's skin, clouds of shadows flowing around her, flaming red eyes, skin made of rock, animal tails or horns). You also should have an idea about how the character acquired powers, if it's an uncommon thing in your setting. While you're at it, figure out the rest of your character's appearance as well.

Zadie has no hair, and her scalp looks like a mosaic; that's her mark. Other than that, her eyes and skin are dark like most people's who live by the wastelands. She is usually covered in wide layers of sand-colored Kevlar strips, with only her eyes showing, and with leather and metal reinforcements at her joints, throat and chest and a metal breathing filter thing over her mouth area. Her powers are a result of demonic blood running through her family line, but she's not necessarily advertising that fact.

Passion

The passion describes the profound emotional state of the character, that is, not just their current mood, but the one passion that permeates everything they do. It tells you something about the character, thereby allowing you to roleplay them in interesting ways.

The passion also lets the character's player earn charge dice when certain conditions are triggered. Those conditions are listed with each passion. If the

triggering of a passion would earn more charge dice than fit in the character's Charge Pool, the remaining dice are turned into strike dice instead.

Zadie's passion is Vengeance. I'm going to have to figure out who wronged her, but I'm leaving that open for now. .

List of Passions

Pick one passion from the following list. You only have one passion at a time. You can change it once per session, during a character scene, in between scenes, or even during a conflict. See Chapter 9 for more details on character development.

Anger

The character has a lot of stored-up aggression.

Trigger: Gain 1 charge die every time an opponent makes a strike roll against you, whether it's successful or not, and every time an opponent inflicts one or more conditions on you.

Bloodlust

The character revels in dealing out pain.

Trigger: Gain 1 charge die for every wound you inflict on an opponent.

Compassion

The character cares deeply about other people. She puts them first, even if that places her in danger.

Trigger: Gain 1 charge die every time one of your fellow PCs takes 1 or more wounds from a strike. You still gain this bonus if you took a wound that another PC would have suffered (using Awesome Tokens or Guard, for example).

Doubt

The character has a problem with low self-esteem. He feels like he needs to prove himself in his own eyes and those of others.

Trigger: Whenever you spend charge dice on charge powers for a Strike or Achievement, and that Strike or Achievement fails (after using traits, if any), you get to keep those charge dice rather than discarding them.

Fear

The character is driven by fear. She is afraid of getting hurt and tries to avoid being a target, but the more she gets cornered, the more she will lash out.

Trigger: At the beginning of a conflict (or at the beginning of any of your later turns if you forgot to do this), determine the enemy you're most afraid of. Gain 1

charge die every time this enemy either earns an Awesome Token with a Maneuver or makes a Strike roll against you or any of your allies.

Glory

This character revels in victory and achievements.

Trigger. Gain 2 charge dice each time you inflict a defeating wound on an opponent. In addition, if you are the one who inflicts the defeating wound on the last enemy in a conflict, you get to keep all of your charge dice instead of just half (including the 2 you just earned). You do not gain these benefits for your eidolons' actions, if you have any.

Love

This passion is aimed at a particular other person. It can be a romantic interest, a family member, or someone else who is very close to the character (but it must be a PC). The love does not have to be requited.

Trigger. Gain 1 charge die every time an opponent makes a strike roll against your loved one, and another charge die for every wound that that character receives. You still gain this bonus if you took wounds or were the target of strikes that your loved one would have suffered (using Awesome Tokens or Guard, for example).

Self-Loathing

The character hates some part of herself, but doesn't necessarily have a death wish. She purposely puts herself in dangerous situations and revels in pain.

Trigger. Gain 2 charge dice for each wound that you take.

Vengeance

The character has been wronged by someone and seeks revenge. You need to name a specific NPC against whom you've sworn vengeance (your nemesis), and the faction to whom he or she belongs (such as Kanissian Guard, Loyalists, Enendian Rebels, Hidden Blade Crime Syndicate). This is a powerful drive forward for the character.

Trigger. You gain 1 charge die at the beginning of any conflict and 1 charge die for every wound that you take. If one or more of the enemies you face belong to your nemesis' faction, your gain instead is 2 charge dice at the beginning of the conflict and 2 charge dice for every wound that you take (this includes fighting your nemesis with other PCs on your side). If you face your nemesis all by yourself, you gain 3 charge dice at the beginning of the conflict and 3 charge dice for every wound that you take.

Character Traits

Characters have 3 traits, which describe who the character is. The traits indicate what the character cares about, the special abilities that define her, the goals in her life, the unrequited love that drives her mad, the flaw that always makes her flustered, and so on. A trait can be focused on another character, or it can be general. Traits guide play and fuel the character's actions.

Making up a trait can be easy or hard, depending on how much practice you have with it and how strong your vision of your character is. A trait can come in many shapes: it can be your character's trademark battle cry, a fact about the character's personality, or an attitude. Here are some example traits:

There is nothing that scares me.
Beautiful singing voice.
“You're going to regret that.”
I can never tell Syjika how I feel.
Always in the shadow of my mother.
Unable to resist the tantalizing lure of flames.

You can gain a mark on a trait for playing a character scene. You can then use those marked traits to reroll dice during conflicts. This mechanic is described in the conflict and character scene chapters.

You can save up one or two of the traits and fill them in during play (and you can change them later, anyway—see Chapter 9 on character development). This allows you to get a feel for the character first, and you can more easily connect the traits to the other PCs this way. In fact, for the most satisfying play experience, I suggest tying at least one of your traits to one of your fellow PCs at all times. And for maximum enjoyment, make it something that complicates both of your lives.

For Zadie, I'm making up two traits that express who she is and what her life is like as a scavenging scout. I write down “I can use anything for any purpose” and “Don't test my patience.” I'm leaving the third trait empty so I can tie it to another PC later.

Skills

Every character has three skills that they can use in conflicts. The Ghostfield setting contains a list of skills that you can pick from. Simply select three skills

from the list that fit with your character or make up comparable ones. For your convenience, here's the list without the explanations from Chapter 10:

Acrobatics	Brawl	Courage	Dirty Tricks	Endurance
Engineer	Explosives	Feint	Firearms	Gadgets
Intimidate	Luck	Melee Weapons	Perceive	Quickness
Stealth	Strength	Taunt	Throw	Vehicles

If you are creating your own setting, you can either make your own skill list as a group, or you can allow freeform skills that you create much like traits. If you create skills at will, however, the group as a whole should make sure that you look all of them over and modify them for consistency before you begin.

Since skills help you in conflicts, if you create any on your own, be sure to make them something that could be useful in a fight, in ways that don't get too demanding for you (as you might have to come up with various uses of the skill a couple of times every conflict).

Once you've selected or created three skills, give one of them a rating of 4, one a rating of 3, and one a rating of 2. These determine how effective those skills are when you use them (the higher the rating, the more effective the skill is). The lowest-rated skill is often one that's used when you support another character in a combined maneuver.

Zadie is a survivor and a warrior. I already know that I want to give her Firearms as her main skill. I'm also thinking that she knows how to handle Explosives, so that's her second skill. Finally, I imagine her as quick and agile, so her third skill is Acrobatics. I'm rating them as follows: Firearms 4, Acrobatics 3, Explosives 2.

Basic Stats

Every character starts with 3 wound circles, an Action Pool with a maximum of 10 action dice, an empty Charge Pool with a maximum of 6 charge dice, and a defense of 2. Collectively, these numbers are called your PC's stats. You'll learn how to use these stats in the conflict chapter.

When you select your powers, you can pick some that will impact your stats (for example, Resilience raises your defense, and if you're a new player, you should

consider picking this up once or twice). When you've selected all of your powers, keep in mind how your stats are affected by the powers and note that accordingly.

Zadie starts out with the same basic stats as anyone else: 3 wound circles, an Action Pool limit of 10, a Charge Pool limit of 6, and a defense of 2. I can already tell that I'll want to pick powers that make her tougher, due to her life in the wasteland.

Selecting Powers

Each main character, be it a protagonist or an important antagonist, has powers. You get to select 9 powers from Chapters 11-14, in any combination, subject to the limitations set out with each power. Alternatively, you can use power packages to quickly create your character. The packages are described below.

If you are creating your own setting or using one that's different than the one provided here, you should check with your GM to figure out which powers are available.

Unless otherwise stated, you can only take each power once. This applies to all powers in all categories. If a power can be taken multiple times, its description will tell you what the additional effects are. When you take such a power more than once, I suggest writing it with a roman numeral according to how many times you've taken it (for example, "Resilience II").

There are four groups of powers: passive powers, charge powers, Soulbound Weapon powers, and Summoning powers.

Passive powers work all the time; they include larger Action Pools, resistances against elements or specific powers, and so on.

Charge powers cost charge dice to use, which are stored up during a conflict and when passions are triggered. They can add bonus dice to strikes or achievements, inflict or remove conditions, and more.

Soulbound Weapons are a distinct collection of powers that allow characters to have items infused with specific effects (they don't actually have to be weapons; they can be pieces of armor, magical amulets, guardian spirits, etc.). Because these weapons are soulbound, they only work for the PC for which they were created. Characters can have one or more weapons, and certain powers allow them to

change the effects during the game. If you pick Soulbound Weapon powers, you'll have to go through the extra step of figuring out your weapon's effects.

Summoning deals with binding creatures (known as *eidolons*) from other worlds to yourself and being able to summon them to your own location. Good-natured characters have a bond of friendship and loyalty with these creatures, while others enslave them to do their bidding. If you pick Summoning powers, you'll have to select which *eidolons* you can summon, either from the list of common *eidolons* in Ghostfield or by making up your own according to the rules in Chapter 14.

It's a good idea to have at least 1 or 2 powers that use up charge dice. Otherwise you'll earn these dice during conflicts without getting any benefit from them.

In addition, if you're playing for the first time, make sure that every character picks Resilience twice and that at least half of the characters have the Refresh power. This will give your characters a good defense and a way to fill up your Action Pools during conflicts while you're figuring out how to best spend your dice.

Zadie is tough and quick, as well as resourceful. I'm picking the following powers for her:

Toughness, adding a wound circle, to show she's used to hardship.

Resilience II, bringing her defense to 4. She's learned to dodge and weave out of the way of blows, bullets, and anything else.

Body Resistance. She got poisoned, drained, and weakened by demons and other wasteland hazards enough times to build up immunities.

Soulbound Weapon. She has a self-assembled sniper rifle that she calls "Silent Reaper," as well as a little assortment of grenades and the likes. We'll let this power count for strikes with either.

Strike Boost. She is a trained fighter who knows how to hit hard.

Soulsmith. Zadie can change the modifications and specifications of Silent Reaper or turn scavenged materials into grenades.

Force Attack. Zadie uses this power for super-precise shots with her sniper rifle or for grenade strikes.

Life Drain. As part of her demonic legacy, Zadio is able to soak up other beings' life force.

Now I have to pick the weapon effect for Silent Reaper. She can always change it due to her Soulsmith power, but I'm going to start off with Power Strike, which allows her to take out individual targets more easily. That's a good fit for a sniper rifle.

Power Packages

If you want to create a character quickly, you can use power packages to do so. Simply select one basic package and one specialization package, and you're good to go. The basic package will give you 3 powers and the specialization package 6, for a total of 9 powers. I've created these with beginners in mind, so the powers included give your character at least a decent defense and some easy-to-use powers.

Basic Packages

Soldier

Resilience
Squad Tactics
Stamina

Prodigy

Maneuver Boost
Resilience
Tactical Maneuvering

Sparker

Darksight
Resilience
Resistance to Electricity

Rebel

Achievement Boost
Resilience
Squad Tactics

Savant

Charge Boost
Maneuver Boost
Resilience

Child of the Gate

Resilience
Resistance to Fire
Spontaneous Gating

Street Urchin

Resilience
Resistance to Frost
Stamina

Shadowborn

Conjure Darkness
Darksight
Resilience

Child Monk

Resilience
Soul Resistance
Stamina

Specialization Packages

Healer

Brighten
Life Transfer
Refresh
Resilience
Restore
Rise of the Phoenix

Hand of Decay

Life Drain
Mass Effect
Resilience
Touch of Decay
Vampiric Strike
Weaken

Warrior Monk

Body Resistance
Force Attack
Refresh
Resilience
Rise of the Phoenix
Whirlwind Attack

Insurgent

Force Attack
Leap Attack
Heroics
Maneuver Boost
Resilience
Toughness

Assassin

Blindness
Force Attack
Poison
Quicken
Resilience
Shadow Strike

Flamecaster

Brighten
Blaze
Elemental Surge
Firestorm
Nightvision
Resilience

Coldbringer

Elemental Surge
Frost Spikes
Ice Hurricane
Resilience
Slow
Weaken

Squad Leader

Force Attack
Heroics
Leadership
Resilience
Tactical Maneuvering
Super Combo Attack

Weaponsmith

Immediate Imbuement
Resilience
Soulbound Weapon (with variable effects)
Soulsmith
Weapon Upgrade
Zap

Planewalker

Force Attack
Leap Attack
Resilience
Skipping
Stamina
Soulbound Weapon (with Pneumatic effect)

Summoner

Bond: Caragu (added power: Toughness)
Bond: Harklings
Empower Eidolon II
Refresh
Summoning

Sentinel

Guard
Refresh
Soulbound Weapon (with the effects Elemental Force, Frost Aura, Protection, and Haste)
Weapon Upgrade III

Background and Links

Characters can have background items and links listed on their character sheets. If you've ever written a character background with important events in the character's past, made a list of the character's NPC contacts, and so on, you know what kinds of things to list here.

There is one big difference between background items and links: background items are the domain of the player to give their character depth, whereas links are provided as tools for the GM.

If your character has a long-lost brother, and you list him in your background, the GM is not going to bring him up in play. The brother plays a role for who your character is, but he won't be used by the GM for plot purposes.

If you list your brother under links, however, you are giving the GM the green light to have your brother show up in the game as an NPC. Or maybe you'll find clues to his whereabouts. Or you may find his corpse. How the link is used is up to the GM (though you should feel free to make suggestions, of course). You can add or change background items and links later on as well, just make sure to inform the GM so that the GM can use the new links (or stop using ones you removed).

First, Zadie's background. Her parents were scavengers, too. I'm putting them in the background section because I don't want to deal with my character's parents in the game, but they're still alive somewhere and I might move them into links at some point.

Most of the stuff about her, however, I put down as links because I like my characters to be personally tied into the events of the game. I'm listing a younger sister, who's a priestess somewhere; an unreliable band of smugglers who buy stuff Zadie finds; an old enemy named Locust who used to be her partner; and the fact that Zadie once uncovered the entrance to an old underground system in the wasteland.

I have no idea what most of these mean or what their details are. I'm leaving that up to the GM and our developing story. What I do determine (and tell the GM and other players) is that her vengeance passion is aimed at Locust, though I haven't figured out yet what exactly happened there.

Character Story Seed

The character story seed is created by each player for his or her own character. It is an event, mission or personality issue that pushes the character into action. It could be a personal loss, falling in love, discovering a mystical item, swearing vengeance, being exiled, dealing with the character's self-loathing, and so on.

You shouldn't plan out a whole story arc—you don't even have to know who or what caused the event. As long as there's something going on that gives your character a goal to pursue or a mystery to explore, or something that complicates her life and makes for good dramatic character scenes, you're on the right track.

Depending on your playstyle, your character story seed may or may not conflict with your group story seed. For most players, I would suggest that they should be intertwined in a way that they support each other or are completely independent. For example, if your group seed is that all of the PCs are stuck together in unknown territory after an airship crash, your character story seed could be proving your newfound love to one of the other PCs, overcoming your fear of the unknown, delivering that urgent message despite your crash, etc.

Advanced players can have character story seeds that conflict with the group story seed. This is great fodder for dramatic choices: the GM can put the PC in a position where she has to choose between one and the other and figure out what's more important to her. But it can also tear the PC group apart if you're not careful, which is why I only suggest it if you're up for that kind of tension.

Our group seed ensures that we're sticking together for a while, and I know my fellow players well enough to know that we like to play some tension between our characters. I talk to a fellow player, and we decide that my character story seed is that his character Rasheem is wearing a necklace that I know belongs to my old nemesis Locust. In fact, I know that because I gave it to him when we were still partners and I had a crush on him. It's made from something unique I found in the wasteland ruins.

How did Rasheem get the necklace? Is he on Locust's side? Is my nemesis involved in the attack on the caravan? Those questions will be answered during our game. Notice that this is only a seed: I'll find out the answers soon enough, but it will hopefully lead to a whole story arc that involves one or more confrontations with my

nemesis. By making this my seed, I'm telling the GM and other players that this is one of the things I'd like the game to focus on.

At this point, I also fill out my final trait: "Distrustful of Rasheem." It turns out that Rasheem's player picks "Grudgingly attracted to Zadio." That should be fun to play out.

5 CHARACTER SCENES

Scenes to Play

Most of the time, the PCs won't be in actual conflicts. They will interact with each other, with NPCs, and with the environment. Character scenes are there to allow you to roleplay your characters with some degree of purpose and pacing, and at the same time they provide some benefit for playing out your character's personality.

Not all of the events have to happen in scenes or conflicts; you can have exchanges among the players and with the GM that talk about things that happen "off screen". These are like short exposition paragraphs in novels. They take care of the times when the characters go somewhere and nothing special happens, for example. But when interesting character interaction is about to take place, a scene begins.

Roleplaying in a character scene looks just like the examples in Chapter 2. The players each describe in turn how their characters react to everyone else, bringing in the events of the story so far, as well as trying to play out their traits, passions, seeds, links, and so on. Some scenes are introspective, some show something about the characters, some contain arguments or revelations, some bring about change, and others are more plot-oriented.

Not all of the PCs have to be included in every scene, but you should give each PC the same amount of "screen time". That is, if two characters interact together without the third, that third character's player and the GM should figure out a scene that they can play out afterwards. This way, players will at times be the audience for each other, but you should care enough about your shared story and each other's characters to enjoy that. The GM can hand over control of NPCs to other players for the duration of a scene to include them and take some of the load off the GM.

Setting Up Scenes

A scene must have a location, participating characters, and interaction. It ends when the interaction has run its course and the location or participants change substantially.

Scenes follow each other in a way that makes sense. After a fight, for example, the characters regroup, lick their wounds, talk trash about each other's performance, worry about the consequences of their actions, and so on. But you can also kickstart scenes by making specific suggestions.

For example, a PC might have a character story seed that relates to her missing brother. She was told that someone in the city knows something about him, and the player decides that her PC will seek out that person. The GM and the player now figure out that the trip to the other character's house wouldn't include any important interaction, so they frame the scene to begin right when the PC rings the doorbell and the NPC opens the door. Or the PC might arrive at the house to find it burned down, which is not yet a scene because there's still no interaction (unless she brought another PC and they interact as they go through the rubble).

Once again, take your cue from animated series, video games, and other sources and see how the different scenes are set up in those, with time passing in between and minor activities not being shown. Only the scenes that have some character or story purpose tend to be shown in detail.

Some players don't like to officially set up each scene, instead preferring to have a more organic flow of the game events. That kind of style can work, too. In this case, the GM just needs to pay more attention and, when a natural conclusion of a scene occurs, take a moment to point that out and let the players pick a benefit.

Scene Benefits

At the end of each character scene that the players roleplay, each player can do one of the following:

1. Heal 1 wound on your own PC.
2. Heal 1 wound on one of your own PC's eidolons.
3. Fill up your PC's Action Pool to its maximum.
4. Mark 1 of your own PC's traits with a check.

Depending on the special circumstances of your setting and the powers you are using, there can be other benefits as well, such as changing effects on a Soulbound Weapon or finding a gate to another dimension. These are listed with the appropriate powers. Whatever the benefit is, you should still play out character interaction during the scene.

PCs can often have several conflicts, take grievous wounds, and completely recover in very short time frames. They are some of the most powerful characters around, after all, and this allows the story and action to keep going without taking long breaks for recovery.

If your character already has all traits marked, all wounds healed, and a filled Action Pool, you won't gain any additional benefit from a character scene. However, that doesn't mean you have to jump right into a conflict. The benefits are additions to the scenes, but they shouldn't limit you. The fun of the game lies in playing your characters and creating your own story, and a lot of that happens in character scenes.

Example Scene

Let's use the example character I created in the previous chapter, Zadie, and involve her in a character scene with Rasheem. This is the very first scene in our game, and we're using it to establish the characters before the group seed hits. Of course, Zadie and Rasheem have no idea that their caravan is about to be annihilated. The GM and the other players get to watch at first, but they can also jump in if a good chance comes up.

Christian: I'd like to have a scene with Zadie and Rasheem where she sees the necklace for the first time.

Daria: Sure, let's set it up where Zadie is out scouting ahead, and Rasheem shows up.

Christian: Okay. Zadie is lying on a ridge, with her trusted rifle against her shoulder. She is peering down into the valley ahead through the rifle scope.

Daria: Rasheem comes up behind her. He's not exactly sneaky. The hilt of his huge scimitar sticks out over his shoulder.

Christian: Zadie turns onto her back and aims the rifle at him.

Daria: He lifts his hands and says: "Whoa. There's no need for that."

Christian: Zadie makes some disapproving noise, like a growl. She lowers her rifle and says: "There is if you're going to make all that noise and stand out like that. You're going to attract any demons within five miles."

Daria: “Well, it’s good that we have you to take them out, then.”
He smiles in that cocky way.

Christian: She considers shooting him.

Daria: Hah. She can try if she wants to.

Christian: Zadio looks him up and down to see what he’s made of.
And then she sees the necklace and her eyes lock onto it.

Daria: Rasheem smiles at her and says: “See anything you like?”

Christian: She says: “Where did you get that?”

Daria: “Huh? What are you talking about?”

Christian: She stands up, walks over, and grabs the necklace.

Daria: Well... Rasheem’s wearing it, so wouldn’t it be up to me if
she gets her hand on it? It’s part of my character.

Christian: Oh sure. I meant she reaches for it.

Daria: Okay. Well... he doesn’t actually mind, so he doesn’t
even look down as her hand closes on it. He says: “That’s
a long story.”

Christian: “I think we can make some time now.” She looks very
irritated.

Daria: I think it would be cool if something came up now to keep
them from getting into it. I’m not even sure yet what the
story is.

Christian: Oh, sure. GM?

Maura: Ah yeah. As Rasheem is about to answer, you hear yelling
and screaming back at the caravan.

Daria: He says: “I don’t think we can.”

Christian: Zadio lets go of the necklace and dashes back toward the
caravan.

Maura: Cool. We’ll have a conflict soon. But first you get a scene
benefit each.

Christian: I’m marking my trait, “Distrustful of Rasheem.”

Daria: And I’m marking “Grudgingly attracted to Zadio.”

Maura: Alright. And now you get to fight some demons together!

6 CONFLICTS

Setting Up Conflicts

Every conflict needs opposed parties who want different things, and the adversity is whoever stands in the way of the PCs and what they want. If there is no opposition, then there's no conflict. This also means that, contrary to many other roleplaying games, if the PCs attempt something that's not opposed by actual characters, it's either ruled absolutely impossible by the group (such as summoning a nuclear warhead) or the players get to determine their PCs' success or failure.

The following section guides you through the process of establishing adversity. You can prepare adversity before the session or make it up on the spot.

You also can determine one or more goals that can be achieved during the conflict. You can have conflicts without goals, which tend to be duels or showdowns where all that counts is beating the other side just for the glory of it. But even then, adding a goal makes the conflict that much more interesting. The creation and advanced uses of goals are explained in the separate goals chapter.

In some circumstances, you can determine that starting conditions are in place. Conditions and how to use them are explained in Chapter 15.

Once you've got all of these figured out, you can play out the conflict.

I'm going to create some adversity and give you some examples of conflict actions as we go along. We're using Zadio and Rasheem as our example characters again.

Choosing or Creating Adversity

Chapter 16 provides several examples of adversity that you can use, either directly or as inspiration for your own creations. It also walks you through the process of creating your own adversity, whether you do it before the session or on the fly. Creating adversity is relatively easy: you pick the adversity type of the opponent, determine the stats, and finally select the adversity's special powers, if any. You can use the adversity sheet from the website to keep track of several adversity characters at once.

There are three types of adversity: individuals, squads, and swarms. The type will make a difference for maneuver descriptions and the way certain powers work. Even though there are multiple members in squads and swarms, they are considered a “character” for all other purposes, such as having one action per turn.

If you want to make up quick adversity on the fly, just pick default stats. These are: Action Pool 10, 1 Skill (Brawling, Firearms, or Melee Weapons are easy) at 3, Defense 3, and 3 wounds. As most adversity only has 1 skill instead of 3, they do not earn bonus dice like PCs do for using all skills (more on this in a bit). Add some powers (easy ones are Force Attack, Leap Attack, and Strike Boost) and your adversity is ready to roll.

After the character scene between Zadio and Rasheem, the next scene (the conflict) starts in the middle of the attack on the caravan. Zadio finds herself confronted by a horde of demonic critters that look like a cross between reptiles and warhounds. There’s a whole bunch of them, and the GM determines that they count as a swarm.

We’re also facing a squad of humanoid demons as well as one individual opponent, a huge ravaging bull-like beast. But I’m going to take care of my critters here first before worrying about those.

The GM picks the average stats for the demon critters: a default Action Pool of 10, a Brawling skill with a rating of 3, a defense of 3, and 3 wound circles. They start without any charge or strike dice.

The GM looks over the list of powers and decides that the critters can use Leap Attack when they swarm me. Great. He also gives them Soul Resistance, which protects them from certain powers but won’t impact me, since I can’t use Life Drain on swarms anyway.

The GM also decides that my critters are weak to fire, but that doesn’t do me much good right now, as I don’t have any fire-based powers. I’ll have to see if I can make use of that in some other way.

Adversity that does not have any charge powers or other ways of using charge dice does not earn any charge dice. Instead, all 6s rolled during maneuvers turn into strike dice.

Once you’ve created a particular adversity, you can keep it on file to make it easier to pull out at a later time. Recurring enemies are lots of fun, too.

Starting Conflicts

The conflict begins with a description by the GM of where the conflict is set and what adversity the PCs are facing. Use broad strokes here, with lots of room for the players to add their own details.

When a conflict begins, characters might have a lower Action Pool than their maximum and some charge dice stored up from earlier conflicts, and their Strike Pool is usually empty (see Ending Conflicts later in this chapter). Every player is responsible for having the appropriate number of dice (or tokens) in their pools on their character sheets.

The GM tells us players what the general area looks like. The caravan is in the middle of the wasteland. There's barren, rock-hard ground underneath, with the wind blowing sand over it. There are bigger rocks all over the place, some several stories high. There are also some cacti around. The GM then describes how the critters flood out from behind a rock formation as we pass, and then the other demons jump out, and chaos ensues.

I've got my character sheet in front of me. This is our first conflict in this game, so I have no leftover dice. I'm stacking up 10 dice in my Action Pool circle, and that's all I have for now.

Taking Turns

The GM determines whether the PCs or the opposition go first. She can either figure this out based on the circumstances of the conflict or have players roll a die against the GM's die, with the higher one going first.

The GM determines that the demons go first, because they're ambushing us. That means I'm acting after the critters, but that's fine. Let them have their best shot at Zadio, and they'll find out who they're messing with.

When it's the PCs' turn to act, the players can figure out amongst themselves who goes first. They can change this order each round according to their needs and plans. When it's the GM's turn, she acts for each adversity in whichever order she likes.

Each player other than the GM gets one action per turn, which is usually a maneuver, a strike, an achievement, or an action power. The GM gets to take one action for each opponent in the conflict. In most cases you can use powers to modify or improve any of these actions, thus broadening your choices.

Maneuvers are used to gain strike dice and charge dice. You start out a conflict doing maneuvers until you've gained a few strike dice and charge dice, then use those for strikes and/or powers to inflict damage or conditions on your opposition.

Strikes are used to inflict damage on the opponent. They use up strike dice. Once you've inflicted enough wounds on your opponent to mark all their wound circles, you knock them out of the conflict. You also might have charge powers that you can add to a strike if you can pay the required number of charge dice.

Achievements are used to accomplish goals. Achievements use up strike dice. A goal can be aimed at a story outcome (like “save the hostage”), weakening the opposition (find the steambot’s weak spot to lower its defense rating), changing existing conditions, or similar things. Goals are explained more fully in Chapter 7.

Powers that are listed as the “action” type are actions in themselves (see the listing for each power to figure out what type of power it is). Examples are summoning an eidolon or using Life Drain. When you use those powers, they use up your action for that turn and cost the listed number of charge dice. If you don’t have enough charge dice for a particular power, you can’t use it yet.

Playing Adversity

The GM controls the adversity much like the players control PCs: she takes an action per turn for each enemy (whether it’s an individual, squad or swarm) using the same actions as the PCs. There are only two main differences.

First, most of the enemies only have one skill. As you will see below, PCs can mark the skills they use and gain bonus dice whenever they’ve used all 3 of their skills. Enemies that only have one skill do not get this benefit. But special enemies that have 3 skills do, so the GM needs to keep track of those.

Second, some of the powers available to adversity are not available to PCs. In fact, the GM can make up powers at will. PC powers are somewhat balanced against each other, but there’s no reason a powerful enemy wouldn’t have some outstanding power, as long as the GM keeps the conflict entertaining for the players and doesn’t use superpowers to one-sidedly push the conflict toward the outcome she wants.

Maneuvers

First choose one of your character's skills to use for the maneuver and describe it appropriately. Remember that this is an anime battle—you'll want to bounce off walls, do crazy stunt flips, swordfight in mid-air, and so on. You can also taunt your opponent, embarrass them, rally your own troops, trigger a trap, or whatever else you come up with that would work to bring you into a better or your opponent into a worse situation than before, whether it's physically, mentally, or socially, or that brings you closer to achieving a goal.

Zadie is attacked by the critters, and it's my turn afterwards. I decide to start out with a maneuver, which is really my only choice because I don't have any strike or charge dice yet. I'm going to use Firearms as my skill for this maneuver, even though you'll see from my narration that I could have used Explosives as well.

I'm telling the GM and the other players that Zadie runs for one of the wagons in the caravan. She runs up the side, grabs the railing on top, and flips over onto the roof. She reaches underneath her layers of armored clothing and produces a scavenged block of a strange material. She tosses it into the mass of critters, who crowd around it, trying to tear it apart immediately. Zadie draws Silent Reaper from her back, aims, and fires into the block, which explodes and kills several of the demons.

Now it's time to gather dice for your maneuver roll. Remember that all of the dice in this game are standard six-sided dice. You'll roll the following number of them:

Maneuver Roll = Skill Dice + Action Dice (+ Gift Dice + Bonus Dice)

First, you gain a certain number of dice for the action according to the rating of the skill you are using, ranging from 2 to 4 dice. Don't take these dice from any of your pools. Instead, I suggest having a big bowl of dice in the middle of the table from which you can draw them (and any bonus dice).

You now add a number of dice from your Action Pool based on how much effort your character is putting into the maneuver, ranging from 1 to 3 dice. You have to add at least 1 die. These actually use up the dice from your Action Pool. If your Action Pool is empty, you can't do maneuvers.

Other players can also give you a gift die each from their own Action Pools, if they think your maneuver was particularly impressive or if they want to support

you. They do not have to have their characters actually assist. Granting another player a die does not use up the giving player's action for the turn.

Finally, add any bonus dice from powers, conditions, weapon effects, and so on, if any of those apply. The Quickened condition grants one bonus die to maneuvers, for example. Most of the time, however, you won't have any of these to add.

My Firearms skill is rated 4, which gives me 4 dice. Zadio is starting out carefully, so I'm only adding 1 die from my Action Pool, but one of the other players also throws in a gift die from her Action Pool because she liked my maneuver description. This gives me a total of 6 dice to roll.

Roll all of those dice for a chance to gain successes, which are dice showing 3 and higher. Every 3, 4, and 5 earns you 1 die for your Strike Pool. Every 6 earns you 1 die for your Charge Pool. 1s and 2s fail to gain you anything and are discarded.

If you have enough dice, simply move the dice with the right numbers onto your Charge Pool and Strike Pool circles and put the 1s and 2s away. If you're using tokens, move those accordingly. If you're just writing things down, erase the appropriate number of dice from your Action Pool and write the gained dice into your other pools.

After your roll, if you have a trait marked from a character scene, you can "spend" (erase) the mark in exchange for rerolling your failed dice (1s and 2s). You need to describe how the trait figures into your current maneuver. Roll the failed dice and figure out dice gained as before, adding them to your total. You can also use up a trait mark for one of your summoned eidolons or for one of your allies.

I roll my 6 dice for Zadio and get a less than satisfying result. 1 die shows a 4, another a 6, and the other 4 dice are all failures (1s and 2s). I move the die showing the 4 onto my Strike Pool circle and the one showing the 6 onto my Charge Pool circle, and I drop the other 4 dice into the big bowl for dice that don't come from pools. I could use the trait I marked in the earlier character scene to reroll the 4 failed dice and probably earn a few more successes, but I decide to save that up in case things get really bad later on.

If you earn no dice at all (that is, you roll all 1s and 2s), your action dice are returned to your Action Pool, gifted dice from other PC players go back to their Action Pools, and any bonus dice are discarded (back into the big shared bowl).

Unless you have a relevant power, you cannot earn more than 5 dice in a maneuver. If you rolled more than 5 successes, pick which 5 you want to earn (in other words, prioritize between strike dice and charge dice, if applicable) and discard the rest.

Maneuver Descriptions

The player who acts describes their maneuver. The description should fit the mood, established environment, and so on. The description of the opposition is limited to the following:

Against **individuals**, you cannot describe whether you injure the individual with your action or how it otherwise affects them. Only describe the intent of your maneuver and what your character is doing. The person controlling the individual gets to add how that actually affects that individual after you make your roll.

Against **squads**, you can describe injuring one or more of the squad members with your maneuver, but not in a crippling way. You cannot describe killing any of them or otherwise taking them out of the fight (that happens specifically with wounds). You can describe temporarily disarming them or otherwise creating handicaps. The other player will add reactions after your roll.

Against **swarms**, you can describe taking out several of the units of the swarm with your maneuver. However, if the player who controls the swarm has identified standout units within the swarm (a leader, an alpha dog, a champion), those are treated like individuals. Against those, only declare the intent of your actions, and the other player will describe how that plays out after your roll.

When I described my maneuver earlier, because I'm fighting a swarm, I got to describe how the explosion tears apart a bunch of the critters, sending them flying in all directions, screaming and leaving behind trails of smoke. That description earned me a gift die from another player.

Marking Skills

Every character has 3 skills that you chose during character creation. These skills are used for earning maneuver dice, as you've seen above. The rating of the skill indicates how many dice you earn from it when you use it in your maneuver. For example, a skill with a rating of 4 gives 4 dice for your maneuver roll. You can only use one skill at a time.

While this may tempt you to use the highest-rated skill all the time, there is a benefit to using all of your character's abilities. When you use a skill, make a mark in front of it. Once all of your skills are marked, you earn 2 bonus dice of your choice (2 charge dice, 2 strike dice, or 1 of each) at the beginning of your maneuver in exchange for removing all the marks. These bonus dice do not count against your dice earning limit for the maneuver, but they also do not count toward earning Awesome Tokens (see below). Once you've earned the bonus dice and erased the marks, you can start all over again.

If you ever want to take an action that just doesn't fit any of your skills, you can use 2 skill dice, but you won't get to mark any of your skills. Deciding whether the action fits a skill or not is up to the player doing the maneuver.

Combined Maneuvers

PCs can gang up to perform a maneuver together. This uses up the action of every character who participates for this turn. Characters who have acted already this turn cannot participate in a combined maneuver.

One character needs to be designated as the leader for the combined maneuver. The leader's player describes the joint action, and the other players help out with their parts of the description.

The leader's skill dice are used in the maneuver as usual. Every character who participates in addition to the leader adds 1 die for the skill they are using instead of its rating. A combined maneuver involving 3 PCs with a leader's skill of 4, for example, earns 6 skill dice (4 from the leader plus 1 each from the helpers). All of the characters mark the skill they used in this combined maneuver.

Every player involved in the combined maneuver can contribute up to 3 dice from their Action Pool (though they do not have to contribute any). Note that the Squad Tactics power adds one bonus die for each participating PC who has it.

The leader rolls the dice for successes as usual. She is limited to gaining 5 successes (unless she has the Tactical Maneuvering power) and all successes have to go to the leader's pools (unless she has the Leadership power). The leader or anyone else can unmark one of their marked traits in order to reroll the failed dice.

It's the next round, and Rasheem has climbed up onto the wagon. We decide to team up this time, with Zadie taking the lead. Rasheem is fighting the demon squad, and he's having trouble, so I'll

try to help him out. First, Daria describes how two of the demons climb up on top of the wagon. One of them jumps at Rasheem, who drops to the ground and kicks the demon up into the air. Then I describe how, after kicking some critters off the wagon, I see Rasheem from the corner of my eyes. I whip out Silent Reaper again, switch it on rapid fire, and send a hail of bullets straight over the supine Rasheem and at the demon that's still on the wagon, watching it fall backwards to the ground. The other demon is falling back down and Rasheem jumps up and hits it with his oversized scimitar, sending it flying sideways into a big boulder at the side of the road.

I'm using my Firearms skill again, which gives me 4 dice, and we get 1 extra die from the Melee Weapons skill Rasheem uses, for 5 skill dice. Rasheem's player puts in 2 from her Action Pool, and I add 2 from mine. I roll all 9 dice, earning 4 strike dice and 3 charge dice. I can only keep 5, however, and I can't hand any to Daria, so I decide to keep 2 strike dice and 3 charge dice and discard the rest of the dice. My Firearms skill was already marked, so I don't get to make a skill mark this time, but Daria marks Rasheem's Melee Weapons skill.

Awesome Tokens

If you manage to earn 5 or more dice (strike and charge dice combined, and not counting bonus dice from marking your skills) at once, the GM will award you an Awesome Token. The GM also earns these herself when her adversity gains 5 or more dice in a maneuver, and summoners gain Awesome Tokens on behalf of their eidolons. You can use Awesome Tokens during the conflict for some benefits or at the conclusion for others (see Ending Conflicts).

You can spend your Awesome Tokens during a conflict in the following ways:

For 1 Awesome Token, you (or your eidolon) can take a free strike, achievement, or charge power action, even if you've already acted in this round. You can do this at any time in between two other characters' actions, even right after you earned the token. You cannot use it to take a maneuver action (forgetting this exception leads to a breakdown of the system, so make sure to remember it). You can, however, use it to Catch Your Breath.

For 1 Awesome Token, the GM can disarm a character's Soulbound Weapon. In return, the character's player gains bonus dice to earn strike and charge dice to

make up for their temporary loss (and they can regain the weapon with an Achievement). For more details, see the Disarming section in the Soulbound Weapons chapter.

For 2 Awesome Tokens, you can take wounds on behalf of another character. The moment the other character takes the damage, your character jumps in the way and gets hurt instead. Since this happens after damage has been determined, it doesn't matter what your or your allies' defense values are; if your ally would have taken 2 wounds, you now take 2 wounds instead, even if your defense is much higher (or lower). Note that this can change the triggering of passions.

For 3 Awesome Tokens, you can have your strike count against 2 opponents at once. Designate both targets and roll your dice once (with the option of using your traits to improve your roll), then apply the successes against both. If some of your dice only work against certain types of adversity and you're using the tokens to strike against different types, make a separate roll for the type-specific dice.

You can use your Awesome Tokens on behalf of another player or their eidolons to grant them one of the benefits above. You can even pool Awesome Tokens for the more expensive benefits, even if the player who benefits does not contribute any Awesome Tokens herself.

With our combined maneuver, I earned 5 dice, so I also get an Awesome Token. I decide to spend it right away and get to make an immediate strike. I'm going try take out the demon that I blasted with Silent Reaper. I could use the token on Daria's behalf and let her character do a free strike, achievement, or power action, but I just earned a bunch of strike dice while she doesn't have enough to overcome the demons' defense, so I'll use the token on me.

Awesome Maneuver Award

If the GM really liked your maneuver description, she can decide to award you the Awesome Token before you roll your dice (even if it's unlikely or impossible that you would get 5 or more successes with your roll). This simply means that you are guaranteed to earn that Awesome Token; if you roll 5 or more successes after the GM already gave you the Awesome Token, you do not earn another one.

Strikes

When you're striking, take up to 6 dice from your Strike Pool. If you're using any charge powers, declare them now and pay their cost in charge dice. Then roll the strike dice plus any bonus dice from powers before you describe what you're doing, so that you can fit your narration to the impact of the roll.

Unless you have a relevant power, you cannot roll more than 6 dice from your Strike Pool in a strike. Bonus dice from powers are not limited in this fashion. You have to use at least 1 strike die to make a strike.

I've earned a total of 3 strike dice and 4 charge dice for Zadio by now (from my maneuver and our combined maneuver), and I'm using them all in a strike against the demon squad. I spend the 4 charge dice on using Force Attack, which gives me 5 bonus dice to my strike roll in addition to the 3 strike dice, for a total of 8 dice. My limit on spending strike dice is raised by 2 due to Zadio's Strike Boost power, bringing my strike dice limit to 8. 5 of my dice are bonus dice and only 3 are actual strike dice, however, so I'm not even close to hitting that limit.

Sadly, Silent Reaper's Power Strike effect only gives a bonus die against individuals, and I'm facing a squad, so I don't get that bonus.

As with maneuvers, every 3 or higher is a success. You compare the number of successes to the opponent's defense. If your number of successes does not equal or exceed the defense, the attack fails and the strike dice go back to the Strike Pool. Bonus dice and spent charge dice are always used up.

If your number of successes equals or exceeds the defense, you inflict a wound. For example, if your opponent's defense is 3, you need to roll at least 3 successes to inflict a wound. The strike and bonus dice you rolled are discarded, and the opponent marks a wound circle. The player of the victim either describes the wound or lets the striking player do it.

You can inflict more than 1 wound at a time, but that requires successes in multiples of the opponent's defense. If the opponent's defense is 3, you need 3 successes to inflict 1 wound, 6 successes for 2 wounds, 9 successes for 3 wounds, and so on.

The demon squad has a defense of 4, so I need 4 successes to inflict a wound. I roll 5, 1, 6, 6, 4, 3, 2, 4. That's 6 successes! I inflict a wound and the GM lets me do the narration. I describe how the demon that I blasted off Rasheem's wagon falls to the ground, riddled with bullet holes. He won't get up again. Ever.

You can unmark a trait to reroll your failed dice for a strike. If you still fail, all strike dice return to the Strike Pool as before, but the trait remains unmarked. You also can unmark a trait to grant this boon to one of your eidolons or one of your allies. When you use up a trait mark, you should narrate how that plays out in your story.

I take a big chance and unmark my trait to reroll the 1 and the 2. I explain to the group that Zadie doesn't trust Rasheem at all. Just before she made the shot, she hesitated and thought about blowing him away instead because he might have attracted the demons on purpose; he is wearing Locust's necklace, after all. But the demons are more of a direct threat, so she overcame her distrust. For now.

I get lucky and score 2 more successes! Now my total is 8, and since I cause a wound for every 4 successes against defense 4, I actually do a second wound. I describe how the demon that Rasheem slashed into the rock smashes to the ground, and as he tries to get up, Zadie snipes him in the back of the neck. Game over for the demon squad. Now back to those pesky critters...

The only way for characters to strike together is to use the Super Combo Strike power. There is no other combined strike.

Achievements

You can use an action to try to achieve one of the conflict goals, which are either story-related or have special effects. Goals are introduced in Setting Up Conflicts, above, and are described in detail in Chapter 7.

Take up to 6 of your strike dice, add dice from a skill (and mark the skill), and roll them all. Every 3 or higher is a success. You need to get as many successes as the difficulty rating of the goal you're trying to achieve. If you're unsuccessful, all of the strike dice return to your Strike Pool (bonus and charge dice are always used up). However, if you are successful, all of the dice that you rolled are used up.

Describe your actions after you know whether you've achieved the goal or not. You can describe part of your action beforehand if you want, to set up suspense for the roll, but you should wait until after the roll to complete the description appropriately.

You can unmark a trait to reroll your failed dice for an achievement. If you still fail, strike dice return to the Strike Pool as before, but the trait remains unmarked. You also can unmark a trait to grant this boon to one of your eidolons or one of your allies. When you use up a trait mark, you should narrate how that plays out in your story.

The GM can, but does not have to, allow powers usually used in strikes or as actions to give bonus dice to an achievement if it makes sense in the specific situation. The number of bonus dice does not have to equal what the power would grant to a strike. When the GM grants this, the player has to expend the charge dice for using the power.

Later in our fight against the demons, we're having the hardest time with the demonic bull. The beast has a defense of 7 because of its armored hide of massive dragon-like scales, and we can't seem to get through with our strikes. I ask the GM to establish a goal that will help us lower the beast's defense. The GM establishes the following goal:

Overcome the Beast's Armored Hide [6]: Beast's Defense -2

I need almost as many successes to achieve the goal as I would need to wound it, but once we achieve the goal, we can inflict all 3 needed wounds to bring it down much more easily.

By this time, I've gathered new strike dice, 5 in total. I'm going to use Explosives for another 2 dice. I need to roll 6 successes to beat difficulty 6, which seems doable with 7 dice and a good amount of luck. I describe how I jump on top of the beast and plant an explosive device under its scales to blow a hole into its armored hide. However, my roll of all 7 dice only turns up 4 successes, which is not enough. I already used my trait earlier, so I can't reroll the failed dice.

I return all of my strike dice to my Strike Pool, discard the dice I used from my skill, and describe how Zadio jumps off the beast and holds her ears shut in anticipation of the explosion. But then

nothing happens—it's a dud. She curses under her breath and jumps aside when the beast charges at her.

If the skill you marked with the Achievement completed your set of three marked skills, you erase the marks and gain the 2 dice of your choice as usual, at the completion of this action (independent of whether you were successful or not).

Combined Achievements

Most goals can be achieved with joint effort. Two or more characters can spend their actions together and contribute strike dice to a joint roll. One of the characters needs to be the leader of the achievement action, just as with combined maneuvers, and only that character can use appropriate powers (unless she has the Leadership skill). As with Combined Maneuvers, only the leader gets to add their whole skill rating while the helpers add 1 die each for theirs.

While a player can usually only spend 6 strike dice on achieving a goal, this limit is raised by 3 for each level of Tactical Maneuvering that the leader has. This means that a leader with Tactical Maneuvering II and her helper(s) can roll up to 12 strike dice total, drawn in any combination from their Strike Pools.

In addition, the group earns 1 bonus die from each participating character that has the Squad Tactics power.

The next round, Daria and I decide to work together on the beast. In the story, Zadie tosses Rasheem a grenade while she provides a distraction. Rasheem somersaults over the beast, tossing down the grenade to blow up and trigger the explosive device. Rasheem has the Heroics power, so we determine that he's the leader of the combined achievement.

We can use up to 6 strike dice together in a combined achievement (Rasheem doesn't have the Tactical Maneuvering power). I give 3 of my 5 strike dice, and Daria adds 3 from Rasheem's Strike Pool. I'm using Acrobatics this time, for 1 skill die despite its rating of 3 (because I'm just the helper), but Rasheem's skill adds its whole rating for 3 more dice. Daria pays 2 charge dice for the Heroics power and gains 4 more bonus dice to our attempt. That's a total of 14 dice! Daria rolls 11 successes and easily beats the difficulty. She discards all used dice. Maybe we should have gambled and used fewer strike dice.

She then describes how Rasheem lands and, as he looks over his shoulder, the grenade and device go off on the back of the beast in a big explosion, sending scales and fragments all around. The GM tells us that the beast roars madly and looks like it's out for blood now, but we're not impressed: with its defense lowered to 5, we can take it down as soon as we get some more strike dice.

Catching Your Breath

Once the Action Pool runs empty, the character is seriously vulnerable and cannot do any more maneuvers. If the character takes another action (strike, achievement, power) while not having any action dice left, she takes a wound due to exhaustion. She can, however, catch her breath for 1 round to regain 2 action dice.

Catching your breath means the character cannot take an action for that round (unless you spend an Awesome Token). It's okay to pass even if your Action Pool is not empty to gain back 2 action dice, up to your Action Pool's maximum (10 by default).

The action dice are earned at the end of the character's turn. This might matter when conditions or powers take away some of the character's action dice.

While your character is Catching Her Breath, she is not maneuvering or otherwise attacking the enemy. Your narration for this action should be something like hiding behind a wall that's getting shot to pieces while you try to figure out what to do next, having a quick tactical exchange with a fellow PC while under cover, or something else that would refresh your character somewhat. I'm sure you've seen such moments in plenty of shows and movies. Providing a neat description will make the simple act of passing much more interesting.

Sacrifice

PCs don't die when they are defeated. In fact, there is nothing the GM can do to kill off the PCs. They are never going to die because of an unlucky roll, a bad tactical decision, or the failure to figure out the trap that the GM put in place. Accidental character death like that goes both against the spirit of spontaneous fun and against the types of stories that you're creating with this game. Protagonists in stories don't just die midway through the story, unless there's meaning to their

death (except when you're playing a video game where you can just load your saved game, but since that's not an option here, neither is unwanted PC death).

It's up to the PC players to decide when their characters' deaths would be meaningful. At any time during a conflict, a player can declare that her character sacrifices herself. The PC automatically achieves a specific goal, without the need for a roll, and either dies right away or soon after the end of the conflict (you can give them a character scene or two of being lethally wounded and uttering their last words).

The goal that the PC achieves can be something that was already established, or it can be something the player now negotiates with the GM, including the defeat of one or all of the PCs' enemies.

A player can choose the sacrifice option even if her character already has been defeated in the conflict.

Death is not the only option here; depending on your story and setting, it can be anything that takes the character permanently out of play. If the GM agrees, it can even be something that only temporarily takes the character out, so that the player has to play a different character for a while before the old one can come back, whether she is saved, is resurrected, wakes up from her coma, or whatnot. Then you can decide which one of your PCs to play from that point on.

For example, if your character story seed was that your PC is being chased by demons who want to take her soul, and you can barter with them to take your PC and leave the other PCs alone, that works as a sacrifice. Whether or not the other PCs (and your new character) can then save the sacrificed PC from the demons' home world opens up a whole new saga in your story.

I strongly suggest that whenever you have a player permanently leaving the group, you provide a chance during the last session to make a really meaningful sacrifice.

Ending Conflicts

The conflict ends when one side retreats or is defeated (meaning all of their side's wound circles are filled up). A defeated individual, squad or swarm cannot participate in the conflict any longer, though players can still grant a die from their Action Pool to other players' maneuvers if they have any left.

Half (rounded up) of every PC's unused charge dice remain while all unused strike dice are turned into action dice (up to the Action Pool's limit—any extra dice are discarded). The Action Pool remains at that level.

Skill marks remain in place after a conflict. However, all of the conditions granted or inflicted by powers (like Poisoned and Shielded) are erased.

If you have Awesome Tokens left over at the end of a conflict, you can trade each one for one of the following benefits. Any Awesome Tokens you don't spend are lost.

1. Keep all your charge dice instead of half of them. Your character is emotionally pumped up and ready to wreak more havoc.
2. Fill your Action Pool to the maximum. Your character skips off the smoldering battlefield where others limp and crawl from exhaustion.
3. Keep up to 3 of your strike dice in your Strike Pool instead of converting them to action dice. In the story, your character takes something away from the conflict that will help in the next one (single-use weapons like grenades, the element of surprise, righteous anger, a battle suit, etc.). If you want to keep strike dice again at the end of the next conflict, however, you'll have to pay another Awesome Token then.

You can spend Awesome Tokens in this manner for other PCs as well.

Involvement

Not all PCs are going to be involved in all conflicts. Depending on how your story is going, PCs might split up and go separate ways or have other reasons for not participating in conflicts together. While players whose PCs are not involved in a conflict cannot earn or spend dice with actions, they can hand over a die for other PCs' maneuvers from their Action Pools as usual. This way, even when you're part of the audience, you're still involved in what's going on.

PCs as well as adversity can sometimes drop into the conflict after it has started. The GM can always introduce new enemies in the middle of a conflict, to represent reinforcements that arrive or other new foes. Players whose PCs are not involved in conflicts initially sometimes reach the conflict later (or are introduced when their fellow players achieve a goal, such as when some PCs were imprisoned, locked out, and so on).

Sometimes PCs or adversity will drop out of the conflict. They could give up, flee, or otherwise stop being involved. This is up to each player for their PC and to the GM for each individual adversity. Characters who drop out simply stop taking turns. In some situations, the PCs need to fulfill a goal to be able to flee, else dropping out means giving up. This depends on the circumstances in your story and needs to be determined by the GM at the beginning of the conflict. PCs might also be able to keep adversity from fleeing; use goals to set this up.

Conflicts Without Combat

Conflicts do not have to be combative, but they always have a chance to turn that way. The characters can all use maneuvers that consist entirely of talking, intimidating, browbeating, or otherwise gaining an advantage. They can then focus on achieving goals without ever striking a blow. However, if it comes down to it, either side can escalate and use the strike dice for strikes, or use a power.

How much or how little combat is included in each conflict is therefore always up to the characters who are involved.

You can also have combat without conflicts. If one character acts against another, and both players agree on the outcome, you don't actually need to go to the mechanics. For example, if one character stands at the edge of a cliff and another pushes her, then both players might agree that she is surprised and falls (though outside of the conflict mechanics, she won't take any wounds from the fall). If the second player doesn't want her to fall, however, you've got a conflict to play out.

PC Versus PC

Most of the time, it's not a good idea to use the conflict mechanics to have fights between PCs. Instead, the players should agree on how their disagreements play out, as in the section above, for example as a character scene. But if your group is up for it, you can certainly use the mechanics. Both players have to agree to this, however—if one of the players doesn't want to participate, her character gets to walk away unharmed.

The conflict then works exactly like a GM versus PC conflict. The players earn and spend dice, inflict wounds, and defeat each other as usual.

Goals during PC versus PC conflicts are tricky. If you're going to have any, all players in the conflict need to agree on them; the GM would not be involved.

7 GOALS

Basics

Most conflicts have goals. They are things that can be achieved aside from just beating up the other characters involved. There can be just one or multiple goals, depending on the situation. You should write down the goal somewhere where it's visible to all of the players. Index cards for each goal or a central sheet of paper listing all goals both work.

Most of the time, once the goal is achieved by someone, its outcome cannot be altered anymore during the conflict. For example, if the PCs achieve a goal to free some prisoners, those prisoners cannot be caught again during this conflict. Exceptions to this rule need to be specifically noted. For more, see the section on chained goals below.

In general, if a goal is not achieved, the status quo remains in place. If the goal was to rescue someone and no one achieved it, that person is still captive. After the conflict, the GM rules whether unresolved goals can still be achieved (maybe in a follow-up character scene) or, if not, how they turned out. The only way for players to determine the outcome is to achieve the goal before defeating the adversary (or being defeated). When one side flees, however, the other side automatically wins all remaining goals.

Difficulty

Goals have a difficulty rating that indicates how hard it is to achieve the goal. A player who wants to determine the outcome of the goal has to roll as many successes with an Achievement (see Achievements in the Conflicts chapter) as the difficulty rating.

An example of a goal would be:

Determine Possession of the Gem [5]

This goal refers to a gem in the scene that either the players or their opponents want to grab. It doesn't matter which side currently has it.

The goal has a difficulty rating of 5. Whoever first manages to score 5 or more successes with an achievement will determine whether the gem gets taken, and by whom (it doesn't have to be the player's character, nor does it have to be in her

favor if the player prefers another outcome). After this has been determined, no one else can end up with the gem for this conflict. It might change hands during descriptions, if you like, but at the end of the conflict it ends up where the player who achieved the goal wants it.

Weakening Adversity

If the opposition in a conflict is strong, you can have goals weaken the opposition in actual game-mechanical terms. This allows for tactical decisions as well as cool combat scenes and tactics like the ones you see in good anime shows.

For example: The GM's adversity has a defense of 6, and she links some of those to conflict goals. There could be 1 goal that's harder to achieve:

Destroy Fortifications [6]: Adversity loses 2 points of defense

Or 2 goals that are easier to achieve:

Destroy East Fortification [4]: Adversity loses 1 point of defense

Destroy West Fortification [4]: Adversity loses 1 point of defense

You'll find listings of the possible effects on the adversity in the Effects and Conditions section below.

Creating Goals

There are four ways in which goals are created. First, the GM establishes them when setting up the conflict. Second, the GM establishes them during a conflict. Third, the players suggest them during a conflict. And fourth, some goals always exist as default options.

Goals that are established at the beginning of a conflict tend to result from the way the story is going and the nature of the adversity. Often, a fight is about something other than just beating the other side. Something's at stake. This is represented with a goal or two. If the PCs already planned for the conflict and put up traps or made other preparations, you can also have starting goals representing them using their advantage in that regard.

During the conflict, especially with an inexperienced group, the GM can establish goals that help the PCs. If the PCs are facing a powerful enemy and have a hard time getting through the defense, or if they are faced with a condition that

impacts them but they just don't know how to deal with it, the GM can throw them a boon to spice things up.

Note that the goal does not have to describe how the PCs can do it, as this leaves the door open for the players to come up with creative ways to achieve a goal. In order to achieve a goal that exposes the adversary's weak spot and lowers its defense, for example, they could peel the armor off the enemy, toss gasoline at it and light it, or talk the arrogant evil summoner into letting his guard down.

Other goals can be established during a conflict to introduce story complications. For example, civilians could pop up who are caught in the crossfire, or important items show up that the characters could snatch on their way out. By establishing these during the conflict, you can alter the course of a battle and make it more interesting.

Player-suggested goals are a great way of allowing the players to express what they care about and how they want to handle a conflict. The example of exposing the enemy's weak spot could just as well be a suggestion from a player that the GM happily establishes.

When a player suggests something, the GM should always establish it in some form, unless it is completely nonsensical in the context of the story (blowing up the whole planet with a firecracker), would ruin other players' fun (stealing other PCs' pants in the middle of combat—if they aren't willing to play comedic right now), or is otherwise outright disruptive.

Default Type

The categories of goals listed in the following sections are all advanced uses of the concept of goals. You should be very familiar with basic goals before you use them, but once you do, you'll see how much variety they can add to your conflicts.

Always assume that a goal is the default type (unique, single, joint) unless you decide otherwise when you create it, and make sure to write any deviations from the default next to a specific goal.

Effects and Conditions

Many goals only have story effects. Those are goals where the outcome makes a difference in terms of the story, but they don't have an impact on the stats, dice, or other mechanical parts of the game.

Other goals have effects on the mechanical level. The list below shows some of the effects, sorted by their default difficulty. This difficulty is provided as a help for the GM, in case you're not sure how hard something should be. However, the fictional situation that the characters are in can always make these goals easier or harder, so feel free to pick a different difficulty that fits your situation.

Again, the GM should usually create these goals when the players suggest them if the players can tie them into the situation their PCs are in. However, the GM shouldn't create multiple goals with the same effects unless it makes sense in the story. If the players already lowered the opponent's skill, the GM can refuse to allow it to be lowered more, but an enemy with a very high defense could have it lowered several times in a row.

Mechanical changes that would last for the whole conflict are one exception to the ban on undoing goal effects. These kinds of effects usually can be undone with the opposition achieving a related goal at a difficulty chosen by the GM.

Easy Goals [4]

- Lower one enemy's defense by 1
- Boost one ally's defense by 1
- Make your or an ally's next strike fire-, frost-, or electricity-based

Tricky Goals [6]

- Lower one enemy's defense by 2
- Lower one enemy's skill by 1
- Boost two allies' defense by 1
- Block an enemy's power for a round
- Make all of your or an ally's subsequent strikes fire-, frost-, or electricity-based
- Cause an elemental strike roll with 6 dice of its own (instead of taking them out of someone's Strike Pool)

Tough Goals [8]

- Boost your and all allies' defenses by 1
- Block an enemy's power until the enemy achieves it back (usually the enemy's difficulty for this would be [6])
- Cause an elemental strike roll with 8 dice of its own (instead of taking them out of someone's Strike Pool)
- Inflict a specific condition on an enemy
- Remove a specific condition from yourself or an ally

Heroic Goals [10]

- Inflict a specific condition on two or more enemies
- Remove a specific condition from you and your allies
- Grant an ally the use of a power they don't have
- Cause an elemental strike roll with 10 dice of its own (instead of taking them out of someone's Strike Pool)

These can work in combination as well. Check out the examples below to see how these can be implemented.

Unique, Parallel or Grouped

Goals are by default unique. A unique goal is one that exists only once, anyone can try to achieve it, and when it's resolved it's put aside. Goals can also be parallel or individual.

A parallel goal exists for one or both sides of a conflict, and each side can only achieve their own. This represents events like races, where each side strives to achieve something faster than the other side. Parallel goals don't have to be the same on both sides, but they often reach toward the same end.

Sometimes a parallel goal only exists for one side. In the "Destroy Fortifications" example above, the goal would be parallel if one side could achieve it but the other side couldn't prevent it. This is the case for most of the effects goals above. If the defending side could somehow, for the rest of the conflict, keep the other

side from achieving that goal (by achieving it themselves and determining the outcome accordingly), it would be a unique goal instead.

Grouped goals are limited to specific characters whose situation or opportunities differ from the others. For example, if one character is on board an airship while the others are on the ground, but they're all fighting in a conflict together, the airship character might have goals that relate to properly steering the airship, something the other characters down below can't achieve or assist in. These goals are only for the group of characters on the airship. In this instance, that's a group with just 1 member, but other characters may maneuver their way up there in the course of the conflict and join the group of characters that can achieve the goal.

Joint or Solo

Most goals can be achieved by multiple characters with a Combined Achievement, as described in the conflict chapter. These are called joint goals, and they are the default option.

Some goals, called solo goals, can only be attempted by one character at a time. Other characters cannot assist with these goals. Solo goals are pretty rare. As this is a group-oriented game, I would keep solo goals to a minimum. It's just usually more fun when the players can team up to do something.

Single or Chain

By default, goals are single events. This means that their effects are immediate and once they are achieved, they're done with.

You can also create a chain of goals. In this case, characters need to achieve two or more goals in order. Think of events in movies where one achievement depends on another: first you hack the security computer, then you break open the vault, then you escape with the diamonds. You can't escape with the diamonds before you've cracked the vault, and you can't get to the vault unless the security system has been hacked.

Chained goals can have mechanical or story effects for each goal in the chain.

A very advanced use of chained goals would be to link parallel goals together, with a unique goal at the end, which creates a race for both sides to reach the final unique goal. An example for this is provided in the next section.

Goal Examples

The following are some examples of goals with varying complexity. While even the simplest goals can spice up a conflict, there's a lot of potential in chaining them together or otherwise getting more involved, once you've become comfortable with how the system works. And if you feel like a conflict needs some change—whether your conflict seems too easy, too hard, too bland, or otherwise out of sync with what you want—these example goals give some inspiration on how to fix those issues on the spot.

The Lone Survivor

This is an example out of a playtest session. Our gang of heroes is fighting a gigantic hydra that appeared out of a crack in the ground. Four of the PCs are taking care of it, while one is fighting some hedgehog mutants in the nearby abandoned village (he ran away from the hydra, and the GM introduced new adversity to keep him busy). Three of the characters are getting close to disposing of the hydra, so the GM introduces a story goal to allow the other two players to have something to do as well:

Save The Last Villager [4]

The GM describes that the PCs spot a figure on a shaky old water tower, with one of the hedgehog mutants clawing its way up the ladder to get to it. Who's the figure? Will our heroes save the villager before the mutants kill him or her? This story goal not only makes the fight more interesting as the last few strikes against the hydra play out, it also opens up follow-up opportunities for character scenes involving the NPC after the conflict.

Some other example goals that allow branching of your story are:

Free The Children [6] (so they won't be carried away at the end of the conflict)

Capture Lao Dai [8] (if the PCs defeat this enemy without achieving this goal, he will escape instead of being captured)

Get Lao Dai To Divulge His Evil Plans [4] (he's not that hard to goad into spilling his brilliant machinations, as long as he's fighting and thinks he can still win; but once the PCs defeat him, this goal can't be achieved anymore)

Land The Airship Safely [10] (to protect the civilians on board)

Fighting Ice with Fire

The PCs are in the middle of a fight with a tough group of ice demons in the center of a dark metropolis. The PCs are having a hard time hurting them, and while the ice demons are vulnerable to fire, the PCs don't have anyone with fire-based powers or weapon effects among them. What now? Improvise.

The player of a PC talks to the GM about thrusting his sword into the tank of a car, thereby covering it with gasoline, and then setting it on fire. The GM smiles and creates the following goal:

Set Sword Afire [4]: Character's next strike counts as fire-based

The GM makes the goal easy because it's a neat idea but the payoff only applies once; she doesn't think the fuel will stick after a serious strike. If the player comes up with a plan that could keep the sword fire-based, she will create a goal that applies the fire-based effect for the rest of the conflict, probably at a higher difficulty.

The player of the second PC wants to lure an ice demon into a gas station, then blow it up. The GM creates the following goal:

Lure Demon Into Explosive Trap [8]: Trigger 8-dice fire-based strike on 1 enemy

Goals like these allow the PCs to trigger strikes with dice other than the ones in their pools. If the PC achieves this goal, she can take 8 dice from the big communal bowl, add 3 dice because the enemy is vulnerable to fire, and roll these 11 dice as a strike without spending any dice of her own.

The players still have to expend strike dice to achieve this goal, but the payoff is bigger. They get to use a skill to achieve it, and since the strike is elemental, it'll add 3 bonus dice against those vulnerable to the element. On the other hand, the PC won't be able to add strike powers or her own strike dice to the triggered strike.

But what if the PCs focus on strike trigger goals from now on to get more out of their strike dice than they would with a regular strike, almost every time? In that case, rejoice: your players are finding new and creative ways to hurt the opposition all the time, and the resulting fights should never get boring.

The Doomsday Gate

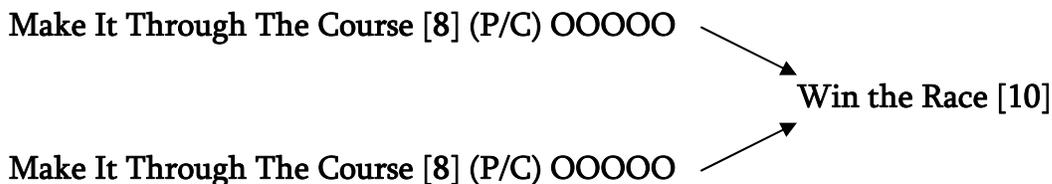
The PCs arrive at the temple where Lao Dai is just about to open the Doomsday Gate. It will allow Lao Dai to bring demons into this world. The GM does two things to set up an intense conflict. First, she creates the following goal:

Destroy The Doomsday Gate [10]

That's pretty hard to achieve and probably will require the PCs to use a combined achievement. And second, the GM uses the optional Countdown Die (see Chapter 17). The GM places the Countdown Die on the table, sets it at 5, and explains that it will count down at the beginning of each conflict round. When it's run out (it would go to 0), the Doomsday Gate will open and a Hydra will enter the conflict. Our heroes have 5 rounds to prevent this by destroying the gate, or they'll have an overwhelming fight on their hands.

A Brutal Race

In the post-apocalyptic world from the earlier chapters, the characters enter a race in which being fast doesn't help you if the other side blows you off the course. The GM creates linked goals to represent the race track and, to simplify things, just adds circles after the parallel chained (P/C) goals to represent the same goal several times. Once those circles are full, that side can attempt the unique goal of winning the race. During the conflict, the PCs can figure out how many of them focus on achieving the goals along the way, and how many attack the other side instead. The difficulties are high to promote combined maneuvers by each side.



Notice that the two tracks are parallel goals: neither side can achieve the other side's goals to prevent them from winning. The GM could also create 3 or more tracks instead of just 2, to complicate matters a bit and make it more of a crowded race.

The Tournament Assassin

In this example, the GM is getting very creative with the rules about goals and conflicts. She sets up a combat tournament in which the PC participates only to get close enough to the emperor to assassinate him. However, getting close to the

emperor is incredibly hard, so the PC has to win the emperor's trust and be invited to his close presence in order to carry out her mission. (This example was inspired by a movie; I won't name it to avoid spoiling it.)

The PC will get to fight 5 consecutively harder enemies. These are laid out ahead of time. The player will get to play only 2 character scenes in between each fight: her PC talks to the emperor, and then there's a flashback scene showing some of the PC's motivation.

During each fight, the following goal exists:

Gain The Emperor's Trust [4]: +2 Strike Dice for Assassination Attempt

The player can achieve this goal up to twice in each fight. At the end of the tournament—either when the PC loses a fight or after she defeats all 5 enemies—the player first has another character scene with the emperor and then gets to make a strike roll against him, but only with the dice she earned through these goals. The emperor has a defense of 4 and 3 wound circles, so the player needs to roll 12 successes to kill him. Once that roll is made, the chance is over, and the player and GM play out the attempt accordingly.

You could also set this up for two or more PCs: they each fight on the opposite end of the ladder, and then they fight each other in the end to figure out who gets to strike at the emperor.

Finally, when the moment comes to strike against the emperor and the player has enough dice to succeed, the GM can throw in the following goal:

Teach The Emperor The Meaning Of Honor [15]

Now the player can decide whether to try and strike or to achieve the goal instead (bringing in a trait for a reroll, possibly, or even invoking the Sacrifice rule).

8 RUNNING THE GAME

The Basics

Now that you know how to create characters, have character scenes, and play out conflicts, one question remains: how should the GM tie all of this together?

First you need to figure out a starting point. I prefer to have games start with a bang. This could be a conflict, or it could be a character scene that's charged with tension. The PCs will have time for quiet reflection later, but at the start of the game they should already be in motion. That way, you avoid a situation where they don't know what to do or where to go and kick off the game with unfocused, meandering character scenes.

Look primarily to the group seed to figure out a good starting point. The players have given you a recent change that affects all of them. There should be plenty of opportunities for conflicts and danger in that.

Your first conflict should be a simple affair against easy enemies, with maybe one story goal. This will give the players the opportunity to learn and apply the conflict rules without having to worry that they're going to be defeated. After that conflict, give them a few character scenes to reflect on what they've just done and what they're going to do now (as well as reap some scene benefits). Then hit them with a harder fight that includes at least one effect goal. After a few more character scenes, it's probably time to finish your first session.

From that point on, I suggest using the guidelines that I've written out below. Spend a little bit of time making a situation web and maybe write down an enemy or two per the adversity rules, but don't prepare too much. Anima Prime can be great fun if you play it spontaneously.

Spontaneous Play

This game was designed for spontaneous play. I describe this type of play as one where the players, including the GM, don't need to spend hours preparing the game, and they don't plan or think much about what they are going to do in the game. Instead, you prepare some basic materials that you can spontaneously use during the game to develop your story.

Here are some good techniques to use for spontaneous play.

Reincorporation

Keith Johnstone, in his book *Impro* (on improvisational theater), describes a concept that he calls shelving. The actors introduce a certain item or fact into the story, then “put it on the shelf” until later on, when they finally realize that they can use that item or fact again within the story. I like to call this reincorporation, to describe the whole cycle. If you’ve watched crime shows like *Castle*, you’ve seen this done in every episode: the details that are mentioned early on are put aside until the end of the show, when they are used to tie everything together.

Reincorporation is a powerful tool for spontaneous play. The GM or the other players put things out there spontaneously, and later during the game, you can reach back to the things you’ve established and weave them into your game.

This can happen already on a very small scale. In one of my playtests, we had a character scene during which the player described how his character salvaged a part out of a steambot. In the conflict that followed, the player used that part to make an ad-hoc gadget that he used against his opponents. He reincorporated the item, for which other players gave him plenty of gift dice from their Action Pools.

Reincorporation works on a larger scale as well. All those links on your character sheets are facts, characters, and other material that can be reincorporated later.

Related to the concept of reincorporation are seeds: those are story elements you throw out there to shelf and later tie together.

Seeds

Seeds, to me, are ideas and events that we put into the story without knowing how they’re going to turn out or what all their details are. You’re already starting the game with several seeds at your disposal: character seeds, a group seed, and setting seeds.

During play, don’t hesitate to throw new things into the mix even if you have no idea how they connect to everything or anything else. Mystery and revelations in stories don’t have to be painstakingly designed. They can just evolve organically as you play, if you’re flexible enough.

For example, when the PCs are in familiar surroundings, throw out something unusual. Maybe there’s a strange object attached to the characters’ airship. Maybe an enemy who attacks the characters has a weird tattoo. Maybe instead of paying the PCs with gold, the strange old man hands them his greatest treasure, an

arcane looking piece of machinery that hasn't worked in eons. Maybe the same NPC keeps showing up at random times to make cryptic statements.

What's going to happen? Why is it happening? And how is all of that connected to the PCs and their story?

You don't have to know the answer to these questions when you introduce seeds. Once they're in the story, you can actively look for ways to tie them into what's going on, and at some point you'll end up with some sort of coherent picture. As coherent as any *Final Fantasy*, *Metal Gear Solid*, or *Lost* plot, in any case.

Often the PC players will come up with their own explanations. Listen to them as they discuss ongoing events in their character scenes. If what they say makes sense—and it might be a lot better than what you had in mind—just go with it!

Situation Webs

One way of keeping track of what's going on in your story, and how things are connected, is to start a situation web. You can write the various seeds and links onto a big sheet of paper and start to connect them with lines. Along the lines, you can write how they are connected.

For example, let's take Zadie and Rasheem from the earlier chapters. They both share a link, namely Zadie's old partner and current nemesis Locust. You could tie them together in a simple triangle. Just draw a line from Zadie to Rasheem that says, "on convoy mission together," one from Zadie to Locust that says "nemesis," and one from Rasheem to Locust that says, "?" That "?" could turn into "contact to black market," or "ex-lover," or "killed during raid," or something completely different, depending on how Rasheem figures out what happened between him and Locust.

It could also be more complicated, however. Rasheem could have received the necklace (which, as you might recall, Zadie had given to Locust) from another character. Now you have a relationship between Rasheem and that new character, and then one between that new character and Locust. How are they connected? And how does that connect to the attack on the convoy and the gathering of demons in the ruined city? Those are all connections you can fill in as you play, and the more you can somehow create connections between all of the links, seeds, and PCs, the better.

You'll end up with a big web of interconnected characters. They all should have a strong impact on each other. One way to have such an impact is with powerful

emotions, another is with needs or goals. Zadie feels hatred toward Locust and wants him dead. Rasheem might be on the run from the unknown fourth character, who in turn lives in fear of Locust (or is his new lover). And so on.

Having a situation web drawn out allows you to tie new events, items, and characters visually to the rest of the story. That ancient item the old man gave the PCs? That's needed for a ritual in the ruined city by the demon lord. Those tattoos on the PCs' enemies? They're the mark of Locust's new gang of elite raiders, on the lookout for the ancient item. That strange object on the characters' airship? Maybe a bomb that the raiders placed, or a beacon from the demon lord, or maybe a present from a third faction that the PCs haven't encountered yet, but who are tied to the ones they know.

Speaking of factions, they obviously play into the situation webs, as they usually relate to each other in a large scale kind of way. People within a faction relate to one another in any number of personal ways—and vengeance, betrayal, espionage, secret affairs, and other things create ties between characters in different factions. The deeper the PCs are in the middle of all this, the better.

Just Play

It can be daunting to play a spontaneous game, where even the GM doesn't know what's going to happen. There's a fear that it could fall flat, that nothing happens, and that nobody has fun, because the program hasn't been developed in advance.

This fear is most common with groups who are used to putting most of the responsibility of what's happening in the game with the GM. But remember, this game is different. If you've got a GM and 3 PC players, the PC players are responsible for 75% of what's going on in the game. Their characters should be driving the story forward. They should interact with each other. They should throw out links and seeds left and right, to make sure there's enough material to play. They should always have something in mind that their characters could do next. And with all the seeds and links you've got, there's always a way to make things matter.

In the end, it's worth it getting over the initial apprehension. Trust your spontaneity, trust the power of seeds, and most of all trust your friends who are playing with you. As long as you're all in it together, you're going to have fun.

9 CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Most stories tell us about the development of the protagonists. The characters achieve their life's passion, they have epiphanies, they grow up or grow old, they acquire abilities and use them for good or bad, and at the end of the story the main characters are not the same people that they were at the beginning.

There are three categories of change that your character can go through. They are personality, seeds, and abilities, and each of them is explained in its own section below.

Personality

The PCs' personalities are expressed in several ways on the character sheet. While most of who they are comes out when they are played, those indicators on the sheet can change over time and express the development of the character's personality. Let's talk specifically about passions and traits.

Passions

The character's passion expresses her overall emotional state. While her mood can change, her passion is something that's essential to who she is. A change in passion represents a fundamental shift in the character's personality. Someone whose life purpose used to be gaining glory now focuses on protecting the one she loves. Someone who used to be full of compassion now revels in her lust for blood.

These kinds of changes don't come about easily. The rules won't prevent you from switching your passion just because you want to earn charge dice in a different way. But if you want to get the most out of playing the game, I suggest using the passion as a core ingredient in developing your character.

You can change your passion on the spot, either during a character scene or at the beginning or end of your turn in a conflict, but only once per play session. Any additional changes need to be approved by the GM. Given that passions are profound states of mind of the characters, such changes should be reasonably rare, and even a change once per session is probably more than the events in the story warrant, but that is up to you.

The best moment to change your passion is when the PC is at a critical decision point. Either something very dramatic just happened to the character, or her decision will bring it about. If her loved one was severely hurt, does she choose to pursue vengeance or keep focusing on her love? If given the choice between helping innocent bystanders or gaining immortal glory, which way will she go?

The game gives you a mechanism to express this in addition to just describing it, and that's changing the passion. Used sparingly and with the right timing, it can be very powerful.

Traits

Traits give you a better feel for who your character is, as well as what's currently on your character's mind. They can express emotions, thoughts, quirks, mottos, and other aspects of your character's personality.

You can use traits in two ways: either flexibly to indicate to other players what your character's current state of mind is, or more like passions, in that a change of a trait expresses a fundamental change of the character.

Contrary to passions, the type and content of the trait have no impact on how it works mechanically in a conflict or character scene. Your character might still be the very same person, just with a different focus. When you change the trait away from "In love with Bea," it doesn't have to mean that the character's not in love with Bea anymore—that's up to how you play the character. But it does indicate that you the player are not as interested in playing out that aspect of your character anymore.

In other words, traits are mainly used as roleplaying inspiration and as signals of your interest.

You can change your traits any time. The more often you change your traits, however, the less likely your fellow players are to pay attention to them or give them any weight.

If you use the optional rule for added trait bonuses (see Chapter 17), you have to change stars into checks when you change a trait.

Seeds

When you kick off your game, you have a whole sheet full of story seeds: several character seeds, a group seed, and one or more setting seeds. These provide you

with fodder to play out during the game and with a framework for everything that happens in your story.

At some point, one or more of your seeds will have played out to a conclusion. There is no formula about how quickly this happens or what the conclusion looks like. It's something that you'll know when it happens.

In some cases, it's pretty obvious: Zadie's character seed about the necklace she had given to her old partner and current nemesis will eventually lead her to him, and they're going to find a way to settle the score. Once that's taken care of, the seed is fully developed and doesn't provide any more room for growth. Once that happens, you can consider that plot closed and start a new one.

Creating new seeds is easy. You make up an event, issue, or insight that will drive the character toward a new series of interesting events, decisions, and conflicts. This doesn't have to be something that comes up in play; you can just tell your fellow players that you've decided that something new happens to the character, and this is it.

If you tie seeds to the development of your abilities (see below), you have additional motivation to keep developing and wrapping up new seeds. But even without that, you'll find that fresh seeds are always a good way to breathe some new life into your story.

Sometimes you might think about abandoning a seed. If you really can't figure out a good way to tie it into the story, or it somehow makes the game less fun for you, it's perfectly alright to abandon a seed. Just let your other players know so they won't play to it anymore and make up something new.

Abilities

Skills

Developing skills is tricky. As they are, the skills are balanced to work with the ratings that they have. If you allow PCs to have higher-rated skills, you give them bonus dice to each Maneuver that make it easier for them to earn Awesome Tokens.

Because of this, I advise against raising skill levels. If you're really into the idea, you could let players raise their lower-rated skills over time so that they end up with 4 skills all rated at 4, but again, this will increase the number of Awesome Tokens earned during conflicts.

Players can trade out one skill for another if the story makes this plausible. However, gaining additional skills wouldn't give them any benefit other than a larger variety of descriptions during Maneuvers, so that option isn't very useful.

Overall, I suggest leaving skills alone and gaining new powers instead, if you want to have characters become more powerful over the course of your game.

Powers

Many stories tell us about a character's journey to greater power. The need to acquire power is often tied into the story seeds, such as in *Avatar*, where Aang has to master all four elements to battle the Fire Lord.

In *Anima Prime*, the way a character can become more effective is through accumulation of additional powers. All other abilities are either details (which the player can figure out on her own during descriptions and maneuvers) or can change in what they look like, but not in how effective they are (such as the ability to use traits for rerolls).

In many other roleplaying games, it is assumed that every conflict brings experience that accumulates over time until the character suddenly rises in power. That approach works well for many of those games, but *Anima Prime* benefits from a more story-based approach. The particular approach, however, depends on what kind of story you want to create.

The following is a list of suggestions of ways characters in your story can acquire additional powers. Use them as a springboard for your game, and make sure that everyone is involved in figuring this out before the game starts. The default for *Ghostfield* is the seed-based development.

Whichever kind of system you use for acquiring powers, no character can ever have more than one power more than the character with the lowest number of powers in the group. With this rule in place, you can even use a different approach for each character (maybe one of them is looking for teachers while another can absorb the power of certain fiends).

Seed-Based Development

There are three kinds of story seeds in this game: character seeds, group seeds, and setting seeds. These provide story fodder and some possible destinations for where the story is going. At some point, one or more of them will be resolved. If you select this option for power development, then the PC whose character seed is

resolved, or all PCs if the group or setting seed is resolved, gains a power at that point (and then it's time to create a new seed).

Knowing when a seed is resolved is an intuitive thing. If your group seed is that you're all out for vengeance against the same enemy, once that vengeance is fulfilled, your seed is obviously resolved. Others might be a bit more vague, such as character seeds that deal with a personal issue of the character. But the player who created the seed is also the one who determines when it's run its course.

Letting characters gain an extra power at the conclusion of a seed could happen often or rarely, depending on how the seeds play out in your game. It can prompt players to address their character seeds as much as they can, but it can also lead to a point where the gaining of a power overtakes the importance of the seed for the story. You'll have to see how that works for your group.

Teacher-Based Development

This approach shows up in many stories. The student needs to find the right teachers, and each time she does, she learns a few things and progresses. Examples are Aang, Katara and Sokka in *Avatar*. While Aang is looking for all kinds of bending teachers, Katara learns new powers from waterbending masters (including the evil bloodbender, indirectly) and Sokka learns from a swordmaster.

In many of the stories, finding a teacher is also a story seed, so you could consider this a subsection of the previous approach. It is common enough, however, to talk about it in detail, and I quite like keeping character seeds more interesting than just "Find the next teacher" all the time.

This approach puts more control over the ability development of the PCs in the hands of the GM. If you're comfortable with this, and your story fits the teacher-based mold, this is one of the easiest approaches to implement and balance.

Adversity-Based Development

In one of our other games, *Beast Hunters*, the PCs are tribal warriors who set out to slay magical beasts that threaten their people and ravage their lands. After a Beast Hunter kills a beast, she uses its blood as ink for a tattoo carved into her skin by her elders, which bestows upon her a part of the beast's power. While the game also has other ways of making characters more powerful, the tattoos are the core concept of the character's development. This is one way of implementing adversity-based development.

I wouldn't suggest using a system in which characters gain points for every single conflict they enter. That would be too much bookkeeping for a spontaneous system and take the focus off the story you're telling.

If you create an adversity-based system in which the PCs gain powers from creatures that they defeat, you have to figure out the following:

- How often can the PCs do this?
- How difficult are the creatures?
- Which powers can be gained?
- Are powers to be gained specific to the creature?
- Can multiple PCs gain a power from the same creature?
- Do you make the creatures up on the fly or have a prepared bestiary?
- Is the game and/or setting all about the hunt of these creatures or are they just a means to an end?

Changing Powers

Sometimes players realize that one or more of the powers they picked for their characters either don't fit or turn out to be less fun than they thought. At other times, characters change through events in a way that is best expressed through a loss or exchange of powers.

In either case, let players slowly change their characters' powers over time. That is, players can choose to lose a power at any time—after all, they could just decide not to use it anymore. Once they have lost a power, they can later replace it. The pace at which this happens is up to you, but in order to keep the game somewhat consistent, I wouldn't change more than one power per game session. If the character lost her Soulbound Weapon and its associated 4 powers, for example, it might take her a while to learn to get along without it and develop new abilities. The player might even want to go on with fewer powers for a longer time, if that makes sense for the story and the character.

Overall, this ties directly into having fun with the game. Players shouldn't have to work their way through a bunch of less-than-fun sessions in order to "earn" having fun with the game again. If you and your players will have the most fun by changing powers around, by all means, go with that.

10 GHOSTFIELD

Dragonspawn (Fiction)

Malley cursed under his breath as he chased after her, dodging the crooked trees in his path. For once he wished that a rogue skipper would actually stop when ordered to, but that was just too much to ask. And this one was exceptionally nimble. She wove among the trees ahead of him, dipping in and out of his field of vision. But after two years of occupational guard duty the Kanissian Captain knew this stretch of Ghostfield better than anyone, even the Enendian locals, and he dashed around the side of a huge boulder formation to cut her off. Just when he thought she might have made an unexpected turn she came charging toward him.

He pulled his pneumatic rifle to his shoulder and took aim. The rogue skipper ran up a half-fallen tree trunk and, with a hissing burst of pressure from her boots, shot into the air in a high arc. The moment his finger started pulling the trigger, a gate flashed open between them and swallowed her.

Damn. It would have been too easy for her not to be a spontaneous gater as well. He slung his rifle around his back, bounced off a tree trunk, then another one, and straight through her gate.

Even after dozens of excursions to the Beyond, his mind needed a moment to adjust to the sudden lack of up and down. He focused on the nearest rock floating in the vast expanse of space. He twisted around in mid-air, landed with a heavy thud on the barn-sized rock, and immediately looked around to see where the rogue skipper had gone. Rocks of all sizes floated around him in their inexplicable patterns, obscuring much of his vision. Finally he spotted her, jumping from one rock to another like a Sumayan dancer.

He pushed off and gave chase. The rogue skipper was shooting thin ropes with metal hooks from her bracers, using them to swing around the rocks and every now and then hurl a smaller one his way. One of them scratched along his back and tore open his shirt as he barely made it out of the way. It was no use wearing armor if you had to go Beyond; that would only slow you down and possibly trap you forever. Breathing heavily, but not ready to give up, Malley made his way closer to her, his sense of up and down adjusting each time that he landed somewhere new. At least she hadn't had time to grab anything of value while he was after her. Selling the Cores from the center of the larger rocks was an illegal

but flourishing business, and he had a hunch that much of the profit of that trade made its way to Enendian rebels.

The moment he thought he could intercept her with a couple more well-aimed jumps, something knocked Malley out of his trajectory. A huge shadow rushed by, much too close for comfort. Chasing rogue skippers was his duty, but he could hardly fulfill it if he was torn apart by one of the Beyonders, so he searched for the nearest little gate and ricocheted several times until he made his way through.

The gate was twenty feet off the ground. Malley rolled with the impact as much as he could. He ended up on his back, looking up at the sky above, trying to calm his racing heart. His eyes widened and his lips parted as right above him, the largest gate he had ever seen tore through the fabric between the worlds, and a gigantic Beyonder burst through. Its body was elongated like a snake's, but with dozens of tree-sized spider legs, and even though it had no wings it flew through the air with an incredible agility.

He jumped to his feet to watch it whirl around before setting down heavily in one of the abandoned villages nearby. The silence following the impact lasted only a moment. A cacophony of little explosions followed as hundreds of large oval things started shooting out along the Beyonder's carapace, from front to back, in high arcs and low. Malley was stunned. Nothing like this had ever come through before.

A nearby impact shook him out of his trance. He walked over toward the smoldering crater. Just as he tried to peer into it, something charged out. It took him by surprise and smashed him off his feet. Together he and the creature rolled across the ground. He felt something sharp sink deep into his shoulder. Yelling in pain, he kicked the thing off of him and, as it was flying through the air, drew his pneumatic pistol and fired several rounds into the critter.

It landed on the ground and hopped right back to its feet, snarling and looking more angry than hurt. It was short but bulky, covered in black fur, with sickly yellow eyes and long claws. Malley got up and swung his rifle around from his back, but before he could aim it the beast slammed it from his hands. Malley ducked and kicked and stabbed with his utility knife but soon found himself thrown to the ground, his head bashed against a rock.

Dizzy and weak, he raised his head. The creature approached him again, rows of teeth bared, ready to turn him into its first snack in this world.

Something shot past it from the left, leaving a trail in the air. The sound of dashing steps came to Malley's ears, just before another shot missed the creature by just a couple of inches on its other side. A shadow fell over him, and he looked up to see someone sailing through the air. The thin ropes to either side of the creature wrapped around its neck, and as the rogue skipper reached the ground behind it, she gave a hard tug, sending its head flying off its shoulders as she landed in a graceful crouch.

Malley managed to push up into a sitting position, warily eyeing the rogue skipper as she recalled her ropes and the hooks snatched back into place in her bracers while the Beyonder's head bounced across the ground. She gave Malley a little smile. Up close, she looked younger than he had expected.

She looked toward the site where the huge Beyonder had landed, then cast a smirk at Malley as she offered him a hand. "Looks like you've got bigger things to chase after than me."

Here and Beyond

The area known as Ghostfield was long thought of as haunted. It's very close to another dimension, which people simply refer to as Beyond. Spontaneous gates of various sizes allow creatures to cross back and forth, ranging in size from tiny to building-sized. Smaller gates are more common; huge gates are rarely seen. People live in the vicinity of Ghostfield, but most villages closer to its center have been abandoned due to the unending appearance of strange and often dangerous creatures.

Several years ago, the Kanissian Empire occupied Ghostfield and other parts of Enendia. The Kanissians, whose border was not far from the field, considered it a potential threat to their national security--and a great resource. The remainder of Enendia has barricaded itself behind the First River, leaving the occupied territory in Kanissian hands. There are several groups of rebels, however, who seek to free the realm from occupation.

If you step through one of the gates in Ghostfield to Beyond, you find yourself in a world without up or down. It's filled with floating rocks of all shapes and sizes. While they seem to repel each other and rarely crash, their Cores attract all other matter, serving as localized gravity. Many of these rocks are only as big as a room, yet they still have a gravitational pull much stronger than a comparable chunk would have in our world. Other rocks are as big as whole villages, but their pull is not much stronger; they all have the same tiny Cores that are the source of the

gravitational anomalies, with similar strength. Some of the huge rocks feature massive tunnel systems or other interior areas.

Strange creatures inhabit the Beyond, but what compels humans to cross over are the Cores and other valuables that can be found within the floating rocks. Scavengers who mine them are known as skippers. They bounce from rock to rock, traveling among them and looking for valuables. Only the First Expeditionary Corps of Kanissia is allowed to do this officially, but there are many rogue skippers who sneak through one of the gates and claim Cores and other valuables to sell for a good price to one of the crime cartels that has sprung up around this illegal trade. Some of them finance the Enendian rebels. Others are just out for themselves.

Conflicts Beyond

Sooner or later, the PCs will find themselves Beyond, trying to fight off Beyonders or Kanissian Expeditionary Troops (or both). One special rule that applies to conflicts Beyond is that any maneuver costs an additional Action Die, which is not rolled but is nevertheless expended, independent of overall success or failure. For example, a maneuver using 2 action dice costs 3 action dice Beyond, but the player only gets to roll 2 of them for a chance to gain dice and has to discard the other one without rolling it.

Player Characters

The player characters can have any sort of background, as long as they have a good reason to stick together. They can be rebels, rogue skippers, Kanissian soldiers, villagers, criminals, or anything else that's workable. Here are the two example characters from the fiction piece above. If you like, you can play these in a sample character scene and/or conflict to get a handle on the setting before you create your own (or you can just use these characters for a whole story).

Captain Malley – Kanissian Guard Veteran

Passion: Anger

Mark: He has a huge shadowy discoloration on his back. Some might mistake it for a birthmark, but it's the spot where a Beyonder melted into him, right before he started exhibiting powers

Traits: I follow orders, but in my own way.
More experience than you'll ever have.
Protective of children.

Skills: Firearms 4

Courage 3
 Brawl 2
Stats: Action Pool 10, Wounds 4, Defense 4
Powers: Gate Sense, Leadership, Resilience II, Skipping, Soul Resistance, Squad Tactics, Tactical Maneuvering, Toughness

Tikara – Rogue Skipper

Passion: Glory
Mark: Eyes sparkle in all kinds of different colors.
Traits: I love the chase.
 Protect my family at all costs.
 Deep in debt.
Skills: Acrobatics 4
 Melee Weapons 3
 Quickness 2
Stats: Action Pool 12, Wounds 3, Defense 5
Powers: Force Attack, Heroics, Resilience III, Skipping, Spontaneous Gating, Stamina, Soulbound Weapon (Boots: Pneumatic)

Skills

There are 20 standard skills in Ghostfield. These should cover most types of actions that characters do when they are maneuvering during a conflict. They are:

Acrobatics	Brawl	Courage	Dirty Tricks	Endurance
Engineer	Explosives	Feint	Firearms	Gadgets
Intimidate	Luck	Melee Weapons	Perceive	Quickness
Stealth	Strength	Taunt	Throw	Vehicles

You can make up your own skills as well, with the agreement of your whole group. They should be as broadly usable as the ones listed above.

The following is a description of each skill, along with some suggestions on how to use it during a maneuver. If you want to use a skill during a conflict and are at a loss about how to narrate it or what you could do with it, ask your fellow players for some suggestions. There’s no shame in kibitzing, and it can actually make the game more fun.

Many times, the usage of skills can overlap. You could do the same stunt maneuver using Acrobatics, Courage, or Quickness, for example. In these cases, the skill says more about who your character is and what kind of combat style she uses. Don't let the narrow meaning of a skill's name or the overlap with other skills limit your imagination when it comes to your maneuvers.

Skill Descriptions

Acrobatics

This is a broad skill that you can use many different ways. It includes jumping around, bouncing off walls, climbing up structures (or enemies), somersaulting over steamboats, and any other cool stunts along those lines. If you're a first-time player, I suggest you take this as an easy-to-use skill.

Brawl

Characters with this skill go hand-to-hand with their enemies. This includes punches, flying kicks, wrestling moves, elbow strikes, bicycle kicks, body slams, and any other attacks that don't involve any weapons other than those you were born with.

Courage

Sometimes you can accomplish a lot if you just dare to do it. Courage allows your character to stand her ground in the face of danger, motivate her allies to follow her lead, and do things that others wouldn't, because she can control her fear. A maneuver using Courage can range from walking directly into danger (at a dramatic camera angle, of course) to taking that leap from a building to the shoulders of a steamboat.

Dirty Tricks

You know that character who throws sand in other people's eyes, stuffs a grenade down a commander's body armor, or uses enemy soldiers as human shields? If you pick this skill, that's your PC. Your character needs a certain edge to pull this off, a rather malleable view of honor in combat. And you need to be able to think on your feet to use this skill a lot. Or else, remember to ask your fellow players for maneuver suggestions.

Endurance

Some characters have more stamina and can take more punishment than others. Characters with this skill can use that ability to their advantage during battle. They could charge ahead despite of acid raining down on them, or come back up so quickly from getting knocked down that they surprise their enemy, or shield

their allies with their bodies. You may want to take powers like Toughness, Resilience and Guard to gain some related abilities.

Engineer

Usually, you use your skills to make things. But in a pinch—that is, whenever someone’s trying to hurt you or your friends—you don’t hesitate to use your engineering skills to take out the weak points of a vehicle, throw a wrench into the moving parts, or modify a blown-off steambot’s flamethrower to turn it into an improvised portable weapon of doom. And if you’re facing humans or Beyonders, you might just have to hit them with a wrench, or use your nailgun to tack their clothes to the nearest wall.

Explosives

If it blows up, you’re an expert in using it. This skill covers grenades, mines, Molotov cocktails, rocket launchers, self-made exploding devices, fuel barrels, or anything along those lines. Not only do you know how to make and use these things, you can also turn your enemy’s explosives against them.

Feint

Sometimes, the best strategy is to trick your opponent into thinking that they know what you’re about to do. Then, of course, you do something completely different. While feinting is something all characters can do, those with this skill have turned it into an art form; no one can predict what they are going to do next.

Firearms

While anyone can shoot a gun, characters with this skill have special abilities that go far beyond that. Maybe you can shoot a dime at a distance of a hundred feet, or ricochet bullets off walls and around corners, or reload a machine gun with one hand while juggling and firing three pistols with the other. You’re an artist, and any firearm turns to a masterpiece instrument in your hands.

Gadgets

Characters with this skill are masters at having the right tool for all the wrong jobs. They’ve got the ability to either manufacture or store dozens of little contraptions that can help out in many ways, whether they are as simple as crow’s feet or as complex as pocket-sized flying steambots. You never have to keep a specified inventory of them; instead, you just make them up as you go. This skill combines very well with certain Soulbound Weapon powers to give your gadgets added punch.

Intimidate

Some characters are downright scary, and those with this skill especially so.

Intimidate is used to keep enemies at bay, stare them down, make them afraid, or otherwise affect them with your posture, verbal threats, and intense stare. Even steambots and other mechanoids can be intimidated. In those cases, this skill works like the violence-backed opposite of Feint: you make an impression not by pretending to do something different, but by making sure the enemy knows exactly what you're going to do to them when you get your hands on them.

Luck

Some characters just have lots of good things happening to them. When a building wall falls over, they're standing in the empty window slot. When a burst of bullets whizzes past them, they're outlined against the wall behind them, without a scratch. That kind of luck is not infallible, but it can be very useful. When you're using Luck in a maneuver, simply describe something very improbable happening that helps out your character.

Melee Weapons

If your character feels naked without a sword, lance, club, dagger, or any similar weapon in her hands, this is the skill for her. It applies to any close combat weapons (even when you decide to throw them for a change, though you may want to pick up the Throw skill for that one). And while anyone can swing a sword, characters with this skill have incredible abilities. Maybe they can deflect bullets, or climb walls with their daggers, or wield swords the size of tree trunks. Any crazy stunt that involves these kinds of weapons is in the character's repertoire.

Perceive

Characters with this skill have honed their perception to a completely new level. Maybe they can see tiny details at vast distances, or act without sight almost as well as with it (you might want to take the Darksight power to support this), or feel vibrations on the ground that give away enemy positions, or slow down time in their mind to take in everything that's happening around them. There is a huge range of maneuvers you can do based on perceiving things that other characters would not, especially in the heat of battle.

Quickness

Sure, some people are fast. But characters with this skill not only outrun them all, they are incredibly coordinated when they do so. Using Quickness in maneuvers allows a character to dodge missiles, move through swarms of enemies at ease, or run up the side of a building (or steambot).

Stealth

Sometimes the best way to maneuver yourself into position is not to be seen until you're ready to strike. Characters with the Stealth skill can suddenly disappear from sight even in the midst of battle, move without making a sound, and jump out of the shadows for surprise attacks.

Strength

When you want your character to be one of the strongest people around, pick this skill. It allows you to do maneuvers based on incredible feats of strength, such as hurling enemies at each other across the battlefield (this works even better when you have the Throw skill), wrestle with a steambot, or push over trees on top of your opponents.

Taunt

Characters with this skill have the ability to enrage an enemy to the point that they make mistakes. In some cases, Taunt can work like a mix between Dirty Tricks and Feint in this regard. Even steambots are not impervious to being lured into a trap by someone who's hopping up and down, waving her hands as she yells insults at the walking assortment of junk. Take note, however, that this skill can make the game lean more in a humorous direction, so make sure that fits with the mood you've established.

Throw

Characters with Melee Weapons can throw them at times. Characters with Strength can toss people and trees. But characters with the Throw skill are unsurpassed at throwing, well, just about anything they can find with incredible precision. Whether it's special tiny daggers, or rocks from the ground, or that item that needs to land in your ally's hand some 200 feet away, if you have this skill, you'll be able to hit just about anything with anything.

Vehicles

Some characters depend on having certain vehicles to use their skills. These can range from the smallest (like roller blades) to jetpacks to airships. The skill also helps with knowledge of vehicles and their weak spots when the character opposes them. I would suggest this skill for PCs only when your character always has a vehicle at hand (like a power armor), or else there are plenty of them around to use in any situation. Most of the time, enemies in vehicles will use this skill.

Powers

Powers are uncommon, but not rare. Having several powers like PCs do, however, is something few are blessed with. There are maybe a dozen characters at or above the PCs' power level in all of Enendia and Kanissia.

The powers in Ghostfield are listed in several categories: passive powers, charge powers, Soulbound Weapon powers, and Summoning powers.

Passive powers are always active and do not require the use of charge dice.

Charge powers have a type listed, which tells you whether the power is an action in itself or supplements a strike, maneuver, or other power (Boost). You can combine as many non-action powers as you can pay for to supplement a single action, with listed exceptions.

Soulbound Weapon and **Summoning** powers have passive and charge powers among them, but they have their own chapters because they have some special rules associated with them. In addition, some characters (like idolons) can only have passive and charge powers, but not Soulbound Weapon or Summoning powers.

Selecting Powers During Character Creation

Unless otherwise stated, you can only take each power once. This applies to all powers in all categories.

Some of the powers and weapon effects inflict conditions on characters. These conditions are listed in Chapter 15. You might want to look those up before picking a related power.

When you select powers for your character, make sure to include some charge powers so that you can make use of charge dice you are inevitably going to earn during a conflict. The power packages in the character creation chapter are a good template to start with. They all contain some charge powers as well as a decent defense.

Some coordination with your fellow PC players is also a good idea. Several powers work better in conjunction with the choices of other players, such as Leadership and Squad Tactics.

Finally, enemies are not bound by the listed powers. The GM can freely create powers for them or modify the ones listed (such as reducing charge dice costs, making them affect all PCs at once, etc.). One interesting example would be to have a “Resist Non-Elemental Damage” power that raises the adversity’s defense only against strikes that aren’t based on fire, frost, or electricity, which would reward PCs for using their elemental charge powers (or goals). You can find some special adversity powers in Chapter 16.

Technology

Enendia is a less-developed realm, but the Kanissians have a vast array of steam-powered technology at their disposal. This ranges from pneumatic cannons to airships. Some of these devices are used Beyond, like pneumatic boots that assist a skipper in jettisoning off a rock.

A new brand of technology has sprung up around the Cores from Beyond, which exhibit strange properties and can enable all sorts of unprecedented effects. There are rumors of experimental hover vehicles that can fly without steampower by using the strange gravitational properties of certain matter from Beyond.

Factions

This section describes several of the groups that are active in Ghostfield. There are many ways they can come up in your game. The PCs can belong to any of the groups, they can work with or against these groups, or they can get entangled in the politics of the region. Therefore, the factions serve as fodder for the creation of characters, seeds, and story events.

Some of these factions are large and have many subgroups, such as the Kanissian troops that are occupying Ghostfield and other parts of Enendia. The PCs will probably have to deal with those quite a bit. Other factions are small, maybe just numbering in the dozens, and their appearance is a rare event indeed.

You can always add factions to the setting as you see fit, and even PCs should not hesitate to talk about a faction that they’ve heard rumors about, thereby prodding the GM to incorporate them into the game. Traits and Links are good places to introduce or connect to factions.

The Kanissian Guard

The Kanissian Empire occupied large parts of Enendia in pure self-defense, according to Queen Seytali's ministers. Recent activity in Ghostfield was seen as a threat to the Empire, as several Beyonders crossed the nearby borders into Kanissian territory. Seeing that the Enendians did not stop these incursions, the Kanissians had no choice but to take over the region to pacify it and make it secure for everyone.

The Kanissian Guard that occupies half of Enendia consists of several branches. The Guard has a standing army of foot soldiers, mostly armed with basic rifles. Many of the soldiers are draftees, and their motivation to put their lives on the line is low, bolstered only by the threat of punishment. The lieutenants and other high-ranking officers among the Guard, most of whom are members of noble houses, wear steampowered armor that protects them from assassination attempts and lets them keep their own soldiers under control.

The more motivated, and often less mentally stable, soldiers are assigned to the Skirmisher regiments. Skirmishers are armed with an assortment of melee weapons, and they relish a good fight. However, this is not borne of loyalty but out of their personalities, which can lead them to abandon their cause when given the chance.

One of the more secretive groups among the Guard are the Shock Troops. These dark-clad infiltrators work in small groups, seeking out vulnerable or high priority targets to blow up with explosives. Shock Troops are highly loyal, though not suicidal. There is often a soldier among them with the ability to shroud the area in darkness, which helps them in setting up ambushes or escaping from pursuers.

The most elite group among the Kanissians is the Expeditionary Corps. This group of Interplanar Operatives was formed when the Kanissians first learned about the opportunities that the gates in Ghostfield offered. Queen Seytali hand-picks all of the Operatives. They are highly trained and impeccably loyal soldiers who believe in their mission. They are equipped with light pneumatic exoskeletons, pneumatic high-rate spike shooters that are built into the bracers of the exoskeleton, and lightning grenades. Most of the time, their missions lead them deep into the uncharted areas Beyond, but the queen at times also uses them as her personal assassins.

You can find stats for the different groups among the Kanissian Guard in Chapter 16.

Enendian Rebels

Enendia was more of a patchwork region than a truly united realm. Many principalities, tribal regions, and city states were tied together through a vast array of written and oral treaties. There was no single ruler or council, and while most of the citizens of Enendia felt that they were joint citizens of a larger region, many held their regional allegiances in higher regard.

The Kanissian occupation changed this identity. With the exclusion of the Northern Tribes, Enendia has experienced a surge in unity and a drive toward forming one large state. The cities and principalities that are unoccupied have formed a united front against the Kanissians, and the occupied territories are bonding through their shared suffering.

Still, resistance to the Kanissians is fragmented. So far, no singular leader has emerged among the rebel groups. In the occupied territories, the Kanissian Guard prevents the open formation of resistance groups. Rebels are largely locals who band together in secret back rooms, but few of them have the power to confront the Kanissians directly.

The Enendian Union has yet to come to agreement on how to deal with the occupation. While all of the members agree that sooner or later, they will have to wage a war of liberation, questions of timing and approach remain unresolved. Is it better to wear out the Kanissians with guerilla warfare from within, or does the empire gain a stronger foothold the longer it stays? Should the Enendians fight the crime syndicates or ally with them in exchange for access to Ghostfield? Should the Enendians seek allies among other realms or rely on their own forces? Is the ultimate goal a direct defeat of the Kanissians or merely a truce that will return most of Enendia to the Union? And how should a newly-formed Enendia be governed?

These questions are of little concern to the local resistance groups that are now actively working against the Kanissians. Many of them simply try to sabotage the Kanissians and make their stay as costly as possible. Some try to infiltrate their ranks, while others collaborate with the occupiers to gain some form of relief for their local community.

Crime Syndicates

Many rogue skippers and criminals slip through the net of the Kanissian Guard to gain access to Beyond via the gates in Ghostfield. While many of them work

alone, two large crime syndicates have sprung up that profit from the acquisition and trade of Cores from Beyond.

One of the crime syndicates (the Vengeful Moon) supports the rebels with a portion of their financial gain, while the other one (the Hidden Blade, with members from Enendia, Kanissia, and other realms) merely enriches its own coffers. The two syndicates are in direct competition and would like nothing better than to wipe each other out, but open war has yet to erupt.

The Northern Tribes

The northern part of Enendia, spanning about one third of the land that's free from Kanissian occupation, is ruled by three major tribes. These tribes have a long history of conflict with each other as well as the surrounding areas, and tales of their raiding parties are told to scare small children around Enendia and beyond.

The tribes believe that the Gods live in the clouds, and that we can feel their presence when the wind blows. Thus, when the air is still, the Gods are assumed to be casting their glance elsewhere. This leads the tribes to stop all activities when there is no wind, for fear that their Gods would not be able to bless and aid them. They also conduct all important matters out in the open and have a strong distrust of closed buildings, which keep the Gods shut out. Anyone who wants to deal with the tribes (and survive) needs to remember never to invite them into any enclosed area, or they will feel that they are being tricked or corrupted.

The tribes have no name for themselves; they simply use “we” when they talk about their members, their clan, or whole tribes. Most of them are born into their tribe, but outsiders willing to dedicate themselves to a clan or tribe can be accepted through the assent of the community. When tribe members die, they are burned, and their essence rises up with the smoke to join the Gods among the clouds.

Two of the tribes are still nomadic and tame horses for their warriors, hunters, and scouts. They are the ones who adhere to the old ways, while the third tribe has settled down at the southwestern edge of their territory and established more permanent trade relations with the remainder of Enendia (though all of their tents and buildings are always open).

The nomadic tribes have a custom that makes their members—all of them considered warriors—recognizable to anyone who's heard of them. When a tribal child is ready, which it determines on its own, it undergoes this ritual. The child holds an overripe sunfruit in its hand. The left hand is customary for one of the

tribes, while the other tribe uses the right hand. A tribal elder now presses the glowing-hot tip of a knife upon the child's shoulder and very slowly runs it down the arm while the remainder of the gathered tribe members chant praises to the Gods. The ritual ends when the child either drops or crushes the extremely soft sunfruit, and the length of the scar forever indicates the Gods' blessing upon the scarred. Very few tribe members can proudly display a scar that reaches all the way down to the back of their hand, and they are often chosen as leaders of clans within the tribe.

There is a legend among the tribes of *The Twice Scarred*, a warrior who bore full-length scars of both tribes and who led them to victory in times when all of the tribes were in dire peril. The elders say that one day, *The Twice Scarred* will return to unite the tribes in their darkest days.

Warrior Monks

There are several monasteries in the eastern mountains of Enendia. The monks who live there have various purposes and spiritual beliefs. Most are men and women who live very simple lives, farm, and support their local villages with food and the art of medicine. These monks simply desire to gain spiritual fulfillment through hard work and dedication to the betterment of their communities.

However, a few of the monasteries house warrior monks, such as the Light Breeze, Seven Streams, and Glowing Ember monasteries. They follow a path of strengthening their bodies and minds through rigid training. Some of them take this as a goal unto itself, while others believe that enlightenment comes through the cleansing effects of combat.

Warrior monks feel a responsibility to protect their communities, but this does not extend to Enendia as a larger region. Most of the monasteries are in unoccupied territory, and they have no interest in opposing the occupation that lies outside of their small areas of influence. Some monks, however, feel differently, especially those who have roots or family in the occupied regions. While they are counseled that they have to let go of those old bonds in favor of the monastery's nearby villages, some of them set out to do something about the occupation.

Sometimes monasteries send monks to investigate mystical activities within Enendia, or to experience the outside world and expand their horizons. Elder monks receive visions in their dreams that guide their assignments. Sometimes these missions lead to dead ends. But many times, they place a monk or two in the right spot at just the right time. Traveling monks are free to bond with other

travelers, but they are taught that their missions are the most important aspect of their lives.

One monastery has been corrupted by other influences. Deep River sends its monks on missions that do not benefit the community, but rather enrich the monastery itself. Sometimes they are hired by special interests, including the crime syndicates, the Kanissians, and even rebel groups, to carry out combat missions. While the other monks are saddened by this development, there is no plan or movement to do anything about it. Individual Deep River monks may be dealt with when they cause trouble within a monastery's community, but the elder monks do not believe that other monks' spiritual corruption is their responsibility.

The Burdened

There is a cave deep in the eastern mountains that is guarded by an ancient monk called Old Hundred Eyes. According to local legends, only those who are driven by a burning desire for redemption can find it. Old Hundred Eyes, who knows their very souls with just one look at them, is said to lead them into the cave, where they face shadows and twisted manifestations of the things they have done and the things yet in store for them. Only if they are strong enough to face past and future do they make it through the cave.

If they do, they reach the Pillar of Souls, which is covered in mystical masks. Anyone who reaches the pillar will know instinctively which mask was made for them. From this day on, they walk the earth looking to make up for their past, endowed by the mask with strange powers. They always wear their mask and never speak their own name, because the deeds are done for redemption, not for glory. They are often warriors fighting to protect those who cannot protect themselves. The people of Enendia call them the Burdened, for their sins weigh heavy on their souls. It is said that their masks will break into pieces and fall away only when this burden is lifted, at their moment of redemption.

There has been a rise in sightings of masked fighters ever since the Kanissian invasion. Some people speculate that freedom fighters are making use of the ancient tale to intimidate outsiders. Others say that war drives people to the kinds of horrible actions for which they spend their whole lives in search of atonement.

Loyal Flaggers

The current ruler of the Kanissian Empire, Queen Seytali, won the throne fifteen years ago in a civil war that pitted different houses of the realm against each other.

Some citizens of the empire still believe that the civil war was an usurpation, instigated and carried out by Seytali's supporters who benefited greatly from replacing the rightful empress, Queen Tanazia. During the final confrontation in the palace, Tanazia was killed protecting her twin daughters Laiza and Fiorenza, who were spirited away by loyal supporters and remain in hiding.

Queen Tanazia had a personal guard, most of whom were put to death by Queen Seytali. However, a few managed to survive. They were the standard bearers of Tanazia, wielding two unique staves with a long, flowing purple ribbon that can be extended or retracted with a very specific flick of the wrist. These loyal flaggers are the ones who guard Laiza and Fiorenza in their secret hiding place. Some work to gather support among the houses to overthrow Queen Seytali. Some wander the realm, including the occupied territory of Enendia, to battle the empire's military forces when they are oppressing local communities. And still others are searching for something that will allow them to exact revenge upon Queen Seytali, no matter the cost.

The loyal flaggers are elite fighters, and only the best and most secretive of them have survived to this day. Some have taken apprentices to carry on their legacy after their death. The flaggers are unrivaled in their ability to fight with their staves, including the use of the ribbons to distract, entangle, throw, and choke. Some of them only ever fight in secret, while others make a purposeful display of flying the purple colors of Queen Tanazia while they battle Kanissian soldiers in public places, to show the populace that hope for justice yet lives on.

Animal Kingdoms

Enendia shares a long and friendly history with several smaller realms in the region. While they have close trade relations, some of which involve the import of weapons or other goods used against the Kanissians, none of those realms are closely allied enough or even powerful enough to help the Enendians directly against the Kanissians.

Several of those realms are inhabited by cultures of sentient animals other than humans. There are peoples with similarities to all kinds of animals, and their level of intelligence, technology, and civility are on par with those of Enendia.

Kanissians don't trust non-humans, as they haven't had enough exposure to get to know them (and they are quite aware of their siding with the Enendians against the occupation). However, Enendians are quite used to them and don't bat an eye when they see talking raccoon people or upright-walking tigers.

Many can mate with each other and with humans, sometimes creating cross-breeds. In Enendia, there is no stigma attached to such relationships or families, they're simply seen as part of the wonderful variety of life. Some even say that mixed breed children are more likely to have an affinity for special powers, which proves their blessing by the higher beings.

Clockworkers

Steampowered machines are common in the Kanissian empire, and through the occupation that technology has reached Enendia and its neighboring realms. Some engineers have specialized in the intricacies of tiny springs, cogs, and levers to a degree that they can create miraculous and magical things.

The Clockworkers, a secret and loosely connected group of geniuses, have found a way to build machines that impact time and space. They can slow down time for short periods, and some can even cause levitation. The secrets of the Clockworkers are closely guarded, but there are many who would pay a fortune and go a long way to lay their hands on them. Rumor has it that the use of Cores from Beyond is the key to giving the clockwork machines their supernatural abilities.

Clockworkers are involved in a long lasting battle against one another, sending out their machine minions to prove that they are superior to all the others. Often, innocents become embroiled in these fights. Some Clockworkers simply are trying to prevent the others from doing that kind of damage.

There have been sightings of very special clockwork creations in recent times: humans merged with clockwork technology. These are exceedingly rare, and what kind of powers they may possess, or what possible reason they could have had to undergo the pain and violation involved, remains a mystery.

Group Seeds

When setting up a game, you might be at a loss about the group seed that's needed to keep your band of PCs together. Here are some suggestions that you can use to kick start your game. Feel free to modify any of them to suit your needs or just make up your own.

- The PCs are all part of a Kanissian Expeditionary Corps Special Unit. Their current mission is to investigate one of the setting seeds, hunt down a deserting officer and her squad, delve into the Beyond to find a specific

- place or item, infiltrate the Enendian Rebels, destroy a particular crime syndicate, or something along those lines. If you want to go a little darker, they could be sent into Enendian territory for sabotage and other covert missions, which could lead them to a crisis of faith when innocent civilians get in their way.
- On the flip side, the PCs are all Enendian rebels fighting for the freedom of their homeland. They could be part of a team, or they could each have reputations as solitary freedom fighters that makes them the target of a Kanissian headhunter group so powerful that they have no choice but to stick together.
 - The PCs are haunted by dreams which they seem to share. The dreams guide them to the same place, where they recognize each other even though they had never really met. And now the dreams show them something else, something so terrible that they know they would perish if they didn't face it together.
 - The PCs were normal citizens (without powers) of the realm, maybe even rivals or members of opposing factions. But they all happen to be in the same place at the same time, possibly caught up in fighting each other, when a gate opens. An incorporeal creature from Beyond hooks into all of them, endowing them with special powers, but also linking them together. The farther apart they are from each other, the weaker they get. Can they find a way to exorcise the Beyonder from their bodies before it takes them over completely?

Setting Seeds

Setting seeds are events in the fictional world that change the status quo. They provide opportunities for the PCs to investigate these unusual occurrences and participate in shaping the future of their world. The players should ignore those setting seeds that they find boring or otherwise unappealing and focus on the ones they find intriguing. Some groups may play out their own stories in Ghostfield without ever addressing any of the setting seeds. That's fine, as they are provided for your inspiration, just in case you need them.

Once the players decide to go after one of the seeds, the GM should try to weave it as much as possible into the character seeds, the group seed, the PCs' links and traits, and so on. The more things are interconnected, the more interesting the game is going to be. For example, if a PC has a link to a missing family member,

they may just be involved (voluntarily or not) in the Gathering. Or maybe the nemesis of one of the PCs is after the Dragon as well, for their own purposes.

Coming of the Dragon

A strange dragon-like creature came through the largest gate that has ever been observed. It burst into our world, flying for a few moments before setting down hard in one of the abandoned villages. It immediately shot hundreds of things out of its carapace into all directions. They could be seeds, eggs, or something of that sort; no one is exactly sure yet. Monks speak of prophecies, the Kanissians see their occupation justified by the threat, the crime syndicates smell profit, and the Enendians just try to survive the most dangerous Beyonder to ever make it into our world.

The Gathering

Bordering a dead town near Ghostfield is an abandoned temple, carved into the side of a mountain. Its proximity to the Ghostfield was its downfall. Recently, rumors have sprung up that something is gathering in the old temple. People speak of a rogue monk who was banished because of his evil nature, who is trying to make a pact with a powerful force Beyond. Some say he has kidnapped an ingenious clockwork engineer to create a permanent gate within the temple that will allow something horrible into our world. Others say he has created an army out of poor souls possessed by Beyonders to carve out his own empire. Whatever his goal, he is dangerously close to fulfilling it.

The Royal Twins

The twin daughters of the previous queen of Kanissia, Laiza and Fiorenza, have been in hiding for fifteen years, protected by Loyal Flaggers from the new ruler of Kanissia, Queen Seytali. However, rumors say that they have finally decided to take a stand and try to reclaim their empire. They are said to be on their way through Enendia, disguised as locals, to meet with Enendian rebel leaders to forge an alliance aimed at bringing down Queen Seytali and end the Kanissian occupation. This piece of news has traveled to Queen Seytali's ears. In the near future, Enendia will be filled with assassins, loyalists, mercenaries, and other fanatics who care much more about their mission than about who might get hurt in their pursuit of it.

11 PASSIVE POWERS

Overview

Passive powers are always active. While they may not always apply to all situations, they do not have to be paid for with charge dice. The following list shows you all of the passive powers.

For beginning players, it's important to note that Resilience is one of the most important passive powers. If you don't have a specific reason not to pick it up, you should have it at least once, but better yet twice. You may not want it if you are purposely playing a frail character, whether for roleplaying reasons, because you need your power slots for other powers, or because you're using the Self-Loathing passion to gain charge dice.

List of Passive Powers

Achievement Boost

The limit on the number of dice you can roll from your Strike Pool for achievements is raised by 2. A leader of a combined achievement can apply this power, but other participants can't.

Body Resistance

This character is immune to the charge powers Body Drain and Slow, and to the Poisoned and Weakened conditions.

Charge Boost

The limit on the number of charge dice you can store in your Charge Pool is raised by 2. You can take this power up to 3 times.

Darksight

The character is not affected by Blinded or Darkness conditions.

Gate Sense

This power does not let a character open gates to Beyond, but she senses where one will appear shortly. The character can spend one character scene to find a gate and enter it at the end of the scene. That means she doesn't get any of the other benefits of a character scene, but any characters with her can enter the gate and still claim a benefit for the scene. Outside of the actual Ghostfield, this power cannot be used. The power also cannot be used during conflicts.

Leadership

When your character is the leader in a combined maneuver, you can distribute the dice gained among the involved players. The limit for earning 5 dice altogether still applies (unless your character also has Tactical Maneuvering). Any player to whom you distribute 5 or more dice (including yourself) earns an Awesome Token as usual. In addition, when you are the leader in a combined achievement, every other participating character can use their applicable powers (by paying the required charge dice), if they have any, to add to the group's dice roll.

Maneuver Boost

The limit on the number of strike and charge dice you can earn in a maneuver is raised by 1. You can take this power up to 4 times. It does not apply to combined maneuvers.

Resilience

Raise your character's defense by 1. You can take this power up to 3 times.

Resistance to Electricity

Your character's defense counts as 3 points higher against electricity-based strikes (charged or weapon effect).

Resistance to Fire

Your character's defense counts as 3 points higher against fire-based strikes (charged or weapon effect).

Resistance to Frost

Your character's defense counts as 3 points higher against frost-based strikes (charged or weapon effect).

Skipping

This character is trained and experienced at skipping among the rocks Beyond. Ignore the extra action die requirement for maneuvering Beyond. Almost all Beyonders possess this power.

Squad Tactics

This power grants 1 bonus die to the leader of any combined maneuver or combined achievement in which this character participates (whether the character applying this power is the leader or not). If more than 1 character in a combined maneuver or combined achievement has this power, the bonus dice from all such characters apply.

Soul Resistance

This character is immune to the charge powers Life Drain, Life Transfer, and Vampiric Strike, and to the Diseased and Hexed conditions.

Stamina

The limit on the number of action dice you can store in your Action Pool is raised by 2. You can take this power up to 3 times.

Strike Boost

The limit on the number of dice you can roll from your Strike Pool for strikes is raised by 2. You can take this power up to 2 times.

Tactical Maneuvering

When you are the leader, the limit on the number of strike and charge dice you can earn in a combined maneuver and the limit on how many strike dice the characters in a combined achievement can spend are raised by 3. You can take this power up to 2 times. It does not apply to maneuvers or achievements your character performs on her own.

Toughness

Your character has 1 additional wound circle, which means that your character can take an extra wound before being defeated.

1 2 C H A R G E P O W E R S

Overview

Every character should have some charge powers. They allow your character to do special actions, boost your abilities, or otherwise have special effects. All charge powers need to be activated by spending charge dice that you've earned with maneuvers. This means that in a conflict, you'll do a maneuver or two first, then use your charge powers as an action of their own or with a Maneuver, Strike, or Achievement.

Powers of the Action type stand on their own and take up a character's action for the turn. Powers of the Maneuver, Strike, or Achievement type add bonus dice or other special effects to that specified action, and they do not cost extra actions to use. You cannot use them with an action other than the one specified unless special circumstances exist (for example, the GM may allow the use of Strike powers for Achievements if the player can explain how she uses the power to help her achieve a specific goal). Finally, powers of the Boost type can be used to enhance other powers, and they do not cost any additional actions.

You can only use one Action power at once, but you can use as many Maneuver, Strike, Achievement, or Boost powers together as you can pay for with your charge dice.

If your character doesn't have any charge powers from this list or any Summoning powers that use up charge dice, you won't have a use for all the charge dice you'll earn during conflicts. If you're picking just one charge power, make it something expensive like Force Attack.

List of Charge Powers

Banishment

Type: Action

Cost: 2 plus Target Eidolon Level in Charge Dice

Effect: This power must be directed against an eidolon, who is thereby automatically banished. This means that the eidolon returns to its home world with all of its wound circles marked. This power is costlier for higher-level eidolons. For example, banishing a Level 4 eidolon costs 6 charge dice.

Blaze

Type: Strike

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This strike is now fire-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against an individual, 3 against a squad, or 2 against a swarm. Blaze cannot be combined with electricity- or frost-based powers and weapon effects.

Blindness

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts the Blinded condition on a character. Until this condition is cleared, the character has to discard 1 die from any roll that she makes (before she rolls the dice). This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

Body Drain

Type: Action

Cost: 4 Charge Dice

Effect: This power transfers stamina from the victim to the power user. The victim loses 3 action dice, and the power user gains 3 action dice, regardless of defense. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect). If the target only has 1 or 2 dice left in her Action Pool, only those 1 or 2 dice are transferred.

Brighten

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power removes the Darkness condition from the area of the conflict.

Chain Lightning

Type: Strike

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This strike is now electricity-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against a swarm, 3 against a squad, or 2 against an individual. Chain Lightning cannot be combined with fire- or frost-based powers and weapon effects.

Conjure Darkness

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts the Darkness condition on the area of the conflict.

Dispel

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power removes all of the following conditions from the targeted character: Darksighted, Empowered, Quickened, and Shielded. This power cannot remove Soulbound Weapon effects or passive powers.

Elemental Surge

Type: Boost

Cost: 1 Charge Die

Effect: This power adds 2 bonus dice to the effect of an elemental strike power (Blaze, Chain Lightning, Firestorm, Frost Spikes, Ice Hurricane, Zap).

Empower

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power grants the Empowered condition to a character designated by the power user. Until this condition is cleared, the character gains 1 bonus die to all strikes.

Firestorm

Type: Strike

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This strike is now fire-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against a swarm, 3 against a squad, or 2 against an individual. Firestorm cannot be combined with electricity- or frost-based powers and weapon effects.

Force Attack

Type: Strike

Cost: 4 Charge Dice

Effect: This power adds 5 bonus dice to a strike against any kind of opponent.

Frost Spikes

Type: Strike

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This strike is now frost-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against an individual, 3 against a squad, or 2 against a swarm. Frost Spikes cannot be combined with electricity- or fire-based powers and weapon effects.

Guard

Type: Maneuver

Cost: 1+ Charge Die

Effect: After you use this power, any strike against an ally that you dedicate when invoking this power must instead be directed at you. You can guard more than one ally by spending another charge die for each additional ally. If someone makes a strike against you, whether directly or redirected because of this power, the effect of this power ends at the beginning of your turn following that strike.

Heroics

Type: Achievement

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power adds 4 bonus dice to an achievement roll.

Ice Hurricane

Type: Strike

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This strike is now frost-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against a swarm, 3 against a squad, or 2 against an individual. Ice Hurricane cannot be combined with electricity- or fire-based powers and weapon effects.

Leap Attack

Type: Strike

Cost: 1 Charge Die

Effect: This power adds 2 bonus dice to a strike against an individual or 1 bonus die against a squad or a swarm.

Life Drain

Type: Action

Cost: 6 Charge Dice

Effect: This power transfers life force from the victim to the character using the power. The victim takes 1 wound, and the user heals 1 wound (if applicable), regardless of defense. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

Life Transfer

Type: Action

Cost: 6 Charge Dice

Effect: This power transfers life force from the victim to a character designated by the player using the power (other than her own character). The victim takes 1 wound, and the designated character heals 1 wound (if applicable), regardless of

defense. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect). The character to be healed must either be present or be an eidolon of the character using the power (present or not).

Mass Effect

Type: Boost

Cost: 1 or 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power has two ways of boosting other powers used with the same action. First, for 1 charge die, it allows the following powers to be targeted against squads and swarms: Blindness, Body Drain, Life Drain, Life Transfer, Poison, Power Block, Slow, Vampiric Strike, and Weaken. Second, for 2 charge dice, you can apply the effects of the following powers to 3 extra characters (individuals, squads or swarms) in addition to the original target: Dispel, Empower, Nightvision, Quicken, Refresh, Restore, Rise of the Phoenix, and Shield.

Nightvision

Type: Action

Cost: 1 Charge Die

Effect: This power grants the Dark sighted condition to the characters designated by the power user, which works exactly like the Dark sight passive power.

Poison

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts Poisoned on a character. Until this condition is cleared, the victim loses 1 action die from her Action Pool at the beginning of her turn each round. The condition is automatically removed when the victim's Action Pool is empty. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

Power Block

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts Hexed on a character. Until this condition is cleared, the victim has to spend 1 additional charge die for each charge power she wants to use. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

Quicken

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power grants the Quicken condition to a character designated by the power user. Until this condition is cleared, the character gains 1 bonus die to all maneuvers.

Refresh

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power strengthens a character's stamina. The target's current number of action dice in the character's Action Pool is raised by 4, up to the maximum of the target's Action Pool.

Restore

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power removes all of the following conditions from the targeted character: Blindness, Diseased, Hexed, Poisoned, and Weakened.

Rise of the Phoenix

Type: Action

Cost: 5 Charge Dice

Effect: This power can bring a defeated character back into the conflict. The target character heals 1 wound circle and can participate as normal, with her current Pool levels, and resuming her position in the order of turns. This power does not work on squads or swarms (not even in combination with Mass Effect). It does not work on characters who still have one or more unmarked wound circles (that is, characters who are not defeated).

Shadow Strike

Type: Strike

Cost: 1 Charge Die

Effect: This power adds 3 bonus dice to a strike against an opponent who suffers the effects of the Darkness or Blinded conditions.

Shield

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power grants the Shielded condition to a character designated by the power user. Until this condition is cleared, the character's defense is raised by 1.

Slow

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts Slowed on a character. Until this condition is cleared, all of the character's skill ratings are lowered by 1. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

Spontaneous Gating

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This character can open a spontaneous gate between Ghostfield and Beyond. Spontaneous gating is only possible in Ghostfield proper (not the rest of Enendia or any other realm) and Beyond. This power counts as an action, but the character can simultaneously enter the gate and go Beyond (or return to Ghostfield) during this action. The gate remains open for 3 rounds, during which any character can spend an action to go through from either side.

Super Combo Strike

Type: Action

Cost: 1+ Charge Dice

Effect: This power allows the user to make a combined strike with another character. For each charge die you spend, a character of your choice gains a bonus die to their strike this round. Your character now actively participates in that strike, which probably includes all sorts of flashing lights, energy beams, tremors, thunderclaps, vaults high into the air, characters tossing each other at the enemy, and so on. You can combine this power with other strike powers if you have the charge dice to pay for them.

Superior Power Control

Type: Boost

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power allows the user to use a strike power *after* rolling the strike dice. The player first rolls for the strike, then invokes this power and pays 2 charge dice plus any charge dice costs for the additional power(s) to be applied. Then the player rolls any dice granted by the power and adds them to the strike roll. This power also allows the use of Guard at the end of a Maneuver, after earning dice for the Maneuver.

Touch of Decay

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts Diseased on a character. Until this condition is cleared, the victim can no longer benefit from the charge powers Life Drain, Life Transfer, Rise of the Phoenix, or Vampiric Strike. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

Vampiric Strike

Type: Strike

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: If this strike inflicts 1 or more wounds, the character using this power heals 1 wound. If the strike does not inflict a wound, the effect evaporates. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

Weaken

Type: Action

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts Weakened on a character. Until this condition is cleared, the defense of any opponents of the victim is considered to be 1 higher, but only against the victim. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

Whirlwind Attack

Type: Strike

Cost: 1 Charge Die

Effect: This power adds 2 bonus dice to a strike against a squad or 1 bonus die against a swarm or an individual.

Zap

Type: Strike

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This strike is now electricity-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against an individual, 3 against a squad, or 2 against a swarm. Zap cannot be combined with fire- or frost-based powers and weapon effects.

13 SOULBOUND WEAPONS

Weapons in Play

Regular weapons do not have specific numerical bonuses, although they can be used in maneuver descriptions with appropriate skills (such as Firearms or Melee Weapons). Soulbound Weapons, on the other hand, contain their own powers, which are called effects.

Characters first need to pick the Soulbound Weapon power, which allows them to have 1 weapon with 1 effect slot. Further powers are available to raise the number of slots on the weapon, allow the character to change the effects, or let the character own more than 1 Soulbound Weapon.

You can consider Soulbound Weapons a pretty broad category: instead of an actual weapon, it could be any item that imbues the character with additional effects, such as a suit of armor or a charm.

Characters are assumed to always have access to their Soulbound Weapons, unless the character's player specifically agrees not to bring it into a particular conflict. A character with Multisoul can choose which weapon she is holding at the beginning of a conflict. Switching weapons counts as the character's action for the turn.

A character can only use her own Soulbound Weapons and never anybody else's. Similarly, weapon effects cannot benefit anyone but the original owner of the Soulbound Weapon.

Disarming

Soulbound Weapons have one drawback: they can be disarmed. In order to do this, the GM has to spend an Awesome Token while doing a Maneuver (which could be the Awesome Token earned with this Maneuver). This ensures that disarming can happen only when the PCs are facing foes that are formidable enough to earn 5 or more dice on maneuvers. The GM can disarm multiple weapons from a character with Multisoul, which still only costs a total of 1 Awesome Token.

As compensation for losing the weapon, the PC immediately (and without spending an action) gets to roll bonus dice to gain strike and charge dice. The

player rolls 2 dice per effect slot of the lost weapon. If the GM decides to disarm multiple weapons from a character with Multisoul, the player adds 2 dice total for each additional weapon lost (so a player with Soulbound Weapon, Weapon Upgrade II, and Multisoul II who loses all weapons would roll 10 dice: 3 times 2 for the effect slots and 2 dice each for the additional 2 weapons). Dice are earned as in maneuvers: 3s, 4s and 5s are strike dice, 6s are charge dice, and 1s and 2s are discarded. As these are bonus dice, they do not earn Awesome Tokens (but they're also not limited as to how many dice can be earned).

PCs who want to get their Soulbound Weapons back in the very same conflict need to achieve a goal with difficulty 8 for each weapon. This Achievement also can be done by other characters on behalf of one of their allies or with a Combined Achievement. The PC automatically regains their Soulbound Weapons at the end of the conflict if they win it. If they lose, they will have to achieve the goal in the following conflict.

GMs should not overuse this ability. While it's fun (and rewarding for the player) to do this every now and then, it can become frustrating if the player is constantly denied the benefit of their special item. On the other hand, if the player is really bothered by it, she is free to pick Improved Grip as one of her powers.

Soulbound Weapon Powers

Soulbound Weapon

The character forms a spiritual or demonic bond with a weapon. The weapons can range from human-sized swords to gauntlets with claws to magical pistols or any other kinds of items that grant the wielder power. The weapon has 1 effect slot that you fill in when you first acquire it. Any character with the Soulsmith power can change the effects during the course of your story, if your PC allows this to happen.

Weapon Upgrade

This power can be taken up to 3 times. Each time, it adds an effect slot to all of the character's Soulbound Weapons.

Quickdraw

The character can switch weapons during a conflict at the beginning of her turn without using up the character's action.

Multisoul

This power can be taken up to 2 times. Each time it's selected, the character gains

an additional Soulbound Weapon. Weapon Upgrade applies to all of these weapons. A character with Multisoul II and Weapon Upgrade I can have 3 Soulbound Weapons with 2 effect slots each.

Improved Grip

When the GM tries to disarm a character with this power, the player of the character can choose whether or not to be disarmed. If she chooses to be disarmed, she gains the bonus dice as usual. If she refuses, she doesn't gain any dice, and the GM does not spend the Awesome Token.

Soulsmith

This power can be taken up to 4 times. The first time it's taken, it allows the character to place (or replace) an effect of 1 slot level on a Soulbound Weapon. This takes 1 character scene of ritualistic incantation. The character does not earn any other benefits from a character scene during which she places an effect. The character can place 1 effect at a time, so she can place single-slot effects on all 4 slots of a 4-slot weapon (taking 1 scene per effect). For each additional time the power is taken, the character can place an effect of 1 additional effect slot. A character with Soulsmith III can place effects that take up 1, 2 or 3 slots, but not 4-slot effects. Each effect takes 1 scene to affect, no matter how many slots it takes up. Ultimate Weapons cannot be changed like this; they require special circumstances and time allotments as determined by the GM (in addition to Soulsmith IV).

Immediate Imbuement

The character can use their Soulsmith power instantaneously, even during a conflict. Instead of taking 1 scene per slot, it takes 1 action per slot. This takes up both the Soulsmith's and the weapon owner's turns if they are not the same character. Outside of a conflict, the character can change one effect on a weapon during a character scene and still gain one of the regular scene benefits. This power can be taken a second time, in which case the replacing of an effect in a conflict takes just 1 action no matter how many slots the effect has. Outside of a conflict, a character with Immediate Imbuement II can change all of a Soulbound Weapon's effects in the same scene and still get a scene benefit. Ultimate Weapons cannot be changed with Immediate Imbuement.

Soulbound Weapon Effects

The effects you can place on Soulbound Weapons are listed below with the number of effect slots they take up. Each effect can only be placed once on each weapon (for example, you cannot have Area Strike twice on the same weapon).

[1] Area Strike

You gain 1 bonus die to all strike rolls against swarms.

[1] Charge Container

This weapon can store 1 charge die, which you must place there when you earn charge dice. This allows you to have access to an additional charge die above your Charge Pool limit, and the charge die remains in the weapon after the conflict is over (that is, it is not subject to the halving of your Charge Pool). If you stop using this weapon (you switch or are disarmed) and have a charge die in the weapon, you cannot access it until you've recovered or reequipped the weapon.

[1] Elemental Force

Double the bonus dice you get from elemental auras (Fire Aura, Frost Aura, Shock Aura) and absorption effects (Fire Eater, Frost Eater, Shock Eater).

[1] Fire Aura

Your attack is now fire-based. Add 1 bonus die to your strike rolls. If you have an electricity- or frost-based effect on your weapon, you need to pick which one applies before the strike. This cannot be combined with elemental charge powers other than fire-based ones.

[1] Fire Eater

Whenever an enemy makes a strike roll against you that is fire-based, you gain 1 charge die, whether the strike succeeds or not.

[1] Frost Aura

Your attack is now frost-based. Add 1 bonus die to your strike rolls. If you have an electricity- or fire-based effect on your weapon, you need to pick which one applies before the strike. This cannot be combined with elemental charge powers other than frost-based ones.

[1] Frost Eater

Whenever an enemy makes a strike roll against you that is frost-based, you gain 1 charge die, whether the strike succeeds or not.

[1] Multi Strike

You gain 1 bonus die to all strike rolls against squads.

[1] Pneumatic

This item improves maneuverability Beyond with air pressure thrusters. You gain 1 bonus die to all maneuvers and achievements Beyond.

[1] Power Strike

You gain 1 bonus die to all strike rolls against individuals.

[1] Protection

You benefit from the Shielded condition as long as you hold the weapon.

[1] Returning

The difficulty of retrieving this weapon after you have been disarmed is lowered to 6.

[1] Shining

The character is not affected by the Darkness condition. When doing a combined maneuver or combined achievement, this benefit counts for all of the other characters involved as well.

[1] Shock Aura

Your attack is now electricity-based. Add 1 bonus die to your strike rolls. If you have a fire- or frost-based effect on your weapon, you need to pick which one applies before the strike. This cannot be combined with elemental charge powers other than electricity-based ones.

[1] Shock Eater

Whenever an enemy makes a strike roll against you that is electricity-based, you gain 1 charge die, whether the strike succeeds or not.

[1] Toxin Immunity

You are not affected by the Diseased and Poisoned conditions as long as you are holding this weapon.

[2] Cursed

When you inflict a wound on a character, you inflict the Hexed condition on your victim. This does not work against squads or swarms unless you have the Multi Strike or Area Strike effect on this weapon, respectively.

[2] Haste

You benefit from the Quickened condition as long as you hold the weapon.

[2] Plaguebringer

When you inflict a wound on a character, you inflict the Diseased condition on your victim. This does not work against squads or swarms unless you have the Multi Strike or Area Strike effect on this weapon, respectively.

[2] Poisonous

When you inflict a wound on an enemy, you inflict the Poisoned condition on your victim. This does not work against squads or swarms unless you have the Multi Strike or Area Strike effect on this weapon, respectively.

[2] Weakening

When you inflict a wound on a character, you inflict the Weakened condition on your victim. This does not work against squads or swarms unless you have the Multi Strike or Area Strike effect on this weapon, respectively.

[3] Banisher

When you inflict a wound on an eidolon, it is automatically banished. This means that the eidolon returns to its home world with all of its wound circles marked.

[3] Soulcharge

Every round at the end of the character's turn, she gains 1 charge die. If the character's Charge Pool already has hit its limit, this effect does nothing.

[4] Ultimate Weapon

This effect is customized for each character, consisting of five effect slots' worth of effects. A player can only choose the contents of this power once for her character. After that, it cannot be changed outside of drastic character developments. The following are examples of Ultimate Weapons:

Energy Nexus: Charge Container, Protection, and Soulcharge.

Flaming Wrath: Area Strike, Elemental Force, Fire Aura, and Haste.

Freezing Vengeance: Elemental Force, Frost Aura, Power Strike, and Weakening.

Elemental Vortex: Elemental Force, Fire Eater, Frost Eater, Shock Eater, and Shining.

Exorciser: Banisher and Cursed.

Thunderslam: Area Strike, Elemental Force, Protection, Returning, and Shock Aura.

1 4 S U M M O N I N G

Eidolons in Play

Summoning is the art of bonding with, summoning, and empowering eidolons. Eidolons are creatures from Beyond that have the ability to *jump* between the worlds to the one they are bonded with, but only at the command of the summoner. They can only stay for short visits and automatically return to their own worlds if they are severely wounded (or at the end of conflicts).

There are several known types of eidolons from various areas Beyond. Other eidolons can be discovered by adventurous summoners, but they are exceedingly rare. Those are handled by the Creating Eidolons rules below.

There are several powers related to this art: Summoning allows a character to summon eidolons she is bonded with, Open Bond lets the summoner have a bond to an eidolon, and Empower Eidolons lets the character create bonds with higher-power eidolons and strengthens the lower-power ones.

Summoning Eidolons

Summoning an eidolon counts as the summoner's action for that turn (as the Summoning power is an action power). As you will see from the power description below, this action costs 1 plus the Eidolon's Level in charge dice (for example, summoning a Level 3 eidolon costs 4 charge dice). The eidolon appears instantaneously. Check out the eidolon's entrance description to see what that looks like for a particular eidolon.

A summoner can have only 1 eidolon summoned at any time. An eidolon that is a squad or swarm still counts as 1 eidolon for all intents and purposes. If you want to summon a different eidolon, you first have to dismiss your summoned eidolon.

Dismissing the eidolon is a free action that the summoner can take at the beginning of her turn. It does not use up her action for that turn. It does not hurt the eidolon. A dismissed eidolon can be summoned back in the same conflict, with all of the pools at the same level they were when the eidolon was dismissed (with a summoning action at the usual charge dice cost).

Controlling Eidolons

If the summoner wants the eidolon to take an action in any given round, she needs to spend her own action to order the eidolon to act. This means that only one of them will do a maneuver, strike, etc., in any round (unless you spend Awesome Tokens for extra actions). In your description, the summoner doesn't have to be just standing around idly, though; she could be riding on the eidolon, running for cover and dodging attacks while giving orders, or something similar.

Eidolons have their own Action Pool, which is full by default when the eidolon is summoned. When the summoner orders the eidolon to act, the eidolon can take the 1-3 action dice for Maneuvers from any combination of both the summoner's and the eidolon's Action Pools (but the total still can't be more than 3). Eidolons also have their own Strike Pools and Charge Pools, but as with action dice, they can use the summoner's strike and charge dice in addition to their own, up to the usual dice limit for the particular action. The summoner, on the other hand, can't ever access the dice in the eidolon's pools.

Summoners can unmark one of their own traits to reroll failed dice when the eidolon is acting.

By default, eidolons have 1 skill, like most enemies. This means they do not mark the skill and never gain bonus dice in the way that characters with 3 skills do. There is a special eidolon power called Skill Set that grants them three skills instead, in which case they work just like regular skill sets.

The summoner and her eidolon can't both do a combined maneuver or combined achievement together, but either one of them can do so with other PCs (and possibly eidolons). However, eidolons can never be leaders in a combined maneuver or combined achievement, so there always needs to be at least one PC involved.

The summoner can still be targeted with strikes while the eidolon is around, unless the eidolon has the Auto Guard power (or uses the Guard power).

If the eidolon is defeated (that is, if it takes enough wounds to fill up all of its wound circles), it immediately disappears back to its home world and can't be summoned back until at least 1 of its wounds has been healed.

Eidolons do not retain their pools after a conflict. Instead, their Action Pool is filled up and their Charge and Strike Pools are emptied. Eidolons do retain their wounds, however, which can be healed through character scene benefits.

Powers

Summoning

Type: Action

Cost: 1+Eidolon Level Charge Dice

Effect: The summoner conjures an eidolon with which she has a bond (i.e., the power is useless without a bonded eidolon). The eidolon appears instantaneously. She can only have 1 eidolon summoned at any one time. The eidolon only acts when the summoner orders it to, which uses up the summoner's action.

Open Bond

The character can bond with an eidolon, in which case the power is renamed to Bond: [name of the eidolon]. Most of the time, this happens during character creation, where the player can select a common eidolon or create a custom one. The character can fill an Open Bond with a common eidolon as a scene benefit during the game as well, after spending the scene with appropriate rituals (which the player makes up). If she wants to bond a custom eidolon during the game, she needs to work out the details with the GM, including whether it takes more time or requires traveling Beyond. This power can be taken multiple times and is required every time that the summoner wants to add a new eidolon to her collection. Summoners can, under rare circumstances, break a bond with an eidolon to free up a bond for a new eidolon. However, this could have very bad consequences (story-wise) and should not happen more than once in any given story arc. Note that this power is useless without the Summoning power. You can take this power up to 3 times. Unless you take the Empower Eidolon power, you can only bond with Level 0 eidolons.

Battlefield Summoning

Any summoned eidolon has its Level in strike dice in its Strike Pool when you summon it for the first time in a conflict.

Charged Summoning

Any summoned eidolon has half of its Level in charge dice in its Charge Pool when you summon it for the first time in a conflict.

Natural Summoner

The charge dice cost for summoning eidolons of Levels 3 and above is reduced to 3.

Empower Eidolon

This power has 2 effects. First, it is a requirement for bonding with higher-level eidolons. In order to bond with a Level 2 eidolon, for example, the character needs to have Summoning as well as Empower Eidolon II. Second, each eidolon with which the summoner has bonded receives an additional eidolon power for each Empower Eidolon level above the one required to bond with it. For example, the Level 0 eidolons of a summoner with Empower Eidolon II would have 2 extra powers, any of her Level 1 eidolons would have 1 additional power, and her Level 2 eidolons would not have any powers other than the standard ones. The additional powers are selected by the summoner when she acquires a new level of Empower Eidolon or bonds with a new eidolon, and they can't be changed later.

Companion

One of your Level 0 eidolons can remain in your world for prolonged periods of time. It stays by your side and does not need to be summoned at the beginning of a conflict. If the eidolon is defeated or banished, it returns once at least 1 of its wound circles is healed (for example through character scene benefits). The companion cannot be changed unless the summoner permanently loses their companion (in other words, the bond is broken and the eidolon is no longer available to the summoner). This power requires the Summoning power.

Magnificent Companion

The summoner's companion can be a Level 1 or Level 2 eidolon. Note that this power requires the Companion power and the appropriate level in Empower Eidolon.

Unbreakable Bond

Your companion is immune to being banished by powers or weapon effects. Note that this power is useless without the Companion power, and it only works on companions, not regularly summoned eidolons.

Warfare Summoning

Any summoned eidolon gets to take an action in the same turn in which it is summoned. If this action is a Strike, the eidolon gains two bonus dice to the strike roll.

Creating Eidolons

The custom creation of eidolons is something that GMs and players should approach together. You might not want to introduce too many custom eidolons unless your campaign is all about summoners.

You will see that an eidolon starting out at a higher power level will be more powerful than a lower-level eidolon with Empower Eidolon powers. This is intended to make up for the customizable nature of Empower Eidolon. Higher-level eidolons also are more costly to summon.

Eidolon Creation Steps

In order to create a custom eidolon, follow these steps:

1. Figure out the nature and details of the eidolon. What is it called, what is its home world like, what does it look like, and so on. You also need to determine its Level (ranging from 0 to 5) and type (individual, squad, swarm).
2. Write down the eidolon's beginning stats. Note that these are different than PC stats. Every eidolon starts out with 1 wound circle, defense 2, an Action Pool Limit of 2, and a Charge Pool Limit of 4.
3. The eidolon only has one skill, which is rated at 4.
3. Every eidolon can choose 4 eidolon powers from the list below.
4. For every level of the eidolon, add 3 more powers. Level 0 eidolons do not get additional powers and therefore have 4 total powers, Level 1 eidolons get 3 extra powers and therefore have 7 total powers, Level 2 eidolons have 10 total powers, and so on.
5. Determine what the entrance of the eidolon looks like when it is summoned. It needs to have aspects of at least 2 of the following 4 groups: sight, sound, smell/taste, and touch. Here are some examples:

Sight: bright flash, colorful sparks, ripples in spatial perception, a window into the home world with flames lashing out, flickering lights.

Sound: loud bang, screeching, roar, humming, buzzing, chains rattling, mechanical noises.

Smell/Taste: sulfur, sweet, acidic, smoky .

Touch: hot, cold, oily, burst of wind, prickling skin.

The eidolon's entrance should be personalized to the eidolon's characteristics. You can look at the existing eidolon's entrances for examples.

6. Give the eidolon a weakness from the list provided in the section after the eidolon powers.

Eidolon Powers

Passive Powers

Some of these are similar to the powers for characters, but are slightly different (like the lesser effects of boost powers). For ease of reference, they are all listed here.

Auto Guard

As long as the eidolon is in the conflict, any strike against the summoner has to be aimed at the eidolon instead.

Body Resistance

The eidolon is immune to the charge powers Body Drain and Slow, and to the Poisoned and Weakened conditions.

Charge Boost

The limit on the number of charge dice the eidolon can store in the Charge Pool is raised by 1. An eidolon can take this power up to 6 times.

Darksight

The eidolon is not affected by Blindness or Darkness.

Resilience

Raise the eidolon's defense by 1. An eidolon can take this power one additional time for each Level (so Level 5 eidolons can take it up to 6 times).

Resistance to Electricity

The eidolon's defense counts as 1 point higher against electricity-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

Resistance to Fire

The eidolon's defense counts as 1 point higher against fire-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

Resistance to Frost

The eidolon's defense counts as 1 point higher against frost-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

Skill Boost

The eidolon's skill is raised by 1. Level 0 to Level 2 eidolons can't take this power. Level 3 and 4 eidolons can take it once, and Level 5 eidolons can take it twice.

Skill Set

The eidolon has 3 skills instead of 1 and can earn bonus dice like other characters with 3 skills. The two extra skills are rated at 1 and 2 points lower than the eidolon's main skill (so most eidolons will have ratings of 4/3/2).

Soul Resistance

The eidolon is immune to the charge powers Life Drain, Life Transfer, and Vampiric Strike, and to the Diseased and Hexed conditions.

Stamina

The limit on the number of action dice the eidolon can store in the Action Pool is raised by 2. An eidolon can take this power up to 5 times.

Strike Boost

The limit on the number of dice the eidolon can roll on a strike from the Strike Pool is raised by 1. An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

Toughness

The eidolon has 1 additional wound circle. An eidolon can take this power once for each of its Levels (for example, Level 3 eidolons can take it 3 times).

Charge Powers

Eidolons can select any of the charge powers and use them exactly the same way that PCs do. All powers associated with Soulbound Weapons, Summoning, and gating (Gate Sense and Spontaneous Gating) are excluded from the list of options for eidolon powers.

Weaknesses

Every eidolon has a weakness. Some combinations of powers and weaknesses should be avoided, for example Resistance to Frost with Vulnerable to Frost. The GM should consider those when working on custom eidolons with the players.

Opponents other than idolons might have a weakness as well—in that case, pick one from this list and modify it as necessary. You can also roll a die for each opponent that the characters face, skipping over two weaknesses you exclude beforehand (for example, if you are creating a fire demon, skip over Vulnerable to Fire and Darkbound).

List of Weaknesses

Cowardly

When an idolon with this weakness suffers a wound, it will run and hide. It loses all of its strike dice and has to Catch Its Breath during the next turn. Any of its powers that would require it to be present (such as Auto Guard) don't work while it's hiding, and it can't use any Awesome Tokens, but it also can't be attacked that turn.

Crazy

The idolon's action for each turn is determined randomly. If the roll shows an action it cannot do (such as strike when it has no strike dice), the idolon Catches Its Breath for that round. Every turn, roll 1 die and consult the following list: 1-3: Maneuver, 4: Strike, 5: Power (summoner selects which), 6: summoner's choice.

Darkbound

Unless Darkness is in effect, this idolon has to subtract 1 die from every roll (before making the roll). This weakness does not automatically grant Darksight; you have to select that as a power.

Overwhelmable

Squads gain 2 bonus dice and swarms gain 3 bonus dice to their strikes against this idolon.

Restless

The idolon cannot do the same type of action (maneuver, strike, achievement, power) 2 turns in a row. For example, the turn after it makes a maneuver, it has to choose a strike, achievement, or power (or Catch Its Breath). Idolons above Level 1 cannot select this weakness.

Vulnerable to Electricity

Any electricity-based strikes (through charge powers or weapon effects) against this idolon gain 3 bonus dice.

Vulnerable to Fire

Any fire-based strikes (through charge powers or weapon effects) against this idolon gain 3 bonus dice.

Vulnerable to Frost

Any frost-based strikes (through charge powers or weapon effects) against this idolon gain 3 bonus dice.

Weak Spot

The idolon has a weak spot that can be used to defeat it more easily. When making a Strike, a player can spend an Awesome Token to attack the weak spot and get 5 bonus dice to the Strike. Only idolons of Level 2 and higher can have this as their weakness.

List of Known Idolons

The following is a listing of known idolons. When a character has an Open Bond and a reasonable amount of time to conduct the necessary rituals, that character's player can freely choose 1 of these types of idolons for the bond, subject to the power level restrictions (the character needs to have Empower Idolon of the appropriate level).

The stats for the idolons are listed taking their powers into account. An idolon with Strike Boost III will be listed with Strike Pool Limit 9 (the basic value is 6, plus 3 boosts). This is for ease of reference, so that you won't have to calculate those numbers during play.

The listings use AP Limit for the maximum number of action dice in its Action Pool, CP Limit for the maximum number of charge dice in its Charge Pool, and SP Limit for the highest number of strike dice it can use at one time from its Strike Pool.

Shaleya

Level: 0
Type: Individual
AP Limit: 2
CP Limit: 4
SP Limit: 6
Defense: 3
Wounds: 1
Skill: Acrobatics 4
Weakness: Vulnerable to Electricity
Powers: Resilience, Refresh, Restore, Shield

Entrance and Description:

A cacophony of sounds and melodies fills the air as a colorful circle appears and the shaleya flies out of it, making a few loops and turns before it settles down. It is an eight-foot snake with six rainbow-colored wings and 2 pairs of bird legs. Shaleya are usually very friendly, but also fiercely protective of those they care about.

Kyanet

Level: 0
Type: Individual
AP Limit: 4
CP Limit: 4
SP Limit: 6
Defense: 3
Wounds: 1
Skill: Brawl 4
Weakness: Overwhelmable
Powers: Blaze, Resistance to Frost, Resilience, Stamina

Entrance and Description:

A cold wind breezes through the area, followed by a fur ball rolling into sight and around the summoner. The kyanet unfolds from it, looking like a very young, 3-foot tall polar bear, with thick white fur and a wide bushy tail. Its home world is incredibly cold, but their internal heat allows the kyanet to survive. They are faster and climb better than their appearance indicates.

Inkots

Level: 0
Type: Swarm
AP Limit: 2
CP Limit: 4
SP Limit: 6
Defense: 3
Wounds: 1
Skill: Quickness 4
Weakness: Restless
Powers: Body Resistance, Leap Attack, Resilience, Quicken

Entrance and Description:

Inkots are a collection of tiny black demonic beasts that burst individually from the ground when they are summoned. They are covered in retractable spikes and bounce around all the time, which makes them hard to hit.

Caragu

Level: 1
Type: Individual
AP Limit: 4
CP Limit: 4
SP Limit: 6
Defense: 4
Wounds: 2
Skill: Endurance 4
Weakness: Vulnerable to Fire
Powers: Auto Guard, Ice Hurricane, Leap Attack, Resilience II, Stamina, Toughness.

Entrance and Description:

Ice spreads out in the air, growing out of nowhere. Suddenly the caragu bursts through the icy layer, landing with a growl as glimmering shards of ice fall all around it. Caragu are large wildcats with exceptionally long necks and rich dark-purple fur. Despite their feral nature, they can be very affectionate.

Farillia

<i>Level:</i>	1
<i>Type:</i>	Individual
<i>AP Limit:</i>	2
<i>CP Limit:</i>	4
<i>SP Limit:</i>	6
<i>Defense:</i>	4
<i>Wounds:</i>	1
<i>Skill:</i>	Firearms 4 (using its fire-shooting abilities)
<i>Weakness:</i>	Vulnerable to Frost
<i>Powers:</i>	Blaze, Brighten, Firestorm, Refresh, Resilience II, Restore
<i>Entrance and Description:</i>	

Flames shoot in from all directions and circle around each other, forming a ball of fire. The farillia bursts out of it, soaring toward the sky as it leaves a trail of fire behind it before it comes back down in a spiraling pattern to settle next to its summoner. Farillia are two-foot fairies with beautiful butterfly wings, always surrounded by the shimmer of heat.

Harklings

<i>Level:</i>	2
<i>Type:</i>	Squad
<i>AP Limit:</i>	4
<i>CP Limit:</i>	4
<i>SP Limit:</i>	6
<i>Defense:</i>	5
<i>Wounds:</i>	2
<i>Skill:</i>	Stealth 4
<i>Weakness:</i>	Crazy
<i>Powers:</i>	Auto Guard, Blindness, Darksight, Force Attack, Resilience III, Slow, Stamina, Toughness
<i>Entrance and Description:</i>	

There is a low, vibrating horn sound in the distance, followed by creaking and screeching sounds. People feel the hairs at the back of their necks standing up. The air is filled with an earthy scent. Finally the harklings appear around corners, rise from behind objects, or step out from behind someone's back. They are three humanoids, all completely robed and hooded, each holding a different weapon ending in a crescent blade. No one knows what their intent or purpose is, and they rarely follow orders, though they do protect the one who called them. When two of them have been defeated (they've taken two wounds), the third one gathers them up and simply walks away.

Yiyon

<i>Level:</i>	2
<i>Type:</i>	Individual
<i>AP Limit:</i>	2
<i>CP Limit:</i>	4
<i>SP Limit:</i>	6
<i>Defense:</i>	5
<i>Wounds:</i>	2
<i>Skill:</i>	Feint 4
<i>Weakness:</i>	Cowardly
<i>Powers:</i>	Blaze, Frost Spikes, Resilience III, Resistance to Fire II, Resistance to Frost II, Toughness

Entrance and Description:

A ball made of large scales falls from the sky and slams onto the ground, then bounces from one object to another until it finally comes to a halt. The yiyon's eyes peek out above on their feelers before the yiyon unfolds. It stands on four insectoid legs, and its two upper arms end in flaming fists while the lower two give off a chilly mist.

Hykeor

<i>Level:</i>	3
<i>Type:</i>	Individual
<i>AP Limit:</i>	6
<i>CP Limit:</i>	4
<i>SP Limit:</i>	7
<i>Defense:</i>	5
<i>Wounds:</i>	3
<i>Skill:</i>	Brawl 5
<i>Weakness:</i>	Overwhelmable
<i>Powers:</i>	Body Resistance, Leap Attack, Resilience III, Skill Boost, Soul Resistance, Stamina II, Strike Boost, Toughness II, Whirlwind Attack

Entrance and Description:

The earth rumbles and cracks appear. A chilling howl fills the air. The Hykeor, a huge wolf with bat-like wings, bursts out of the ground. It descends in a shower of debris and lands surprisingly gracefully, immediately starting to pace back and forth as it eyes its first victim with red glowing eyes.

Stormravens

<i>Level:</i>	3
<i>Type:</i>	Swarm
<i>AP Limit:</i>	6
<i>CP Limit:</i>	4
<i>SP Limit:</i>	6
<i>Defense:</i>	4
<i>Wounds:</i>	4
<i>Skill:</i>	Courage 4 (they swarm enemies without fear)
<i>Weakness:</i>	Vulnerable to Fire
<i>Powers:</i>	Auto Guard, Elemental Surge, Frost Spikes, Ice Hurricane, Resilience II, Resistance to Frost II, Stamina II, Toughness III

Entrance and Description:

Snow begins to fall and the sky darkens. Ravens crow as they gather above (if you're inside, they come rushing in through various openings or seem to emerge from the shadows). The ravens circle for a moment before their formation dashes downwards, led by one huge raven that lands on the summoner's shoulder or arm. The remaining stormravens fly around them, waiting for orders.

Kulos

<i>Level:</i>	4
<i>Type:</i>	Individual
<i>AP Limit:</i>	6
<i>CP Limit:</i>	6
<i>SP Limit:</i>	6
<i>Defense:</i>	5
<i>Wounds:</i>	3
<i>Skill:</i>	Luck 4 (strange and highly improbable things happen)
<i>Weakness:</i>	Weak Spot
<i>Powers:</i>	Body Drain, Charge Boost II, Life Drain, Mass Effect, Refresh, Resilience III, Slow, Soul Resistance, Stamina II, Toughness II, Weaken

Entrance and Description:

A short, hairless, naked, and genderless human appears with a blinding yet soundless flash, accompanied by a strong metallic taste in any spectator's mouth. Around it, space and time seem to bend. Kulos does not move—it makes things come to it with its mind. The only moving things about this creature are its eyes, which seem to command reality around itself. As it never turns, its back presents a blind spot.

Uyar

Level: 5

Type: Individual

AP Limit: 10

CP Limit: 4

SP Limit: 6

Defense: 7

Wounds: 5

Skill: Intimidate 5 (whatever it does, it makes an impression)

Weakness: Darkbound

Powers: Body Resistance, Conjure Darkness, Darksight, Force Attack, Resilience V, Shadow Strike, Skill Boost, Stamina IV, Toughness IV

Entrance and Description:

Lights and even sunlight flicker violently as the Uyar's thundering steps are heard. If it is summoned within a confined space, this huge eidolon will break through the nearest wall. In the open, it appears as a slowly manifesting outline behind the summoner in the strobes of occasional light until it towers above all. The uyar is covered in a thick black oily substance, which constantly drips from his hulking form and turns to smoke upon hitting the ground. Metal spikes stick out of its arms and legs.

15 CONDITIONS

Conditions in Play

Conditions are effects that are in place due to certain circumstances, powers, or Soulbound Weapons. The effects are listed with the conditions below.

Conditions like Poisoned that have an effect on the character's pools only apply once per turn, even if the character takes additional actions with Awesome Tokens.

You can link conditions to goals for some fun possibilities. For example:

Activate Toxic Defense System [6]: Inflict Poisoned condition on all

And then, in reverse:

Activate Antidote Dispenser [8]: Remove all Poisoned conditions

Using conditions in this way adds more variety to your conflicts. The GM should be open to the players suggesting goals that inflict or heal conditions.

Individual and Overarching

Most of the time, conditions are individual effects. This means that they affect only one character. Individual conditions can be countered in many ways, including with the appropriate powers.

Sometimes conditions are overarching. This means that the condition is not just an effect on one character, but it is something that is continuously inflicted on everyone around. Darkness is the only standard condition of this kind, but in the above example, Poisoned could be determined to work as overarching if the Toxic Defense System keeps pumping toxic gas into the room until it is shut down.

Overarching conditions cannot be countered with powers that remove conditions from individual characters, because the condition would immediately be inflicted on the character again (immunities still apply, of course). Special powers (such as Brighten for Darkness) or achievements are needed to remove the effects of overarching conditions.

If you feel like you're going to have a lot of changes in conditions during a conflict, I suggest keeping a separate sheet on the table to keep track of them. You

should mark overarching conditions as such, so that players don't plan on using their powers to counter them.

Starting Conditions

Some conflicts take place under unusual conditions, and the GM can determine that the conflict starts with certain conditions in place.

For example, the GM can declare that a fight at night in the absence of strong light sources begins with the Darkness condition in place. Or maybe the PCs find themselves in a cave filled with toxic gas, where all characters (including the adversity) start with the Poisoned condition on them.

The GM should either create or allow the players to suggest goals to counter or perpetuate the starting conditions.

The GM can also establish new conditions during the conflict, either by creating a (possibly parallel) goal for the adversity to achieve, or just because circumstances in the story warrant it. Still, the players should have the option of overcoming them during the conflict with more goals.

List of Conditions

A character can benefit or suffer from the effects of a condition only once. Two or more sources of the same condition do not stack (for example, a power and a weapon effect that both grant Quickened). All conditions are erased at the end of a conflict.

Blinded

The character has to discard 1 die from any roll that she makes (before she rolls the dice).

Darkness

This is an overarching condition that works like Blinded on everyone in the conflict until it is removed. It does not stack with Blinded.

Darksighted

The character is not affected by Blinded or Darkness conditions.

Diseased

The character can no longer benefit from the charge powers Life Drain, Life

Transfer, Rise of the Phoenix, or Vampiric Strike, or otherwise heal wounds during this conflict.

Empowered

This condition adds 1 bonus die to the character's strikes.

Hexed

The character has to spend 1 additional charge die for each charge power she wants to use. This includes all powers that cost charge dice (such as Summoning) and is cumulative (if you use a strike power and a boost power together, for example, both of them cost 1 additional charge die).

Poisoned

The character loses 1 action die from her Action Pool at the beginning of her turn. When the Action Pool is empty, the condition is automatically removed.

Quickened

This condition adds 1 bonus die to the character's maneuvers.

Shielded

This condition adds 1 point to the character's defense.

Slowed

All skill ratings of this character are considered to be 1 lower.

Weakened

The defense of any opponents of this character is considered to be 1 higher against this character.

16 ADVERSITY

Creating Opponents

Making up your own adversity is easy to do on the fly. You may want to prepare bosses or other special enemies beforehand, but most of the time you can throw something together in a minute or two. If you're really pressed for time, just pick some adversity from the samples in the following section, change the name, and maybe tweak a stat or replace a skill.

When you create your own adversity, you need to determine its type, stats, powers, and weakness (if it has one).

Type

The opponents of the PCs come in 3 different types: individuals, squads, and swarms.

Individuals are powerful single characters. They can range from humanoids to demon lords to steam-powered robots. They have specific powers and abilities, and each time a wound is inflicted the individual is injured (or damaged).

Squads are multiple characters that act as a group. These can be reptile assassins that always work in threes, a small pack of demonic howlers, a special assault unit, or something along those lines. Squads lose members whenever a wound is inflicted.

Swarms are huge groups of similar creatures. A swarm can be an army of humans, a massive rush of crimson wolves, or a hundred vengeful spirits. Swarms lose members even during maneuvers against them, and wounds inflicted on a swarm represent serious blows to the integrity, morale, or leaders of the swarm. Still, wounds do not usually make swarms less effective, as they can only attack in small parts of the whole anyway.

The type of the enemy makes a difference for the effect of wounds inflicted upon it, as well as for the function of certain powers. Some powers and weapon effects are more effective against one type than against another. These differences are listed with the individual powers and effects.

Stats

There are several stats that the GM needs to determine for each opponent. They are listed and explained below. As a quick reference, if you want to throw an average opponent at the PCs, pick the defaults for the pools and set all the other variables (skill, defense, wound circles) at 3.

Action Pool (AP): This is the maximum number of action dice an opponent can have. A maximum rating of 5 would indicate an opponent with little stamina, while a rating of 15 is quite dangerous. I suggest using the default value of 10 most of the time. Adversity usually starts with their Action Pool filled to the maximum.

Strike Pool (SP): Write down the number of strike dice with which the adversity begins the conflict if it's not the default (which is none). Most of the time, there's no reason for the adversity to have strike dice already, but situations might come up—such as an ambush against the PCs—when it makes sense for the adversity to have an edge here.

Charge Pool (CP): Most adversity will start with an empty Charge Pool, but the GM can rule otherwise if circumstances make that plausible.

Skill: This is the number of basic dice the adversity gets for a maneuver. Unlike the PCs, most enemies only have 1 skill, and the rating is completely up to the GM. A rating of 3 would be average, with 1 or 2 for easy opponents and 4 or more for challenging ones. Adversity with 1 skill do not mark their skill to earn bonus dice. Special enemies, such as recurring villains, can have 3 skills. Only those special enemies get to mark their skills to earn bonus dice like PCs. Those enemies usually have the same 4/3/2 skill ratings as PCs, but they can be higher, too.

Defense: This determines how hard it is to injure the adversity. A defense rating of 2 is quite weak, while a rating of 6 is as high as PCs go with their powers maximized for defense. A defense higher than 6 requires powers, effects and/or goals that reduce the defense to be overcome.

Wound Circles: How many wounds it takes to defeat the adversity. A single wound circle indicates a quick end in sight for this opponent, while 3 or more often make for extended conflicts (depending on the defense rating). A squad should not have more wounds than the total number of units in it.

Powers and Weaknesses

You can assign the adversity any of the PC powers or make up your own. Most opponents to the PCs only need a couple of powers. For starters, I suggest simple-to-use powers like Strike Boost, Leap Attack and Force Attack.

Adversity is not bound by the PC powers. They don't need to be balanced against each other. Furthermore, you'll have cases where one really big opponent needs to face 3 or 4 PCs at once. These special enemies would be easy fodder if they didn't get to have powers that could deal with groups of PCs. I've listed some examples of special adversity powers below.

Adversity that does not have any charge powers or other ways of using charge dice does not earn any charge dice. Instead, all 6s rolled during maneuvers turn into strike dice.

You can also add a weakness from the list at the end of the Summoning chapter on eidolon powers. Weaknesses aren't necessary, but they add tactical options for the players that often make a conflict more interesting.

Example Adversity Powers

Aura of Decay

Type: Action

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts the Diseased condition on all of the PCs.

Aura of Weakness

Type: Action

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts the Weakened condition on all of the PCs.

Auto Refresh

Type: Maneuver

Cost: 2 Charge Dice

Effect: The target's current number of action dice in the character's Action Pool is raised by 4, up to the maximum of the target's Action Pool. The power user can invoke this power at the beginning or the end of the Maneuver.

Blink

Only one strike roll can be made against this character each round. After that, the character jumps Beyond and returns only at the beginning of her next turn.

Inferno

Type: Strike

Cost: 5 Charge Dice

Effect: This strike is now fire-based and the strike roll applies to all of the PCs at once (the successes are compared to each PC's defense to see whether they take wounds). The strike also gains 4 bonus dice to the roll.

Magic Vortex

Type: Action

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: Until this character's next action, no charge powers may be used in this conflict (including Summoning powers that use charge dice).

Poison Cloud

Type: Action

Cost: 3 Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts the Poisoned condition on all of the PCs.

Spawn Critters

Type: Action

Cost: 6 Charge Dice

Effect: Creates a swarm of Critters in the current conflict. The Critters are listed in the Beyonders section, below.

Stream of Power

The character gains 2 charge dice automatically and without cost at the beginning of every turn.

Toxic Blast

Type: Action

Cost: 2+ Charge Dice

Effect: This power inflicts the Diseased, Poisoned, and Weakened conditions on a PC. For each additional charge die spent, another PC is affected.

An Assortment of Foes

There are many dangers in Ghostfield. Kanissians guard the territory and suppress any activity that might threaten the occupation. Beyonders break into our world and wreak havoc. With the advent of the Dragon, those incidents are only going to become more frequent and drastic. And then there are rebels who consider anyone not on their side to be an enemy, as well as crime syndicates thriving on

Core acquisition and black market trade that defend their turf with all means available to them.

The chapter on conflicts tells you how to create your own adversity for the PCs. However, it's always good to have some ready-made examples, both to show what a finished enemy actually looks like and to give GMs options for times when making your own adversity might take too long.

The enemies in this chapter are samples for those purposes. Use them in play or as examples for your own creations, whichever suits your style best. Just remember that you can get great fun out of being the GM by creating memorable, unique, and personality-driven enemies.

For all of them, assume the default values (an Action Pool of 10 and the same limits for Strike and Charge Pools as PCs) unless otherwise noted.

Kanissians

The Kanissians are governing Ghostfield and its surrounding Enendian territories with an iron fist. They are utterly sure that the Ghostfield poses a lethal threat to their nation, and therefore, they are ready to do anything to keep it under their control and protect their people and their empire. Not all of them do so willingly, however; many soldiers are drafted into service.

With their access to the Ghostfield, the Kanissians also developed advanced machinery that mixes steam-power with the wondrous properties of the Cores from Beyond.

Whenever a Kanissian individual is listed with three skills instead of one, you should flesh them out a bit for use in your game. Give them a name and some context. They're especially useful when you can bring them back as recurring enemies.

Footsoldiers

The standard group of Kanissian soldiers wear gray uniforms and wield pneumatic rifles. They are led by a Sergeant and have undergone basic training together as a unit. Most Kanissian soldiers are loyal, but that doesn't mean they would pick death over defeat. In fact, many of the soldiers had little choice but to join the ranks, and they value their own lives highly.

Type: Swarm

Skill: Firearms 2
Wounds: 4
Defense: 3
Powers: None.
Weakness: Cowardly

Skirmishers

For its skirmishers, the Kanissians select soldiers with behavioral issues and fill out the ranks with petty criminals and other unwanted elements. Skirmishers are sent ahead of the standard troops to soften the enemy without regard for the skirmishers' safety. While they are not as organized as the regular soldiers, they tend to be more aggressive and enjoy combat. That said, their loyalty is questionable.

Type: Swarm
Skill: Melee Weapons 3
Wounds: 3
Defense: 3
Powers: Force Attack
Weakness: Vulnerable to Frost

Shock Troops

Shock troops are elite units of the regular army. They are fearless and often operate behind enemy lines. They have training in explosives and interrogation, which makes them perfectly suited for sabotage missions. Depending on the mission, they may wear camouflage armor or street clothes. If they need to attack an enemy unit, they prefer to set an ambush. Due to the number of explosives they carry, they tend to avoid getting anywhere near open flames.

Type: Squad
Skill: Explosives 4
Wounds: 4
Defense: 3
Powers: Darkness, Darksighted, Shadow Strike
Weakness: Vulnerable to Fire

Interplanar Operatives

Ever since discovering the Beyond and its potential, the Kanissians have trained special troops that explore and exploit that parallel world. The Kanissian

Operatives, which officially are part of the Expeditionary Corps, are elite soldiers working in small groups. They are trained in using gates and maneuvering Beyond, but they also are highly efficient in all other situations. Only the most loyal and most competent soldiers are selected for the Interplanar Operations program. Their standard outfit consists of a light pneumatic exoskeleton, and their basic weapons are pneumatic high-rate spike shooters that are built into the bracers of the exoskeleton as well as lightning grenades. Operatives are allowed additional weapons per their personal preferences.

Type: Squad
Skills: Firearms 4, Quickness 3, Explosives 2
Wounds: 4
Defense: 4
Powers: Blindness, Force Attack, Restore, Skipping, Stamina II (Action Pool 14)
Weakness: None.

Steam Armor Lieutenant

The Kanissian army is led by officers with individually-fitted steam-powered and Core-enhanced suits of armor. These suits provide great protection as well as integrated weaponry. Most Kanissian outposts are overseen by a Lieutenant outfitted with this armor, which protects the leading officer while giving her or him the ability to command the troops from the midst of even the most heated battles.

Type: Individual
Skills: Firearms 5, Brawl 4, Endurance 3
Wounds: 3
Defense: 6
Powers: Blaze, Darksighted, Shield, Stamina (Action Pool 12)
Weakness: Vulnerable to Electricity

Steambot Dreadnought

The largest bots in the Kanissian regular army, individual steambots are used for crowd control, occupational support, and straightforward attack power. Unless one finds the weak spots in the steambots' armor, these dreadnoughts are near unstoppable, although their lack of speed and detailed coordination make them a minor threat to mobile foes.

Type: Individual

Skill: Brawl 3
Wounds: 3
Defense: 8
Powers: Force Attack, Soul Resistance
Weakness: Vulnerable to Electricity

Steambot Guardians

Guardians are smaller versions of the looming dreadnoughts. What they lack in raw power and armor, they make up for in quickness. In addition, they are outfitted with flame throwers and short-bursting jetpacks.

Type: Squad
Skill: Brawl 4
Wounds: 3
Defense: 5
Powers: Blaze, Leap Attack
Weakness: Vulnerable to Electricity

Beyonders

There are many creatures that live Beyond. Some of them are completely harmless, but many pose a threat. They could either actively invade our world to wreak havoc, or they could simply defend their territory when skippers enter the Beyond.

Many of the Beyonders have strange and dangerous powers. Most of them can fly or, at the very least, jump long distances. This is necessary for their survival Beyond.

These Beyonders are not idolons. They have no one who controls them and have entered Ghostfield through gates rather than summoning. That means they can't be banished.

Critters

These beasts appear in large swarms. They are tiny but ferocious, resembling multi-colored geckos with four wings. While they are not dangerous as individuals, they have the ability to overwhelm others with their sheer numbers.

Type: Swarm
Skill: Quickness 3

Wounds: 4
Defense: 2
Powers: Leap Attack, Skipping
Weakness: Vulnerable to Fire

Toxic Beast

This monster looks like a giant, pitch black gorilla, which is always surrounded by a haze of poisonous mist. It is much more intelligent than its looks might indicate.

Type: Individual
Skill: Brawl 5
Wounds: 3
Defense: 4
Powers: Body Resistance, Force Attack, Poison Cloud, Skipping
Weakness: None.

Flaming Harbinger

Very few of these creatures have been spotted so far, none of them outside of the Beyond. That may change with the advent of the Dragon. Flaming Harbingers have six legs, but they prefer flying with gigantic wings that seem to be made of fire.

Type: Individual
Skills: Firearms 6 (fire breath), Acrobatics 5, Intimidate 4
Wounds: 4
Defense: 5
Powers: Leap Attack, Inferno, Resistance to Fire II, Skipping, Soul Resistance, Strike Boost II
Weakness: Vulnerable to Frost

Hydra

Only one of these creatures has been encountered so far, but more may appear as the Dragon spews forth its minions. Hydras appear to be plants, as they burst out of the earth and are rooted deep underground. They have several heads as well as tentacle-like branches that grab and throw hapless victims. Defeating a Hydra takes much more than just hacking away at it.

Type: Individual
Skills: Brawl 7 (bite and grab), Throw 6, Endurance 5

Wounds: 5
Defense: 8
Powers: Aura of Weakness, Auto Refresh, Banishment, Body Resistance, Darksight, Dispel, Life Drain, Shield, Skipping, Soul Resistance, Spawn Critters, Stream of Power
Weakness: Hydra Heads. Whenever one wound is inflicted, the player who caused it picks one of the following powers that was associated with the head that is no longer available to the Hydra: Aura of Weakness, Auto Refresh, Banishment, Spawn Critters. If the Hydra regains a wound (for example, by using Life Drain), it regains a power of the GM's choice.

17 GAME MODIFICATIONS

Pick and Choose

Optional mechanics are a tricky thing. They are not included in the basic game for a reason: they don't fit everyone's game. But they are still neat extensions to the way the game works, if you don't mind a little added complexity. You can introduce them into the game bit by bit after getting used to the basic mechanics.

Choosing to include too many optional mechanics in your game can slow it down quite a bit. They might also have unintended consequences. You can always decide to toss them out again later if they don't fit with what your group is doing.

Refresh

Every now and then, the PCs can catch their breath for an extended period of time. This usually happens at the conclusion of a story arc, or a big chapter thereof. In these cases, you don't need to play through all of the character scenes that would usually be necessary to heal up. Instead, remove all marks on traits and consider all wounds (on self and eidolons) healed. If the players want trait marks, they will have to play new character scenes.

You should agree as a group, as with all optional mechanics, whether to include refreshes in your game.

Flashbacks

The GM can allow the players to have PC flashbacks during a conflict. I'm sure you've seen flashbacks used in movies, stories and games. The characters remember something that happened before, in the middle of a fight or a tense situation, and it helps them in some way. Or it explains something that's happening in the current situation or why they do something to another character that otherwise would seem out of place.

When players want to have a flashback scene in the middle of a conflict, one player has to spend their action to initiate it. At that point, pause the fight and let the player and another player have a flashback character scene in which their PCs interact. At the end of that scene, return to the conflict at hand and let the two PCs each mark one of their traits (this is the only available scene benefit for flashbacks). You also can play NPCs in those flashback scenes at the players'

request (for example, if the PCs are siblings, you could have a flashback scene to their youth that involves one of their parents, a group of bullies, an ailing common friend). Obviously, the flashback should be related to their traits in some way, but they can also rewrite a trait to bring out something new and surprising with the flashback.

Flashbacks most often refer back to special moments between characters that now impact how they relate to each other during the conflict. But they also can be used to show preparations that the characters did that weren't previously known. For example, a flashback could show that the characters placed traps or sabotaged structures on which they're now fighting, much to the surprise of the enemy (and the GM). They can then incorporate that information in action descriptions and use the trait mark to ensure that the preparations have an impact.

If you want to have flashbacks with more than two characters, one additional PC has to spend her action for each additional 2 PCs involved in the scene.

Threat and Countdown Dice

There are several reasons why character scenes are discrete units rather than a stream of continuous events. For example, that's how fictional pieces that inspired this game work, such as anime TV shows, comics, and video games. But another very important reason is the way that you can use scenes to pace the game. One option for intensifying the pacing is the Threat Die.

At any point during the game, the GM can slam a Threat Die on the table. The number it shows on top indicates how many scenes away a specific looming threat is. The threat might be unknown, or it might be something the PCs are aware of. It could be a powerful enemy hunting the PCs, a disaster waiting to happen, or something else along those lines.

At the beginning of every scene—and a conflict counts as a scene in this regard—the die is turned down by 1 number. If the die showed a 3 before, it now shows a 2. If it shows a 1 when you are supposed to turn it, the next scene is the one in which the threat manifests. Remove the Threat Die and play out the event.

The Threat Die severely limits the amount of recovery that PCs can indulge in between conflicts—use it sparingly to insert tension and suspense into the game.

If during a conflict or character scene the players come up with a clever way to delay the threat, the GM can establish a goal that they can achieve. For example,

the threat is a pack of demonic guard dogs that were stirred up by an alarm that the PCs triggered, and they will take 3 scenes to arrive. If the players are in the middle of fighting off other guards, and they realize they can barricade a door to keep the dogs out a bit longer, the GM can create a Barricade Door goal that will turn the die up 1 or 2 notches, or they could escape the threat completely (the specific effect needs to be declared when the goal is created, as usual).

You can also let PCs do actions that will delay the threat in scenes when there's no conflict going on, but one or more PCs will not be able to gain any character scene benefits for that scene as they focus on fulfilling the goal. This is also used for setting up "you guys run while I'll hold the door shut as long as I can" situations of self-sacrifice. In fact, you can have a whole session during which players need to come up with new ways to delay the impending doom as they run toward salvation and even sometimes sacrifice one of their own to buy a delay for the others (think *Aliens*).

Finally, you can use a die called Countdown Die within a conflict to signify something that will happen at some later point in the conflict, such as an enemy's use of its most awesome power. A Countdown Die counts down by rounds rather than scenes. This is especially exciting when you give the PCs an opportunity to prevent the event from happening either by defeating the enemies before the timer runs out or by achieving a goal you create for this purpose. One example of this is shown in Chapter 7.

Trait Bonuses

If you want traits to be a little more relevant for play, and you'd like to link that into a reward structure, you can expand the way traits work in the following way. When you play a character scene and mark a trait, there are two different ways to do so. First, if you didn't really bring out the trait in the scene, mark it with a check. This is the regular mark, used for a reroll. But if you brought out the trait in the scene and used it to make the story in the scene more interesting, mark it with a star instead. When you unmark a starred trait, you get a bonus die to add to your reroll.

In addition, if you can tie the trait into your description of whatever action you're taking when you unmark the trait, whether it's a checked or a starred trait, you also earn a bonus die to the reroll.

This more involved mechanic allows traits to become more important, both in the story and in their mechanical impact. Make sure your group agrees on whether you're using this added mechanic before you start a session.

Creating a New Setting

Having a good setting is vital for having a good game. Characters cannot exist in a vacuum—they come from somewhere, and more importantly, they have somewhere to go.

A good setting is full of potential, but it doesn't force the characters to do anything in particular. It allows a lot of freedom for creating a variety of characters, but it also ties them all together. Good Anima Prime settings should be painted in broad strokes, so that the players and the GM can fill in the details during play and don't have to worry about memorizing a bunch of stuff. Providing too rigid a setting stifles spontaneous play, because the players are always afraid of forgetting something and "doing it wrong." That's why Anima Prime settings should be inspirations that kick off the players' imaginations, rather than exercises in scholarly anthropology, history, engineering and whatnot.

Settings are created from a basic concept, much like characters. Some unifying theme should be present, some basic seed from which the rest grows. That gives the setting a good feel of coherence and lets you add to it during play.

Settings often have specific powers, effects, eidolons, factions, and so on that express the concept. They give a particular feel to the mechanics that matches the rest of the setting.

Finally, settings have setting seeds. They are story seeds like character and group seeds, that is, story ideas that can blossom into many different shapes depending on how play is going. The PCs don't have to address the setting seeds if they don't want to, but they lend a dynamic vibe to the setting that makes it more exciting. Things are happening, the world is in flux. In Anima Prime, nothing is ever static.

I've included a short fiction piece set in the premade setting, because I often get more of a feel for a setting if I imagine how characters would act within it. You don't need to do that for settings you create with your group, but you should still always think about this: What are the PCs able to get involved in, and how can you insert more opportunities for adventure and conflict?

Basic Concept and Description

The basic concept for your setting should tie directly to the mood and content that you've selected for your game. If your mood is dark and gritty, your setting should have a fitting concept, such as a nation under the rule of an oppressive force, a free-for-all area where might makes right, and so on. If on the other hand your mood is bright and silly, your setting would have a concept that fits that mood.

Your setting can be large or small, depending on what the focus of your game is. It can consist of a whole star system with different planets or of a single high school class in the middle of a big city. Either way, you can always expand on it or add additional detail during the game.

Describing your setting doesn't have to take very long. You can usually express the concept and basic details of a setting in just a paragraph or two. The rest of the setting can be developed through the PCs' background items and links, various story seeds, and whatever you happen to throw out in play.

Many people like to establish large-scale facts about their settings. For example, they'd say: "In this setting, there are migglys, which are small humanoids that love to play tricks on people." That's fine for creating a rough impression, but for a game like *Anima Prime*, it's important that those facts are generalizations and don't need to all be memorized and always followed. So while most migglys are culturally trained to play tricks, there are sure to be some migglys who strongly dislike that custom. In other words, feel free to create large-scale generalizations, but don't be constrained by them. Actually, these kinds of generalized facts are most interesting when the PCs or other main characters prove to be the exception to the rule.

Creating a setting can take a few minutes or several hours, depending on how customized you want it to be regarding powers, factions, and so on. Both GM and players can and should be involved in most aspects of setting creation, and PC creation will help to flesh out the setting and tie the main characters of the story into it.

Player Characters

The PCs are going to be tied into the setting. They either live inside of it or are thrust into it at the beginning of your story. Either way, they need to interact with it.

When you create your setting, think about what kinds of characters could be PCs and what they would be doing. Is there room for different roles? Are there struggles going on that the PCs could join? As long as there's room for adventure and drama in your setting for strong protagonists, you're good to go.

Powers, Effects, Eidolons

One of the things to consider in creating your setting is the place that powers have within it. Are they common or rare? Inborn, trained, cybernetically implanted, or magically bestowed? How do everyday people feel about people with powers?

You also need to decide whether all of the powers are available, or whether some of them just don't happen in this setting. Once you've got that figured out, think about whether your setting could use a custom power or two that you make up at this point. The Ghostfield setting has a few powers specific to getting to and from Beyond, for example.

The same goes for custom effects and eidolons. If your setting needs a few of those that are specially designed for it, making them up before you start playing allows the PCs access to them right away.

It might be tempting to come up with a bunch of new stuff for the players to pick before you start playing, but it's definitely not a prerequisite. There are enough powers, effects, and eidolons available that you don't need anything else to have fun. And if you want to add things later on, you can always do that, and PCs can acquire additional powers according to whatever character development system you've set up (see Chapter 9).

Factions

As an extension of the basic concept as well as the question of what the player characters can get involved in, you can create specific factions that exist within the setting.

Factions add an element of choice and depth to the setting. The PCs can join or side with one faction over another, play one against the other, suffer the animosity of a whole faction because they messed with one of their members, and so on. Factions also provide a great opportunity for links with PCs, NPCs, and story events.

You can always add factions later on during play as well.

Setting Story Seeds

Once you've figured out what your setting usually is like, it's time for the GM to create a way in which it is changing. This is called a setting story seed. Such a seed is an event or dynamic that has the power to change things about the setting and in which the PCs can get involved, if they want to.

Setting story seeds can range from the blatantly obvious and aggressive (an invading force) to the subtle (the water from the river has started to taste metallic) to the weird and ominous (a black skyscraper just appeared in the middle of the city, and most people act as though it's always been there).

As with all story seeds, you don't have to know a thing about why this is happening, who's doing it, or where it's going. It's a seed that you can develop spontaneously as you play. You can tie it to other events, the group story seed, individual character story seeds, links, traits, and other in-game occurrences. Over time, you'll figure out a way to make it matter, and the PCs can decide if they want to get involved and push the development of the seed and the setting in one direction or another. Take a look at the Spontaneous Play essay in the next section for some more hints on how to help this along.

You can develop more than one setting story seed for your setting, but one is usually enough to get things going.