

CROWSMANTLE



PREMISE

In their youth, they journeyed to a land of wonder. There they became heroes and saved lands from a great evil. Then they grew up. Now as adults, they're called back to fight peril to a realm transformed.

Inspirations: *The Magicians, The Chronicles of Narnia, Ni No Kuni, The Books of Magic, Grimm, Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, Digimon, The Phantom Tollbooth, Zot!, Alice in Wonderland, Return to Oz.* The pitch line for the game is adapted from the *Fate World of Adventure, Nest.*

SYSTEM

These rules are designed to flesh out the campaign concept, build characters, start playing, and have rules emerge over time.

A few years ago, I ran a campaign called *Last Fleet*. We used our homebrew system, but didn't write up any new rules. Instead players said what they wanted: i.e. what cool stunts, powers, feats, etc.. From that we built abilities. Every few sessions we checked in to see if they'd thought of new abilities or directions.

Effectively we built talent trees on the fly for individual characters. Advancement looks the same here. That's combined with a slim PbtA engine, plus a few extras (such as Keys from *Lady Blackbird*). These rules assume a familiarity with PbtA. I use GM in place of MC out of pure habit.

CONVERSATION

Begin with a conversation about what the game should and shouldn't be.

What's the tone of the setting? How much time will be spent in the "real world" vs. the realm? What should their adult lives be like? Are there any lines or veils for the game? (rpg.stackexchange.com/questions/30906/what-do-the-terms-lines-and-veils-mean) The GM should see if players have any questions they need answered to create a character.

Beyond the base premise, we have the following facts:

Each character saved a distinct place, nation, or people of this world. They became the great hero of that place. The whole realm faced a Great Evil. The characters met together to fight and put down this evil, which they did. At least one more hero existed beyond just the PCs.

Next we need to establish other facts about the setting and the PCs. Not necessarily in this order, we answer the questions individually:

Who is your character now?

Who was your character then?

What was your land like?

What was your special gift?

What bonds or obligations does your adult character have?

How do they remember their time in the land?

Next, building on this, we need to answer this question:

Who or what was the Great Evil?

The GM is part of this conversation, suggesting and adding material.

STATS

Crowsmantle uses seven stats for characters. The first six are paired and the last one's unique to the character.

Tough: Strong, Enduring, Good Physique, Resilient

Swift: Agile, Speedy, Coordinated, Dexterous

Clever: Quick Thinker, Instinctual, Speed Reader, Sharp Observer

Wise: Knowledgeable, Studious, Pattern Spotter, Analytical

Charming: Diplomatic, Cool, Fast Talker, Charismatic

Fierce: Intimidating, Confident, Impressive, Strong Willed

The first pair covers physical activities, the second smarts, and the third people skills. Moves only loosely associate with Stats. That means your choice of Stat should be based on description and approach. Fighting with *+Tough* looks different from fighting with *+Swift*. The choice of *+Charming* or *+Fierce* changes what your attempt to wheedle out info looks like.

Players assign values to these six: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, -1

TALENT

You assign a name to your seventh “Talent” stat. This represents the power or gift you once had in the other realm. Someone who practiced magic might call it Wizardry or Spellcasting. Another who acted the trickster might call it “Thievery” or “Princess of Shadows.” These abilities aren’t necessarily magical. If you gathered and led people you could call it “Loyalty.”. If you impressed and inspired your friends it could be “Storyteller” or “Imagination.” You describe the effects and fiction of this talent. Feel free to be vague at the start and figure out the possibilities in play.

When the game begins, your talents have atrophied. Everyone begins with a +0 in this stat.

The *Invoke Talent* move uses this stat.

Your Talent establishes a fiction for your character something they’re able (or were able to do). So it is a Stat with built in Stuff.

In play, you can use that Talent stat as an option if you're trying to do one of the basic moves. As well, you could also build a custom move based off of the concept: perhaps something more potent, narrower, or just more evocative.

For example, X has the Talent "Awaken," where they wake up objects so they can talk to them.

They might make a custom move that deals with more than talking, perhaps asking something to stop working or directly turning someone's item against them.

Let's say someone takes the Custom Move: Healing (a variation on MotW's Lay on Hands). When you go to heal someone **ROLL**...

10+ You restore two boxes of harm and remove the Injured tag.

7-9 You heal them, but take the damage on yourself

6- You do them additional Harm.

They might also take the talent Healer, which might have broader applications: mending friendships, recovery, repairing things, giving a positive impression.

OTHER CHARACTER DETAILS

Pick two Keys. Choose one for Child and another for Adult. Keys offer extra experience in play. A character's two keys may be in conflict. (see *Keys* below)

Choose three Advances. These represent your skills, abilities, and even stuff (see *Advances*)

Set your Harm track at 6. (see *Harm and Damage* below)

Done.



BASIC MOVES

These moves cover a lot of ground. Distinctions occur in how the action's described, the actual situation, and the stat called for. For example if you're trying to read a person through conversation roll +Charming instead of +Wits. If you're indirectly trying to bring someone's organization down you might roll +Fierce or +Wise, instead of +Tough.

Principle: When you do something, you roll the relevant Move with a stat appropriate to the situation.

I'll use terms mostly as they appear in other PbtA versions.

Forward +X: Add that to your next related action. In combat, it could be for another attack or escape. Or after uncovering info, it might be a bonus to an action using those details. For what I'm calling "Set Up", you can pass that bonus wholly or in part to another character. **Hold X** is a currency, spent to achieve an effect, ask a question, or gain a benefit. Hold may decay over time.

Ongoing +X is a bonus to rolls for that character for the rest of the scene (or until something major changes).

INTERACT

Roll this when you talk and engage with a person or group in an attempt to get something. Gain an ally, create a strongly favorable impression, instill jealousy, obtain a favor, fool them about a fact, get them to give you something, arrange for support, and so on

ROLL...

10+ You move attitudes sharply towards what you want. That may...

...establish a significant fictional change.

...make the person or group do as you wish for a general effect.

...create a debt for later use (Hold 1).

...have them immediately assist with something (+2 Forward or +1 Ongoing).

..."Set Up" something (+2 Hold).

7-9 You shift attitudes slightly towards what you want, but greater results come with a catch, complication, or cost.

Shifting attitudes and building relationships require time or leverage. When you want to persuade someone against their inclination, you need leverage or a debt of some kind. That may be spent by the transaction. This move covers PCs acting on NPCs. The group will have to decide how and in what way Interact can be used on other players.

In Other PbtA Games This Is Called... Parley; Manipulate Someone; Mislead, Distract or Trick; Persuade an NPC; Do Someone a Favor; Forge a Treaty; Act Up

FIGHT

Roll this when you're engaged in a conflict and attempting to deal Harm. This assumes an active and dangerous opponent. When fighting, you take 1 Harm unless you negate that through a pick. By default you deal Harm 1 when you succeed. Fights don't have to be physical, they could be political struggles, debates, or a hacker clashing with a system. In these cases, the GM may establish special Harm tracks, as well as damage/armor for the contest.

ROLL...

10+ Deal take/standard harm and pick three effects.

7-9 Deal take/standard harm and pick one effect.

...deal extra Harm (may be taken multiple times).

...gain +1 Forward for yourself or another (Set Up).

...take no Harm.

...Change state/position.

If you're under no threat—no one nearby to affect you and no shooting enemies—the GM may say you take no harm. In some cases, this may not even need a move.

In Other PbtA Games This Is Called... Hack & Slash; Volley; Kick Some Ass; Unleash an Attack; Lash Out Physically; Fiercely Assault

DISCOVER

Roll this when you want to learn something. This can be doing research, hitting the streets, looking around, sensing danger, considering your own experiences. You can obtain general

information without a move. If you want to use your expertise to discern something use this move.

ROLL...

10+ Gain 2 Hold to spend on questions. Take +1 Forward for an action based on that information. This may be passed to another.

7-9 Gain 1 Hold to spend on questions.

You may ask a question for each hold. The GM should answer this clearly and directly, allowing for some follow up and clarification.

What kinds of questions can you ask? Usually the Who, What, Where, When, and How of things. What you can ask should be relies on your character's fiction and how you've narrated the process. If unobvious, GMs may ask players to explain how they would learn something and permit them to reframe if necessary.

In Other PbtA Games This Is Called... Discern Realities; Spout Lore; Investigate a Mystery; Read a Bad Situation; Figure Someone Out; Gaze into the Abyss; Eyeball

ACT

Roll when you're acting directly to do something. That means most everything else not covered by the previous three moves. Your opposition may be active or passive. Act attempts include trying to avoid a landslide, hacking a computer terminal, repairing an engine, training horses, organizing your troops, putting out a fire, leaping a crevice.

ROLL...

10+ You succeed in your attempt.

7-9 You succeed, but at a cost or with a complication.

In order to be able to use this move, the character must be able to perform the action. So a normal person can't flip a loaded semi-truck. An untrained person can't perform brain surgery. A human can't survive in the vacuum of space for hours. You can't write the great Russian novel in an afternoon. Logic and drama should equally be your guide. Define success clearly. In some cases, success may simply be mitigating or stalling.

Sometimes the Act moves involves aiding or setting up another person. In this case mechanical success gives a +2 Forward to that person. The cost on 7-9 may include getting more deeply caught up with the results of the other character's action.

In Other PbtA Games This Is Called... Defy Danger; Aid or Interfere; Undertake a Perilous Journey; Act Under Pressure; Escape a Situation; Keep Your Cool; Hold Steady; Shake It Off; Scrounge

INVOKE TALENT

This is built on Use Magic from *Monster of the Week*.

When you use your Talent, say what you're trying to do and how your Talent works with that. Then **ROLL...** +(Talent).

10+ Your talent works as you wish. Choose an effect.

7-9 You partially succeed. Choose an effect and take a glitch. The GM narrates the impact of the glitch.

If you fail. You have lost control. This can cause big trouble.

By default the magic has an effects listed below, if enduring it lasts for around thirty minutes, and it does not expose you to danger, unwanted attention, or side-effects. Glitches may change that.

PCs cannot aid one another in Invoking Talents.

EFFECTS

This is a partial list. The form and scope of your talent determines what you can do.

- Inflict harm (1-harm ignore-armor obvious).
- Enchant a weapon. It gets +1 harm and +magic.
- Do one thing beyond human limitations.
- Bar a place or portal to a specific person or a type of creature.
- Trap a specific person, minion, or monster.
- Banish a spirit or curse from a person, object, or place.
- Communicate with something you don't share a language with.
- Observe another place or time.
- Heal 2-harm, cure a disease, or neutralize a poison.
- Other

GLITCHES

Again this list is not exhaustive

- The effect is weakened.
- The effect is of short duration.
- You take 1-harm ignore-armor.
- The magic draws immediate, unwelcome attention.
- It has a problematic side effect.
- Other

Depending on what you're trying to do, GM may require materials, time, or other necessities.

If you want to do something big with your Talent, that's probably a ritual or undertaking. These always take a significant amount of time and have larger requirements. You may have to use other moves to set these up. The strength of the effect increases, as does the impact of the glitches.



HARM AND DAMAGE

Characters have six boxes of Harm they can take.

By default attacks do 1 Harm. If you have a weapon, you do +1 Harm. Items and such may increase this.

You can wear armor, but this is also bulky and hard to hide (i.e. the Bulky tag). It reduces damage by 1 and gives the GM a wonderful way to ping you.

You're taken out when you have no Harm left. Circumstances determine what happens next. If you can be treated, you wake up after the scene. All but the 5th and 6th Harm boxes clear after a scene of recovery. The last two require some kind of healing within the fiction.

You may reduce the damage from any one hit down to 1 Harm, by marking yourself as "Injured." An injured character needs hospitalization and is open to GM Moves playing on how messed up they are. If you're Injured and lose all the rest of your Harm, you're taken out and Crippled.

Crippling either reduces the rating of a stat or puts a cap on one of the four basic Moves, meaning you can never get above a 9.

EXPERIENCE AND ADVANCES

You begin with three advances. You can pick these at the start or in play. During play, you gain XP. In addition to any bonus the GM gives out at session end you get:

- +1 XP when you fail a roll (6-)
- +1 XP when you create a new, non-character specific, setting-appropriate Custom Move for the game which everyone likes
 - XP based on your Keys
 - XP based on Bonds and Debts

You can spend 10 XP at any time to gain an advance.

ADVANCES

You can pick one of five things when you gain an Advance: *Stat Raise*, *New Move*, *Critical Move*, *Skill*, or *Stuff*.

On Terminology: Moves usually refer to a wide class of abilities in PbtA. In this case, I'm using the term Move exclusively to refer to the roll 2d6 +Stat structures. That's an artless distinction, but everything about this is heavy-handed. The same with the term "Skill." PbtA studiously avoids that. I'm using it because it has a fairly clear definition.

STAT RAISE

Add +1 to the rating of one of your stats. The max for a stat is +3. You can raise the same one only once a session.

MOVES

You can come up with custom moves. These follow 10+ succeeds; 7-9 succeeds with cost formula. We can work together to define the stakes, range, and limits of these moves. They should be cool and fit with your concept. If you come up with a custom move that fits the game broadly, rather than being tied to a specific archetype, we might add that to the general pool of moves. If everyone thinks it's a good and evocative idea you gain +1 XP.

You might want to sketch out ideas for moves ahead of time. Write them down when inspiration strikes. If you don't want to figure it all out, tell the GM generally what you want and they'll build it. *Urban Shadows* has a section on building custom moves (p. 272).

VARIANT MOVES

As you can see above, the four basic moves cover a good deal of territory. These can be used as the basis for a custom move. The general rule is that if the custom move covers a narrower range, you may have success create greater effect.

EXAMPLES

Bring Down the Pillars: When you try to use your great strength to create a massive change in the environment, **ROLL...**

10+ You do what you set out to do: walls come tumbling down, statues fall, hillsides crack open.

7-9 It breaks, but not as you wish. Something's damaged, others endangered, or a new peril revealed.

Finders Keepers: When you search for a necessary or significant object, **ROLL...**

10+ You discover what you want. Choose one: it has key importance to the moment or scene; +1 it offers +1 Ongoing for the scene (choose move); or it offers +2 Forward (Set Up). You may only have one such item "effective" at a time.

7-9 You make a discovery, as above, but you must lose or sacrifice something of importance.

Tempest in a Teapot: When you ask a tool or weapon to create problems, **ROLL...**

10+ It does so, creating an effect and causing Harm if you wish it to.

7-9 It does so, but causes damage to or problems for an ally or yourself.

CRITICAL MOVE

You may add a benefit to one of the four basic Moves, called a Critical Move. This triggers when you roll a 12+ on the Move. You gain all the effects of a 10+ in addition to the benefit.

Interact: You don't use up your leverage OR you gain additional leverage on another group.

Fight: You devastate your opponent, dealing double Harm OR you force them to flee or cease working towards their immediate goal.

Discover: You may suggest a modification or loophole to an answer OR you may ask another question after a discussion of the previous answers with the group.

Act: If you're facing active opposition to cause Harm or a complication to them OR if you're aiding someone, they act as if they rolled a 10+. When you Act to avoid danger or Harm and roll a 12+, you may protect a group of others (like nearby innocents or your group).

SKILLS

Choose something specific you're good at. You gain a +1 doing it. This should be a narrow range. Driving a car, climbing, surviving a hostile environment, spaceship gunnery. Skills never stack.

EXAMPLES

Wallflower Awareness: Your natural worry makes you preternaturally aware when you enter new places. You have +1 for Moves relying on knowing the layout or exits of a location.

Hunger Artist: You know how to stretch resources. Add +1 to a Move when you have to survive or aid others to survive.

Musician: You can coax a tune out of most instruments. But you only gain a +1 when you're not trying to play a prewritten piece.

STUFF

This is the “everything else.” It can be anything that a) isn't a rolled move or b) isn't a flat bonus to a narrow activity. It might be additional Harm or Armor, if you want to go down the combat route. It could be a set of henchpersons you can send out to do things. It could be the ability to fly in the Realm. It could be owning a Skyship. It could be a magic pony.

If you want something potent, it needs a limit. It takes a move to use, always creates a cost, can only be used once per session, can't be used in certain circumstances, can be taken away, etc.

EXAMPLES

Catch: Do +2 Harm when striking someone who has broken a promise to you or your allies.

Loophole: Tell the GM when you want to spot a loophole, gap or weakness. They will offer you one, though not necessarily related to the immediate problem. Once a session.

The Unspent Quarter: You have a quarter that always returns to you at sunset.

Red Lead Sword: Weapon does +2 Harm. May be taken away.

Resilient: +1 Harm box.

Invisible: You can turn invisible as long as you hold your breath.

EMERGENT PLAY & OUTRIGHT THEFT

Go look at other PbtA rules and steal from those. Borrow, reframe, and modify bits from other games that work. The key concept is that the rules evolve just as the characters do.

If the GM's comfortable with it, early on they may come up with the Advances. Ask players what they'd like their character do better. Make them prioritize. Come back the next session with three things for each player: a Move, a Skill, and a Stuff. This takes some work. The GM can usually build up a nice back log early on, and then later have the players come up with more of this once they've seen how it works.

KEYS

This mechanic comes from the games *The Shadow of Yesterday* and *Lady Blackbird*. Each key offers a way to gain bonus experience in a session. You may "buyoff" a key. This is a significant dramatic moment and should be played as such. You gain 10 XP for buying off a key. Players can and should come up with other keys.

Key of the Bruiser: You enjoy overpowering others. Gain 1 XP every time you defeats someone solo in battle. Gain 3 XP for the solo defeat of someone more powerful than you. *Buyoff:* Suffer a defeat in combat.

Key of the Commander: You're accustomed to giving orders and having them obeyed. Gain 1 XP when you come up with a plan and give orders to make it happen. Gain 3 XP when you organize and lead a large force. *Buyoff:* Acknowledge someone else as the leader.

Key of the Competitor: You love contests and love to win. Gain 1 XP when you enter a competition. Gain 3 XP when you actually win such a contest. *Buyoff:* Gracefully concede to another.

Key of Conscience: You must protect the weak. Gain 1 XP every time you defend someone who is in danger and cannot save themselves. Gain 3 XP when you take someone in an unfortunate situation and change their life to where they can help themselves. *Buyoff:* Ignore a request for help.

Key of the Daredevil: You thrive in dangerous situations. Gain 1

XP when you do something cool that is risky or reckless. Gain 3 XP when your recklessness protects your companions but causes you great harm or loss. *Buyoff*: Be very very careful.

Key of Fear: Select what triggers your phobia—spiders, snakes, undead, being underground, etc. Gain 2 XP when you flee the source of your phobia instead of fighting it. *Buyoff*: Fight or face your phobia.

Key of Greed: You love wealth. Gain 1 XP every time you make a deal that favors you in wealth. Gain 3 XP every time you double your wealth. *Buyoff*: Give away everything you own except what you can carry lightly.

Key of the Guardian: You are a loyal defender of another PC. Gain 1 XP when you make a decision influenced by them or protect them from harm. Gain 3 XP when you follow their orders against your instincts. *Buyoff*: Sever your relationship with them.

Key of Honor: You follow a personal code of honor. Gain 1 XP whenever you keep your word, defend your reputation against insult, or protect those to whom you are obligated. Gain 3 XP when your code causes you major loss or harm. *Buyoff*: Commit a dishonorable act.

Key of the Impostor: You are in disguise or often maintain disguises. Gain 1 XP when you perform well enough to fool someone with your disguise. Gain 3 XP when you fool a group for an extended period. *Buyoff*: Reveal your true identity to someone you fooled.

Key of Knowledge: You love discovering secrets and weird restricted information. Gain 1 XP when you uncover a previously hidden or secret fact or long-lost piece of information. Gain 3 XP when you publish or reveal this knowledge that others want kept secret. *Buyoff*: Pass up an opportunity to learn something important.

Key of Martyrdom: You thrive on personal pain and suffering. Gain 1 XP every time you take a Wound and 3 XP every time you become Injured. *Buyoff*: Flee a source of physical or psychic damage.

Key of the Matchmaker: You like seeing romantic pairings work, though perhaps not your own. Gain 1 XP when you try to set up a pairing. Gain 3 XP when you try to set up a pairing and it actually clicks. *Buyoff:* You turn your attention to your own romantic life.

Key of Memory: You're terribly forgetful. Gain 1 XP when you forget a key fact from one scene to the next. Gain 3 XP when your forgetting gets you in trouble or puts you in danger. *Buyoff:* Remember a vital detail at exactly the right moment.

Key of the Mission: You have a personal mission, defined at the start (discuss with the GM). Gain 1 XP every time you take action to complete this mission. Gain 3 XP every time you take action that completes a major part of this mission. *Buyoff:* Abandon this mission.

Key of Naiveté: You're a sucker for a sob story, scam, or pretty face. Gain 1 XP whenever you do what a stranger asks you to do. Gain 3 XP when your trust leads to a major betrayal. *Buyoff:* See through someone's manipulation.

Key of the Nice Girl: Gain 1 XP when you do something nice because that's what's expected of you. Gain 3 XP when being nice costs you a significant opportunity. *Buyoff:* Loudly put your own interests ahead of someone else's expectations.

Key of the Odd One: Gain 1 XP when you do something small but weird to everyone around you. Gain 3 XP when you do something that causes you to be excluded from a group or event. *Buyoff:* Figure out what's driving this behavior.

Key of Order: Things have rules. People are supposed to stick to the rules. That's how things should work. Gain 1 XP when you try to correct someone's violation of a rule. Gain 3 XP when your complaints change the person's action or decision. *Buyoff:* Let the breaking of rules go by unremarked.

Key of the Outcast: You have been exiled or banned from somewhere. Gain 1 XP when your status causes you trouble or is important in a scene. Gain 3 XP when you're brought into direct contact with the source of your exile. *Buyoff:* Regain your former standing or join a new group.

Key of the Paragon: You're a noble, wealthy, or the scion of a famous family. Therefore you're a cut above the common man. Gain 1 XP every time you demonstrate your superiority. Gain 3 XP when you make a significant positive impression on a peer or superior. *Buyoff:* Disown your heritage.

Key of Partyer: It's always time to party. Gain 1 XP when you drop a chunk of change on party times. Gain 3 XP when you spend all of your money on such entertainments. *Buyoff:* Hit rock bottom.

Key of the Procrastinator: Gain 1 XP when you're able to successfully delay a due date for yourself. Gain 3 XP when you manage to finish something major after the last minute after putting it off. *Buyoff:* Get something done well in advance.

Key of the Prudent: You avoid combat like the plague. Gain 1 XP every time you avoids a potentially dangerous situation. Gain 3 XP every time you stops a combat using means besides violence. *Buyoff:* Leap into combat with no hesitation.

Key of Renown: You'll make a name for yourself or die trying. Gain 1 XP when you brag or put yourself at risk to do something unnecessary or foolish that will add to your reputation. Gain 3 XP when you hear your rep mentioned by strangers. *Buyoff:* Give someone else credit.

Key of Rivalry: Choose a fellow PC as your rival. Gain 1 XP when you compete with them and boast about it. Gain 3 XP when you deal your rival a humiliating defeat. *Buyoff:* Cede a competition to your rival.

Key of Romance: You're a hopeless romantic. Gain 1 XP when you fall in love with someone. As well gain 1 XP when your lover (or would-be lover, if your love is unrequited) is endangered and you act to rescue them. Gain 3 XP when your love leads to punishment or more than one of your lovers meet and come to a realization. *Buyoff:* Marry or break up with a long-time romantic partner.

Key of Sales: You like to make deals and trade favors. Gain 1 XP when you bargain, make a new contact, or exchange a favor. Gain 3 XP when you make a big score through your dealings. *Buyoff:* Cut yourself off from your network of contacts.

Key of the Skeptic: Gain 1 XP when you find an alternate explanation for a fantastical event. Gain 3 XP when your unwillingness to accept the strange keeps you from progress or success. *Buyoff:* Finally acknowledge the reality of the Realm.

Key of the Spendthrift: If you have money, you're supposed to spend it. Gain 1 XP when you drop a chunk of change non-essentials. Gain 3 XP when you spend all of your money on that way. *Buyoff:* Make a budget.

Key of Thievery: Ooooh the shinies. Gain 1 XP when you steal something cool or score a big payoff. Gain 3 XP when you steal something legendary, named, or unique. *Buyoff:* Swear off stealing forever.

Key of Thrift: People toss away good stuff. Gain 1 XP when you rescue and hang on to something someone throws away. Gain 3 XP when a rescued object proves useful. *Buyoff:* Clean out your hoard.

Key of the Tinkerer: You just can't leave it alone. Gain 1 XP when you modify, improve, repair, or patch some object or place. Gain 3 XP when you do this against the wishes or desires of the owner. *Buyoff:* Pass up the opportunity to mess around with technology.

Key of the Traveler: You love exploring places and meeting new people. Gain 1 XP when you share an interesting detail about a person, place, or thing or go somewhere exciting and new. Gain 3 XP when you go somewhere lost to the ages or normally forbidden to you. *Buyoff:* Pass up the opportunity to see something new.

Key of the Twice Shy: You've learned to avoid blame, but reflexively avoid credit as well. Gain 1 XP when you can pin your success on someone else. Gain 3 XP when they readily take full credit. *Buyoff:* Exclaim your own awesomeness.

Key of the Unrequited: You fall into love and infatuation easily and deeply. Gain 1 XP when you fixate on a new persons. Gain 3 XP when you do a risky or embarrassing thing in front of that person to gain their attention. *Buyoff:* Suffer a painful rejection.

Key of Vengeance: You have a hatred for a particular organization, person, or even species or culture. Gain 1 XP every

time your character hurts a member of that group or a lackey of that person. Gain 3 XP every time you strike a major blow at that group or person. *Buyoff*: Let your enemy go.

Key of the Vow: You have a vow of personal behavior you have sworn not to break. This could be a dietary restriction, a requirement to pray at sunbreak every morning, or something else like that. Gain 1 XP for every session in which you don't break this vow. Gain 3 XP every time you don't break this vow even though it causes you great harm. *Buyoff*: Break this vow.

Key of the Widow(er): You lost your significant other truly and finally. Gain 1 XP when you make a connection between something in a scene and your lost love. Gain 3 XP when your pining interferes with new potential relationships and friendships. *Buyoff*: Lock away or dispose of the last of your mementos.

BONDS AND DEBTS

BONDS

Bonds represent your strong ties, friendships, obligations, and debts. Bonds support and push you forward. You start with one bond, usually to someone or something in the “real world.” You can have up to three bonds. You can assign a bond to an empty slot whenever you like.

You can “burn” a bond at any time to increase your result by one category (i.e. failure to mixed success). This represents your character using the charge in that bond. To restore a bond, you must spend time with the subject of your bond. Make an Act +(Social) Move. On a 10+ you restore the bond. On a 7-9 you restore the bond but add a complication to the relationship. On a 6- you break the bond and permanently damage the relationship. That bond slot becomes open.

You may voluntarily break a bond you haven't burnt. You have to turn your back on, rebuke, drive away, or be betrayed by the subject of your bond. You gain +3XP and the bond slot becomes open.

DEBTS

In play you may create debts with NPCs via Interact or just what happens in the story. We don't handle this mechanically. Instead that serves as leverage or justification for fiction later. On the other hand, you may decide you owe a debt to an NPC or even PC. That's a "You saved my life, now I have to repay" scenario. Debts are always optional for you. If you decide you a debt to someone, you clear the debt and gain +2XP for taking a dangerous action or making a sacrifice for them. This clears the debt.

If another PC owes you a debt, you can "call it in," asking them to do something or make a choice against their inclination. If they agree, the debt's cleared and they gain +2XP. If they refuse, the debt clears and you gain +2XP. This is an optional rule. Players shouldn't have more than one or two debts to simplify bookkeeping.

GM ROLE

As well as PbtA usual options, GMs should follow these principles:

Negotiate Moves: When players suggest new custom Moves, either for themselves or for the group, work with them. Get agreement about the appropriateness of it. Define the limits and successes. Be open to the possibilities. Once a Move has been created, accept that as part of the fiction.

Develop Advances: If you're building the advances for the players, listen to what they want. Work to come up with clever versions. If players ask for something large, break it up into chunks. Provide hard choices. If they have several good options, they'll have a hard time deciding. If a player's identity changes through play, develop for that new identity, not the old one.

Protect Niche: When developing Advances, make sure that new additions don't invalidate earlier ones. Talk with players about what they see as their identity and try to support that.

Focus on Theme: Come up with game concepts related to the theme and actions, AS THE PLAYERS DEFINE IT. You might develop Custom Moves to reskin Basic Moves. Why? Because it adds to the flavor. At the same time, if you come up with a Custom

Move and players forget it repeatedly, talk about cutting it.

Pick Appropriate Stats: Stats picks in combination with the Basic Moves create flavor. Consider the players intent and description.

Consider Balance: Don't worry about balance. EXCEPT if a player or players seem bothered by the ease with which another player does awesome things. Listen for those grumbles. Sometimes, it's because a player has accidentally or deliberately built a character which doesn't work in the context. They may perversely stick with. Engage them on this. Other times something's broken. In this case, work to make other people cooler, rather than nerfing. That's usually awful advice, but we're talking about a short-term campaign. Who cares?

GM MOVES

Use an Opposition or Environment Move

Reveal an Unwelcome Truth

Show Signs of an Approaching Threat

Inflict Harm

Expend Their Resources

Turn Their Move Back On Them

Separate Them

Give an Opportunity that Fits Their Core Concept

Show a Downside to Their Choices

Offer an Opportunity, with or without Cost

Put Someone in Trouble

Tell Them the Requirements or Consequences and Ask

Suggest a New Move or Advance

Point to a Connection between Worlds

Reveal or Ask for History

END OF SESSION/ADVENTURE

...Did they discover something about the Realm & the threat to it?

...Did they protect or aid some citizens of the Realm?

...Did they defeat a foe in service of the Realm?

...Did they deal with the hazards of their Real World lives?

For each "yes," everyone gains an XP.

INTERACT

10+ You move attitudes sharply towards what you want.

7-9 You shift attitudes slightly towards what you want, but greater results come with a catch, complication, or cost.

FIGHT

10+ Deal take/standard harm and pick three effects.

7-9 Deal take/standard harm and pick one effect.

...deal extra Harm (may be taken multiple times).

...gain +1 Forward for yourself or another (Set Up).

...take no Harm.

...Change State/Position.

DISCOVER

10+ Gain 2 Hold to spend on questions. Take +1 Forward for an action based on that information.

7-9 Gain 1 Hold to spend on questions

ACT

10+ You succeed in your attempt.

7-9 You succeed, but at a cost or with a complication.

INVOKE TALENT

10+ Your talent works as you wish. Choose an effect.

7-9 You partially succeed. Choose an effect & a glitch.

HARM & DAMAGE

Start with 6 Boxes. Take *Injured* tag to reduce a hit to 1 Harm. Attacks do 1 Harm or 2 Harm w/weapon.

BONDS

Burn a bond to raise a success. Spend time to restore a burnt bond.

ADVANCES

Gain XP from fails, Keys, Bonds, Debts, Moves, and session bonus.

10 XP buys a Stat Raise, Move, Critical Move, Skill or Stuff.

NAME: Jessie Vont

REALM: Tar-no-Bog, the Land of Hidey-Holes

ADULTING: Administrative Assistant

Tough +0

Swift +1

Clever +2

Wise +0

Charming +1

Fierce -1

Vanishing +0 (fading out, making other things disappear)

Childhood Key: *Key of the Odd Girl:* 1 XP when you do something small but weird to everyone around you. 3 XP when you do something that causes you to be excluded from a group or event.

Buyoff: Figure out what's driving you in this behavior.

Adult Key: *Key of the Nice Girl:* 1 XP when you do something nice because that's what's expected of you. + XP when being nice costs you a significant opportunity. Buyoff: Loudly put your own interests ahead of someone else's expectations.

Skill: *Wallflower Awareness:* Your natural worry makes you preternaturally aware when you enter a new place. You have +1 when you make a Move that relies on knowing the layout or exits of a location.

Stuff: *Invisibility:* You can turn invisible for as long as you hold your breath.

Critical Move: *Yes, But:* On a 12+ with Discover, you may suggest a change or significant addition to an answer received.

Jessie grew up as the youngest child, with two older sisters. Not as pretty as them, her mother drilled into her that she needed to be good to fit in and get along. When Jessie fell into Tar-no-Bog, she fell in love with the wilds and brambles of the place. Her natural skill at Hide-and-Go-Seek allowed her to trick the Lukbugs that tormented the inhabitants. When her family moved, Jessie expected she'd still be able to go to the Realm. But though she sought high and low in their new town, she never found passage again.

NAME: Vedat Iskander

REALM: Ferdumpus, the Exalted Scrapyards

ADULTING: Ticket Scalper

Tough +1

Swift +2

Clever +0

Wise +2

Charming +0

Fierce +1

Scavenge +0 (reusing the broken, finding the useful)

Childhood Key: *Key of the Unrequited:* You fall into love and infatuation easily and deeply. Gain 1 XP when you fixate on a new person. Gain 3 XP when you do risky or embarrassing things in to gain their attention. Buyoff: Suffer a painful rejection.

Adult Key: *Key of Thrift:* People toss away good stuff. Gain 1 XP when you rescue something someone throws away. Gain 3 XP when a rescued object proves useful. Buyoff: Clean out your hoard.

Move: *Finders Keepers:* When you search for a necessary or significant object, **ROLL...**

10+ You discover what you want. Choose one: it has key importance to the moment or scene; +1 it offers +1 Ongoing for the scene (choose move); or it offers +2 Forward (Set Up). You may only have one such item “effective” at a time.

7-9 You make a discovery, as above, but you must lose or sacrifice something of importance.

Skill: *Hunger Artist:* You know how to stretch resources. Add +1 to a Move when you have to survive or aid others to survive.

Stat: +1 Wise

Vedat grew up in a massive family, a small commune of immigrants who'd chosen shared living and a polyamorous lifestyle. The result was a herd of children, all struggling for attention. Like his brothers and sisters, Vedat collected things for memories and a sense of his own place. He found Ferdumpus after one of his brothers stole his small stash. There Vedat could find anything needed, a talent useful in bringing down the Crusherman and his Hoist Boys.

NAME: Amanda Eagleton

REALM: Sunspark, the Questers' Freehold

ADULTING: Road Worker

Tough +2

Swift +0

Clever +1

Wise -1

Charming +0

Fierce +1

Hercules +0 (lift heavy things)

Childhood Key: *Key of the Competitor:* You love contests and love to win. Gain 1 XP when you enter a competition. Gain 3 XP when you actually win such a contest. Buyoff: Gracefully concede to another.

Adult Key: *Key of the Matchmaker:* You like seeing romantic pairings work, though perhaps not your own. Gain 1 XP when you try to set up a pairing. Gain 3 XP when you try to set up a pairing and it actually clicks. Buyoff: You turn your attention to your own romantic life.

Stuff: *Red Lead Sword:* Weapon does +2 Harm. May be taken away.

Stuff: *Resilient:* +1 Harm box.

Move: *Bring Down the Pillars:* When you try to use your great strength to create a massive change in the environment, **ROLL...**
10+ You do what you set out to do: walls come tumbling down, statues fall, hillsides crack open.

7-9 It breaks, but not as you wish. Something's damaged, others endangered, or a new peril revealed.

Amanda grew up, a small young thing, raised by a father who worked as a bouncer, lifter, and general strongman. He said men should be strong, but she shouldn't have to. Then her father died of a heart attack while working a club. She found her way to Sunspark even as she swapped between family members' care. Her ability to lift nearly anything allows her to complete Brancow's Seven Challenges and save the realm. She left the realm reluctantly, but knowing she had to find a way to be as strong in the real world.

NAME: Nadja Salt

REALM: Summertithe

ADULTING: Temp

Tough +0

Swift +1

Clever +1

Wise +0

Charming +2

Fierce -1

Speaker +0 (talking to anything)

Childhood Key: *Key of the Twice Shy:* You've learned to avoid blame, but reflexively avoid credit as well. Gain 1 XP when you can pin your success on someone else. Gain 3 XP when they readily take full credit. Buyoff: Exclaim your own awesomeness.

Adult Key: *Key of the Procrastinator:* Gain 1 XP when you're able to successfully delay a due date for yourself. Gain 3 XP when you manage to finish something major after the last minute after putting it off. Buyoff: Get something done well in advance.

Move: *Tempest in a Teapot:* When you ask a tool or weapon to create problems, **ROLL...**

10+ It does so, creating an effect (and Harm if you wish it to).

7-9 It does so, but causes problems for an ally or yourself.

Skill: *Musician:* You can coax a tune out of most instruments. But you only gain a +1 when you're not trying to play a prewritten song.

Stuff: *The Unspent Quarter:* You have a quarter that always returns to you at sunset.

The only time Nadja's family noticed her was when something went wrong. Then, it felt to her, she'd be the scapegoat, regardless what had happened. Even good stuff got turned around by parents who seemed to relish laying verbal traps. In Summertithe, no one expected anything of her. She could laze about and just talk and dream. That's how she learned the secrets which stopped the Helperman taking the younglings away to the Work-School. Nadja's kept that detachment in her adult life, cutting corners and gliding by as best she can. Even when she's inspired, she tries to hide it.

NAME: Cole Winters

REALM: Galloping Gultch

ADULTING: Safety Inspector

Tough +1

Swift -1

Clever +0

Wise +1

Charming +0

Fierce +2

Sheriff +0 (keeping things orderly, enforcing the rules)

Childhood Key: *Key of Order:* Things have rules. People are supposed to stick to the rules. That's how things should work. Gain 1 XP when you try to correct someone's violation of a rule. Gain 3 XP when your complaints change the person's action or decision. Buyoff: Let the breaking of rules go by unremarked.

Adult Key: *Key of the Skeptic:* Gain 1 XP when you find an alternate explanation for a fantastical event. Gain 3 XP when your unwillingness to accept the strange keeps you from progress or success. Buyoff: Finally acknowledge the reality of the Realm.

Stuff: *Catch:* Do +2 Harm when striking someone who has broken a promise to you or your allies.

Critical Move: *Tin Star:* When you Act to avoid danger or Harm and roll a 12+, you may protect a group of others (like nearby innocents or your group).

Stuff: *Loophole:* Tell the GM when you want to spot a loophole, gap or weakness. They will offer you one, though not necessarily related to the immediate problem. Once a session.

Cole grew up in a household with two busy and ambitious parents. They worked hard at their jobs and badly juggled obligations and promises. That only worsened when they divorced. In Galloping Gulch, Cole enforced the rules and kept the peace. He learned how to use those to put down the Rampagers and Backgivers. In the Gulch everything had its place, and you just had to figure out their codes to keep them in line. It was a forced therapy session that taught Cole the Gulch wasn't



CROWSMANTLE

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Crowsmantle built by Lowell Francis based on various *Powered by the Apocalypse* systems. Invoke Talent built on module from *Monster of the Week*. Keys based on material from *Lady Blackbird*, *Shadow of Yesterday*, and various online adaptations.

Art commissioned from Gene Ha and Alexandra "Lexxy" Douglass

This is adapted from other material, so feel free to adapt this. The name "Crowsmantle" is mine though.

