REIGN Enchiridion

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REIGN
Enchiridion

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Welcome to REIGN Enchiridion.

This is a condensed, pared-down version of the full REIGN rules available at Indie Press Revolution [www.indiepressrevolution.com], and Lulu.com, or as a .pdf from IPR or DriveThruRPG [www.drivethrurpg.com].

As a game, REIGN focuses on leadership. Instead of being sent on quests by authorities, your characters can become (or begin as) authorities sending people on quests. The assumption is that your characters lead a company, which is just a collection of people bound together by common goals. The company rules were designed to be loosely coupled to the system, so you can take that chapter and use it with any game that has warring factions.

REIGN's rules system is called the One Roll Engine.

What Is the One Roll Engine?

The One Roll Engine (ORE for short) helps decide whether an event happens in the game's shared setting. Players and the Game Master roll dice. The results of those rolls determine events that aren't otherwise obvious.

These aren't rolled for actions that are trivially easy, or for actions that are clearly impossible. You can't roll to shoot down the sun. You don't need to roll to tie your shoes. You only have to roll during an archery contest if someone cares about the outcome and if it matters to where the game is going.

Which Dice, and How Many?

The ORE uses ten sided dice (d10s). In most cases, you roll a number of dice equal to a character's Stat (measuring general talent) plus a Skill (training, experience or intuitive ability). This combined number is your pool for that task. If my character is trying to convince a merchant to give me a break on a purchase, I roll my "haggle pool." This consists of my Haggle Skill (for mercantile bullying) and my Command stat (showing how impressive and overbearing I can be). If my Haggle Skill is 4 and my Command stat is 2, my pool for haggling is 6 dice. (The abbreviation of this is 6d.)

Reading the Result

You want matches—dice in your pool that turned up the same number. If I roll 2,3,5,6,9,10 then I got no matches and failed. If I roll 1,1,4,5,7,7 I got two matches, a pair of 1s (abbreviated 2x1) and a pair of sevens (2x7). It's like poker, where you're looking for pairs and treys, and where higher cards are generally better.

There are two measures of success with this system: How many dice turned up in a set (the set's Width) and the size of the number itself (its Height).

The most common set is a pair. That's a match with Width 2. A pair of twos, a pair of nines, a pair of fives—they all have different Heights but the same Width.

Higher and Wider are desirable in different ways. A 4x1 result has poor Height but great Width. A 2x10 result has great Height but poor Width. Which is better? That depends on the situation, because Height and Width indicate different things.

Width usually indicates speed and competence. Wide sets happen before narrow sets—so that 4x1 indicates something done with much greater speed than that 2x10. In a fight (for a common example), Wider sets go first and do more damage when they hit.

Height usually shows how favorable circumstances were at the moment, and how well the character took advantage of them. Sometimes the poorly skilled guy (the one with the small pool, who can't get Wide results) still gets lucky. In a fight, Height indicates where a blow falls. Low results strike less vital areas like the arms and legs. Higher outcomes are strikes to the body or the head.

To sum up then: You want to get results that are both Wide and High. If I roll five dice, the best possible result is a 5x10. I may wind up having to choose between Width and Height—that same 5d pool could turn up 2,2,2,9,9 giving me a 3x2 and a 2x9. The set I pick depends on what I'm trying to accomplish.

TYPES OF ROLLS

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Different circumstances pose different challenges, so different types of rolls are called for. Trying to overcome an inanimate obstacle—outwitting a cunning death-trap or preparing a finicky soufflé—is different from a competition with something that's alive and reacting. Both are different from striving against an adaptive creature whose goal is not to accomplish something, but to prevent your action. These differences are handled with Static, Dynamic and Opposed rolls.

STATIC CONTESTS

These are the simplest challenges. In a static contest, it's your character against circumstance. Perhaps he's trying to swim across a river, lift a big boulder, carve an exquisite statue or get out of the way of an avalanche. It's a one-time event in which he either succeeds or fails.

To get the result, roll your pool. Got a match? Good—you succeeded. It's that simple.

If it's not that simple, meaning your GM wants more challenge, there may be a Difficulty to your roll or a penalty to your pool. (They're explained below, under "What if it's Really Tricky?") You may need to get a minimum Height, or you may roll a smaller pool, but it's one roll and you either get it done or you don't.

If you fail a static contest, you can try again if you've got the time. Any Difficulty or penalty doesn't change, so you can generally just keep trying to scale that cliff until you find a way or give up because it's too hard. The exception to this is if you're in the middle of some peril that gives you a time limit, or if the action itself is draining. A perfect example is swimming across a river. You take your first roll normally and, if that fails, you struggle back to shore. If you try again immediately, your GM may ask for a Body+Endurance roll to see if your lungs quit on you, or she may assess a penalty or put on a Difficulty rating because you're tired. But the important thing about static contests is that success or failure all comes down to your roll. You're not interacting with anyone else's results.

It's often a good idea for GMs to be generous with static contests—imposing low penalties and Difficulties, if any are assessed at all. Moving the story along is a good thing. The time to make static contests harder is when achieving it gives them a significant advantage. If, for example, scaling a deadly cliff lets them come at a fortress from a poorly-defended side, then the roll should be challenging. After all, if they succeed, they've made things substantially easier for themselves, and substantially easy stories aren't involving.

DYNAMIC CONTESTS

A dynamic contest is when two people are trying to do the same thing at the same time, and only one of them can. An example is a foot race (two or more characters using their Body+Run pools), but it could also be a battle of wits as two swains try to impress a beautiful stranger. (In that case, it could be dueling Charm+Fascinate pools.) Or two advisors attempting to sway the king's opinion with Charm+Fascinate (or Command+Intimidate, or Charm+Plead) rolls.

Regardless of the type of contest, the rules all work the same way. All the involved contestants roll their pools and choose the sets they're going to use. Then those sets are compared and the best one walks away with the prize—the trophy, the stranger's attention, the will of the king.

Which set is 'best'? That depends on the nature of the competition. In a foot race, the GM might say that the Widest set is the best, because Width indicates speed. With the struggling suitors, Height might be a better gauge, as it shows who's favored by fortune, and who's adapting better to events. To persuade the king, it might be Height if each side has plenty of time to set out arguments and provide evidence. If the barbarians are at the gate and the debate is over "fight or flee," then Width might serve, as a tersely-stated case plays to the king's need for decisiveness.

The GM should make it clear beforehand whether Width is the deciding factor, or Height… or whether there are different rewards for each. Perhaps the quick wit wins the fair maiden's eye, but the narrow/high result keeps his dignity and impresses the onlookers, who dismiss the Wide/low character's desperate clowning.

Opposed Contests

The final type of contest is when one character wants to climb the rope, present his evidence, or bury his sword in somebody's spleen. Another character wants to pull him down, dismiss his testimony, or avoid that lethal sword thrust. These are opposed contests and they are handled with a mechanic called Gobble Dice.

The character attempting the action—climb, debate, stab—rolls normally. In these instances, we're looking at Coordination+Climb, Command+Inspire and Body+Fight. The blocking character who wants to drag, obfuscate, or jump back, rolls her pool as well. She'd be rolling Body+Fight, Command+Inspire, or Coordination+Dodge.

If the active character fails his roll, the blocker's roll doesn't matter. If that guy can't get up the rope on his own, he sure as hell can't do it with someone grabbing his legs.

If the active character succeeds and the blocker gets no successes, then the attempt succeeds, like you'd expect. He gets up, gets heard, or spills blood.

It gets interesting when both succeed. Then the dice in the blocker's pool become Gobble Dice. Each Gobble die can counteract one die in an opponent's set, as long as that die is of equal or lesser value. Once a set is broken down to one die or fewer, it no longer has any value.

Example: The active player rolls 1,2,7,7,0 to get up the rope. The blocker rolls 8,8,9, Both her eights become Gobble Dice. By gobbling one die out of his 2x7 set, she reduces it to 1x7—no match.

But if timing matters, as it so often does, even a High set may not work if it's not Wide enough.

Example: The attacking character rolls a 2,2,2,6,8,9 in his Body+Fight roll, for a 3x2 result. The defender tries to dodge and rolls 2,4,6,9,9. She has a 2x9 set of Gobble Dice, but because Width determines speed, his strike occurs before she can react. Even though her dice were big enough, they weren't fast enough.

Thus, a Gobble set must often be at least as Wide and at least as High as any set it's trying to spoil. That's a pretty serious drawback to being reactive instead of active. (Too much of "I'm going to stop him doing what he's doing!" can slow play to a crawl, so burdening the naysayer is a story issue as much as a mechanical one.)

It's not always the case, however. If it's a debate or discussion and both get plenty of time to make arguments, the Width of a Gobble set doesn't matter. But remember that you

can only Gobble if you're trying to discredit his argument—not make an argument of your own. If your opponent is trying to convince the Empress that the Dindavarans are massing to attack, and all you have to do is provide reasonable alternate explanations for their movements because she doesn't really want to believe it, then it's an opposed contest.

Furthermore, the advantage to Gobble Dice is that once you have them, they're more efficient—especially against multiple actions.

Example: Instead of just climbing the rope, the active character is trying to do two things—he's trying to seize a precious emerald off a pedestal and then climb up the rope, but if he can't get the gem he'll still try to flee the emerald's guardian. He rolls a multiple action (as explained on page 16) hoping to get two sets—one to grab the gem, one to go up the rope. He gets his two sets, a 2x2 and a 2x5. The guard, however, only has to roll one Body+Fight pool to interfere with what he's doing. She rolls a 2x7, which lets her respond to everything he tries. Her two sevens become Gobble Dice. With one, she knocks a single die out of the 2x5 set, reducing it to 1x5 and, therefore, nothing. With the other, she takes a die out of the 2x2 set. Just by grabbing him, she's prevented him from taking the stone and from climbing the rope.

When defending against more than one person, Gobble Dice can be used on different sets even if the defender only got a single pair.

WHAT IF IT'S REALLY TRICKY?

Climbing a ladder is easier than climbing a greased pole. Since the same pool reflects both tasks, the rules have to accommodate varying challenges. There are two ways to do this: The GM can assess a penalty or can impose a Difficulty.

DIFFICULTY

Difficulty indicates how hard it is for everyone, novices and experts alike. It's indicated by a number—so, "Difficulty 3." Any matches whose Height is under that number aren't sufficient to get the job done.

Example: Boyles needs to get down the cliff fast, and it's muddy. The GM decides climbing down is a Difficulty 3 task. Boyles rolls his 4d Climb pool and gets 1,1,1,1. Normally a nicely Wide set, in this case it's useless because its Height is lower than the Difficulty.

Difficulty is best for problems that make a task more tricky, but which don't preclude great results, and which affect everyone equally. Difficulty 3 is pretty typical. Difficulty 4-5 is imposing, and Difficulty 8 is appallingly hard.

PENALTY

A penalty is when the GM knocks some dice out of your pool. This indicates a problem where someone of lesser skill is unlikely to have a chance, and even an expert isn't going to get the superb results one would expect. A –1d penalty is for something that's a little more obscure or complicated, while a –3d penalty is about as high as you should go for anything other than demanding, outrageous stunts.

Example: Rugris is trying to find a misfiled scroll. Normally this would be a Knowlege+Lore roll, and Rugris' pool for that is a measly 3. Since the GM assesses this search as imposing a –2d penalty, Rugris is out of luck. With only 1d in his pool, he cannot make a match. A character with a large pool—8d, say—would only roll 6d while trying to find that confounded document.

There is a vital difference between penalties and Difficulties. Difficulties make things harder for everyone to an equal degree, regardless of pool size. Penalties are far harsher to people with small pools than those with large pools. As a GM, you're almost always better off using a Difficulty and saving the penalties for situations where (1) they're in the rules or (2) it's something that should be damn near impossible for an amateur but not nearly as tricky for someone heavily trained.

Note that with penalties, Expert Dice and Master Dice are removed from pools first. (Expert Dice and Master Dice are explained on page 15.)

There are refinements of the system, but that's the core of it. If you've got a grip on that, there's more detailed explanation in the Player's Chapter.

Game Terms

Types of Dice

Area Dice: When an attack or effect harms all people within an area, its damage is measured in Area Dice. Everyone affected rolls that many dice and applies the appropriate type of damage to every hit location that comes up.

Example: While besieging a tower, the heroes get a cauldron of scalding oil dropped on them. This is an Area 4 Killing attack. Everyone in the area rolls 4d and applies a point of Killing damage to each hit location that turns up.

Armor does not protect against Area Attacks.

Expert Dice: This special kind of Skill die indicates unusual talent. Instead of rolling an Expert Die (or ED, for short) you set it at whatever number you want, before you roll the other dice. You can never have more than one ED in your pool. You can never have an Expert Die in a pool with a Master Die.

Example: When using the Fight Skill, you have a pool of five regular dice and one expert die. (This is abbreviated 5+ED.) Your enemy has good armor on everything except his legs, so you decide to swing low. The legs are hit locations 1 and 2, so before you roll you set your Expert Die at 2. Your normal dice come out 2,3,4,9,8. You can match the rolled 2 with your ED 2 and get a pair that hits his vulnerable ankle.

Gobble Dice: Skills that directly counteract other Skills produce Gobble Dice. When you roll those Skills successfully, the dice in the set you use become Gobble Dice, which can suck dice out of your enemy's pool and spoil his attacks.

There are two limits on the use of Gobble Dice. First, you can only use them against dice that are equal to or lower than their own Height.

Example: Tud swings his axe at Gorda the sorceress. She tries to get out of the way. He rolls a 2x6 on his attack. She rolls a 2x8 on her dodge. The two dice that came up in a set become Gobble Dice. Since the Height of one of her gobblers (8) is greater than the Height of Tud's attack (6), she can counteract it. With one of the dice in his pair gone, it's no longer a pair and his attack fails.

Second, you can only use a Gobble die when the timing of an event allows it.

Example: If Tud had rolled a 3x6 against Gorda's 2x8, she would have gotten hit, because Width determines the timing of events. His Wider set goes first, so he hits her before she even has a chance to react.

Remember, some uses of Gobble Dice are not time sensitive. This is particularly true with social Skills.

The advantage of Gobble Dice is that you can use them against more than one attack, even if you only got a pair.

Example: Gorda gets a friend and they attack Tud. This time, he's parrying. He rolls a 2x10, while Gorda gets a 2x7 and her friend gets a 2x2. Their sets are all the same Width, so Height acts as a tiebreaker: Tud goes first. His two tens become Gobble Dice, and he takes a seven out of Gorda's set and a two out of her friend's set. With one pair, he wrecks two attacks.

Most other dice only work in sets of two or greater: Gobble dice are a special case. Once they've changed, they can be used individually. However, unless you do a multiple action (explained on page 16), you can only turn one set into Gobble Dice every round.

Example: Tud's defending himself and his Parry roll produces a 3x4 and a 2x6. He can only change one of these sets into Gobble Dice. Does he pick the 3x4, which gives him an additional die and lets him act faster? Or does he choose the 2x6, which is Higher and can counter attacks of greater Height? Such decisions are a key part of the game…

Master Dice: Master Dice (or MDs) indicate tremendous proficiency. You don't roll an MD: You can set it to any number you want. Unlike an Expert Die (see above), you roll the normal dice in your pool before you set your MD. This means that you can always get a set when your pool has an MD. You can never have more than one MD in your pool, and you cannot have a Master Die and an Expert Die in the same pool.

Example: You have a Master Die in Stealth, along with four regular dice (abbreviated 4+MD). When hiding in the forest, you roll your four normal dice and get 3,4,6,10. You can change your MD into another 10, match it with the naturally rolled 10 and have a pair of tens, successfully concealed. If you'd rolled 3,4,4,10, you'd have a choice to make. You could either match with your 10 and get the 2x10, or you could change your MD to a 4 and get a 3x4. Remember, sometimes Wide seta are better than tall ones.

Waste Dice: Any time you roll, dice that don't match are 'Waste Dice'. Some effects still make use of them.

Example: I have 9d in my pool. I roll and get 2,5,6,6,7,7,7,8,9. The sets are 2x6 and 3x7. The 2,5,8 and 9 are Waste Dice.

Note that dice in a set never count as Waste Dice, even if that set isn't used. Similarly, if a set gets ruined (by Gobble Dice, for example), the remainder isn't a Waste die.

Introduction

Example: Gorda the sorceress casts a spell that does Width Killing damage, and a point of Shock to each location shown by a Waste die. She rolls 1,1,2,2,3,4,6,8,9. She has a 2x4, a 2x2 and a 2x1 when she hurls this spell against Tud the Barbarian. But Tud hits her first, and getting hit costs you a die from one of your sets. (This is explained in more detail in the Combat chapter.) She takes a die from her 2x1 set, reducing it to nothing. When it's her turn, she activates the spell with her 2x4. It does 2 Killing to Tud's arm (hit location 4). It also does a point of Shock to the locations indicated by 3,6,8 and 9. It doesn't effect location 1, even though that die is no longer in a set, and it doesn't effect location 2, even though that set wasn't used.

OTHER TERMS

Armor: Armor is a factor, be it physical or occult or miscellaneous, that protects your body from getting clobbered. No matter its source, armor works the same. It has a numerical rating, and all Killing and Shock damage to the protected location is reduced by that rating.

Example: A character has one point of armor on his head. He gets hit there with an attack that would normally do 3 Killing and 1 Shock. Instead, it does 2 Killing and 0 Shock because the armor reduces the harm.

Armor rating is abbreviated AR. If you have 3 points of armor, that's "AR3."

Bonus: A bonus is anything that raises a numerical element of the game. If you get a +2 armor bonus and your armor rating is usually 3, you'd get armor rating 5. If your Graces pool is usually four dice and you get a +1d Graces bonus, you roll five dice.

Craving: A Craving is an irrational drive towards some activity, condition or substance. While pursuing a Craving, a character gets a +1d bonus to all rolls. While foregoing a Craving, the character gets a –1d penalty to all rolls. Cravings are explained on page 28.

Duty: A character dedicated to a code of conduct or set of beliefs has a Duty. When acting in accordance with Duty, all his rolls are made at +1. When ignoring his Duty (or disgracing it), all his rolls suffer a –1d penalty. Duty is explained on page 28.

Game Master: "GM" for short. This is the person who is running the game, describing the setting, controlling every character except the PCs (q.v.), setting the Difficulties and overseeing the rules' use to provide maximum satisfaction for everyone.

Height: The number shown on the dice in a matching set. If four dice turn up sevens, that's a set with Height 7.

Mission: A Mission is a character's short-term goal. While pursuing her Mission, she gets an extra die in every pool. While she's intentionally jeoparding the Mission, or missing a chance to pursue it, she takes a –1d penalty to all rolls.

Multiple Action: When a character attempts to do two or more things in the time usually required for one, that's a multiple action. Trying to seduce someone while racing her on horseback is a multiple action involving the Fascinate and Riding pools. A more common example—trying to hit two people in quick succession—is a double use of the Fight pool. When trying to do two things at once, use the lower pool, take one die out of it, and hope for two sets. If you get two sets, you can apply one set to each action. If you have an Expert or Master die in your smaller pool but not the larger, you must assign at least one set to that pool's action.

Example: Mouray's Dodge pool is 3+MD while his Fight pool is 8d. He also possesses a Martial Technique that lets him make multiple actions with Dodge and not take the multiple action penalty. When he tries to hit someone and dodge, he rolls his 3+MD pool. If he gets two sets, he can assign them as he wishes. If he only gets one set, he has to use it to dodge.

For each additional action, you take another die out of the pool and hope for another set. If a character tries to hit four people in the time it would usually take to get a decent stroke at one, his roll is at a –3d penalty and the player is seeking four sets.

Passion: Missions, Duties and Cravings (q.v.) are collectively known as Passions. These are things your character cares so deeply about, that fulfilling them makes her stronger and failing makes her weaker.

Penalty: Whenever a factor is reduced by some number, that's a penalty. It's the opposite of a bonus (q.v.).

Player Character: "PC" for short, the Player Characters are the main characters in the game, the most important people in the story, and the only characters not overseen by the Game Master (q.v.).

Pool: The total number of dice you roll when attempting to accomplish a task. Usually a Skill (q.v.) plus a Stat (q.v.).

Round: An imprecisely-defined unit of time that tracks who hit whom first in a fight. It's best thought of as "the time it takes every character to do one thing." If a character tries to do more than one thing in a round, that's a multiple action (q.v.).

Set: When you roll dice, and some of those dice show the same number, that's a set. If I roll seven dice and get 1,2,4,4,6,8,8 then I have rolled two sets—a pair of fours and a pair of eights.

Skill: Skill ratings measure how competent a character is in certain narrow areas of activity such as playing music, hearing faint sounds or begging for mercy. Skill ratings contribute to pools (q.v.).

Slow: Some combat actions (mostly spells) demand extra time. This is represented by a Slow rating. For each point of Slow, you have to spend a combat round (q.v.) preparing before you make your roll. A heavy crossbow is Slow 1: It can fire every other round. A spell that's Slow 3 can only be cast every fourth round.

Squishing: Exchanging Height and Width. If you can squish a result two points, you can change a 4x5 to a 2x7 or a 6x3. If you squish something down to 1x, it's no longer a set. You can't squish a set above Height 10.

Stat: Stat ratings measure a character's innate abilities in broad categories of tasks. Stats combine with Skills (q.v.) to form the pool (q.v.) of dice rolled for actions. The six stats are Body, Coordination, Sense, Knowledge, Charm and Command.

Tall: A set (q.v.) is tall when the numbers rolled are high. 6x1 is not a tall set. 2x8 is a tall set.

Wide: A set (q.v.) is Wide when many of the dice in the pool turn up the same number. 6x1 is a Wide set. 2x8 is not a Wide set, it's narrow.

Width: The number of dice that compose a set determine its Width. If four dice are in a set, its Width is four. If two dice are in a set, its Width is two.

T here are two options for character generation. 'Point Buy' is the simplest. You pick Stats, Skills and other factors you want, and then pay for them. No drama, you know exactly what you're getting.

'One Roll' is random. You roll 11d10, read the results, and get Stats, Skills, Advantages and life history (with some assembly required). It's fast, and can give you a character you might never have chosen or thought up on your own.

Both methods use the same set of Stats, Skills, Advantages and so forth. These are explained in this chapter.

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Stats

There are six Stats in the ORE. They describe general, inborn qualities.

Body measures how strong, tough and able to work your character is. A high Body character can easily tote bales, overcome illness and smack around lesser specimens. A low Body indicates indolence, lethargy or general scrawn.

Coordination is what you use to keep your balance, move gracefully, aim, and climb up trees. A character with poor Coordination is a klutz.

Sense measures alertness and how well-attuned a character is to the world around him. An intelligent character might be absent-minded and oblivious to her surroundings—she has high Knowledge, low Sense.

Knowledge describes a character's ability to learn. An untutored character may still have high Knowledge: She just learned a lot through observation instead of study. Similarly, a person who's not naturally bright but who has had extensive schooling may have a low Knowledge Stat but make up for it with high Skills.

Command is a measure of presence. A low Command character is easy to ignore, while a high Command character gets your attention if he wants it. You may not like him, but you listen to him.

Charm measures how pleasant you seem. People with high Charm are likeable and fun to be around. Low Charm people are crass, boring, and irritating.

You cannot get Expert Dice or Master Dice attached to a Stat. Stats cannot start higher than five.

Skills

If Stats represent broad aptitudes, Skills represent narrow applications of them. Specific rules for using them are in Player Chapter.

When you combine a Stat number with a Skill number, you get the total number of dice you roll when trying to use that Skill. This total is called your pool. For example, Fascinate is a Charm Skill. Suppose your character has Charm 2 and Fascinate 3. When trying to convince the Deputy Minister that you can find the lost emerald mines of Pula Thark if she just fronts you a stake to hire donkeys, you roll five dice (abbreviated 5d), because the pool is Charm 2+Fascinate 3. You have a 5d Fascinate pool.

You cannot start out with a Skill higher than five.

With Skills you can buy Expert Dice (EDs) and Master Dice (MDs). They count towards the number of dice in your pool, but you don't roll them. Instead, you set your ED to the number you wish before you roll your other dice. If you have an MD, you can set it to any number after you roll your other dice.

Note that it's possible to have only one die in a Skill, but have that be a Master Die. That character is skilled, but in a narrow way—they perform excellently under the circumstances for which they were trained, but they are poorly equipped to deal with unpredictable obstacles.

Common Elements

Each Skill has a notation at the end listing "Expected possessions." These are tools or items that someone who's competent in that area would reasonably have. You don't get these just for taking the Skill. But if you're good at it—meaning, you have an ED, an MD, or 5 dice in it—your character starts play with that item or collection of items. In no instance should any of these possessions have any great value. You want something expensive, buy the Possession Advantage.

Getting Better

As you play the game, you get experience points, abbreviated XP. You spend XP to improve your Skills and Stats, buy Advantages, or improve your Company. They're the currency of the game mechanic (as opposed to the currencies of the game setting, which are Wealth and Treasure, described on pages 27 and 82). Using XP is described in full on page 55.

Skill Descriptions

Body Skills

Athletics: This is a catchall for physical tasks that don't merit a their own Skill. If it's not running, climbing, riding, or enduring, it's probably Athletics. Use it to jump, throw, and lift heavy weights. *Expected possessions:* none.

Endurance: Roll Endurance to keep running, or walking, or swimming past the point where weaker (or less driven) individuals collapse. *Expected possessions:* none.

Fight: This is the Skill for untrained brawling. Someone with a high Fight Skill lacks the finesse of someone with a Weapon Skill (see "Weapon Skill," below) but that's rarely a comfort when he buries his axe in your spleen.

Using Skills with Other Stats

Usually, a Skill combines with the Stat under which it's listed. Almost every time you use the Parry Skill, it's going to be paired with the Body Stat. However, there may be times when you want use a Skill in an unusual way. Your character might watch someone dueling and wish to evaluate her blocking ability. In this case, you could combine your Parry Skill with your Sense Stat, since you're trying to sense how well someone parries. Similarly, Knowledge might work better than Charm with Jest if you were trying to make a particularly obscure in-joke to an audience of scholars. For such odd times out, it's the GM's call whether they can be used with another Stat and, if so, which Stat comes into play.

Fight is used with any hand-to-hand weapon where it's obvious how it hurts someone. Even if you'd never seen a sword before, Fight would let you figure it out. Missile weapons are another matter—training and control matter there. Also, exotic weapons that aren't dangerous without training are useless for Fight. *Expected possessions:* none.

Parry: When you try to knock a weapon away before it hits, or meet force with force, that's a parry. You use this Skill to protect yourself or others near you. However, Parry presumes that you've got something hard to parry with—a mailed forearm, a shield, a weapon of your own. If you try to parry a weapon with nothing but your bare hands, you're likely to get a nasty cut on your elbow. Which still may be preferable to a nasty cut on the throat. (See "Parry" on page 51 for more information.) *Expected possessions:* A shield or a dagger.

Run: Cowards run from fights. Brave men run towards them. Cruel men run down fleeing enemies. The Skill they all need is 'Run'. Roll this to move fast on your feet. (To keep running for a long distance, roll Endurance.) In a fight, you can move 15 feet every round automatically. If you want to move farther than that, roll Body+Run. A success lets you move farther—five feet for every point of Width. (See "Move" on page 123.) *Expected possessions:* A comfortable pair of shoes.

Vigor: This is not a Skill that is learned. It represents how well you overcome injury and illness. You make Body+Vigor rolls to recover from combat (it's described in detail on page 114) so this is often a good bet for belligerent types. It's also what you roll to resist sickness. *Expected possessions:* none.

COORDINATION SKILLS

Climb: You can travel vertically with confidence. Scaling trees, cliffs, or a ship's mast—it's all the same. In combat, you can you can ascend five feet per round for every point of Width in your set, if the surface is easy. If the conditions are inclement, it's five feet for every two points of Width. Or, if you're not in immanent danger and can take your time, a successful roll or two just gets you to the top. *Expected possessions:* A coil of rope.

Dodge: You move your body away from a threat, so that it does not pain you. Ducking punches, diving for safety, leaping over bonfires without singeing—all require Dodge rolls. You cannot use Dodge to protect anyone but yourself. It's described in greater detail on page 47. *Expected possessions:* none.

Perform _____: You can put on a good show. Pick a category of entertainment when you select the Skill. You could be a juggler, acrobat, or dancer. You can buy this Skill more than once for different specialties.

The Perform Skill is listed under Command as well, but that's for putting on a show that's mostly about who you are, not what you're doing. If there's any question, just pick a Stat. *Expected possessions:* A costume.

Ride: You can get a dumb animal to do the work of hauling you around. Roll this to beat the other riders in a race, guide your horse through the forest, or charge down on your opponent in battle.

Riding is very general. Riding a creature you've never mounted before, you may face a Difficulty until you're used to the quirks of riding a giant bat, seahorse or rabbit. *Expected possessions:* A decent saddle and a horse of no great worth.

Skill Descriptions

Stealth: A quiet step? Remaining unseen while the household searches for you? Pilfering, purloining, and picking pockets? All covered. This Skill is the one-stop shop for burglars and adulterers alike. (Okay, you might want some Climb and Lie in there as well.) Stealth is versatile, useful for all manner of deviousness. If this sort of mischief is a major part of your game, your GM may break Stealth up into a variety of Skills—moving unseen, moving unheard, confounding traps and so forth. But for most games, one broad Skill suffices. *Expected possessions:* A black cloak with hood and scarf.

Weapon Skill _____: Pick a category of weapons like "bows" or "axes." You've been trained to hurt and kill with weapons of that type. You can choose "empty hand striking" or "grappling" as Weapon Skills too, instead of using the broader Fight Skill.

While the categories encompass a lot (there's no separate "bow" and "crossbow" Skills) they're still narrower than the generic Fight Skill. The difference between training and talent is that a trained fighter can learn special maneuvers. Specifically, you can follow Martial Paths, learn Techniques, and get special advantages when using a Weapon Skill. You can never use a martial technique with the Fight Skill—that's the drawback to treating a sword, a club or an axe as if they're interchangeable.

(Martial paths and techniques are covered in greater detail starting on page 26.) *Expected possessions:* A weapon of the appropriate type.

Knowledge Skills

Counterspell: In the REIGN setting, snarling lines of occult force is something that can be learned or intuited. In other settings, this Skill may be unavailable, or may be restricted. It works just like the Dodge skill, by producing Gobble Dice. However, counter-casting only works on spells that focus on the counterspeller. If the sorcerer collapses the tower you're in, counterspelling won't save you. *Expected possessions:* Lucky charm or talisman.

The 'Expert' Skill

If you want a Skill that's not listed on here, and nothing seems to cover it, just take a Skill in "Expert _____" with your desired talent filling in the blank. Then file it under whatever Stat works best. If you want to be a great chef, you could put "Expert Cook" on your sheet (probably under Sense.) You could put "Expert Animal Trainer" under Charm or Command, depending on your methods. Or you might want to put a "Jump Expert" Skill under Coordination instead of relying on Body+Athletics. Just be sure to check with your GM so she can veto "Blow People Up With My Mind" if it doesn't fit her setting.

The Knowledge version of "Expert" is "Student," just to be exacting.

Character Generation

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Healing: This is the mundane ability to clean wounds, apply bandages, and whip up herbal remedies. *Expected possessions:* Bandages, splint materials and herbs of various potencies.

Language _____: Every character starts out with one Master Die in his native language. If you wish, you can buy additional dice, to help explain complex concepts, or understand them, or read. You can also purchase this Skill multiple times, picking a different language each time. Language Skills are unique in that you combine your Skill with your listener's Skill and roll that as a pool. This is explained in greater detail on page 50. *Expected possessions:* A set of decent, if unremarkable, clothes.

Lore: You're educated. You know legends, history, folk tales, the great myths of the major religions—you've studied it all. The GM may not allow you to roll Lore for some facts, simply because they are unknown to any but experts. If you want to really specialize in some field of knowledge, be a Student of it. (See the "Student" Skill, below.) *Expected possessions:* Several fragile books and scrolls.

Strategy: Tacticians fight battles, but the strategist fights the war. Past the level of yelling for the cavalry to shore up a flank is the larger picture of controlling supply lines, encircling or bypassing fortresses and encampments, choosing propitious battlegrounds, or winning by avoiding conflict altogether. *Expected possessions:* None.

Student of _____: You're knowledgeable about something that's not already on the list. It's a way to let people have characters who are wise in the ways of identifying birds or designing aqueducts without listing every field of human study. *Expected possessions:* Depends entirely on the field of study.

Tactics: You're an expert at allocating unit-scale military force. It's not much good for engagements involving fewer than ten people or more than a hundred, but that covers an awful lot of encounters. *Expected possessions:* A game with pieces and board of decent quality.

Magic

There's no "magic" or "enchantment" or "sorcery" Skill listed under any of the Stats. That's intentional. Many people like designing their own setting and deciding how magic works and what it is—which is another way of looking at what it means. In a magical world, enchantment underlies societies and history and what people expect. A generic Skill description isn't going to cover that. If you're building your own REIGN setting, think hard about what you want magic to do and be good for, and work hard at explaining that to the players.

The default in REIGN is a single Skill that combines with different Stats depending on what kind of spell is being cast. This is covered in greater detail in the Magic chapter.

Skill Descriptions

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Command Skills

Haggle: You drive a hard bargain. By debating, wheedling, brow-beating and feigning indignation, you can get the best price for items, whether buying or selling. *Expected possessions:* A rather nice hat with matching belt and gloves.

Inspire: You can provoke the higher, nobler (or crueler, coarser) emotions in those who listen. An inspiring speech could convince the jury to let your friend off, by inspiring mercy. Or you could give the rousing address that spurs your army into making that last, doomed charge.

Inspire is predicated on sympathy. It's the Skill of getting people to feel what you feel (or, more deviously, to feel what you appear to feel). It can also be used to taunt people into being crazed wrath, but usually you use it to get people on your side.

This Skill is only useful when used on crowds or groups. If there is a conversation with give and take, it's probably more a Fascinate situation. *Expected possessions:* none.

Intimidate: Where Inspire provokes a broad range of emotions, Intimidate focuses on fear. With an Intimidate set, you present yourself as a person it would be foolish to cross. The nature of the threat doesn't matter—Intimidation coveres anything from political ruination to magical revenge to a brutal beating. It can be used on groups or individuals. *Expected possessions:* none.

Perform _____: You put on a good show for the crowd. Pick a general category when you select the Skill. It could be that you're a storyteller, an actor or a musician. You can buy this Skill more than once for different specialties.

Perform is also listed as a Coordination Skill, but that's for full-body action performances. With Command, it's more an issue of being a spellbinding speaker or having compelling expression. *Expected possessions:* An appropriate musical instrument or two, for a musician. Otherwise nothing.

Sense Skills

Direction: Your sense of direction gives you a feel for your location. Some part of you is aware of distance, height, and direction. You can find North, retrace your steps, and guide your ship back to port by dead reckoning. *Expected possessions:* A map of the local region.

Eerie: With the Eerie sense you detect the uncanny, the unnatural and the unwholesome. Your eerie sense won't protect you from a lurking footpad, but it might alert you that you're in a haunted (or cursed, or ill-omened) house. Sorcerers hate people with good eerie senses, unless those people have been co-opted as apprentices. (Some GMs may disallow Eerie in their setting.) *Expected possessions:* A good-luck charm.

Empathy: This social sense permits you to gauge those with whom you speak and interact. Use it to see through lies, detect influence of your mood with guile, and spot the envious ex-lover at the wedding. *Expected possessions:* A memento of a bittersweet love affair.

Hearing: Your perception of sound is exceptional. You're superb at eavesdropping, hearing muffled footsteps in dark alleys, and recognizing which string on your friend's violin is just a trifle sharp. *Expected possessions:* none.

Scrutinize: Scrutinize measures your character's ability to look around a locale and reconstruct what happened there, or glean information that isn't immediately obvious. Use it to track someone in the forest, find the hidden panel in the chest, or get a clue from a crime scene. *Expected possessions:* none.

Sight: This Skill improves your chances of spotting the trapdoor you're about to step on, the sail on the distant horizon, or the stealthy assassin taking aim from that minaret. *Expected possessions:* none.

Charm Skills

Fascinate: You can talk and make someone want to keep listening to you. It measures your conversational finesse, your talent for listening (or making people think you're listening) and your general ability to help people like you. If you want to charm, seduce, persuade or simply amuse an individual, this is the Skill. *Expected possessions:* A mirror.

Graces: Short for "social graces," this measures your manners. It's not just obvious stuff like "Never pinch the hostess' husband right in front of her." It also indicates knowledge of foreign cultural mores. Take this Skill and you know how to dine cordially, dance passably, flirt acceptably, and accept (or decline) a royal gift graciously. *Expected possessions:* A set of fine clothes.

Jest: "So these two barbarians walk into a barber shop…" This measures your ability to make people laugh, through high-minded literary sophistry with low-brow fart gags. *Expected possessions:* none.

Lie: Whether you're stretching the truth, fabricating claims of valor or fraudulently name-dropping, this is the Skill you need to remain unflustered and consistent. It is typically countered with Empathy. (Some lies may be detected by other means—Knowledge+Tactics or Strategy if someone's gassing about a famous battle, say. The GM judges and should tell you which pool to roll.) *Expected possessions:* none.

Plead: Rarely a Skill you want to use, it may be one you have to use. Plead plays on the kindness or sympathy (or disgust) of someone you cannot sway through other means. You can plead for your life, plead for a loan, or plead for the good of the country. It's all covered by this single, shameless Skill. *Expected possessions:* none.

Martial Paths and Esoteric Disciplines

Martial Paths are narrow groups of techniques that give warriors an edge in combat. Paths start out with simple maneuvers, and work up to almost inhumanly useful attacks or defenses.

Esoteric Disciplines are the non-combat equivalent: Specialized knowledge that lets you use some Skills better.

To learn any technique from a Martial Path or an Esoteric Discipline, you have to know all the lower techniques. The cost of each technique is equal to its level in the path (or discipline). The first technique is like an Advantage that costs 1 point. The third

Optional Rule: Jest and Straight Lines

Before every game session, each player can present the GM with a number of written-out "straight lines" equal to his Jest score. The GM should make an effort to provide these, so the character can unleash a prepared rejoinder.

Example: Joey's character Bo has Jest 1. Before the session starts, he hands his GM a slip of paper that says 'Indignant woman says "Well! I never!"' During the course of the game, the GM arranges the requested line from the right type of character, so that Joey can come back with "And with that unfriendly attitude, you never will."

It's too bad if the GM can't find a way to insert the line, but she shouldn't feel she's supposed to contort the plot to work them in.

technique costs 3 points and the fifth costs 5 points. Thus, to master an entire Martial Path, or an entire Esoteric Discipline you have to spend 15 points (1+2+3+4+5).

You can never learn more than fifteen martial or esoteric techniques.

Wealth

Your character's Wealth rating goes from 0 to 10 and shows well-off she is. If she has Wealth 0, she's a pauper. If she has Wealth 10, she could ransom a kidnapped prince, outfit an army, or simply live in decadent luxury.

During character generation, you cannot raise Wealth above 5. You buy it like an Advantage. Spend two points, you start with Wealth 2. Spend 5 points, you start with Wealth 5.

Passions

Passions are clear personality drives—things so important to a character that they affect the rules. There are three Passions, and you can have one of each. The three types are a mission, a duty and a craving.

A mission is something you're determined to accomplish. It's a concrete task—something like "Get a meaningful peace treaty signed between my country and the neighboring empire." If you complete your mission, you get a bonus experience point and you can pick a new mission.

Duty is more nebulous—it's a way you live your life. These are hard to change: It's stuff like "Never take an action that would smirch my family name with dishonor" or "Always aid women in distress" or "Always enrich and glorify my country." You can get rid of a duty, but it costs 10 XP. If you don't have a duty, you can only get one if it's offered in the plot.

A craving is personal, selfish and egotistical. "Get drunk whenever no one's counting on me," or "Make love with as many willing partners as possible" or "Amass tremendous wealth" are good cravings. You can only get one of these at the beginning, and you can never be rid of it.

Whenever you're in the direct pursuit of a passion, you add a die to your pool. If you're in the pursuit of two passions, you add two dice. If you're ever obeying all three passions at once, you add three dice. Alternately, instead of adding dice, you can offset penalties.

If you're acting against a passion, you lose a die from your pool. The more passions you resist, the more indecisive and unsure you become. It's possible—I'll call it desirable—to have passions conflict. Rules-wise, they just cancel out, but it makes for good characterization.

Example: Yao is a hot-headed nobleman, assigned guard duties to his clan chief's daughter Nui while she travels towards her marriage to a foreign prince. He decides that "Protect Nui until she arrives safely" is a good mission. (Just having it be "protect Nui" would be bad because it's open ended.) He decides to take a duty as well—"Do nothing cause my family name to be remembered with dishonor" is a good one. But running contrary to that (sometimes) is his craving—"Have sex with as many women who will have me."

In the course of a session, a chamber maid at an inn suggests Yao desert his guard post to make sweet love in the dairy pantry. If Yao does, he's disobeying his duty and his mission, losing two dice from his pool, but he's obeying his craving, which offsets one of the lost dice. All his rolls take a one die penalty while he's away from his post with the maid.

If, on the other hand, he stays and gets into a fight with some marauding assassin, he gets no bonus. He's accomplishing his mission, but sexual frustration distracts him from swordplay.

The next day he's with Nui and a flirtatious handmaiden when three bandits attack. Springing to the attack, he gets a whopping +3d bonus: One because he's protecting Nui, one because he's looking good in front of a potential sexual conquest, and one because running away would shame his family name.

It turns out that his courage impressed more than the handmaiden. Nui suggests that she'd like a last fling before she gets married to some wizened old goat. This does not conflict with his mission and it's certainly in keeping with his craving, but it's up to the GM to decide if his duty is transgressed.

PASSIONS

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Duties, Missions and Cravings do not cost anything. In theory, they're just as likely to harm your character as help her. But a +1d bonus (or the ability to offset the loss of a special die) is nothing to sneeze at.

ADVANTAGES

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Your GM may opt not to use Passions. The rules are balanced with or without them.

Advantages benefit your character, but don't fit under any other category. As with all character generation stuff, Advantages have point costs, depending on how useful they are. The point costs are listed in parentheses next to the name of the Advantage.

You can acquire more Advantages during play, but only if the GM feels it's reasonable. If you make it very clear to your GM that you'd like to buy an Advantage after play begins, the GM may decide to allow it (for something you can do yourself like "Cannibal Smile") or not (for something over which you have little control, like "Thick Headed").

Animal Companion (Varies): You've got a dog, a hunting falcon or some other trained animal. It helps you out. If you want to be a knight with an outstanding horse, take it as a companion.

You can just purchase a horse, but Animal Companions are part of your character. Your GM can callously slay any bought animal to advance the plot. Animal Companions can't be so summarily dismissed. They aren't invulnerable—take it with you when you storm the castle and you're taking your chances—but their loss should mean something within the terms of the plot.

See the examples in the Animal Cost chart (page 30) to gauge a cost for your critter. The GM has veto power over any unreasonable companions. If you want to bump up an animal's intelligence to the level that it obeys orders beyond the ability of an ordinary creature (something like Trigger or Lassie), add a point to the cost.

Beauty (1,3 or 5): If you take one point in this, you're the prettiest boy in your village or someone who gets a second look on the street. At hree points a decadent noble might want to marry or abduct you. Five points of beauty gets you a face that can launch a thousand ships.

In game terms, any time you roll a low success with your Fascinate or Graces Skills, there's a minimum Height to your set. If you roll under it, your Beauty raises it. The new level depends on how much you spend on your Beauty Advantage.

Cost	Minimum Success
1	3
3	7
5	10

Suppose you have a 5d Charm+Fascinate pool and you have the 1 point Beauty Advantage. Chatting up the archduchess, you roll a 2x1. Normally that would make you mildly diverting. But because you're beautiful, it's treated at a 2x3. If you had the 5 point version of the Advantage, it would act like a 2x10 success, keeping her absolutely enthralled.

Character Generation

Cost	Animal
1	Good, loyal warhorse
1	Friendly dog
1	Trained hunting falcon (adds 2d to your pool when you're hunting food in the wild)
1	Dancing monkey
2	Exceptionally strong warhorse (+1 damage box in each hit location)
2	Exceptionally vicious dog (+2 Fight and Dodge Skills)
2	Stealing monkey, trained to climb into homes and lift jewels
3	Superb hunting pack (five dogs, add 3d to your pool when you're hunting food in the wild)
2	Superb racehorse (when racing, it increases the Width of your Ride sets by 2)
2	Protective orangutan (Use the Stats for an Alpha Primate, as listed on **page 318.**)
3	Master warhorse (as the exceptionally strong, but you get a +1d bonus to all Ride rolls while mounted on him)
4	Talking cat of human level intelligence
5	Giant flying mount of animal intelligence
5	Trained riding mammoth

You still have to roll a success. If you're beautiful but have poor Graces, you're going to look like you don't care, and people often resent good looking folks who think they don't have to follow rules.

It's possible to purchase this Advantage with XP, if you explain why your plain character is now more attractive. Perhaps your character just needed a chance to clean up and get a decent wardrobe, or has matured, or is more self-confident. Or maybe that facial scar is just really dashing.

Cannibal Smile (1): You have strong jaws and sharp teeth. With a successful Body+Fight roll, you can bite someone for Width Shock damage, 1 Killing damage. You can also add 1d to your Intimidate pool when scaring someone who knows you're a biter.

Followers (Varies): You've got a group of people who obey your orders (usually), do your bidding (for the most part) and expect you to lead and provide for them.

Specific rules regarding followers (particularly an explanation of Threat), are under "Followers" on page 131, along with "Unworthy Opponents" on page 125. The chart shows how many followers you get.

Cost	Threats			
	1	2	3	4
1	10	5	3	2
2	20	10	5	4
3	30	15	10	6
4	40	20	12	8
5	50	25	15	10

Keeping your lackeys in liquor, livery and limes isn't cheap. Every month, there's an upkeep cost, listed on page 62. Depending on background, you may be able to use the Status Advantage to keep unpaid followers around for a while—it depends on the nature of the followers and their relationship to your status.

When you pick out your followers, select a job for which they are all trained. In addition to fighting at the Threat level described, they can roll a pool equal to their Threat when doing that job. (If you pick out a crew of a dozen Threat 4 sailors for 7 points, they individually roll 4d when climbing or sailing or tying knots. If your 30 Threat 2 followers are monks, they roll 2d for Lore or Eerie tasks.)

Fool Lucky (5): You can re-roll a pool, but it costs you an XP every time you do it. You can only re-roll each pool once—you have to accept the second result, even if it's worse than the first.

Knack for Learning (5): Pick one Skill. When you improve that Skill, whether by buying more ranks in it or by promoting dice into Expert or Master, the XP costs for the improvement drop by 1. (If you have a Knack for Dodge, getting your second level of Dodge Skill costs 1 point instead of 2, promoting a level to Expert costs 9 XP instead of 10, and promoting an ED to Master costs 14 instead of 15.) You also get this cost break on Paths and Disciplines relevant to the Skill.

Character Generation

Leather Hard (5): You have an extra wound box in every hit location.

Lucky (1): Once per session, you can re-roll a pool when no matches turned up.

Patron (Varies): You've got someone advising and protecting you. This could be a meddling parent or an employer. In any event, it's somebody who's in a position to aid you... sometimes.

Example Patron	Cost
Village Chief	1
Wealthy Merchant	2
Prosperous Regional Governor	3
Wizard, City Ruler	4
Powerful and Influential Wizard, Minor King	5

This is not quite the wonderful setup it may appear. While you have your patron's resources to draw upon, the cost is that you're one of those resources. Your patron expects things of you—the nature of this expectation depending on the nature of your relationship. A king who favors a knight trusts him with lots of important missions. That village chief may ask for aid when in danger from a bandit gang (or a corruption investigation).

DEFAULT MAGIC SYSTEM: SPELLS

In REIGN's default setting, spells are bought through the following Advantage.

Spells (Varies): You know a spell, or several. By spending more points, you can know more spells or better spells.

Cost	Single Spell Purchased	Multiple Spells Purchased
1	One spell at Intensity 2	Two spells at Intensity 1
2	One spell at Intensity 3	Two spells at Intensity 2
3	One spell at Intensity 4	Two spells at Intensity 3
4	One spell at Intensity 5	Two spells at Intensity 4
5	One spell at Intensity 6	Two spells at Intensity 5

Starting characters can't know spells above Intensity 6.

You can buy this Advantage multiple times, getting different spells each time.

Chapter Two

Possession (Varies): You own an item of value. As with an Animal Companion, it's an important part of your character. It thus has limited plot immunity, meaning the GM can't wreck it or seriously devalue it without good reason.

To find the cost for a Possession, check out the price list for various items. It starts out on page 61. Find the type of item you want (or something you and your GM can agree is roughly of equal value). Look at the lowest Wealth level it can cost, and reduce that number by one. That's the cost of the Possession Advantage.

Example: Trincula starts out having inherited a mansion in the city from Trinculo—the father she never met. A used mansion of this sort usually costs 6-8 Wealth. The lower end of the range is 6, and reduced by one, Trincula's house is a level 5 Possession.

Secret (Varies): You know something that people would kill to protect. The cost of the secret depends on how many people would kill to protect it. As a guideline, consider the Company that wants the secret preserved. For every five points that Company has in its combined Qualities (rounding down), the Secret's cost rises by 1. Thus, the nation of Dindavara considers it an issue of national security to keep the means to forge a Dinda sword secret. Dindavara has 21 points in Qualities. The Secret of the Dinda is a 4 point Advantage.

Status (Varies): People have a reason to respect you. (This doesn't mean they do, but there's a reason.) Perhaps you're a scholar of note, or your family name is associated with deeds of renown. Whatever it is, you get treated as one of the elite.

Cost	Example Status
1	Minor squire, village sage, certified instructor of some skill or other
2	Knight, priest of a large temple, town mayor
3	Lord, high priest of a capital temple, head of a large merchant clan
4	Duke, Admiral, world famous for _____
5	Crown prince, head of a lesser religion

This Advantage doesn't confer any material benefits of position—you need Wealth and Followers and Possessions for those. If you take Status without those you could be a dispossessed noble who trades on his family's good name, or maybe just a clever impostor who happens to resemble an arch-mage.

Thick Headed (1): You have an extra wound box in your head.

Wealth (Variable): You have Wealth. Each point of Wealth costs one point. See page 58 for how it works.

Problems harm or inconvenience your character. They don't cost points, they earn you experience points. Any time your Problem (or Problems) affect play, you get an extra XP at the end of the session. You never get more than 1 XP per session from Problems, no matter how many you take. Sometimes the player decides when a Problem comes into play, sometimes the GM decides, and sometimes it's up to the dice.

You can never take more than three Problems.

Drunken Blackouts: When you drink, you do foolish, dangerous and/or illegal things. After sobering up, you don't remember them. The player decides when a Blackout kicks in, but the GM controls that character until the binge ends. When this behavior causes trouble, you get the 1XP reward. (If you find a way to black out without causing trouble you don't get the XP.)

Gruesome: You're not just homely or plain. It's actively unpleasant to look upon your face. Your GM may give –1d penalties to Command or Charm Skills, if she feels that being appallingly hideous might impact them. You cannot take this and the 'Beauty' Advantage. You get a bonus XP in any session where this penalty is levied.

Hated Enemy: Someone hates you. Maybe you know who, maybe not. Whenever this enemy's acts harm or inconvenience you, you get a bonus XP.

Jinx: Once per session, the GM can nullify one successful set you've rolled. You cannot appeal or re-roll.

Manifest Density: You can only take this Problem if your Knowledge score is 1. You can never raise your Knowledge above 1, and your dumbness is apparent to everyone you meet. Every session in which your dimness leads someone to mistrust you, take advantage of you or ignore your warning nets you 1 XP.

Misplaced Confidence: Pick a Skill in which you have misplaced confidence. Any rolls against that Skill have their Difficulty increased by 3. If you fail a Skill roll because of that Difficulty, you get an extra XP.

Missing Arm: If you attempt a task where you'd normally use both arms (trying to climb a tree or pull a rickshaw), your GM can assess a Difficulty—something around 3-5 is typical. Finally, if someone hits you in hit locations 3-4 (if you're missing your left arm) or 5-6 (if it's your right) the damage goes straight into your torso. Any time one of these difficulties arises, expect an extra XP at the session's end.

Missing Hand: You still have the arm, it's just tipped with a hook or some other sort of prosthesis. You still may face Difficulties for two-handed actions, but you still have wound boxes in your arm. Nevertheless, when a hit turns up at location 4 (if your left hand is gone) or 6 (if it's right) the damage goes into your torso.

Peg Leg: Instead of a leg, you've got a shoddy wooden prosthesis. Any time you try to run, climb or perform some other leg-intensive action, you face a Difficulty of 3-5 (GM's discretion). Any time a hit turns up that would strike you in your missing limb, the damage goes right into your torso.

Repulsive to Animals: All your Expert Animal Trainer and Ride rolls have their Difficulty raised by 3. If you fail a roll because of this Difficulty, you get an extra XP at the end of the session. Furthermore, wild animals or even tame ones are more likely to attack you. Any time this happens, you can expect the XP payoff at session's end.

Problems

Stupidly Forgiving: Instead of polishing off a helpless foe, you're likely to give him a lecture and let him go. It's up to you to try and activate this Problem—you have to say you're letting someone off with a warning. Once you decide to show mercy to an enemy, it's up to the GM to decide if this comes back to haunt you. If it ever does, you earn that XP.

Unwholesome: The first time you meet someone, he rolls his Eerie pool. With a success, something about you makes them feel creepy. You can still win them over with charm or bribery or an obvious display of good deeds, but you start out with one social strike against you.

Method 1: Point Buy

Now that you understand Stats, Skills and Advantages, here's the first of the two character generation methods: The goal-oriented one. You have a budget of points, you buy what you like, you go.

This tends to create characters who do one or two things superlatively well and who are almost hopeless outside their areas of expertise. (In character generation, buying the fifth level of a Skill costs the same as buying the first level. When you're actually playing, the standard experience rules make that fifth level far more costly. This is intentional.) It's therefore a very good idea to consult with the other players so that you don't end up with five expert warriors and no one literate enough to negotiate a surrender treaty.

Step One: Baseline

Start with 1 in each Stat and one MD in your character's native language.

Step Two: Buy Stuff

You get a number of points to spend, based on the scope of your campaign.

Beginner — 85 points
Serious Adventurer — 120 points
Epic Hero — 150 points

You buy Stats, Skills and Advantages based on the following costs.

Increasing a Stat by 1: 5 points.
Increasing a Skill by 1: 1 point.
Promoting a Normal Skill die to an Expert Die: 1 point.
Promoting an Expert Die to a Master Die: 5 points.
Acquiring an Advantage: Varies, but the cost is listed.
Acquiring a Problem: Free, but you can't have more than 3 Problems.

Step Three: Make up a Background

Where your character was born, how he was raised, why he turned out the way he is, what he likes to eat, wear and sleep with… the other character generation options provide plenty of inspiration for this kind of thing. But if you just want to saddle up and slay some dragons, this step may be optional.

Method 2: One Random Roll

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If you're really in a hurry, or don't like making decisions, or feel like a radical departure… there's the one roll system. This generates characters at the Beginner level, worth 85 points.

Step One: Baseline

Start with 2 in each of the six Stats and one MD in your character's native language.

Step Two: The Roll

Roll 11d10. Normally, you can't roll more than 10d in a pool because it guarantees a match. In this case, that's the point.

Step Three: Professions

You will generate at least one match, probably two, possibly three or more. The Height of the match (or matches) shows what profession (or professions) you've practiced in your life. The Width of the matches shows how accomplished you were at the job you chose (or, just as likely, the job circumstance thrust upon you).

Each level includes all the preceding levels. If you roll 4x1, it's not just that you get…

+2 Stealth, +1 Dagger, +2 Lie

You get that, plus…

+1 Sense, +2 Plead, +1 Run, +1 Sight, +1 Dodge

…from the 2x1 level, along with…

+1 Dodge, +1 Run, +1 Fascinate, +1 Jest, +1 Endurance

…from the 'Canny Beggar' stage.

If you got a match of 6x or Higher, take the extra dice and reroll them.

Stats are listed in CAPITALS so that you won't look for them under the Skill lists. Advantages are listed in *italics*.

2x1 Lowly Beggar:

+1 SENSE	+2 Plead
+1 Run	+1 Sight
+1 Dodge	

3x1 Canny Beggar:

+1 Dodge	+1 Run
+1 Fascinate	+1 Jest
+1 Endurance	

4x1 Experienced Beggar:

+2 Stealth	+1 Dagger
+2 Lie	

5x1 Beggar Monarch:

+1 CHARM

2x2 Petty Thief:

+1 COORDINATION	+1 Dodge
+3 Stealth	+1 Run

3x2 Cutpurse:

+1 Dodge   +1 Dagger
+1 Run   +2 Climb

4x2 Burglar:

Change one Stealth die and one Climb
die to Expert
+1 *Wealth*   +2 Lie

5x2 Criminal Mastermind:

Change your ED in Stealth to an MD.

. . . .

2x3 Street Entertainer:

+1 CHARM   +2 Perform
+2 Fascinate   +1 Jest

3x3 Traveling Bard:

+1 COMMAND

4x3 Successful Player:

Change one Perform die and one
Fascinate die to Expert.
+1 Graces   +1 Inspire
+1 Language

5x3 Renowned Performer:

Change one of your EDs (your choice) into
an MD.

. . . .

2x4 Miserly Merchant:

+1 CHARM   +2 Haggle
+2 *Possession (*pick a form of transport)
+1 *Wealth*

3x4 Canny Tradesman:

+1 Language   +2 Lie
+1 Haggle   +1 Student of Navigation

4x4 Banker:

Change one normal Haggle die to Expert.
+2 *Wealth*   +1 Direction
+1 Lie

5x4 Captain of Industry:

Change your Haggle ED to an MD.

. . . .

2x5 Able Seaman:

+1 COORDINATION +1 Fight
+2 Climb   +2 Student of Sailing

3x5 Weathered Tar:

+1 Athletics   +2 Endurance
+2 Vigor

4x5 First Mate:

+2 Direction   +1 Sight
+1 Language   +1 Student of Navigation

5x5 Captain:

+1 COMMAND

. . . .

2x6 Foot Soldier:

+1 BODY   +2 Fight
+1 Dodge   +2 Parry

3x6 Veteran Warrior:

Change one Fight or Weapon die to an ED.
+2 Weapon (you choose)
+1 Dodge   +1 Parry

4x6 Front Line Fighter:

Learn the first two techniques on one
Martial Path, and the first technique on a
different Path.   +1 Weapon

5x6 Champion:

Change your ED into an MD.

2x7 Lowly Sage:

+1 KNOWLEDGE	+2 Languages
+1 Lore	+2 Heal

3x7 Canny Sage:

+5 ranks of Student in whatever fields you choose.

4x7 Expert Sage:

+1 Heal	+2 Lore
+2 Fascinate	

5x7 Master Sage:

+1 KNOWLEDGE

. . . .

2x8 Squad Leader:

+1 COMMAND	+1 Fight
+1 Ride	+1 Tactics
+2 Inspire	

3x8 Officer:

+2 Parry	+2 Tactics
+1 Endurance	

4x8 Commander:

+1 Sight	+1 Direction
+2 Strategy	+1 Lie

5x8 General:

+1+ED Strategy	+1 Tactics	+1 *Status*
+1 Sight	+1 Direction	

2x9 Sorcerer's Apprentice:

+1 Lore	+1 Eerie

+1 KNOWLEDGE (or whatever Stat helps with magic in your setting)
+3 Sorcery OR +1 Sorcery and +2 *Spells* (if spells have to be acquired separately in your setting)

3x9 Hedge Wizard:

+2 Counterspell	+1 Eerie

+2 Sorcery OR +1 Sorcery and +1 *Spells*

4x9 Adept:

Change one Sorcery die to Expert.
+2 Eerie
+2 *Spells* OR +2 Counterspell

5x9 Master Enchanter:

Change Sorcery ED to MD.

. . . .

2x10 Noble Byblow

+1 COMMAND	+1 *Wealth*
+1 *Status*	+2 Graces
+1 Sword	

3x10 Minor Noble:

+1 Intimidate	+1 Lie
+1 *Status*	+1 Graces
+1 *Wealth*	

4x10 Prominent Noble:

Change one Intimidate die to an Expert Die.

+1 *Wealth*	+1 Intimidate
+2 *Status*	

5x10 Of Royal Blood:

Change your Intimidate ED into an MD.

NOT SO VERY RANDOM

You can take as many dice as you wish as EDs for your roll. Thus, you can decide you want a character who's commanding and scary and regal, and set three (or even five) dice to 10, leaving the rest to chance. This is a good way to get some randomness in but still build a character who fits with the rest of the party. If you know they need someone who sneaks, set a couple dice on 2 and let the rest fall where they may.

STEP FOUR: UNUSUAL EXPERIENCES

For each of your Waste Dice (that is, dice that didn't come up in a set) consult one of the three following charts to see what an interesting life you've led—and what abilities or benefits that has given you.

Which chart you use—A, B or C—doesn't really matter. A has the least-bizarre events, and C has the most, if that influences you. Only B has entries for passions, if you're using the passion rules.

CHART A

1 **Exiled:** You are no longer welcome in some province, country or region. Just what did you do that was bad enough to get kicked out, but not bad enough to merit summary execution?
+3 Plead, +1 Dodge, +1 Run.

2 **Robbed!:** Someone has stolen pretty much every cent you have in the world. How was this done? Stealth? Confidence trickery? Simple brute force? However it was accomplished, it's made you more watchful. **+1 SENSE. If you've gotten any levels of Wealth, you lose them all. However, for each lost Wealth level, you can take a level in any other Advantage you wish.** (Note: If you had some Wealth

and really want to keep it, just stick this event into your character's history *before* the event that gets you the wealth. It's okay. You have my permission.)

3 **Someone Got Spurned**: You either rejected or got rejected by some potential lover. Regardless of who denied whom, regardless of whether it was swift and painful or slow and gentle (and painful) or cruel and heartless (and *really* painful) someone's heart got crushed. **+1 CHARM.**

4 **Racer**: You have, at some point, spent a lot of time jockeying an animal along a track while being cheered on (not to mention bet on) by a feverish crowd of fans. What kind of animal was it? Why'd you quit? **+3+ED in Ride.**

5 Outstanding Cook: Says it all, really. You're a great cook. You make food taste good. **+5 Expert: Cooking.**

6 Gladiator: You've fought for the entertainment of others. Maybe you were willing, maybe not so much, but you've known the pressure of having people hoot and cheer while someone else tries to stick a trident in your thigh. **+3 Weapon: Spear, *Thick Headed, the first martial technique in a Path based on Spear, Dodge or Parry.***

7 Rescued an Injured Animal: At some point, you saved a critter and nursed it back to health. Probably when it was young. Now it adores you. **+2 Student: Animal Training, +3 Animal Companion.**

8 Kidnapped by Barbarians: 'Barbarians' in this case meaning 'Someone of a culture not your own.' Why did they kidnap you? How did you escape? *Did* you escape? Did you come to share their beliefs, or were you always sullen and resentful?
+1 Ride, +1 Endurance, +1 Plead, +2 Language of Your Kidnappers.

9 Gnostic/Mystic/Religious Experience: You've experienced something that fundamentally changed the way you look at the world, nature, spirituality and the underlying order of existence. Or maybe you were just possessed by evil spirits for a year. In any event, you've been up close and personal with the alien and bizarre.
+2 Eerie, +2 Lore, +1 Sorcery.

10 Served the Decadent Rich: Maybe you played the nose-flute behind a screen in a brothel, or were the towel steward at the Empress' private bathworks, or were the door guard at the royal seraglio. Whatever, you got to see society's best at their worst.
+1 Fascinate, +2 Graces, +1 Plead, +1 Lie.

Chart B

1 Mistaken-Identity Shenanegans: You were, at some point, embroiled in zany misadventures when someone mistook you for someone else. You still may not know exactly what was going on, but you came out of it okay.
+1 Wealth, +2 Lie, +2 Stealth.

2 Imprisoned: Maybe you were locked up for your political views. Maybe you were in a prison camp after your cowardly general surrendered. In any event, you were jailed somewhere crowded and unpleasant. Or maybe you were crammed in a madhouse, with or without good reason. (Ask yourself this: Why was your character imprisoned, rather than killed out of hand?) **+2 Fight, +3 Vigor.**

3 Love Triangle: At some point, you were in love with her and she was in love with him. Or maybe she was in love with him and he was in love with you. Or maybe they were both in love with you and you didn't want either. Whatever happened, there were lots of hurt feelings and regrets and probably at least one really embarrassing public scene. ***Beauty (3), +1 Lie, +1 Plead, Mission: Find True Love.***

4 Caravan Debacle: You were in a caravan that never went to its intended destination. Instead, it went terribly, terribly wrong. This could be due to bandits, horrific weather, disease, monster attack, loss of food which forced you all to resort to cannibalism… the details are up to you, but they were nasty.
+3 Student: Navigation, +2 Direction.

5 Press Ganged: Against your will, you were forced onto service aboard a warship. How'd you get out of that one? **+1 BODY, *Craving: Beat On Sailors.***

Chapter Two

6 Vengeance Quest: They murdered your father! (Or maybe it was your husband, or sister, or child.) You've spent years honing yourself into an engine of vengeance. Now they must pay! **+2 Sword, *the first two techniques of a Martial Path. The Path is up to you, but it must relate to Sword, Dodge or Parry.***

7 Magnificent Garden: You had a really great garden, once. It was your pride and joy. It brought you happiness and tranquility. Now, it's gone. **+5 Student: Plants and Herbs.**

8 Stolen Birthright: You were destined for better than this. Maybe you're supposed to command a merchant fleet, or rule a barony, or own Apple Blossom Ranch. But you've been tricked or conned or forced out of what's yours by right. Now, you're going to take it back.
+1 COORDINATION, *Duty: Sustain Your Family's Traditions.*

9 Survived Hideous Occult Ritual: Blasphemous religious ceremony? Arcane experiment? Whatever it was, it went really, really wrong. Really. The question is, were you performing it, or just there to be sacrificed?
+2 Counterspell, +3 Eerie, *Problem: Unwholesome.*

10 Diplomatic Incident: No matter what your current social station, or what your social station was when the… unpleasantness… occurred, you managed to create tremendous antagonism between two states, nations or tribes. Did you intend to be an agent provocateur? Or was it just sheer mischance? Whatever it was, you've attracted somebody's attention. ***Patron (5 points), Problem: Enemy.***

Chart C

1 Raised Wild: Perhaps you were abandoned in the woods as a child and were nursed by wolves (or a bear, or an ape, or whatever). Maybe primitives who have no real language of their own raised you. Whatever it was, you're used to living on the edge.
Lose the normal MD everyone has for their native language — and note that your GM now has the right to make you roll *any time you want to explain something.* +3 Hearing, +2 Sight, +3 Language, +2 Expert: Throwing, +2 Endurance.

2 Escaped a Death Sentence: Maybe you fought free against incredible odds. Maybe you snuck out through a lucky break. Or maybe the rope just broke at the right time. ***Fool Lucky.***

3 Star-Crossed Lovers: Well, a parent just didn't approve. Or maybe it was a spouse. Or maybe events just conspired to trap you, hundreds of miles away from your beloved. In any event, it was not to be, leaving you sadder, wiser, and unusually attentive to the quickest exit from any bedroom you enter. **+1 Lie, +1 Stealth, +1 Run, +1 Dodge, *Beauty (1), Problem: Enemy.***

4 Unexpected Windfall: You've come to own something of great value. Maybe you won it at cards. Maybe it 'fell off the cart.' Maybe you just found it. ***+4 Possession, +1 Wealth.***

5 Stranded: You could have been shipwrecked, the lone survivor of an exploration mission, or simply gotten lost somewhere desolate. In any event, you had to survive solo for a really long time. **+3 Throw, +1 Endurance, +1 Athletics.**

6 Saved Someone's Life: That's got to feel good, huh? How'd you do it? Cure the fever

no one else could? Pull her from in front of runaway horses? Swim him to shore? Scare off the wolf pack? Whatever it was, you've got a friend for life. And your friend is a *good* friend to have! **Patron (5 points).**

7   Unlikely Education: At some point, you've gained a great deal of knowledge about some subject that's completely unrelated to your professions and other experiences. Maybe you were apprenticed to someone. Maybe you have an abiding interest. Maybe you were imprisoned in a specialized library for an extended period. **+5 in a Student Skill you don't already possess.**

8   Disastrous Mountain Expedition: Similar to the Caravan Debacle (above), you were involved in a horrible mission that went awry. Maybe you were exploring uncharted lands, or trying to find a profitable new pass, or were guiding mercenaries in to aid your beleaguered people. But by mischance or mischief, it all went awry. **Leather Hard.**

9   Strange Birthmark: You never thought too much about that birthmark on your neck (or ankle, or shoulder-blade, or wrist). You know — the one that looks like a fish (or an anchor, or a crown, or a tree). But a few people who've seen it have had very strange reactions, ranging from eagerness and awe, to anger or even fear. What does it mean? You have no idea. **Knack for Learning, Problem: Enemies.** You can pick the Skill to which your knack applies or, if you prefer, leave it up to the GM.

10 His Majesty's Personal Cobbler: You made the most beautiful, most comfortable, most durable shoes in the entire kingdom, and as a result you are one of the relatively few people to have seen the monarch barefoot. Do you still have this exalted position? If not, what happened? If so, where'd all your money get to? (This result gives you a Skill in Student: Cobbler that costs more than you should really get from a single die, but… come on, it's *cobbling*. You can make and fix shoes and other leather goods and that's it. It's not quite the lifesaver that a 4+MD Dodge Skill can be.) **+4+MD Student: Cobbler**.

Step Five: Organize

Now you've got a pile of professions and experiences, along with Stats and Skills. What your character lacks is coherence. For that, all you need to do is look at the list of events and put them in order. If you roll a 3x4 and a 2x4, you've got someone who has been a sailor and a successful merchant. It seems a reasonable progression to start out manning the yardarm and eventually make enough money to buy your own ship and become a merchant. But you could just as easily go the other way and decide that the merchant lost his money and has had to become a sailor—he's just now earned back enough to strike out on his own again. Similarly, 2x6 and 2x8 (Foot Soldier and Squad Leader) could indicate someone who got promoted for competence, or someone who got demoted due to corruption, scandal or simple politics.

When you're putting all this together, it's often a good idea to talk to the other players to see what narrative they're constructing. You can take this opportunity to decide your character already knows one or more of the others. If you rolled the "Sailor" profession and another player got the "Stranded" event, you two might decide that your character was on the ship that rescued him. In this fashion, you can jump right into play with characters who trust one another.

Chapter Two

Alternate Charts, Alternate Professions

It's perfectly possible to tinker with the One Random Roll method of character creation so that it's customized to your setting. Suppose your GM has built an academy of arcane study, and the PCs are going to be instructors. She could write up a chart where x1 matches indicate training in magic based on altered perception, x2 matches show that you're an oracle, x3 matches are for fire magi and so forth.

There are a couple guidelines to make this work smoothly.

Every Die Is Worth 5 Points: Remember that the first level in a profession is formed from two dice, not one—that 2x4 match indicates 10 points worth of goodies, not five. However, that 3x4 match only adds another 5 to that.

Loose "Event" Dice Should Resemble the Profession: Check out the charts in place. All the 7 events give you some kind of Student Skill, and two out of three 6 events give you combat Skills. This is no accident. When writing up charts A, B and C, I knew that anyone who had a loose 7 die necessarily had no x7 match. Since the x7 match has all the brain Skills, I knew that putting brain Skills on events that came up 7s wouldn't produce redundancies. Similarly, anyone who has a loose 6 doesn't have an x6 match and, therefore, could probably use a combat Skill or two.

Y ou have a character who works with the other PCs and your GM says it fits the plot. That's good. You understand what matches are, why you want them, and what the difference between a 3x2 and a 2x3 is. Splendid. What follows are the rules governing Skills, along with a few Esoteric Disciplines that make Skills more useful and interesting.

Rules for Specific Skills

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While the Character Generation chapter explains what the Skills are, this chapter has particular rules for how they work. (Combat Skills are exceptions. They're mostly covered in the Combat section.)

Athletics

The definition for Athletics is left intentionally vague. Someone with a high Athletics pool should be able to perform impressive feats—without even a roll if the GM's generous. Otherwise, a straight static contest roll is sufficient for ordinary tasks. If you roll a match, you did it, full stop. In competition with another character, you engage in a dynamic contest, as described on page 11. Other than that, the GM adjudicates this Skill with common sense—which means she should accept a simple match unless (1) it harms the plot or (2) it reduces the fun instead of increasing it.

Throwing is a special case, given its combat use. Lots of factors impact on how far and how well you chuck an object—size, strength, aerodynamics, et cetera. Rather than bother with all that, use the following rules of thumb.

Light objects can be accurately thrown out to Short range. (Short range is defined on page 120 in the Combat section, but it's about twenty paces). A 'light' object is anything your character could comfortably heft with one hand. If it hits, it does Width in Shock damage. Items that are unusually dangerous—they're pointy or white-hot or something—might add a point of Killing damage or might even do their Width in Killing damage.

Heavy objects (things that the character needs both hands to lift) can be accurately thrown about ten feet. They do Width+1 in Shock, unless they're unusually nasty (bladed, spiked or dripping acid) in which case they might add a point of Killing damage or do Width+1 Killing. **Usual Stat:** Body

Taking Time and Doing It Right

When trying to bullseye someone with a crossbow, add +1d to your pool for every round you spend aiming, up to a maximum of +2d. This same idea applies to many other Skills. If you take twice as long to investigate the crime scene before rolling, you can give a +1d bonus to your Scrutinize pool. If you have all the time you want to get secreted away you can add two dice to your Stealth pool. There are some circumstances where this doesn't work, but usually taking your time makes success far more likely. As with the crossbow, no more than two dice should be added to a pool.

Climb

In combat, you can ascend five feet per round for every point of Width in your set, if the surface is easy to climb on. If the conditions are inclement, it's five feet for every two points of Width.

If you're not in immanent danger, a successful roll or two gets you to the top. Hard climbs are represented with Difficulties. Really good equipment can offset Difficulty, but rarely improves results. **Usual Stat:** Coordination

Direction

With a successful roll, you can intuitively find North, retrace your steps easily, and guide your ship back to port by dead reckoning. A roll with this Skill can fill in for all the usual rigmarole of consulting maps, figuring movement rates, buying feed for horses and so forth. Good roll = quick trip. Failure = lost in crocodile swamp. **Usual Stat:** Sense

Dodge

Avoiding damage is thoroughly covered in the Combat section on page 122. The mechanical difference between this and Parry is that you can dodge without touching the incoming weapon, and you can't protect anyone but yourself by using it. **Usual Stat:** Coordination

Eerie

Eerie is used to sense when a spell is being prepared. It can also determine if a particular item is enchanted. (It cannot normally be used to scan a person or animal for enchantment—living creatures are too complicated.) Detecting spellcasting is passive: The GM asks you to roll when you're in an area where you might notice someone doing it. Checking items requires active concentration. No matter how powerful that magic sword is, you're not going to sense it with Eerie unless you really examine it.

Most people have poor Eerie senses. While they might detect a sorcerous flux, they have no way to determine its direction, intensity, or use. They can typically tell if it's aimed at them or not, but other than that they just know it's occurring. **Usual Stat:** Sense

Empathy

Empathy is the Skill of understanding people at the emotional level. When someone attempts to sway your opinions with Fascinate or Inspire, a simple Empathy roll is enough to let you intuit their intentions. This does not mean the attempt fails. When you try to persuade someone, don't you try to make the pitch sweet? In any event, nothing a GMC rolls can make your character change his mind. All that Inspire and Fascinate can do is make him want to believe.

A common use for Empathy is "dishonesty detector." When you suspect someone is lying, roll Empathy. Your GM rolls some dice in secret—either the other character's Lie roll or Fascinate or Intimidate or whatever seems reasonable for telling the truth. If the character is lying, his Lie dice become Gobble Dice and go at whichever set you pick (if you get one). If more than one person is trying to figure if the talker is for real, the Lie roll only has to destroy the Highest and the Widest roll by reducing them to a single point of

Rules for Specific Skills

Width. (This is described under Lie). If you get no sets or your sets are destroyed, the GM tells you something like "He seems to be telling the truth." If your sets remain and he's honest, the GM tells you the same thing. If your sets remain and he's lying, the GM says, "He seems to be hiding something" or a similar line. When a character scans honest, the GM should never, of course, tell you if she's ruining your Empathy sets or whether there was nothing to ruin them. **Usual Stat:** Sense

Endurance

If you're trying to do something hard for a long time, roll Body+Endurance. If you succeed, you can keep going unimpaired. If you fail, you take a penalty. Endurance can also be rolled in a contest against torture. Your Endurance successes become Gobble Dice that oppose the sets from his Knowledge+Healing (or Expert: Torturer) roll. This is not time-sensitive, so if you get 2x7 and he got 4x5, you can cut him down to a 2x5 and lessen the impact. **Usual Stat:** Body

Fascinate

This is personal-interaction Skill doesn't need a lot of rules. Roll a success and your listener is more inclined to like you or be interested or agree. Use common sense: Fascinate can't overcome circumstances like "She saw you kill her mom" but less traumatic problems (you belong rival political groups) may only impose a Difficulty. **Usual Stat:** Charm

Fight

Fight makes attacks, described throughout the Combat section. It canwrestle, punch, or use a hand-to-hand weapon, as long as its use is obvious. Anything that requires finesse, training or an explanation can't be used with Fight. Weapons like whips, bows and lassos are beyond its purview. **Usual Stat:** Body

Graces

Any Graces set keeps you from making a fool of yourself. Any failure means you committed some kind of faux pas. Even if you've never met someone before and have no clue about their culture, Graces makes you sufficiently sensitive that you abort rude actions or make it clear you intend no offense.

Graces have a subtler use. People with élan can use it to mask devious activities. If you talk to someone and make a successful Charm+Graces roll to incline him to trust you, his next Sense+Empathy roll against you is at a –1d penalty. He cannot use Sense+Empathy to detect this manipulation because the only thing he'd detect is you acting the way everyone really ought to. **Usual Stat:** Charm

Haggle

Use this to get a better price—lower if you're buying, higher if you're selling. A simple Haggle roll can appraise objects if your character has any excuse for the knowledge. (Someone who owned some jewelry can evaluate gems, but a beggar who spent her whole life in the gutter has no way to know how much a rare perfume is worth.)

You can also use Haggle when you want to buy something with a Cost equal to your Wealth rating. Normally, if you bought it your Wealth would drop by 1. You can choose instead to make a contested roll against the seller. If you get the Higher set, you get the object and keep your Wealth. If the seller rolls Higher, you can't get it at all. Alternately, if the object or the merchant or your Wealth rating don't matter much to your GM, you may get the bargain with a simple success. **Usual Stat:** Charm

Healing

There are a couple ways to apply this. Once per day, you can fuss with bandages and splints and, with a successful roll, remove a number of Shock points equal to the Width of the roll.

For the more seriously harmed, you can roll to help them after they've spent a full day resting and recuperating. If this roll succeeds, you can change one point of Killing damage into Shock. The healer decides the location for the changed point.

If applied to torture, the Healing Skill can extract information, though this imposes a –1d penalty. (If you want to lose the penalty, take Expert: Torturer.) This is a contested roll against Body+Endurance, with the victim's Endurance successes becoming Gobble Dice. Before rolling, the torturer says what body part he's working on. For every point of Width the torturer rolls, the victim takes a point of Shock to that location. Every time the interrogator gets a set past the defense of Endurance, any Lie rolls the victim makes take a –1d penalty until he recovers from all damage. (These penalties are cumulative.) If the torturer rolls no successes, he does Killing damage equal to his pool.

Healing sets can alleviate the effects of some poisons or illnesses—possibly curing them altogether. This is discussed at length on page 180, but the rule of "what's good for the story" can alter how easy (or possible) such aid is. **Usual Stat:** Knowledge

Hearing

Hearing helps you notice things. Static contest rolls (see page 11) hear things like the low hissing sound of escaping poison gas or the twang of a tripline.

When someone hides from you, roll your Sense+Hearing pool. The hidden spy uses Coordination+Stealth successes as Gobble Dice against your sets. If multiple people search, the hider only has to beat the Widest and Highest sets. (This is described under "Stealth," below.) Interference, like wind or the sound of waves on the shore, are usually modeled with dice penalties. If you're inside a metal structure during a violent hailstorm, your GM may not let you make Hearing rolls. **Usual Stat:** Sense

Inspire

For general rabble-rousing, a successful roll produces an emotional response, with greater Height indicating increased passion. If your game doesn't need more detail, there it is.

Inspire can raise the Threat level of allied troops. If you give a speech before a fight, any success gives the Morale bonus to their Threat (described on page 126 of the Combat section) if they don't already have it.

If you don't get a chance before the battle, you can still give your troops the Morale bonus

during the fight. Spend a round yelling encouragement and direction, and your soldiers gain the Morale effect for all of that round, starting with the Declare phase, and you don't need to roll. If you want to direct them while doing something else (dodging or attacking, say) you need to make a multiple action between Inspire and whatever else you want to accomplish. This is described in detail, with examples, on page 131. **Usual Stat:** Command

Intimidate

Outside of combat, Intimidate can produce various effects, but they're up to the GM to adjudicate, based on the toughness of the target and the ramifications of giving in. Browbeating a defenseless peasant into telling you where the harmless old man went is simple. Scowling at the hardened guard at a fortress who knows his liege will kill him if he lets the wrong people in—that's got to be against some Difficulty. Its uses in combat are discussed in the **Combat** chapter. **Usual Stat:** Command

Jest

If you just state "My character laughs and jokes with the guards" but don't come up with any examples, roll Jest. Any success elicits some laughs, ranging from mild chuckles (for x1 sets) to thigh-slapping guffaws (for a x10). With no sets, your reward is flop sweat. If you come up with a funny joke and tell it, you succeed without rolling. If you think it's funny and the GM doesn't, roll without penalty to see who the audience agrees with. **Usual Stat:** Charm

Language

Language rolls are cooperative between speaker and listener. It doesn't matter how sharp one's comprehension is, or how eloquent the other, if there's no common vocabulary. Therefore, if two characters don't share a Language, neither can make Inspire or Fascinate rolls. (The other Charm and Command Skills can be made through gesture and facial expression, though Difficulties may be assessed.) Furthermore, characters without a language in common can only exchange the simplest pieces of information.

If characters do share a language, the pool is formed of each character's Skill (instead of one character's Knowledge+Language). If either character has an MD you don't need to roll and can proceed. Otherwise, roll. With a success, they can communicate simple ideas and try to outwit each other.

Example: Tud's native language is Truil but he has Language: Imperial 1. He encounters Kipo, who has an MD in Futai but only 3d in his Language: Imperial Skill. Any time they want to have a conversation they roll Tud's Skill+Kipo's Skill, or 4d.

Drop a die from the combined pool if (1) the subject is complicated or specialized (such as a conversation about detailed military strategy or magical theory) or (2) one of the characters is trying to read something the other wrote. If it's a written document about something complicated or highly involved, it's a –2d penalty.

At the GM's discretion, Difficulties might come into play if a Language roll with low Height establishes the dialogue. This is especially appropriate for Fascinate or Inspire rolls. But if it's going to be a pain, don't bother. **Usual Stat:** Knowledge

Lie

Lying is a contested action between Lie Skill and Empathy. The roll off doesn't happen if the listener isn't suspicious (or doesn't care). Depending on the falsehood, of course, other Skills could detect it: Knowledge+Lore if someone's gassing about a historical event, or Knowledge+Graces if they claim to have spent a summer at the palace.

The liar rolls and turns his results into Gobble Dice, which he uses to offset the Highest and/or Widest sets generated by his listeners. It's just like Stealth (see page 53). If you lie to multiple people, you just have to wreck the Widest set and the Highest, and you take no penalties for 'multiple actions' when trying to fool more than one listener. Liars do take a multiple action penalty when two different lies collide—for example, when a liar gave a false name to his new wife and his old wife shows up asking who the other woman is. (The bigamist may actually pull it off if the women don't share a language.)

Telling a lie is not time sensitive. If your Gobble Dice are 2x10 and your patsy rolled a 3x3, you can apply two of your tens to two of his threes and wreck his set.

Furthermore, just because someone got Lie successes doesn't mean you have to decide your character trusts her. As always, the opinions of the character are up to the player. **Usual Stat:** Charm

Lore

Lore is kind of a catch-all. It often has a Difficulty or penalty, depending on how obscure the given question is. Knowing the proper etiquette in a foreign land usually requires Graces, and any Graces gives the answer. But if you don't have Graces, you might figure it out with Lore. When using Lore for something offbeat, or which another Skill usually covers, a Difficulty is in order. It can be as low as 2 (for something well known, like the title of a foreign land's ruler) to as high as 10 (for something arcane and obscure—like the name of the mother of the founder of an ancient city). **Usual Stat:** Knowledge

Parry

Parry maneuvers are covered in detail in the Combat section, but they generally produce Gobble Dice (see page 14). They differ from Dodge maneuvers in that you can use Parry to protect someone other than yourself, but you need a hard object with which to block. **Usual Stat:** Body

Perform _____

Often, this can be used without a roll. If someone has the Skill, they can play a tune or remember their lines in a play, unless it's desirable to produce tension (or comedy) through the possibility of embarrassing failure or spectacular success. In that case, roll. A failure means the performer humiliates himself. A low success means he performs ably. A high one means he plays well. **Usual Stat:** Command

Plead

If you roll a Plead set, your listener feels bad if he doesn't do what you want. It doesn't control people's actions, but a good Plead roll might distract them enough to produce a

Difficulty or die pool penalty, at the GM's discretion. (This usually won't work on PCs unless the plea plays to one of their Passions. If you say "My character doesn't give a damn that he's about to kill her brother," the GM ought to respect that.) **Usual Stat:** Charm

RIDE

Roll this as a dynamic contest to beat the other riders in a race, to charge down on your opponent in a battle, or as a static contest to guide your horse through the forest. **Usual Stat:** Coordination

RUN

In time-sensitive circumstances, you can move 15 feet every round even while taking another action. If you want to move farther, roll Body+Run. A success gives you five feet more for every point of Width. (See "Move" on page 123 of the Combat section.)

You may also use the Run Skill when it's important to move faster than someone else—a chase scene or a foot race, for example. In that case, simply do it as a dynamic contest (described on page 11) or a series of dynamic contests for longer or more dramatic pursuits. For lengthy runs, Body+Endurance rolls can be added. The easiest way to do that is to give a –1d penalty to Run rolls for people who've failed their Endurance tests, while those who succeed have no such penalties. **Usual Stat:** Body

SCRUTINIZE

This is the Skill of analyzing your surroundings to reconstruct events. It makes you a detective or a tracker. Even someone with poor sight and hearing can be good at reading the signs of passage, because it's more a matter of analyzing patterns.

To detect something simple with no attempt to disguise it, take a few minutes and roll a Scrutinize success. This is how you pursue of mounted fugitives, for example.

If you're trying to find something hidden, roll Scrutinize and the character who hid it rolls Stealth. His successes become Gobble Dice, applied to the set you picked. (If you want to really search hard in a short period, do a multiple action.) If more than one investigator is on the case, the Stealth roll only has to defeat the Highest and Widest sets.

Circumstances often levy Difficulties. Trying to find a trail in the dark, or find the one scroll you need when the library is on fire can deter even the most perceptive seeker. **Usual Stat:** Sense

SIGHT

Sight notices things. If you're trying to determine if the ship that's coming over the horizon is flying the Upunzi flag, use the standard rules for static contests, as described on page 11. Difficulties may apply, as usual.

If someone is hiding from you, you roll Sense+Sight, and the hidden spy uses Coordination+Stealth successes as Gobble Dice against your successful sets. If multiple people are searching, the hider only has to beat the Widest and Highest set. (This is described, with examples, under "Stealth," below.) Environmental factors that make hidden people hard to spot are usually modeled with dice penalties. **Usual Stat:** Sense

Stealth

When you roll Stealth, you produce Gobble Dice (described on page 14) to counteract the Sight, Hearing, Scrutinize or other detection sets of the person you're trying to outfox. It works like Dodge or Parry, only you're avoiding notice.

When trying to hide from a group, you don't have to wreck every set from every person in the group. Instead, you only have to beat the Highest and the Widest. If all the sets are of equal Width, you only have to beat the Highest. If there are a variety of Widths and Heights (say, your searchers roll 2x3, 2x10, 3x4, 4x5 and 4x7) you only need to beat the single Highest set and the Highest of the Widest sets—in the above example, the 2x10 and the 4x7.

If your Gobble Dice reduce both the Highest and Widest set to only a single die, you've remained hidden. You only get to use the one set you picked (unless you tried a multiple action to generate more sets), but these dice aren't time sensitive. Thus, if you get a 2x8 result and the pursuer gets a 3x8, you can ruin that set by reducing it to 1x8.

Example: Luovis is fleeing across a sunlit field and finds a scant hiding place. He rolls his 7+MD Stealth pool. He rolls 1,1,3,4,6,6,6,8. With a 2x1 and a 3x6, he decides to make his MD a 6 as well. He now has four Gobble Dice at the value 6. There are six Xingh clan soldiers following him, and because they're Threat 4 elite guards, the GM decides to roll 4d for each of them. She rolls as follows.

> Xingh 1: 2x3
> Xingh 2: no match
> Xingh 3: 3x6
> Xingh 4: no match
> Xingh 5: 2x7
> Xingh 6: 2x3

> Luovis only has to beat the 3x6 (because it's Widest) and the 2x7 (because it's tallest). Unfortunately for him, he can only handle the 3x6 set. He has enough dice, but they're not tall enough to manage the 2x7. Now he has to either fight, run or surrender.

The best friends a spy can have are cover and distraction. If there are impediments to sight (such as clutter or darkness) and hearing (such as nearby speech or loud music) the GM should give –1 or –2d penalties to the searchers. Unless, of course, she has a good reason not to.

Example: Having seduced the jailer's daughter, Luovis running from the same guards, only this time there's eight of them and they've been ordered to kill him. But this time he's fleeing by night along a forested riverbed, so each guard only rolls 2d. Now his 7+MD pool yields him 1, 2, 2x4, 2x6, 10. He decides to make his MD a 10 and chooses his 2x10 set against his enemies, who get the following results.

> Xingh 1: no match
> Xingh 2: 2x1
> Xingh 3: no match
> Xingh 4: no match
> Xingh 5: 2x8
> Xingh 6: no match
> Xingh 7: no match
> Xingh 8: 2x6

> 2x8 is the Widest and Highest, and he can easily surpass it. Now, Luovis could just as easily have chosen to make his MD another 6, giving him three Gobble Dice at six which wouldn't have helped him against that 2x8 but might have defended him against a Wider set. Of such decisions are the game made…

If neither hunter nor quarry rolls a set, the runner remains undetected.

Stealth also applies when you hide an object or disguise yourself. You don't need to roll your pool until someone is trying to see through your costume or find that box of emeralds. This means that you might be required to roll Stealth years after hiding an item. In that case, the GM rolls your old Stealth pool without telling you, since your character has no way of knowing someone's digging up his treasure cache. **Usual Stat:** Coordination

Strategy

When your Company gets into a military engagement with another Company, each side's commander rolls Strategy. The higher roll gets a temporary +1 Might bonus. **Usual Stat:** Knowledge

Student of _____

This Skill is like Lore, except that since you define it, it's narrower. As a result, your GM is far less likely to assess a Difficulty when you use this Skill to recall a relevant datum. Even if the GM does give a Difficulty, it should be lower than the Difficulty for a Lore roll (if the GM permitted one). **Usual Stat:** Knowledge

Tactics

With a Tactics set, you can get a yes or no answer to a question like "Given what we know, is a frontal attack a good idea?" There's rarely a Difficulty for Tactics. But you can't use Tactics to evaluate something's importance when you're unaware of it. So your expertise may tell you a pincers movement is a great idea, because you don't know an ambush is lurking.

With a successful Tactics roll, you can determine, simply by observation, one of the following facts about an individual.

—His Body or Coordination Stats if you see him fight.

—His Skill level at any combat Skill you see him use (Fight, Weapon, Dodge, Parry, Throw and so forth.)

—His Tactics levels if you see soldiers carry out a plan he executed.

You can also identify a Martial Technique you see used—if you make a Tactics roll whose Difficulty is the effect's point cost. That is, to recognize Spinning Steel, which costs 1XP to learn, any set would suffice. To recognize the use of Ghost Draw (which costs 5XP) you'd need to beat Difficulty 5. Recognizing a technique gives you a vague idea what it does. **Usual Stat:** Knowledge

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Vigor

Once per day, after a good night's rest, you can make a Body+Vigor roll. If it succeeds, you can recover a number of Shock points equal to the set's Width, or convert one point of Killing damage into Shock. You may make more Vigor rolls if you're exposed to illnesses or poisons: A simple success shakes off minor stuff, while serious diseases or toxins have Difficulties. If you've taken damage to a Stat any success on your once-a-day Vigor roll can restore a lost Stat point instead of healing Shock damage. **Usual Stat:** Body

Weapon Skill _____

Used to make attack actions. A vast menu of attack choices is available in the Combat section, but the basic description of making an attack with a weapon Skill starts on page 122. **Usual Stat:** Coordination

Character Development

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At the end of every game session, you get experience points, abbreviated as XP. You can earn them different ways, and you can spend them to make your character better.

Earning XP

Your GM may give you an XP for anything that enriches the game. The default sources are the following.

Attendence: Show up for a game session, get 1XP.

Thespianism: Play your character so engagingly that your GM or fellow players are tempted to burst into spontaneous applause, you get another XP.

Out of Character Enhancement: If you're artistically inclined, draw dramatic (or humorous) images. Keep an in-character journal or an out-of-character chronicle. Or bring a pizza and a six-pack every week. This enhances the fun and deserves an XP award.

Problems: As described under "Problems" on page 34, you get an extra XP any session in which one of your self-inflicted troubles harms you.

Dramatic Plot Alteration: Any session with a climactic (or abysmal) plot event is worth an XP, if it was the PCs who spurred this event. This could kick in when you finally overcome a hated foe, or when you conclude some lengthy plot episode. This is not an award you can expect every session, but it does go to every player present.

You can expect to earn between 1–5 XP per session, likely about 2–3.

Spending XP

Improving Skills: You can permanently raise a Skill by spending XP equal to its new level. If I raise my Direction Skill from 3 to 4, it costs me 4 XP. (You can't skip levels—to raise a Skill from 1 to 4, you have to first raise it to 2, then 3, then 4, spending a total of 9 XP.)

Promoting a Skill die to an Expert Die costs 1 XP. Promoting an Expert Die to Master costs 5 XP.

Spending XP, you can raise a Skill to 6, but no higher. If this gives you a pool bigger than 10, you don't roll more than 10 dice. Instead, you use the overflow to offset penalties.

Example: With 6 Body and 6 Fight, Ublon the Overslayer has a 12d Fight pool. When fighting, he only rolls 10d. But if he takes an action that would usually give him a –1d or -2d penalty, he can take it without dropping a die from his pool. For example, Ublon can take two extra attacks (which usually inflicts a -2d penalty) and still roll 10d because his actual pool is 12.

Improving Stats: You can permanently raise a Stat by paying 10 XP. Every 10 XP you spend raises the Stat one level. You can raise your Stats to 6 using XP, with the implications for pools above ten described above.

Buying Advantages: You buy Advantages by paying their price in XP, if plausible. The GM decides if events have made an Advantage available. Your PC is unlikely to become gorgeous overnight just because you spent points on Beauty. (Or he might, if you describe the total makeover.) However, if you got along well with a GMC and want to spend XP to make him a Patron, that's perfectly reasonable.

It's the same with Martial Techniques and Esoteric Disciplines. Their XP cost is the same as their cost at character generation, but in play you cannot learn them without being taught. (If you take them at character generation, you can teach them to the other PCs.)

The flip side is that the GM may give you Advantages for free. If you organize the retreat from a devastated town, you could get some followers from the deal. Or if you engineer a brilliant heist, your Wealth can go up.

You can never gain the Wealth or Possession Advantages by spending XP. Your GM might allow it in specialized circumstances, but by and large those things have to be gained and lost through play.

Junking

You may generate a character who has Skills you never use. If you suffer from creator's remorse, you can junk a Skill, but only if it's genuinely useless.

If you decide you want to ditch a Skill, tell your GM and put a mark next to the Skill. Any session where you don't roll that Skill, add another mark. Any time you roll it, erase all the marks next to it.

Once a Skill has two marks, meaning you decided you didn't like it and went a session without using it, you can decrease that Skill and get 1XP for every level you drop. If you want a drastic plunge in Skill you need an explanation, though if you haven't been using it, presumably there's no evidence it's there.

GMs: There's no point engineering situations to force a roll on a Skill they want to junk. Maybe if you know that Skill will become more interesting down the line, but other than that it's best to go along. You should still call for rolls that emerge naturally from the narrative, but if your player has come to despise a Skill enough to mark it for destruction, it probably hasn't gotten much use.

There's no limit to the number of Skills you can slate for junking, but watching more than two is probably more trouble than it's worth.

Optional Rule: Carousing for XP

A rapidly increasing spiral of money doesn't always make for great stories.
Therefore, characters in fantasy stories often get rich but lose the money investing
in cockamamie schemes, throwing lavish entertainments, or gambling.

RPG players tend to be more cautious with their imaginary funds. But to tempt
you away from amassing Wealth, here's a reward for squandering money.
By lowering your Wealth by one point, you can get 1XP in return.

Only do this when it's plausible—not in the middle of a siege, not between sessions with an
unresolved cliffhanger. But with a reasonable excuse, you can lose money and gain XP.

When you spend these XP, try to find a connection between the Skill you buy and
the money you waste. Suppose someone drops his Wealth by 2 to get 2XP for his
Sword Skill. Perhaps he spent the money getting expert instruction. Or maybe he
got robbed and had to fight his way free. If he lost it gambling, he could increase
Sight (to spot marked cards) or Stealth (as his card-sharping skills improve).

Optional Rule: Burning XP

Some games give players control over the plot. Maybe a little control,
maybe a lot. GMs who like that allow players to burn XP.

Burning an XP means spending it for an immediate in-game effect. It lets the player tip the
odds, or dictate them, on events that would otherwise be perfectly random. If this sounds like
cheating, you can skip the rest of this box. But if it sounds like common sense to give PCs an
option when a lousy die roll could kill a character who has otherwise been ably played, read on.

By spending an XP, you can get any of the following one-time effects.

Squeak By: Replace a failed roll with a 2x1 result. (You can't make this part of a multiple action.)

Power Through: Add 1d to a pool or offset a -1d penalty.

Shake it Off: Negate one point of damage that you just received.

You can't spend multiple XP to ignore loads of damage or add buckets of dice.

Money

Money is important in a political game, but tracking every coin is not. These rules treat money as a flexible principle, not as a concrete fact.

Buying Things

A list of objects you might wish to purchase starts on page 61. Each object has a price (or range) listed. Prices fluctuate greatly in fantasy settings: The markup for transport is substantial, so you're better off buying local goods unless they're desperately inferior. The GM decides which direction to slide the price of an object, depending on local factors. In barbarian lands where the people barely know how to smelt iron, a steel sword costs, if it's available at all. In more civilized countries, that same sword isn't nearly as expensive.

The abstraction for personal cash Wealth, which you can purchase at character creation as an Advantage. If you don't get that Advantage, you have Wealth 0.

If your Wealth score is greater than an object's price, you can buy it and your Wealth score doesn't change.

If your Wealth score is equal to the object's price, you have a choice. One option is to simply pay full price. If you do that, you get the object but your Wealth drops by 1.

The other option is to bargain for it. If you do this, you can either roll your Wealth as a pool, or roll Command+Haggle. This is a contested roll against the seller. If you get the Higher match, you get the object and your Wealth doesn't change. If you don't get a match, you can't get the object at all—not even by dropping your Wealth rating. Naturally, if you decide to sell something this can work in the opposite direction, but it may be easier for the GM to avoid having haggling GMCs. If the PC wants to buy something and there's nothing hanging on him getting it or not, a simple success in the Command+Haggle may be sufficient to get it on the cheap.

If your Wealth score is less than the object's price, you can't get it.

Astute players quickly realize the vulnerability in the first option: If they have Wealth 5, and want to buy a sword that costs Wealth 2, they can automatically do so. If there's no limit to the number of times they can do that, there's no reason that they can't buy a hundred swords, or a thousand, and outfit an army on the cheap. Right?

Well, no. There's a separate chart for purchasing multiple items.

Wealth converts to Treasure at roughly a 3-to-1 ratio, so you can outfit a private army with private monies. However, using Treasure to arm your people is more efficient.

Losing Wealth

The most obvious way to lose Wealth is to buy things. But there are other ways.

First and foremost, there's robbery. This is an act of GM caprice which should be used sparingly, of course, and which should provide an interesting plot turn in exchange.

More commonly, there are infrastructure expenses. Being rich in more primitive economy costs money. You pay for guards, and traps on your treasure vault, and thief-takers to recover your lost goods… or you just write off the losses. Then there are taxes.

In game terms, these factors mean there is a tendency for riches to erode. Any time your Wealth score is 4–6, it drops by 1 every season. (Not every game session, every season.) If it's 7–10, it drops by 1 every year. However, this only happens if you fail to raise or lower your Wealth in that time period. Only stagnant funds depreciate.

This is an incentive to (1) keep adventuring to improve your resources and (2) spend money rather than sit on it.

You can also share the Wealth. By voluntarily decreasing your Wealth by 1, you can give one person Wealth equal to your newly lowered Wealth rating.

Example: When Jubelus the Merchant marries off her only daughter, she provides a dowry equal to half her riches. Jubelus has Wealth 6. By dropping to Wealth 5, she can raise her previously penniless daughter to Wealth 5 as well.

Gaining Wealth

Mounds of coin and small piles of semi-precious stones have Wealth levels (or ranges) attached to them. When you find them, you can trade them in to boost Wealth.

The reason for ranges is that (1) a treasure may have greater or lesser value depending on the buyer and (2) its value may also fluctuate depending on the ability of the seller. If your GM assigns a changing value, it's because she has a plan, either for you to get a bigger payoff if you find the right seller, or by roleplaying a good story about getting rid of it, or by using Command+Haggle. Your GM may not tell you the Wealth range of a particular treasure without some knowledge that would let you appraise its value.

Once the item's Wealth level is set, you can decide what to do with it.

If your current Wealth is **higher** than the level of the treasure, you don't change your character's Wealth by taking it. (You get the goodies as objects, but they have no effect on your character sheet because they're not significant compared to your overall bankroll.)

Example: Vados the Merchant has Wealth 5. He acquires a trove of spices valued at Wealth 3. He can take the trove, but it doesn't raise his overall Wealth. Vados' player could note down "Wealth 3 spices" and later give them to a poorer PC or GMC. That's fine and a good idea. But they don't impact his personal wealth.

If your current Wealth is **lower** than the level of the treasure, you can take it and jump up to the Wealth level of the treasure.

Example: Smelly Rahn the beggar finds an emerald the size of a hen's egg! It's got a Wealth range of 3–5. Rahn goes to sell it. Sadly, the jewel merchant is unimpressed by his rags and wretched odor, so Rahn's only going to get Wealth 3 for it. If he cleans up, he might get Wealth 4. If Rahn cleans up and makes a good Command+Haggle roll, he could jump up to Wealth 5.

If your current Wealth is **equal** to the level of the treasure, you can sell it and raise your current Wealth level by 1.

Example: The merchant who bought the emerald has Wealth 5. If he can get the emerald's full value of 5 when he sells it in turn, his Wealth rises to 6.

Just How Much Money Is It?

As advertised, the Wealth system is fuzzy and imprecise, based on the premise that there's a tension between the character's inclination to carouse and debauch and the player's tendency to hoard. With that in mind, here are rough guides to **exactly** how many coins of a given type are represented by a particular Wealth rating. (You will note gaps. Don't worry about them. They're there to explain why you can sometimes buy a Cost 4 item with Wealth 4 and not drop, and sometimes you can't.)

It's not precise and it won't stand up to rigorous examination—but did you really start playing REIGN so that you could rigorously examine the monetary model? These sums are here so that when your characters crack open a chest and see a thousand small silver coins, they know they've struck it rich.

Wealth	Thick, Pure Gold Coins	Thin, Devalued Gold Coins	Small Silver Coins	Large Silver Coins
1	1-2	1-2	5	2-3
2	2-3	4-5	10	5-6
3	4-5	8-10	20	10-12
4	8-10	15-20	40	20-25
5	15-20	30-40	80	40-50
6	30-40	65-80	160	80-100
7	65-80	130-160	320	160-200
8	130-160	250-300	640	320-400
9	250-300	500-600	1300	640-800
10	500-600	1000-1500	2500	1300-1600

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Personal Service or Item	Wealth
Stewed turnips with black bread (or local equivalent)	0
Pauper's funeral (hole, cairn, no coffin or tombstone)	0
Night of hard drinking	1
Fresh and hearty repast	1
Invigorating massage	1
Decent burial (prayers, wood coffin, simple monument)	1
Ablutions (haircut, shave, manicure, bath with fancy soaps)	2
Lavish personal feast	2
Fine dinner for a small group of friends	2
Negotiable affection	1-3
Lavish funeral (mourners, elaborate casket, imposing tomb)	5

Precious Items	Wealth
Plain gold band, earring or ampalang	1
Signet ring	1
Half-pound of rare local spices	1
Peasant's wedding dress	1
Jeweled cape clasp	2
Flask of fragrant oil or perfume (local)	2
Perfectly adequate pearl	2-3
Half-pound of rare, imported spices	3
Simple diamond necklace	3
Solid gold "brass" knuckles with your initials on them	3
Enormous, intricate, tourmaline-studded jade lip disc	3-4
Flask of rare perfume from distant lands	3-5
Wedding gown for the minor nobility	4
Working spinning wheel made, for some reason, of silver	5
Immense ruby	5-6
Pearl of great price	7-8
Begemmed wedding gown fit for a queen	8
An Imperial crown	9

Vehicles / Transportation	Wealth
Mule or donkey	1
Rowboat or canoe	1
Riding horse	1-2
Ox or draft horse	1-2
Peasant wagon	2
Small sailboat (crew of 2)	2
Warhorse	2-4
Racehorse	2-7
Gentleman's coach	2-3
Merchant riverboat (crew of 5)	4-5
Small ocean vessel (crew of 10)	6-7
Medium ocean vessel(crew of 20)	8
Huge ocean vessel (crew of 35)	9
Crewed trio of huge ocean vessels with a 3-frigate escort	10

Weapons	Wealth
Small weapon (dagger, shortbow) of poor quality	0
Combat weapon of poor quality (typically iron)	1
Small weapon of adequate quality	1
Combat weapon of adequate quality (typically steel)	2
Small weapon of exquisite quality	3-6
Combat weapon of exquisite quality (such as a Dinda sword)	3-6
Exotic weapon (such as a Truil hornbow)	3-5

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Armor	Wealth
Wooden Helmet	0
Iron Cap	1
Small Wooden Shield	1
Cavalry Boots	1
Cuirass (Boiled Leather)	2
Large Wooden Shield	2
Small Metal Shield	2
Steel Gauntlets	2
Reinforced Full Helmet	2
Breastplate	2
Chain Shirt	2
Large Metal Shield	3
Chainmail	3
Tower Shield	3
Full Plate Armor	4

Buildings (Used)	Wealth/Treasure
Rude shack	1/1
Tidy cabin	2/1
Modest home	3/1
House in town	3-4/1
House in the city	4-5/2
Lavish country manor	5-7/2-3
Imposing city mansion	6-8/2-3
Small fortified tower	5/2
Stout fort	7-10/2-3
Allegedly impenetrable fortress	--/4
Palace	--/5
Gilded palace of historical importance	--/6

Buildings (Constructed to Specification)	Wealth/Treasure
House in town	3-4/1
House in the city	4-5/1
Lavish country manor	6-8/2-3
Imposing city mansion	7-9/2-3
Small fortified tower	6/2
Stout fort	8-9/2-3
Allegedly impenetrable fortress	-/5
Palace fit to stagger the sensibilities of a potentate	--/5

Entourage Equippage

Provision	Wealth/Treasure
A Month's Coarse Rations for…	
1 soldier	1/0
6 soldiers	2/0
12 soldiers	3/1
50 soldiers	4/1
100 soldiers	5/1
200 soldiers	7/2
400 soldiers	8/2
600 soldiers	9/3
1000 soldiers	10/3
1500 soldiers	--/4
3000 soldiers	--/5
A Month's Hearty Rations for…	
1 soldier	1/0
5 soldiers	2/0
20 soldiers	4/1
60 soldiers	5/1
100 soldiers	6/2
200 soldiers	8/2
400 soldiers	9/3
800 soldiers	10/3
1500 soldiers	--/4
2600 soldiers	--/5
A Month's Rude Lodging* for…	
3 soldiers	1/0
6 soldiers	2/1
12 soldiers	3/1
50 soldiers	4/2
100 soldiers	5/2
200 soldiers	6/2
400 soldiers	7/3
600 soldiers	8/3
1000 soldiers	9/3
1500 soldiers	10/3

*includes ghastly food

A Month's Simple Lodging** for…	
1 soldier	2/0
5 soldiers	3/0
15 soldiers	4/1
30 soldiers	5/2

Chapter Three

60 soldiers	6/2	200 soldiers	8/3
100 soldiers	7/3	400 soldiers	9/3
200 soldiers	8/3	800 soldiers	10/3
400 soldiers	9/3		
800 soldiers	10/3	*Armor and Combat Weapons for…*	
**includes decent food		1 soldier	3/0
		5 soldiers	5/1
Simple Weapons and Shields for…		15 soldiers	6/1
1 soldier	2/0	30 soldiers	7/2
5 soldiers	3/0	60 soldiers	8/2
15 soldiers	4/1	100 soldiers	9/2
30 soldiers	5/2	200 soldiers	10/3
60 soldiers	6/2	400 soldiers	--/4
100 soldiers	7/3	1000 soldiers	--/5

ESOTERIC DISCIPLINES

Skills determine how well you climb a wall, berate an underling, or dodge a crushing blow to the cranium. Some actions, however, are beyond the untrained. These actions, while tied to a particular Skill, are unusual. Most people can stumble through a speech, but a trained orator knows the tricks of breath, delivery and posture that make words more resonant. People who can do the extraordinary with ordinary skills are those with access to esoteric disciplines.

There's a difference between being able to perform an action and being able to do it well. An obscure field of study can show you how to run with good posture, but it's no guarantee if your die pool is low.

That said, many techniques simply give bonuses to Skill pools in narrowly defined circumstances. If those bonuses raise the pool above 10d, only ten dice are rolled, but the excess can buy off penalties. It's exactly like having a Skill higher than 5, as described on page 56.

PURE BREATH TECHNIQUES

Monks seeking enlightenment through spiritual purity have practiced this set of stretches, breathing exercises and calisthenics for at least a hundred years. Only in the last few decades have soldiers noticed the advantages of staying healthy and healing faster, but the word is spreading quickly

Pure Breath is used when you make Body+Vigor rolls.

Cleansing Respiration (1 Point): Once per day, you can make a Body+Vigor roll to regain Shock damage, even if you didn't get a good night's sleep.

Stretch of the Wakening Cat (2 Points): If you perform this series of postures in the morning, you heal a point of Shock damage. You get this regardless of whether you failed or succeeded at a daily Body+Vigor roll.

Blossom Exhalation (3 Points): You can use your Vigor Skill instead of Endurance to continue performing an effortful task. You still have to use Endurance to resist torture.

Esoteric Disciplines

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Invigorating Stance (4 Points): When you master this technique, you can ignore all Difficulties to your Vigor rolls when dealing with illness or poison.

Supple Power (5 Points): Once per day, you can add your Vigor Skill to your Athletics Skill for one action. Doing so puts a point of Shock damage on your torso.

Example: Rewis has Body 2, Vigor 5 and Athletics 2. A heavy cart has tipped over, and a 4d Athletics pool isn't much for this task, so he uses Supple Power. Adding his Vigor 5 to that 4d pool gives him a hefty 9d to shift the cart.

Supple Power cannot be used in combat.

The School of Perpetual Readiness

These techniques are used with Knowledge+Tactics rolls.

Basic Mobility (1 point): During the Declare phase of combat, state that you're giving orders to Unworthy Opponents under your command, and describe what you're ordering them to do. Roll Knowledge+Tactics and if you get any success, your minions can keep one 4x set or 5x set at its original Width instead of dividing it into 2x or 3x sets.

Bring Fear (2 points): If you have prepare an attack plan make sure your followers understand it, you can make one Knowledge+Tactics roll before battle. If you get a success, your troops' fierceness produces a Morale Attack equal to your Tactics roll's Height during the first round of combat.

Improvised Arms (3 points): If your followers have no equipment, you can give them the +1 Threat bonus conveyed by arms and armor. You have to spend an hour setting traps, building fortifications or improvising weapons. If you describe this entertainingly, no roll is required. Otherwise, any Knowledge+Tactics set gives the benefit.

Fortified Force (4 points): If you prepare a defense plan and spend at least an hour overseeing the preparations, you can make a Tactics roll before combat starts. Your defenders can keep one 4x or 5x set unsplit each round for a number of rounds equal to either the Height or Width you rolled. However, those unsplit Wide sets can only be used for defense.

Master Mobility (5 points): When you roll the dice for your followers' actions, you may use one of their dice as an MD. You do not need to roll or take an action to do this, as long as you either trained the troops rolling the pool or gave them orders before the fight.

Political Whispers

Political Whispers are used with the Charm+Fascinate pool. Its affects apply to companies more than to human beings.

Proportional Listening (1 Point): You know when to stop talking. Your well-timed pauses draw out the listener and persuade her to fill in the gaps.

After speaking with a member of another Company for an hour at least, roll Charm+Fascinate. If you succeed, you can learn whether the other Company's Influence is greater, less than, or equal to your Company's Influence.

Coincidental Allusion (2 Points): By making a Fascinate roll while talking to someone of a different Company, the diplomat can raise his own Company's Influence score by 1 for

the remainder of the month. This only works if the person addressed is (1) powerful in the other Company and (2) that Company has equal or higher Influence than the speaker's. Coincidental Allusion cannot improve any Company's Influence more than once per month. It can't ever provide a bonus greater than +1. Its benefits can't arise from more than one person using it.

Timely Confession (3 Points): The stock in trade of the power-monger is proprietary information. One who has mastered the timely confession can bargain away one such nugget (or let it slip, seemingly by accident) in order to draw out similar information in return.

By passing this information on to informers, spies and diplomats, or by using it himself, a character earns a Charm+Fascinate roll. If it succeeds, someone took the bait: The character either immediately gets, or soon receives, an accurate indication of what another Company he's examining is doing with its Influence.

That Reminds Me of a Story… (4 Points): When making any Fascinate roll to attempt to alter an Influence score, the character may add his Jest Skill to the pool. If this would result in more than one Expert or Master die being in the pool, excess special dice are rolled as normal dice. This can be combined with all the other techniques in this path except Spellbinding Discourse.

Spellbinding Discourse (5 Points): By spending at least two hours talking to a leader of another Company, the character can temporarily decrease its Influence by 1 for a month. No roll is required. If someone in the other Company suspects some sort of social sabotage, it's a Knowledge+Graces roll against a Difficulty equal to the speaker's Charm+Fascinate pool to figure out how it was done. Even if someone is expecting it, however, there is no way to avoid it: Spellbinding Discourse can easily incorporate suspicion and doublethink into a verbal strategy.

Not a Lot of Esoterica

In preparing this book, I removed a lot of the Esoteric Disciplines that are in REIGN. Partially, this was to save space and keep costs down. Partially, it was because many were specific to Heluso and Milonda, the initial REIGN setting.

If you want more Esoteric Disciplines, many are available free online. The links below are for .pdf files of the first two REIGN supplements, each of which has many Disciplines.

• http://www.gregstolze.com/reign/downloads/FirstYearColor.pdf
• http://www.gregstolze.com/reign/downloads/2YoORInterior.pdf

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SVRANA RUN

In the core REIGN setting, 'Svranas' are a particular culture's combat messengers. Svrana Run is used with Body+Run rolls.

Instant Start (1 Point): Characters who have mastered the Instant Start get a +2d bonus in any contested Run roll when both contestants are starting immobile.

With the Wind (2 Points): Instead of moving the standard 15 feet in a combat round, the character can move 20 feet without a roll.

Tireless Step (3 Points): The character gets a +2d bonus to any Endurance rolls related to running without rest.

Inexorable Tread (4 Points): The character takes no penalties to his Run pools from injury, illness or poison, until a leg is broken, severed or pulped.

Unsurpassed Fleetness (5 Points): When the character rolls to improve his movement rate in combat, each point of Width improves his speed by 10 feet, instead of five.

DO-IT-YOURSELF ESOTERIC DISCIPLINES

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Instead of the many setting-specific Esoteric Disciplines of REIGN, the Enchiridion has these guidelines for creating your own. But before you start construction, understand that these are only guidelines. An effect that's perfectly reasonable for the third level of a Scrutinize path may be grossly underpowered at the third level of Knowledge, or overpowered at the first or second level of Athletics. If it sounds too good to be true, reconsider.

Assembling paths with this article approaches the triple border where "player" meets "game master" meets "designer." So look at what you make as a designer, not as a player.

MARTIAL PATHS?

Effects that work fine for peaceful Skills may turn the game into a travesty if applied to fighting. It's your game to experiment with, but consider this your red flag. These effects were not tested or considered in light of Martial Techniques, only Esoteric Disciplines. They may work with fights just fine. Or they may blow your game to smithereens.

Ignore One Die of Multiple-Action Penalty

Usually, when you try to do two things at once, you roll the lowest pool and knock a die off for each additional action. With this effect, you still roll lowest, but you can add an action with the discipline's Skill without the penalty. Depending on the Skill, you may want to limit it to doing two of the same action with the discipline Skill, or you may be fine with permitting additions to other Skills.

Add a +2d Bonus in Narrow Circumstances

For the cost of this discipline at character generation, the player could get an extra die in the core Skill, so two dice seems reasonable. But it should only come in a particular instance. So, for a Stealth example, it could kick in to stay silent or unseen, but not both.

Squish a Set By One

Squishing is described on page 17. As a general rule, squishing up or down by X points is a level X discipline. If the discipline lets you squish either direction by three points, it should be the third rank of the path. At five, though, you might as well squish as many points as you want.

Time an Effect As If It Had +1W

For Skills where timing matters a lot, this is a good level one effect. If timing isn't an issue, you are better off with a different effect, or maybe with just giving a +1W bonus.

Add a +1d Bonus to Another Skill

If you roll a set with the discipline Skill, it gives you a +1d bonus on a related Skill. Try and have a reason for the bonus: "Because I made a Jest roll, I get +1d to my Weapon: Bow shot!" is kind of silly.

Substitute a Close Stat

Instead of rolling its usual Stat with the Skill, you can use a different Stat. For instance, Climb is usually a Coordination Skill, but it's reasonable to train to use Body for it, or even Sense. Using Charm to climb a hill is, again, silly.

Reduce Difficulty by 2-3 Points in Narrow Circumstances

This is only good to use for Skills where Difficulties are common. Variations would be "reduce Difficulty by a Stat" or "reduce Difficulty by the Width of a set."

Reduce Penalties From Failure

A broad effect that works for a lot of Skills, this lets you reduce the impact of attempting a risky act and botching it. It's not great for proactive Skills where a failure simply means you didn't get the bargain on the cape. It's better for reactive Skills where you're rolling to avoid something bad, and the discipline can let you reduce the hassle of failure. For

instance, if an Endurance failure would usually mean collapse, this could permit the character to continue (though impaired, so it's not as good as succeeding at the roll).

ADD A +1H BONUS, TO A MAXIMUM OF X10

If Height doesn't matter for the Skill, this is unlikely to make an exciting discipline, but there are many Skills where Height matters a lot.

REDUCE THE DIFFICULTY OF A RELATED ROLL

Similar to reducing Difficulty in narrow circumstances, and the same cautions apply. The difference is, instead of the restriction on when it can be used, it's a general aid to a specific other Skill.

TWO-POINT EFFECTS

IGNORE MORE THAN ONE DIE OF MULTIPLE-ACTION PENALTY

In non-combat situations, it may be fine to just allow as many actions as the player wants. Even in combat, it's probably not unbalancing to allow extra defenses. Other than that, it's the same considerations as offsetting a single multiple action penalty.

IMPROVE A BASELINE TRAIT BY 20-50%

The clearest example of this from canon Disciplines is increasing the base unrolled movement from 15 to 20 feet. Another movement example would be that, when rolling to run (as explained on page 52), each die in a set improves the rate by 6 feet instead of 5. Alternately, you could do it with rolling Vigor to recover from Shock, and have the wounded person recover W+1S instead of WS.

Keep in mind that while the 30% swing between 20% and 50% looks big, the ORE is grainy. It's not necessarily as big as the swing between a 2d pool and a 3d pool.

GET A +2D BONUS IN BROAD CIRCUMSTANCES

Much like getting the bonus in narrow circumstances, but less restrictive. There should still be some condition to make it interesting. But it should be something that a character is going to use often. So, to give a Haggle example, a narrow circumstance would be "when haggling with my people" while a broad circumstance would be "when haggling from the seller's position."

GET A +1 WIDTH BONUS

Not just for timing, as with the Rank One effect, but for anything governed by Width. Of course, if Width doesn't matter much, neither will this Discipline.

Decrease Difficulty by 2-3 in Broad Circumstances

A "broad circumstance" should be about half the time. You can have it be a flat -2 Difficulty (for Skills that almost always face Difficulty, like Sorcery) or a -3 Difficulty for those where it's less critical. Alternates would be "Decrease Difficulty by a Stat" or by a Skill, but for those you might want to narrow the situations in which the Discipline applies, because it's not hard to get a Stat or Skill above 3.

Reduce Damage in Narrow Circumstances

The narrower the circumstances, the greater the reduction can be without it causing resentment among other players. A Discipline that reduces damage from any kind of fall should have a small reduction. One that reduces falling damage as long as you land in water, or only when you fall off a horse? There it's fine to eliminate lots of damage, maybe even all of it, because those sorts of falls are unlikely to come up often. Taking less damage from a punch when you're dodging is more reasonable than taking less damage from any kind of attack at all.

Ignore a Minor Penalty

When a situation gives you a -1d Penalty or a Difficulty of 3 or less, it's nice to have a Discipline to ignore that -- not only because it provides a balanced increase in success, it makes the rules simpler.

Make an Opponent's Roll Time-Sensitive

Usually, argument and debate aren't that pressing, so someone with a Height advantage can can go to town. This is particularly distressing when they're therefore able to gobble out your 3x sets with pimply little pairs. If you can make the debate a pressure-cooker, now he needs to meet triples with triples.

Evaluate a Rival Company's Quality

It can break the feel of the fiction to just blurt out numbers -- "They got Might 3!" -- so a better way to handle these sorts of evaluations is through comparison. "Looking over their troops, your own start to look distinctly scrawny and clumsy." "You think their finances are roughly equivalent to your own." Keep the numbers and Quality names out of it.

Perceive Relevant Information About a Character

As with finding information about Company Qualities, it's better to compare than to rattle off dry names and numbers: Comparing Skill levels is always a fun and useful ability. Alternately, there are often Passions to suss out. Just make sure it's relevant to the Skill. Being able to find someone's Craving by using carefully calculated Jests is. Learning someone's Duty by making a Climb roll? Not so much.

ENABLE A SKILL TO DO SOMETHING IT COULDN'T BEFORE

Normally, Haggle can't directly influence a Company Quality. Enabling it to do so in limited circumstances could be a good third-tier Discipline. It's not a good idea to let a Skill trample too much on the purview of a different Skill—making a Dodge that does damage is all right, but making it work just as well as Fight makes the Fight Skill obsolete, and no one wants that, right?

USE A DIFFERENT AND IMPLAUSIBLE STAT

Using Coordination instead of Body to Parry makes sense. That's the kind of Stat substitution that merits a first tier Discipline. Using Charm to parry would be a third rank Discipline, and then only with some tissue of explanation to cover up its naked ridiculousness. For real mismatches, a narrowing situation may be warranted. ("You can only use Charm to parry an attack from someone who, in other circumstances, might have found you cute.")

IGNORE A PREREQUISITE FOR A ROLL

For example, a Healing Discipline that lets you Heal someone who's been out all night carousing instead of resting. Or haggling unimpaired with someone when you don't share a language. Or Counterspelling a spell that doesn't target you.

SUBSTITUTE ONE SKILL FOR ANOTHER, FOR ONE NARROW USE

This is for the narrowest of narrow circumstances. You can use Haggle instead of Intimidate, but only when dealing with members of your same tribe. You can use Tactics in the place of Run, but only in a huge and confusing battle with hundreds of warriors clashing on each side. Otherwise, you once again run the risk of making a Skill obsolete cheaply.

IGNORE ALL DIFFICULTY IN NARROW CIRCUMSTANCES

The more important that Difficulty is to the Skill, the narrower the circumstances should be. There are few Difficulties for Skills like "Student of Apiary History" so a Discipline related to it could remove all Difficulties in almost any situation. Sorcery, on the other hand, faces Difficulty (in the form of Intensity) all the time. A Sorcery Discipline that ignored Difficulty should only kick in when things are dire ("only when you've got a single undamaged wound box in your head") or highly awkward ("only when you're being supported by a number of Salckian Theurgeon followers equal to the spell's Intensity").

COMBINE SKILLS IN NARROW CIRCUMSTANCES

Be careful with this one. Essentially, instead of rolling Charm+Fascinate to get on the priest's good side, you get to roll Charm+Fascinate+Jest. You can see why the narrow circumstances are needed. A character who could do that all the time would be an unstoppable, mirth-spewing social juggernaut, leaving the crushed and chortling husks of GMCs in its wake. Put on a limit like "Only when speaking to someone of the same social background." And try to keep the Skills related. Combining Tactics and Intimidation when you're trying to frighten an enemy force makes sense. Combining Tactics and Vigor is more of a stretch.

Chapter Three

Three-Point Effects

Produce a Morale Attack at Stat Level

Use this only for Skills where a display of talent might conceivably scare someone into fleeing. Moreover, it's good to keep this as an entirely free Morale Attack that spontaneously arises from a successful attempt at something else, something unpenalized. There are plenty of ways to get low-level Morale Attacks like this by devoting a roll to them. This should be a freebie, since it's likely to only work on small numbers of weak opponents.

Receive an Outcome Bonus Equal to a Stat

This can be a bonus to Width, Height or a factor unrelated to either. (Before you apply this as a damage bonus, remember that this could be as high as +6.)

Add a Point to a Quality, With Effort, Once a Month

One person can make a difference, but it's not easy. It should take time and effort, in addition to a success at a dedicated roll. Whereas the Morale Attack above should be entirely free, this shouldn't. If, for instance, I have a Jest path that lets me increase Territory, my character's going to have to spend some time spreading those jokes around before he gets his roll, and if the roll fails, tough luck for me this month.

Prevent a Quality From Tiring in Narrow Circumstances

Normally, every roll that involves a Quality lowers it by a point. Preventing that drop is a potent effect, so either reserve it for exacting situations ("Might does not drop from defending in wide-open plains when the attacker's pool isn't more than three greater than my own") or have it work only once a month for a particular application ("Might does not tire after my first attack of the month.")

Four-Point Effects

Height Automatically Jumps to 10

This is easy to remember, doesn't have the baggage of squishing, and it's powerful for Skills where Height matters. Probably a risky to put on a Martial Technique.

Double a Baseline

All the advice about improving a baseline element by a lesser degree applies here. You could set it up, thus, that someone's base climbing speed is 10 feet per round for each point of Width rolled on Climb. (Using this on a fighting Skill is going to throw the combat system badly out of whack.)

Substitute Height for Width

This is particularly potent when Wide results are highly desirable, as with the Healing or Vigor Skills. It's not universally great (since your chances of getting an x1 set are as good as your chances at x5) but probably best to reserve for Skills where routinely getting

sets that have Width of x5-10 aren't going to be ridiculous. Or where massively Wide sets won't suck all the challenge out of a situation.

Broad Skill Substitution

Just like substituting a Skill in narrow circumstances, avoid (1) making it ridiculous and (2) making that other Skill utterly obsolete. It could work well for Parry and Dodge, which are similar in effect but differ in detail -- letting someone use Dodge to protect another person isn't going to unbalance the game. Similarly, letting someone use Eerie instead of Direction (for whatever reason) probably won't get too weird because they're both Sense Skills and rarely used to have a drastic effect on other characters. But letting someone use Jest for Athletics is hard to justify.

Ignore All Difficulty in Broad Circumstances

This is a good one for Difficulty-plagued Skills, and by the fourth tier the player should be getting some serious effects.

Impose a Difficulty on Someone

This is a mechanic to use with caution. The concerns are (1) it can serve to pointlessly slow down the game by forcing multiple re-rolls, (2) it can rob people of actions they ought to be able to attempt and (3) it can make characters who ought to be competent at a Skill into laughingstocks. So this is best used for Dynamic Contests (see page 11) where there's already an element of competition and this is just tilting the odds. But if a Dynamic Contest already has Difficulties, it may be best not to use this effect, because adjusting Difficulties upwards and downwards on the fly can be annoying. Be careful using it with Static Contests for all the reasons listed above.

Produce a Morale Attack Equal to the Set's Height

This is like the previous Morale Attack effect. It should be something that's added on, not a primary outcome of the roll. It's nice because there's the chance of getting MA 10, but that's rare enough to keep the effect balanced.

Add a Temporary +1 Bonus to a Quality

Unlike the Morale Attack above, this should require -- at the very least -- a dedicated roll that can't be re-attempted. Alternately, you can allow the Discipline to give the bonus for only some circumstances -- "Only when temporarily boosting Influence" or "Only when Territory is being applied to improve something permanently" for example.

Add Gobble Dice

Giving a free x10 Gobble Die that can be used at any time is a wonderful fillip for any Skill where you normally have to choose between defending and aggression. It's not overpowering in the face of a 3x+ set, but even those can be blunted nicely, and it can clear out a pair.

Receive an Outcome Bonus Equal to a Stat

Typically this means adding the amount of some relevant Stat to either the Width or the Height of a set. It may be wise to limit the maximum Width to 5 and the maximum Height to 10.

Five-Point Effects

Very High Improvement to Baseline Ability

More than doubling something that's standard, like letting someone accurately throw a light object fifty feet, is pushing the limits of what humans can accomplish. But that's what five-point effects are all about.

Drastically Reduce Damage From a Moderately Broad Source

Pick something specific and halve the damage from it. This is a good one to have as a non-rolled ability, as long as the source of injury is narrow enough that it's not de-facto invulnerability. Good examples would be temperature extremes (losing a point of Body half as often) or taking two points less damage from magic sources. Bad examples would be taking no damage from edged weapons (too broad and too much of a reduction) or taking two points less damage from punches (too narrow and not enough of a reduction). Look for the middle ground, and adjust for your own game's setting and tone.

Remove All Damage from One Source

As with the reduced damage above, negated damage has parameters you can customize. If the ability has to be rolled (and therefore requires an action) it can work just fine with a damage source as broad as "unarmed attacks." If it doesn't have to be rolled, keep it extremely narrow -- "no damage from magical fire" would be good, but no damage from any kind of fire is much too broad. It's not only implausible, it's open to abuse.

Unlimited Squishing

This is more powerful on abilities where timing or Width matters, because it allows that 2x10 to turn into an 11x1. It's not bad with abilities where Height is most important, because really wide sets aren't that common. Be careful with this around abilities that allow for automatic improvements of Height, like Advantage: Beauty. Granted, there are few times when Graces or Fascinate are going to rely heavily on Width, but it could happen.

Provides Benefit on a Fail

The best Skills or circumstances for this effect are the on/off Static Contest Skills where the character either gets it done or doesn't. With this effect, even when the set fails to materialize, there's some sort of consolation prize, completely unrelated to the situation at hand. For instance, a path based on the Student of Mathematics Skill might offer some kind of insight every time the character fails at Athletics -- maybe an XP that can only be

spent on "Student of Mathematics." Alternately, if a character is trying to Dodge and still gets hit, this could permit a small reduction in damage. That sort of thing.

Change a Relevant Other Skill Die to a Master Die, One Time

What this lets a character do is apply one Skill to improve an action with a related Skill. So a Scrutinize Discipline with this effect might let someone search for a great hiding place and then get the MD to Stealth when using it. Or, for example, an Intimidate Discipline might let you scare people by proxy, building up a distant boogeyman into a menace that must be stopped -- giving you the bonus to Inspire when you call for a crusade to eliminate the menace. As you can see from these examples, the other Skill to be improved, and the circumstances of improvement, should be clearly defined.

Shut Down an Opponent's Course of Action

Keep this narrow, because it can drag down the progress of the game when one character has broad powers to just deny, deny, deny. That said, it can accelerate the game when this just cuts to the chase. "No, you're not going to find him as long as he refuses to move." It can also be nice when someone tries to knock a character off his horse and the player gets to say, "Nyah nyah, my incredible Discipline keeps me in the saddle automatically."

Give a Permanent +1 Increase to a Quality, One Time Per Company

This is another one that has to be handled with caution to prevent degenerate combinations from transgressing the spirit of its limitations through a mangled interpretation of the letter of the rules. One could, for example, improve a Company's Quality with this ability, then improve another Company, then combine them and form a third Company and improve that. If all that maneuvering and combining and improving makes sense within the fiction of the game and is providing lots of interesting story for other players, then it's probably just fine. But if it's just fiddling to get an unearned advantage, that's not cool. It's a subjective judgment for the GM, though.

Use an Excess Set for Another Skill

There are a couple ways to apply this one. If, for example, you want it for a Fascinate path, you could set it up so that any time you roll two sets with Fascinate, you can apply the other one to Jest or Graces or Lie. Or you could have a bedside manner Discipline that lets you apply extra Healing sets to Fascinate. Either way, it gives those extra sets something to do, other than soak up Gobble Dice and penalties.

Substitute One Quality For Another in Defined Circumstances

This is a good one to require a roll to activate, if not time-consuming arrangement. Using Might instead of Treasure can be a tremendous advantage, and if it can be done any time a character feels like it, there's little point in gaining Treasure at all. Best to limit it to once a month or to very particular uses. ("For invasions, you can roll Might+Might instead of Might+Treasure.")

The individual effects already discuss limits that are likely to be germane for a particular effect. Some of those are repeated here so, naturally, if it's already supposed to already be involved with a Fifth Tier effect, its presence ought not lower its level. Use common sense.

Makes a Previous Tier in the Path Obsolete (-1)

If the third tier in a path adds +4d to your Direction pool in the same circumstances when the first tier offers +2d, then there is no incentive to use the first tier. Some Discipline paths are like that: They stack up, getting bigger and better along their narrow focus. Other paths spread, expanding the Skill in different directions. If your path stacks, it can be a little more powerful because it's not providing as much variety.

You're Helping Someone Else With a Roll (-1)

This offers incentives for making other players succeed and look cool, which is a behavior I want to encourage. It also eases the ego-bruise that can arise from using your power to help the other guy get the glory.

Reduces Width By 1 for Timing (-1)

Slowing an effect is a good flaw, but only so long as timing is going to matter.

Inflicts a -1 Penalty to Height (-1)

Height isn't quite as narrow and volatile as Width, so losing a point is unlikely to have a radical effect on a set. Be sure to clarify what happens with those x1 sets, though -- are they ruined or does this penalty have a minimum of 1?

Automatic One Point Squish to Raise Height (-2)

This one cuts both ways, because it's intended to be utterly involuntary. That means if you get a 2x5, it becomes a failure, transforming into a 1x6. Apply with care to keep the effect from actually being a penalty and not a benefit.

Makes Exactly Two Previous Tiers Obsolete (-2)

As with the -1 flaw, this is a more extreme example of stacking.

Inflicts a -1 Penalty to Width (-2)

In addition to the timing penalty, this runs the risk of killing a set unless you put on a minimum Width of 2, which I recommend.

Inflicts a Point of Shock Damage (-2)

The biggest caution is to have this make sense. It's usually simplest to have the damage go to a random location, but to fulfill the demands of reasonableness it may have to be limited to a particular location.

Restraining Factors or 'Flaws'

Makes More Than Two Previous Tiers Obsolete (-3)

The pinnacle of stacked effects. Really, the goal here is to not only make this Discipline worth the points you pay, but also to make it worth discarding at least three other Disciplines.

Combative Effect Is Timed Last in Round (-3)

It's a big price break, but going after the mook with the 2x1 set is a big flaw for Skills that are at all relevant to fighting.

Difficulty Is Increased by 3 (-3)

Just be careful if the Skill faces regular Difficulties. Having Difficulties exceed 10 is all right if you want to make it impossible to do certain things with the Discipline. The bigger concern is of having a bunch of Difficulties to calculate every time the Discipline gets used.

Inflicts a Point of Killing Damage (-3)

Just as with Shock damage, handle this carefully. Something that can both kill a character and make him look silly is something to approach with caution.

Random Paths

You saw this coming, right? The factors for each level are numbered, below. Roll 5d10 and you've got the rough skeleton of an entire Esoteric Discipline. By my math, that makes for ten thousand possible paths for each Skill, without even using flaws. But the rolls only give you an outline. Filling it in requires creativity, but with all those possible permutations, all I can do say "fit the effect to the Skill, and if you can't find an obvious fit, re-roll or pick something."

One-Point Effects

Roll	Effect
1	Ignore One Die of Multiple-Action Penalty
2	Add a +2d Bonus in Narrow Circumstances
3	Squish a Set By One
4	Time an Effect As If It Had +1W
5	Add a +1d Bonus to Another Skill
6	Substitute a Close Stat
7	Reduce Difficulty by 2-3 Points in Narrow Circumstances
8	Reduce Penalties From Failure
9	Add a +1H Bonus, Maximum of x10
10	Reduce the Difficulty of a Related Roll

Two-Point Effects

1	Ignore More Than One Die of Multiple Action Penalty
2	Improve a Baseline Trait by 20-50%

3	Get a +2d Bonus in Broad Circumstances
4	Get a +1 Width Bonus
5	Decrease Difficulty by 2-3 in Broad Circumstances
6	Reduce Damage in Narrow Circumstances
7	Ignore a Minor Penalty
8	Make an Opponent's Roll Time-Sensitive
9	Evaluate a Rival Company's Quality
10	Perceive Relevant Hidden Knowledge About a Character

Three-Point Effects

1	Enable a Skill to Do Something New
2	Use a Different and Implausible Stat
3	Ignore a Prerequisite For a Roll
4	Substitute One Skill For Another, For One Narrow Use
5	Ignore All Difficulty in Narrow Circumstances
6	Combine Skills in Narrow Circumstances
7	Produce a Morale Attack at Stat Level
8	Receive an Outcome Bonus Equal to a Stat
9	Add a Point to a Quality, With Effort, Once a Month
10	Prevent a Quality From Tiring in Narrow Circumstances

Four-Point Effects

1	Height Automatically Jumps to 10
2	Double a Baseline
3	Substitute Height for Width
4	Broad Skill Substitution
5	Ignore All Difficulty in Broad Circumstances
6	Impose a Difficulty on Someone
7	Produce a Morale Attack Equal to the Set's Height
8	Add a Temporary +1 Bonus to a Quality.
9	Add Gobble Dice
10	Receive an Outcome Bonus Equal to a Stat

Five-Point Effects

1	Very High Improvement to Baseline Ability
2	Drastically Reduce Damage From a Moderately Broad Source
3	Remove All Damage from One Source
4	Unlimited Squishing
5	Provides Benefit on a Fail
6	Change a Relevant Other Skill Die to a Master Die, One Time
7	Shut Down an Opponent's Course of Action
8	Give a Permanent +1 Increase to a Quality, One Time Per Company
9	Use an Excess Set for Another Skill
10	Substitute One Quality For Another in Defined Circumstances

The Players' Chapter

In REIGN, "Company" doesn't mean a business enterprise (like "the gas company"). It means a group joined together in pursuit of some shared objective. A Company could be a religion, a political cause, a mercenary troupe, a secretive conspiracy... any group of people who have common cause.

Forming a Company welds your strengths together and offsets your weaknesses. For this reason, Companies get some advantages that individuals just can't. By the same token, companies are more fragile and less flexible than lone people.

What Is a Company?

Just as a character is defined by Stats, Skills and Advantages, a Company is defined by its goal and by its Qualities.

Goal

Companies exist to do something, though that goal often changes over time. Nevertheless, the goal keeps the group united, be it as vague as "Seek knowledge wherever it's found" or as concrete as "Assassinate the king!"

While goals resemble missions or cravings for a player character, it doesn't add or subtract dice from the Company's pools.

But even without mechanical effect, having a stated goal is critical for the Company. Unless it stands for something, even something selfish ("enrich all members"), sedentary ("prevent the discovery of the lost temple") or just silly ("get together monthly to wear elaborate hats") it's not going to grow or improve.

The Qualities of a Company

Each Quality reflects your Company's ability to get things done in the world. Spying out secrets, changing governments, waging war and making a fortune—a Company can accomplish any of these. The five Qualities (Influence, Might, Treasure, Territory and Sovereignty) are discussed in detail later, but each is measured on a scale of 1-6.

Qualities are abstract, because many elements contribute to the wealth of a nation or the value of its lands. Keeping track of them all would be tedious, so nstead of tracking exactly how many light cavalry your army contains, it's simpler to give you a single digit and be done. You can keep track of details like that—it enhances the the illusion of the situation—but accept that it boils down to a Might rating. You're welcome to add rules hacks of your own: In fact, refinements of Qualities are included in the very first online REIGN supplement. You can download it at http://www.gregstolze.com/REIGN_Supplement01.zip if you like.

Instead of getting advantage by focusing on minutiae of what Sovereignty 3 means, the game encourages situational actions to give your nation, gang or cult or temporary advantages.

The PCs' actions have a direct impact on the Company. By acting smartly and succeeding, you can add ordinary dice, an ED or an MD to your Company's pools. On the other hand, PCs who make gross misjudgments or fail miserably penalize their Company's pools.

Might

Might is a crude gauge of martial prowess. It encompasses the number of active soldiers, their training and equipment, their access to enchantment, and the worth of their commanders. A vast, unruly mob of peasants might have the same Might as a dozen well-armed, veteran cavalry soldiers.

Quality	Example of Might
1	Well-meaning but poorly trained spearmen, possibly with leather caps.
2	A thin rank of untrained soldiers with adequate weapons, or adequate soldiers with poor weapons.
3	The typical city guard, a small corps of elite soldiers, or a huge gaggle of undisciplined scrappers.
4	Good troops with excellent leadership, or vice versa.
5	A well-honed, confident, experienced, superbly balanced fighting force.
6	Tough, experienced veterans, well organized and commanded, with plenty of magic backup.

Followers and Might

If you have the Followers Advantage at rank 5, it's roughly equivalent to Might 1. If you assign your Followers to the Company as a whole instead of having them obey you, well, there it is. You can't personally lead more people than is represented by Followers 5 without forming a Company.

This does mean that if you have Might 3+, you can assign some followers to come with you on private missions and, voila, instant Followers without paying for the Advantage. That's fine. If you keep withdrawing followers and getting them all killed, your GM may decide to give you a temporary Might penalty, as troops become demoralized. Or she might take it out on you in Sovereignty.

Temporary Raises for Might

Gaining temporary advantage is what being a good commander is all about. Some ways to get the advantage include…

Fight From Entrenchments: A force that's holed up in a fortress is a lot harder to eliminate than one in the open field. Getting attacked when you're defending some impregnable fastness directly improves your chances of fending him off.

Surprise Maneuver: If you can keep some grand plan secret and spring it at the last moment, you can dismay and confuse an opponent. If you successfully conceal a cavalry platoon on the hill, waiting to descend on his flank, then said flank is going to softer when the charge comes. Keeping secrets is, of course, hard.

Head Hunt: Sneaking in and murdering highly visible figures in the enemy command structure is a great way to get an advantage… if you can. Even if the general you assassinate

is an incompetent figurehead, it's still demoralizing to know your leader is vulnerable. Not to mention how nervous the next guy promoted is going to be.

Scare Tactics: If you can spook the enemy troops before the engagement, by exaggerating your own fighters' prowess or ruthlessness, your enemies are more likely to flee. Of course, this raises the question of how to get them to trust your assertions…

Be Smarter: Here's a gamble. Your commander rolls Knowledge+Strategy against their commander. The Higher set gets a temporary +1 to Might.

Hire Mercenaries: Make a pure Treasure roll with no other Quality. If it succeeds, you've raised your Might by a point for one specific military action. (GMs may not permit this action if it's unreasonable for mercenaries to be available.) Even with high Treasure, this roll is likely to be dodgy, so you may want to first boost that Treasure roll through some character play. Remember, this erodes your Treasure rating, just like rolling it in conjunction with another Quality. (The erosion of Qualities through use is explained on page 91.)

TREASURE

Treasure measures how much money a group can access, be it in the form of promissory notes or jingly bags of coin. More than that, however, Treasure represents an intangible fiscal infrastructure. At the higher reaches of power, money is as much about appearance as actuality. Some nations can even convince people that scraps of paper are tremendously valuable.

Quality	Example of Treasure
1	Every level of the operation is visibly pitiful—ragged clothing, scurvy livestock, bad haircuts…
2	A struggling Company working close to the margin, with little fiscal safety net.
3	Perhaps a small but tightly run enterprise, or a large and shabby one, or a settlement with areas of poverty and prosperity.
4	A prosperous organization, well-managed and profitable.
5	With deep reserves and a strong record of success, the Company can take greater risks without the chance of being utterly wiped out.
6	The Company radiates casual opulence, and possesses not only such significant reserves that it cannot count them, but also an evolved fiscal system for exchanging (say) quarried stone for milled wheat, or pig iron for cut timber or the services of an expert builder. On top of that, there's plenty of potential for lending to and borrowing from other companies of equivalent stature.

TEMPORARY RAISES FOR TREASURE

Treasure is difficult to increase short term, but some possibilities include…

Ask for a Loan: Find another Company whose Treasure is sufficient to give you some. Work out terms. If an agreement is reached, they transfer some Treasure to you for a predetermined term, after which you either give it back or default on the loan and hope their Might is insufficient to raid you in redress.

Terms vary from loan to loan. Some expect a return with interest. Others expect the same money back, accompanied by other concessions.

Issue Bonds (or Debase Currency): Issuing bonds is like getting a loan from your own citizens. If you're a business, the equivalent is asking your workers to accept deferred payment. It works like a normal loan, only you permanently lose a point of Sovereignty if you default.

Nations can also debase their currency, if they're sophisticated enough to use credit or paper money. In that case, you borrow from Territory.

Threaten: By making a pure Might roll (with no other Quality) you can shake down your creditors or debtors or just some timorous bystanders into extending credit. This erodes your Might like any other use of Might (as explained on page 91), so you may want to roleplay some to boost the pool. If the roll succeeds, you get a temporary raise and avoid any serious blowback—there might be ill will, but no one sneaking into your bedroom with a stiletto. Some GMs may roll this in secret and extend you the credit even on a fail—only to have repercussions crop up later.

Wealth and Treasure

Wealth turns into Treasure at a 3 to 1 ratio, rounding down. If you have Wealth 3-5 you can invest it into a Company as Treasure 1. Wealth 9-10 is Treasure 3. No individual can manage Wealth above 10 without a Company.

In the same way that a leader can requisition Followers without significantly dropping his Company's Might, characters can make purchases with Treasure that, while meaningful to an individual are trivial to a Company. Just withdraw Wealth at a level two or more below your Treasure level.

In the same way that abusing followers can backfire, so can fiscal irresponsibility. If the PCs are cavalier about dipping into collective funds, GMCs might decide to do the same, producing temporary or permanent Treasure drops. Plus, a 'let them eat cake' attitude can lower Sovereignty like little else.

Influence

Influence measures how much a Company knows and how easily it can learn. It also gauges how powerfully (and subtly) a group can sway the opinions of other groups. This is not the power to redraw national borders, but the power to learn what the Prince believes, and perhaps persuade him otherwise.

The Qualities of a Company

Quality	Example
1	Self-absorbed and unknown, your Company has negligible pull.
2	A group like this might stumble on a fact now and then, or through sheer luck change the mind of someone noteworthy.
3	Your Company can make its opinions known directly, and can learn of major events in a timely fashion.
4	Well-informed for a decent sized area, your group understands the intangible connections between people and groups and social trends. Your knowledge lets you choose arguments calculated to persuade.
5	An array of sources can be checked against one another for accuracy, while legions of advisors (or blackmailers) can make your will felt throughout a nation.
6	For your Company, the walls have ears and the hills have eyes. When you whisper, generals shout and soldiers scream.

Temporary Raises for Influence

Impress the Gentry: If your characters are suave, debonair and respectful to foreign dignitaries and opinion makers, without seeming flighty, smarmy, or foppish, it can give you pull with them. They have pull with others. Keep at it long enough, you can pull just about anything.

Bluff: Create a convincing illusion of wealth, prestige or force and influence others by playing to their misplaced greed, envy or fear.

Threaten: Reminding others of past military exploits can often make people remarkably pliable. But this can backfire if you get someone aggressive who's just looking for an excuse.

Promise: Play up your vast wealth, staggering influence or lush tracts of land in order to get the greedy to aid you. Keep in mind, the greedy are fickle without eventual reward.

Territory

Territory measures more than just acreage (though that's part of it). Territory means population, it means the strength of the land, it means mills and cattle. Good Territory indicates educated followers and efficient workers. It lets your Company grow, and recover from setbacks.

Quality	Example
1	A village with surrounding farms, a small town, or a neighborhood within a city. It could also be a small church, a minor organization of tradespeople, or a single large ship with crew.
2	A town, a modest duchy, legitimate authority over a large part of a big city. Alternately, a caravan of decent size, or a broad-but-shallow national conspiracy.
3	A tiny country, a fair sized region or a huge independent city. If not physical land, this could stand for a prominent regional religion, a national merchant empire, or a very large mercenary Company.
4	A large region within a large country, or a of medium size nation, or a huge independent city and its surrounding area.
5	A large country.
6	A vast and varied nation with a highly-developed culture.

Chapter Four

Temporary Raises for Territory

It's hard to accelerate the productivity of a fleet or a nation or a noble family, because any obvious improvements have already been made. But there's one way to squeeze out a bit extra—if you're willing to pay.

Exhaust the Fields: Or make your craftsmen work sixteen-hour shifts. Or mortgage your property for a second time. Or borrow against money that's already earmarked for something else. There are many ways to milk short term improvement at the cost of long-term damage. If you think of one and the GM agrees, you get a temporary 1d Territory increase that lasts 3 months, or until used, whichever comes first. When it's been used, you temporarily lose 1d of Territory for six months.

Sovereignty

Sovereignty is the inner strength of your society. It measures the loyalty of the people to the Company, its leaders, and one another. It is, essentially, their identity as citizens or employees or worshippers. Companies with high Sovereignty can expect voluntary aid from even its lowliest followers—acting not from hope of reward, but out of a sense of civic duty. Companies with low Sovereignty may dissolve from within, even when there's no external threat.

Every Company must have at least one point in Sovereignty every month. It can be a temporary point caused by strenuous leadership, but it has to be there. Otherwise the Company dissolves. You can survive hitting zero in anything else. If your group identity dies, your group dies.

Quality	Example of Sovereignty
1	Barely-suppressed hatred.
2	Grudging, resentful obedience.
3	Typical loyalty: The followers gripe about the leaders to one another, but demonstrate patriotism when an outsider makes remarks.
4	Unusual dedication, due perhaps to personal charisma, positive events, or the abject terror of those under a tyrant.
5	The commoners take pleasure in promoting the nation. If there's rule by fear, it's backed with equal amounts of glorious rhetoric, probably something about having a manifest destiny.
6	Total cultural cohesion to the point of xenophobia (or at least condescending snobbery). Devotion to the ruling clique.w

Temporary Raises for Sovereignty

Being such a fluid Quality, there are several good ways to raise Sovereignty.

Declare a Holiday: Once a year you can get away with this for a high priest's anointment, the birth of a prince, or an important wedding. People like an excuse to put on good clothes, so their Sovereignty goes up by at least 1 the month after the holiday. If you give them a great reason, the bonus might increase or the effect last longer.

Dispense Justice: Often, the leader of a Company is expected to adjudicate conflicts. If you do this justly and care (or put on a good show of caring), if you can avoid conflicts of

interest (or, again, make with the good show) and present an image of impartial wisdom, the people become more likely to trust your judgment in other matters. On the other hand, if it looks like you're helping your cronies or selling out, your Sovereignty may suffer.

Permit Them to Ignore You: If your Territory is greater than your Sovereignty, and you do nothing with Territory for a month, you may (at the GM's discretion) get a +1 Sovereignty bonus on your next roll, for no reason other than the people have a vague sense that you're less demanding than other monarchs or employers. It won't get you flowers strewn in your path, but apathetic people don't riot. If things are going poorly for the Company, you won't get this bonus. But if things are on an even keel, it's probably something you can expect.

General Company Rules

All companies use the same rules. At the 'mighty empire' side of the scale, however, one Company may be composed of many smaller companies, with control flowing from the top downward. For instance, one kingdom can be composed of several domains, and itself be part of an empire. Lords of those domains can apply the potencies of their lands as they see fit… unless ordered otherwise by the king, or by Imperial authority. Because Qualities tire out through use, the timing of actions can become a political football— simply by prioritizing his Influence task before his king's, a lord improves his odds of success. As long as the king doesn't get angry.

Combining Companies

The Quality scale is not a strict, linear mathematical progression. Here's why: Dice in the ORE aren't a linear mathematical progression. Your chance of getting a set when you roll two dice is one in ten. When you roll four dice, it's one in two. Clearly more dice aren't only better, they're increasingly better.

That's why it works. Here's how it works: In order to raise a Quality by 1, you have to combine it with an equal Quality. If a Quality combines with a higher Quality, it just goes to that higher level.

(If you understand how the Wealth rating works back on page 58, this is exactly the same.)

Example: Harfast and Welterwood, two adjoining duchies, are merging.

> Harfast has Might 3, Treasure 2, Influence 1, Sovereignty 2, Territory 2. Welterwood has Might 1, Treasure 2, Influence 3, Sovereignty 3, Territory 2.

> Harfast's significant Might overshadows the Welterwood forces, swallowing them whole. The combined Company has Might 3. Their tied Treasure, however, combines to reach Treasure 3. Welterwood's Influence overshadows Harfast's Influence, so their new Influence is 3. Similarly, Welterwood's superior Sovereignty raises Harfast's, to 3. Finally, because their Territories are of similar value, the combined Grand Duchy has a higher value than either alone, Territory 3.

Clearly you can't steal Territory from a smaller Company, or enrich yourself at the expense of a poorer one. To gain Territory through conquest, you have to attack someone of equal or greater Territory. You can still push around your smaller neighbors and decrease their Territory: But any lands you seize are insignificant compared to what you already have.

Chapter Four

The Exception: Sovereignty

Sovereignty measures how strongly the members of the Company identify themselves with it. That's abstract. It becomes concrete when loyalties conflict.

Consider a border province in a nation. If the nation's other provinces pass laws unfair to the frontier, it's a conflict. The borderlands might even secede. It all comes down to whether the people see themselves first as frontiersmen, or as citizens of the nation.

When companies combine, you can't easily reinvent people's identities. Thus, when two groups merge (or when one faction rebels from within), the changes in Sovereignty depend more on circumstance than on any formula.

If the companies combine harmoniously, then the normal rules apply: Two equal ratings go to the next one up, and unequal ratings go to the highest score. The Welterwood/Harfast combo in the body text is an example.

If the companies combine grudgingly, their combined Sovereignty is one lower than the higher of the two components' scores.

Example: Ten years ago, a church broke into two sects, Inspired and Orthodox. The diverse and complacent Orthodox Company has Sovereignty 2. The Inspired Company has Sovereignty 5 because they're fanatics. If the two groups are forced back together by necessity, neither side loves it, but both recognize they're better together than alone. The Sovereignty of the Unified church is 4—less than the fanatical 5 of the splinter sect, but greater than the complacent 2 of its parent.

Sometimes a merger is downright hostile. In the case of an occupation or seizure by force, the combined Sovereignty should drop to the lower of the two scores.

Example: A band of barbarian horsemen (Sovereignty 2) seize a fishing village (Sovereignty 4). When these companies merge, their combined Sovereignty drops to 2. The warriors can threaten and bluster, but the newly-formed Company "barbarian village" only has as much discipline and identity as the ruffians in charge.

If you attack someone of equal size, you have to reduce their Sovereignty and Territory to zero to raise your Territory. This is total conquest: That Company no longer exists. If you attack and win short of complete annihilation, you can still lower their Territory: You just don't raise your own.

Picking on someone with superior Territory is different. If you succeed, you can increase your Territory by 1 and decrease theirs by 1 simply by succeeding at an annexation attack. (See page 96 for rules on annexation.) However, if you continue to attack them and completely destroy them, it won't increase your Territory further.

It may, however, raise your Treasure. Treasure operates just like Territory. To recap:

If you attack someone of equal Treasure, you can only raise your own Treasure if you completely deplete their Territory and Sovereignty.

If you attack someone of equal Treasure, you can drop their Treasure by raiding (see page 96). You just won't improve your own Treasure. The property gets burned, smashed or stolen. War is hell.

If you attack someone of greater Treasure, a simple success decreases their Treasure by 1 and raises your Treasure by 1.

This means, for example, that if your smaller neighbor robs you, you can only regain your losses from him if the two of you traded Treasure Qualities. If he was a lot poorer than you, you have no chances of redress short of total conquest.

Example: A street gang with Treasure 0 decides to rob a family of jewelers (Treasure 3). Succeeding at the heist, the gang's Treasure goes up to 1 while the family's Treasure drops to 2. Enraged, the jewelers send hired muscle to recover the gems. She succeeds, dropping the gang's Treasure back to 0… but part of the loot gets lost. Even if she recovered it all, the lost reputation can account for the Treasure loss. With her history of poor security, people won't trust her with their money.

Optimized Combinations

When several companies combine into one (as when provinces add up to a nation, or nations fuse into an empire) the order of combination matters.

Example: The Brotherhood of Iron Night initiates the master of a smuggling ring, and a mercenary captain. Both the mercenary Company and the smugglers are now controlled by the Brotherhood. These three groups have the following Qualities.

Brotherhood: Might 1, Territory 1, Sovereignty 3, Treasure 1, Influence 2

Smugglers: Might 1, Territory 0, Sovereignty 2, Treasure 2, Influence 1

Mercenaries: Might 2, Territory 1, Sovereignty 2, Treasure 2, Influence 1

One option is to fold the smugglers into the Brotherhood first. Their two equal Mights go up to the next highest level. The Brotherhood's greater Territory sucks in the Smugglers', as does their Sovereignty and Influence. Since the Smugglers have more Treasure, the Brotherhood's Treasure rises to the Smugglers' old level. The Brotherhood is now at

Might 2, Territory 1, Sovereignty 3, Treasure 2, Influence 2. It goes on to incorporate the Mercenaries.

Their equal Mights rise again (to 3) as does Treasure, while their equal Territories rise to 2. The superior Brotherhood Sovereignty stays at 3, and the same thing happens with their Influence of 2.

Thus, by giving the smugglers a superior position to the sell-sword, the Brotherhood ends up looking like this:

Brotherhood: Might 3, Territory 2, Sovereignty 3, Treasure 3, Influence 2

But what if they did it in the opposite order—combining with the warriors first, then taking the criminals?

Example: The Brotherhood's Might, Treasure and Territory all rise to 2, their Sovereignty remains at 3, and their Influence stays at 2. When they bring the crooks into the fold, neither Might, Sovereignty, Influence nor Territory change, but their Treasures combine to 3. This way, favoring the mercenaries, the Brotherhood changes to this:

Brotherhood: Might 2, Territory 2, Sovereignty 3, Treasure 2, Influence 2

It's better than they began, but the organization is less efficient and the groups don't fold together smoothly.

As a third option, what if the two newcomers are conspiring to take over the Brotherhood from within? They combine their companies first, and hope to bargain for enough power to control the whole mass.

Example: The warriors' superior Might and Territory stay at their previous levels, but the matches in Sovereignty and Treasure each combine to 3 and their Influence rises to 2. When the brash newcomers flex their muscle, their Company swallows the Brotherhood. Its Might stays at 2 while its Territory rises to 2. Treasure doesn't change, but Sovereignty reaches an impressive 4 and Influence hits 3. This means that the infusion of new leadership really inspires the followers and makes things happen. This combination looks like this:

Conquered Brotherhood: Might 2, Territory 2, Sovereignty 4, Treasure 3, Influence 3

Some players enjoy fiddling with different Company Qualities to see how the math works out. Some don't. Both ways are fine, because this doesn't come up often. If the players in your group don't want to mess with these tricks, they shouldn't—just stick companies together one at a time and be done with it. But if your group loves min-maxing, go for it. You may wind up in the position of having to choose between personal authority and Company strength. Adding your group last may give the best structure, but leave the characters subordinate. Getting in line first may give them the whip hand, but only half the horses.

GMs may concern themselves with this when big companies subdivide. That is, the PCs' Company may come into conflict with a local governor or provincial authority, and so the GM throws the Qualities of the province against them. But that province is part of a nation, and the GM may also calculate the nation's Qualities. If you build your own companies and sub-companies, it's okay for them to be inefficient, especially if having that weakness to exploit leads to a more interesting game.

Traitor! I'll Stab You in the Face!

Sometimes one faction within a larger Company takes actions that are against its interests. (Sometimes the PCs are leading a secret conspiracy trying to bring down the despot from within.) Here's how you manage it when a component attacks the whole or vice versa.

It's just like a normal conflict. The only meaningful bit is determining the relative Qualities when they're rolled.

The big Company's Quality doesn't change if it's two or more greater than the traitor's Quality. Otherwise, the big Company's Quality drops by one in conflicts with the rebels. The Qualities of the enemies within don't change.

Example: The Empire has Might 5, Territory 6, Influence 5, Treasure 4 and Sovereignty 3. One of its member nations individually has Might 3, Territory 3, Influence 3, Treasure 3 and Sovereignty 3. If that country tries to throw off the Imperial yoke, the Empire's Might, Territory and Influence are all too great to be immediately harmed. Its Treasure and Sovereignty both drop a point.

What happens when groups so closely entangled manage to damage one another? Possibly the bigger group gets hurt in the process of repressing its component.

If the Qualities started out equal, damage to either Company reduces the Quality on each side by an equal amount.

Example: The insurgents make an attack on the Empire's Sovereignty through an unconventional warfare attack. The attack succeeds, reducing The Empire's Sovereignty to 2. However, since the insurgency is still tied to The Empire's fortunes, its own Sovereignty drops to 2 as well.

If the defender's Quality is two or more greater than the attacker, a successful attack drops it without harming the attacker.

Example: The insurgents go up against the Imperial Guard and prevail. The Empire's Might 5 was two higher than their Might 3, so the uprising can attack it without harming themselves.

Similarly, if the defender's Quality is less than the attacker's, a successful attack drops it without harming the attacker.

Example: The Empire attacks the rebels' Territory, and succeeds. Because the Empire's Territory 6 is comfortably higher than the insurgents' Territory 3, the Empire can attack without damaging themselves.

Got it? Before biting the hand that feeds you, their Quality drops by one unless it's at least two higher than your Company's Quality. (If it's that much bigger, your withdrawal isn't big enough to really hurt.) When resolving conflicts, both sides are harmed if the damaged Quality is equal between them.

How Often?

You can use a Quality once per month for each level you have in it. With Territory 6, you can apply it six times each month. Might 3 lets you can engage in three major military actions per month.

There's a catch, however. Every time you use a Quality, it takes a –1 penalty until the next month. These can be offset by raising the pool (see below) but the first military action your Might 5 war machine takes in a month is going to be far more effective than the fourth action, when it's eroded to Might 1

Example: Lord Lockfang is tracking both a group of foreign spies posing as horse traders, and a home-grown insurrection.

Lockfang's Company has Influence 4, Territory 2 and Sovereignty 2. His first Influence action for the month is to seek them with an Influence+Sovereignty roll, which is 6d. He fails. He now has a –1 penalty to both Influence and Sovereignty. He tries again at 4d, and this time makes it. His Sovereignty is now effectively 0 and his Influence has dropped to 2. He can combine Influence with Territory to seek the spies with a 4d pool. He fails, and each Quality drops by one point again. If he wants to keep looking for them he can roll 2d. Or he can save his remaining point of Territory in case someone attacks him, or to try and improve one of his other Qualities.

Prioritizing wisely is critical.

Order and Disorder

Qualities drop by 1 every time they're used. If you like, you can voluntarily reduce a Quality by 1 during an early action to raise it by 1 during a later one. The order is not set in stone. When you're first getting used to the system, however, putting your Company's actions for the month in decreasing order of importance is a good way to manage the sliding Qualities.

Subdivisions

You can split a Quality if you need to do two things at once in wildly disparate areas. This is most commonly used with Might, when you have to send some troops to the mountains and some to the seashore. It can come up with other Qualities—maybe you conquer an island and have it as a separate piece of Territory—but it's best to consider Qualities as a single pot from which servings get ladled, diminishing with each serving.

If you still want to split, here's how. Allocate part to one task and part to another. The "chunks" of Quality degrade through action as usual.

Example: The Empire has Might 6 and separate wars on two sides. The Empress allocates Might 4 to the west, with Might 2 guarding the east. When the western invasion comes, the first battle is fought at Might 4, the second at Might 3 (or lower, if The Empire loses) and so on. If the eastern forces attack long after the western incursion, they still face Might 2, because those troops are unaffected by distant events.

Raising the Pool

The pools available, even to mighty nations, may seem small. A nation defending itself may roll a 5d pool—and then a 3d pool against a second attack! This makes companies terribly fragile. That's why their leaders are critical.

The actions of player characters (and GMCs) can give temporary bonuses and penalties to a Company's Qualities or pools. These boosts never last long, but they can add up to three dice to a pool, or an Expert die, or even the coveted MD.

If the PCs aren't doing much, the GM can fast forward through long spans of time making monthly Company rolls after five or ten minutes of discussion. But if the characters are involved with one particular aspect of governance, they can raise it.

The exact actions required to raise or lower a Quality pool is a matter for GM judgment, but guidelines follow.

Action	Effect
Catastrophe! Accidentally poison your army on the eve of battle.	-3d
Humiliating Failure. Throw up during a diplomatic banquet.	-2d
Error. Pursue support of your levies by saying, "I'll tax you peasant bastards until you bleed!"	-1d
Washout. Try to persuade a neighbor to ally with you, but without offering incentives or threats.	No effect
Minor success. Gain good tactical intelligence on the eve of the battle.	+1d
Significant success. Become a key patron for a genius artist.	+ED
Outstanding success. Solidify your hold on the population's hearts with a public marriage to a beautiful princess.	+2d
Major success. Persuade a neighbor that some of his land is worthless, buy it cheap, and find gold on it.	+MD
Spectacular coup! Assassinate your rival to the throne on the eve of a "spontaneous uprising."	+3d
Epic triumph! Manipulate the enemy king into facing you in single combat before his army—and kill him.	+1+MD
Mastermind Maneuver! Seduce the enemy's Supreme	+2+MD

Commander so thoroughly he's willing to throw away everything for you.

There is one important restriction on temporary improvements. They cannot be "saved." If you cranked up your Might with temporary improvements, all the dice you've gained are applied to your next relevant Might roll. You can't hoard them for later rolls.

Sometimes the characters raise a Quality. Sometimes it's for one roll of a particular pool. Sometimes the improvement only applies to certain uses of a Quality, while other times it operates across the board. There are many variations, and it's largely the GM's job to decide

whether it's a pool raise or a Quality raise, how big it is and how long it lasts. As a rule of thumb, a raise that alters a single roll should be more significant than raising a Quality for the whole month. But the variations are endless: If the PCs spend lots of time improving the defenses of one castle, it makes sense for the bonus to apply only when that castle is attacked. If, instead, they rigorously drill the officer corps in new and unconventional tactics, that may improve every Might roll made… until the enemy has time to adapt.

Improving a Quality

There are three ways to permanently increase a Company's Quality.

Combining

If two small companies get mixed and mingled, they form one bigger Company. This is explained in detail on page 86, but here's the short version. When a Quality of the two companies is unequal, the merged Company has that Quality at the higher of the two levels. If a Company with Sovereignty 3 joins forces with a Company at Sovereignty 1, the new Company has Sovereignty 3. (See page 87, though.) When a Quality is equal, the combination raises it by one point: If the two companies both have Might 5, when they merge the new Company has Might 6.

Conquest

If your Company attacks another Company, it might conquer it completely. This is described in full on page 98, but basically you have to meet two conditions.

Reduce two of your enemy's Qualities to zero.

One of the Qualities zeroed out must be either Territory or Sovereignty.

The outcome depends on the relative size of your Company and your victim. 'Size' in this instance means 'combined total of all five Qualities'.

If the Company was half your size or smaller, you get nothing. If it was smaller, but more than half your size, you can improve any one Quality by a point if that increase makes sense. If it was equal size or larger, you can increase any two Qualities that make sense, or maybe raise one Quality by two points if the GM agrees.

Example: Remember Welterfast, back on page 86? It was a combined Company that got scores of 3 in each Quality. Now it's ready to take on a criminal gang with Might 1, Treasure 1, Influence 2, Sovereignty 2 and Territory 1. Back when Harfast had Influence 1, the gang could hold the authorities at bay. Now Welterfast starts with a Might+Influence attack to wipe out their Territory (specifically, burning down the warren of mazy streets where they operate), followed by a straightforward Might+Treasure to round up and kill their armed members. In one month, the gang is destroyed.

The crooks' Qualities added up to 7 (1+1+2+2+1), which is less than half of the 15 Quality totals of Welterfast (3+3+3+3+3). Not enough for Welterfast to make a permanent gain. The GM might give them a temporary Sovereignty bonus.

Next, Harfast turns on its neighbor to the south. Unfortunately, while their lands belong to different kingdoms, they're all part of the same Empire so settling things through open

combat would be frowned upon. So Welterfast falls back on skullduggery, reducing the neighbor's Sovereignty and Might to zero in one month.

That province had Might 2, Treasure 3, Influence 4, Sovereignty 2 and Territory 2. Its Qualities add up to 13, less than Welterfast's total but more than half. Welterfast gets to increase one of its Qualities. They could take his lands, but since they were smaller than the Grand Duchy, that wouldn't raise their Territory. Instead, they choose to raise their Influence.

In fact, their clout becomes so great, the Empress suggests that they turn their attentions to an adjacent foreign province. Its Qualities add up to 16. If they completely destroy it (something certain to bring two powerful nations to war), they can raise two Qualities.

Experience

The final way to permanently improve a Quality is having your PCs take risks and work hard. Your character earns experience points, as described on page 55. You can spend those to improve your character's Stats or Skills and such, or you can spend them to improve your Company's Qualities.

You have to justify the increase, but not very much. If you've spent several adventures with the army, raising Might is reasonable because the troops know your face. If you've been dining with the cultural elite, increasing Influence makes sense. Wiping out smugglers and bandits? Increase Sovereignty or Territory. Anything you do that makes your Company better can find a reflection in a Quality.

All that means nothing without the XP, of course.

The XP cost for raising a Quality is equal to ten times its new level. If you want to raise your Company's Might to 6, you need to put in 60 XP. Raising Sovereignty from 1 to 2 costs 20 XP.

Raising Qualities is expensive, but you're not alone. Only you can raise your character's Parry Skill, but every PC in your group can contribute XP to the Company.

Only you can decide whether you want to sink XP into the Company or into your character, but consider this: If your character dies, the Company remains. Now your GM doesn't have to tank the game if the whole party gets wiped out. Nor does she have to bend over backwards to keep that from happening.

Company Generation

The easiest way to generate a Company is to give each player one (or more) points of Quality to assign as they wish. One per player is typical, but you could give two or more points per player.

When you're starting, you can alter the dynamic by deciding what the base PCs are like and what each character brings to the Company. A game where the players start out at Serious Adventurer (see page 35), but with only a point each to build their Company makes them scrappy outsiders raging against entrenched society. But what happens if characters at the lowest level of achievement have three points of Qualities to assign? The leadership of those who really need to rely on their Company is a different feel from those who don't loose much if they scrap this group and start over.

Company Generation

Remember, a Company has to meet certain minimum requirements every month to remain viable. It has to have at least one point in Sovereignty. Otherwise it simply collapses into a mob. It's possible to keep going for a while with temporary improvements, but that's life support. Eventually, the leaders have to tend to their people's needs.

What Companies Do

Now that you understand Qualities, here's how you put them into play. There are ten common actions, each governed by a roll of two Qualities combined into a single pool.

You may take an action with only one Quality—if you're saving the other Quality for different tasks, or if that other Quality has hit zero anyhow. All you do is roll that single Quality with any raises that you've gained for it.

Timing Conflicts

The timing of Company actions is left, in large part, to the discretion of the GM. Most times, with large groups acting on the scale of weeks or months, timing doesn't matter because by the time one Company is aware of another's action, that action is halfway complete.

But sometimes it does matter. Sometimes there are two groups, each trying to harm the other, and getting in that first punch can determine whether the counterstrike hits. In these cases, there are a couple rules one can use. Decide which you're going to use beforehand, because the rule will affect the tone of your game.

Smaller Pool First

Generally, smaller pools indicate smaller Companies. Being small doesn't have a lot of advantages, but with this rule, organizational inertia is less and a certain degree of nimbleness lets them respond and adapt. As a mechanical bonus, small pools are more likely to fail, so your game resolves quicker when that's out of the way. If you really want to privilege PC effectiveness, have the smaller base pool act first, with dice bonuses from PC successes being added afterwards. That way you can act first and have the superior pool.

Highest Sovereignty First

Companies with high Sovereignty are composed of motivated followers, true believers who are taking initiative and thinking about more than doing the minimum and getting home to bed. This gives the PCs additional motivation to keep the people in their Company happy and to present their cause as worthy of striving and sacrifice.

With either method, you can break ties with a flipped coin.

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Attack

Roll: Might+Treasure

Against: Might+Territory

Your Company's military sallies out to engage the enemy. Call it invasion, raiding, annexation or a war of liberation, what it comes down to is your troops going in against their troops' fortifications.

What the Attack Does

What the attack accomplishes depends on its goal. There are several goals in warfare, as follows.

Raiding. Your troops go in, sack the town, and haul everything home. If you succeed at a raid, your opponent's Treasure goes down by 1. If you raid a group with equal or lower Treasure, their Treasure drops but yours does not rise. If you raid someone with greater Treasure, their Treasure drops by 1 and your Treasure rises by 1.

Annexation. You want their land, so you take it. If you succeed, you take Territory from your enemy. As with raiding, you can't raise your Territory if the enemy is the same size or smaller. If you Attack a larger company and succeed, your Territory rises by 1 and theirs drops a like amount.

Symbolism. You defeat the enemy but don't take anything, other than the right to say you defeated the enemy. This can be surprisingly important. A symbolic victory may temporarily or permanently raise Sovereignty (for a historical rival) or Influence (if your neighbors would respect someone who defeats that foe). By the same token, it may gain nothing for the attacker while temporarily, or permanently damaging the defender's Influence or Sovereignty.

Pre-Emptive Defense. Your sole goal is to weaken his army. If you succeed at this goal, his Might drops by one. You gain nothing, other than the knowledge that you bloodied his nose.

Those are the typical objectives of combat, though there are plenty of others for creative GMs and characters. When the clash comes, both sides roll and the dice show what happened.

It's possible to combine goals as well, but every goal past the first levies a –1d penalty on the Attack roll and requires an additional set. If you have Might 3 and Treasure 2, your attack pool is usually 5. If you're attacking to both seize some money and win a symbolic victory, you roll 4d and hope for two sets. If you only get one, you have to pick between gold and glory.

Resolving Attack and Defense

The defender gets to choose if he wants an opposed contest or a dynamic contest.

If it's opposed, his dice gobble. If he ruins all your sets, you fail at your goal, with minimal damage on either side. This is much like dodging in combat. Each side's Qualities get eroded from use, as usual.

If it's a dynamic contest, the Widest and Highest roll resolves first and knocks a die out of a set on the other side. (It's just like hand to hand combat when two individuals attack and neither defends.) If the defender gets a set through, the attacker's Might drops by 1. If the attacker gets a set through, the defender's Might or Territory drops by 1 (defender's choice).

Chapter Four

These penalties are in addition to the usual temporary losses for applying a Quality.

These losses of Might and Territory are temporary until the Quality hits zero. The attack that knocks it to zero makes the loss permanent. (Dropping your Might to zero making attacks is not a permanent loss: Your Might returns to its normal level next month, when the troops have had a chance to regroup.) The defender may withdraw before reaching zero, but if he does, the attacker succeeds at his raid or whatever. (Though, of course, that goal might be to knock down Might or Territory. In that case, withdrawing to preserve the Quality under attack is not permitted.)

Some attackers make conservative attacks. This parallels a multiple action attack/defense in hand to hand combat and is resolved the same way: The pool loses one die, and if the roller gets two sets he can attack with one and use the other to gobble enemy sets.

Some defenders do the same thing—drop their pool by one, hope for two sets, use one for attack and one for defense. Either side can do multiple action defenses (dropping one or more dice and hoping for multiple sets) or multiple action attacks (hoping for more usable sets, each with the potential to decrease the enemy's Might by 1).

Once battle is joined, you can make one Attack roll every day, until one side flees, or until someone's Might hits zero. You get to pick what time of day you make your roll, giving characters time for personal missions to better your odds (see "Raising the Pool" on page 92). Your opponent may choose to counter-attack you at any time during the day, however. In that case, he's making an attack and you're choosing whether to make it an opposed or dynamic contest. Defender still rolls Might+Territory and the invader still rolls Might+Treasure, but otherwise it's the same as above.

Being Informed

Roll: Influence+Sovereignty

Against: Influence+Treasure or a Difficulty set by the GM.

A leader's judgment is only as good as his information. By going to the people who know (that's Influence) and by listening to loyalists (that's Sovereignty), a Company can roll to find out what's going on.

The result of the roll depends on what is going on. To get the news and be a well-informed despot, any success is sufficient. To learn something a little more obscure—for example, if a warlord or military leader wants to get the latest gossip from inside the Academy of Arcane Studies—a Difficulty of 3 or so might be appropriate.

Difficulties arise when you're trying to find out about someone who's attempting to remain hidden. Smuggling rings, bandit gangs, murderous cults… these are all Companies too, and they want to remain covert. If they're trying to stay hidden and you're trying to find out about them, you roll Influence+Sovereignty while they roll Influence+Treasure. This is an opposed contest, where his dice gobble yours. If you have a set remaining, you've learned something—exactly what you've learned is up to the GM. High results indicate good information. Low results indicate rumors and conjecture.

Total Conquest

If you can reduce a rival Company's Sovereignty to zero, it collapses.

If you reduce two of a Company's Qualities to zero in one month, including either Sovereignty or Territory, you have completely overwhelmed and subsumed that entire Company. If it's a nation, you now rule it (in fact, if not directly in name). If it's a merchant enterprise, you're making the decisions.

Add all of the fallen Company's Quality scores together—add the permanent scores, not what they got chipped down to by the time it all fell apart. Then total the five Qualities for your Company.

If the Qualities of the losing Company were half or less than the total Qualities of the conqueror, the winner gains nothing.

If the Qualities of the losing Company equaled more than half the winner's total, but weren't equal, the winner can raise any one Quality by a single point, permanently. The GM may limit this based on narrative plausibility—if you have Territory 4 and defeated a Territory 1 enemy, it makes little sense for your Territory to rise.

If the Qualities of the losing Company were equal to or greater than the winner's total, the winner can raise any two Qualities by one point each, permanently. You may also be allowed to raise one Quality by two points, but that's the GM's call.

Counter-Espionage

Roll: Influence+Territory

Against: Influence+Treasure

If your rivals are smart, they're trying to learn your weaknesses, just as you're trying to learn theirs. (You're not trying to learn theirs? Better go read up on "Espionage" on page 99.)

Finding spies is tricky, but the more adroit you are with insinuation (your Influence Quality) and the more organized your underlings (Territory) the more likely you are to pick up on mysterious outsiders asking questions.

When spies are active in your area, they're rolling Influence+Treasure for the facts they seek (which could be anything from troop movements to fiscal secrets). If the PCs have been active in keeping their ear to the ground, the GM may allow you to roll your Influence+Territory (along with any raises), then use them as Gobble Dice against the spies' sets. If you haven't been paying attention, she may roll the dice in secret once a month. This roll still gives the –1 penalty to each Quality, so if you find yourself rolling fewer dice with Territory or Influence… well, figure it out.

If the spies roll no successes, they've given themselves away. You may not know who they are, but you get word someone's sniffing around. This does not occur when they get a set and you wreck it with Gobble Dice: That just means you guarded your secrets successfully.

Defend

Roll: Might+Territory

Against: Might+Treasure

This is how you avoid becoming someone else's cash cow, vassal state, or symbolic whipping boy. The nuts and bolts of it are covered under "Attack" on page 96. The mechanics work exactly the same when it's your peasants running for the hills with all the chickens they can carry.

Espionage

Roll: Influence+Treasure

Against: Influence+Territory

If you're smart, you're trying to find out all you can about your enemies. If your underlings are sexy, or excellent conversationalists, or invisible, you may want to send them off with a list of questions you want answered… or opinions you want altered.

Finding Information

When they start investigating, you roll Influence+Treasure in an opposed contest against your rival's Influence+Territory. (If they're trusting and oblivious you may roll unopposed.) If their Gobble Dice ruin your set (or sets) you learn nothing.

What you learn depends on what you're asking and how obvious it is. Gauging the population's general mood or tracking massive troop movements requires only a successful roll. Something obscure or protected may impose a Difficulty.

If you fail to roll any success at all, it means your spies have slipped up and alerted the authorities. Be warned. If you get a set but it's just too low to beat a Difficulty, your spies are still undercover.

Another option you can use is put your spies in place and then, instead of pestering them for information immediately, give them time to establish their cover. It's time-consuming but it makes the dangerous enterprise of espionage marginally safer.

If you've got a spy in place building the confidence of his neighbors, roll Influence+Treasure in a static test. If you succeed, your next roll to gather actual information gets a +1d bonus. You can only develop a maximum of a +2d bonus doing this.

When asking tough questions, or asking them in areas with repressive regimes, or where the secret police can scry with crystal balls, you may opt to take high risks for high payoffs. This is like a called shot: You reduce your pool by 1d and turn one of the remaining dice Expert. It reduces both your chances of success and your opportunities for Width, but a Wide set that gets gobbled doesn't do you much good. Your call, spymaster.

CHANGING MINDS

If you want to change the mind of a decision maker, or alter the tone of public debate on an issue, roll Influence+Treasure in an opposed conflict with the other Company's Influence+Territory. (Once again, overconfident groups might not roll, along with those who used up their Qualities, or who are hoarding them for later use.) If his pool wrecks all your successes, nothing happens. If you get successes, nothing visible happens, but opinions have shifted. If the public was rallying behind the idea of war with a neighbor, expressing concern or dissent becomes more tolerable. If the Prime Minister was dead-set against the Prince marrying a foreign girl, his vehement opposition may soften.

Often, well-placed suggestions can provide a temporary raise for a logical follow-up action. If you want that foreign girl marrying the Prince, having her accepted might give you an Influence raise when she attempts to sway public policy after the wedding. Alternately, the results may have no mechanical reflection, but still move the plot in a direction to your liking.

IMPROVE THE CULTURE

Roll: Territory+Treasure

Against: Nothing or Difficulty equal to the current Sovereignty

"Improving the culture" is a foggy mandate and no one has a sure-fire recipe for it. Possibly because no one agrees on the definition of "culture."

Rulers are always building roads, libraries, universities and theaters, paying for monuments and hiring bards, declaring holidays and appointing poet laureates, with the goal of drawing the people together.

Regardless of how the characters go about strengthening the community, the mechanics are the same. Roll Territory+Treasure. If you only want a temporary improvement, it's a static contest. Any set gives a +1 raise to Sovereignty that lasts for all of the next month.

To permanently increase Sovereignty, you roll against a Difficulty equal to the current Sovereignty. If you beat the Difficulty, your Sovereignty goes up by 1 permanently. If you roll a set but fail to beat the Difficulty, you get nothing.

You can only attempt to improve your Sovereignty once per month. You cannot use this method to raise your Sovereignty above 5.

POLICING

Roll: Might+Sovereignty

Against: Influence+Might

Learning that there are people who wish you ill is one thing. (It's part of Being Informed, as described on page 97.) Doing something about it is another matter. It's a police matter. To bring in the authorities, roll Might+Sovereignty against the enemy group's Influence+Might.

The mechanics are covered under "Unconventional Warfare" on page 102. To recap from the defensive perspective, infiltrating forces are there to take one shot at damaging your

Company. If you're aware of them before the event, you can try and roll up the conspiracy. Roll Might+Sovereignty in a contested against the cabal's Influence+Might. He's defending, so any sets he rolls become Gobble Dice. If you get no sets, or if he wrecks all your sets, you do no damage to his enterprise… save indirectly, because forcing him to roll tires out his Qualities. On the other hand, he may be a gambler and decide not to oppose. If you roll sets and they aren't countered, you permanently lower his Might or Influence by 1. He decides which Quality gets lowered. More importantly, you can pre-empt his mission. Even without full knowledge of his plot, you can strike, forcing him to either has to flee or hide. (On the other hand, if you're the risk taker you can watch and try to catch them in the act. This doesn't damage his Might or Influence until he makes the attempt and you spring the trap. Be warned: Sometimes you catch the bad guys after they fulfill their dark design.)

But sometimes the King's Guard gets there too late. When the infiltrator makes his move you can make a contested roll to foil him. He's once again rolling Influence+Might. You roll Might+Sovereignty to form gobble sets and, if you can ruin all his sets, his action fails. If you're unaware of the attack until it occurs, you can only respond with this contested roll.

If you were alerted beforehand, you still may want to make the contested roll. Or, as mentioned above, you can lure him into a trap. In this case, your rolls are dynamic. Widest set goes first and knocks a die out of one opposing set. If you get a set past him, you permanently lower his Influence or Might by 1 (he picks which) and you lower the other Quality by 1 until the end of the month. If he gets a set past you, he achieves his goal. This means it's possible for you both to succeed.

After he makes his attempted attack, there's one final set of rolls: Your attempts to apprehend them after the fact. This conflict is opposed, and he can only be the defender. If you don't get any sets after he uses his Gobble Dice, he escapes. If you get a set past him, you drop his Influence by 1 permanently and you've either killed everyone in the conspiracy, or clapped them all into prison.

Rise in Stature

Roll: Sovereignty+Treasure

Against: Nothing or Difficulty equal to current Influence

There are many ways to manipulate prestige and few of them work the same each time. Throwing elegant soirees, making displays of loyalty, giving grand titles to opinion-makers or selecting the right dress-designer can all give one's words more weight. On the other hand, many have had equal successes by giving the right people big, taut sacks of rubies.

Whatever you do to make your influence felt, it boils down to a Sovereignty+Treasure roll. If you want to temporarily raise Influence, any success is good enough. Permanent improvements are rolled against a Difficulty equal to your current Influence. Decide which you want to attempt beforehand, because if you try for a permanent increase and fail to hit the Difficulty, you do not get the temporary improvement—even if you got a match.

You can only roll to improve your Influence once per month. This method cannot raise Influence above 5.

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Train and Levy Troops

Roll: Sovereignty+Territory

Against: Difficulty equal to current Might

By calling on its resources and the loyalty of its followers, any Company can raise its Might. For nations, this is matter of recruiting from the youth while forging arms, building siege weapons, and obtaining supplies for the troops. For smaller groups, it's not simply a matter of hiring some eager mercenaries with notched swords and easy grins: That can be done with private riches, as described on page 131. This is the process of integrating soldiers, however they were recruited, into your society.

This is different from training troops to fight. If they're foreigners, it means teaching them your language and customs—and teaching your people to accept the strangers. Whether the forces are raised from within a society, or recruited and welcomed, the result is the same—soldiers who won't betray or desert your Company at the first opportunity. It changes soldiers from "those you hired" to "those who fight for your cause."

Here's how it's done: You roll Sovereignty+Territory against a Difficulty equal to your current Might. If you succeed, your Might increases permanently. Unlike similar uses of Qualities, you cannot temporary improve Might in this fashion. You cannot raise Might above 5 in this fashion. You cannot make this roll more than once per month.

Unconventional Warfare

Roll: Influence+Might

Against: Might+Sovereignty

This is the stuff at which PCs typically excel. Instead of meeting the enemy face to face on the battlefield, the unconventional warrior poisons wells, burns crops, sabotages ships and assassinates prominent military leaders.

Every decent nation condemns these methods. If the participants live to stand trial, they're termed war criminals and humiliate the nation or group that sent them. If, of course, that group is ever identified.

The Mission

When planning a sortie of this type, the infiltrators choose a goal. GMs and PCs alike often get very creative with these goals, but typically they boil down to an attack on a Company's Quality. Some examples follow.

Might: Poison troops, sink ships, sabotage siege engines, spoil provisions, weaken a fortress with sorcery or assassinate prominent leaders.

Territory: Foul wells, sicken livestock, destroy roads and bridges, blockade steams or knock down dams. Or, fire's always a favorite.

Influence: Applying military force to intangible opinion making is tricky. Eliminating diplomats is a start, but there's a reason for all those honor guards. Better, perhaps, is to blackmail or bully one through threats against family or other cherished interests. Or,

sometimes soldiers from country C dress up as soldiers from country A while in country B and commit atrocities in order to chill relations between A and B.

Sovereignty: Riding around terrifying the peasants works pretty well. Spreading rumors about immanent political disaster, or revealing embarrassing state secrets—that works too. Most of all, attacks on Sovereignty target what makes a culture feel safe and secure in its identity—so, defiling temples or murdering beloved artists is another way to shake things up.

Treasure: Raid caravans, murder prominent bankers, attack the treasury or burn down the mint. Alternately, the more artful approach is to devalue the currency by importing masses of counterfeit coin, or by engaging in large-scale smuggling.

Whatever your mission, you get one chance to accomplish it and one chance to get away. Each of these is a separate Influence+Might roll. Don't forget to drop each Quality each time it's used, so the second roll is at a –2d penalty. (If the defender uncovered the plot beforehand, they may pre-emptively attack the conspiracy, as described in "Policing," page 100.)

Resolving the Mission Against the Police

Your opponent reacts to the mission by policing with Might+Sovereignty. The exact way these rolls—yours, and his—interact depends on how much he knows, and on when each of you chooses to act.

If he uncovers the infiltrators beforehand, he can roll Might+Sovereignty in an opposed roll against your Influence+Might. You can only respond by generating Gobble Dice (though you don't have to roll). If he gets a set past you, he permanently decreases your Might or Influence by a point. You pick which Quality takes the hit. Furthermore, you have to scrub the mission, either fleeing or going to ground.

He doesn't have to take this opportunity.

When you make your move, an informed opponent can choose whether he wants to resist you with an opposed or with a dynamic roll. If he has no idea what you're planning, he can only roll opposed. You're both still rolling the same pools. If he's already tried to thwart the conspiracy and failed, remember that both of you now have reduced pools.

With an opposed roll, he's trying to derail the plan. If his Gobble Dice ruin your sets, or if you don't roll any, you do not achieve your goal. If he can't wreck your sets, mission accomplished.

If it's a dynamic contest, it means he's counterstriking. You both roll your pools and compare sets. The Highest set acts first and knocks a die out of one opposing set. If he can't smash your sets, you accomplish the goal. But if you don't smash his sets you lose a point apiece from Might and Influence until the end of the month, and pick one of those losses to become permanent. You can deal him a hard blow and still get hurt yourself.

Whether you succeed or fail, after your attack it's time to escape. This final roll determines how well your forces cross the river by night, or bluff past the border guards, or lie low until the heat dies down. Whatever you do, you roll Influence+Might against his Might+Territory again. This time, you're the defender in a roll that can only be contested. If you gobble out his sets, you get away. If you don't, you lose a point of Influence permanently as your forces get captured or killed. It's possible that they don't get traced back to your Company. Or maybe they do. Whichever way it goes, he has them and you no longer do.

ASSETS

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Assets are to Companies what Advantages are to individuals. While the Qualities of a Company let it adapt to broad situations, many companies have Assets that give them an edge in particular, circumscribed conditions.

Players who want to purchase Assets for their Companies can buy each Asset as if it was a new point of some Quality. If you want to design custom Assets, here are the guidelines:

-If an Asset gives a +2d bonus to a company's Quality or pool, it should only do it in a very narrow set of circumstances. This could be for one particular type of roll ("only Might rolls made to defend Territory"), or after a certain prerequisite is fulfilled ("after the Company has convinced the targets of some relevant lie").

-If an Asset gives a +3d bonus, it should only be usable one time, and in narrow circumstances.

That's all there is to it. Most of the examples are built exactly that way.

INFLUENCE ASSETS

Being a shifty and liquid property already, "the ability to change minds and learn things" lends itself readily to situational edges.

SINISTER OPERATIVES

Agents of this stripe never show up on battlefields, never engage in fair fights and almost never reveal their origin (if they even know it). Sometimes they're heartless mercenaries. Other times they're ideological fanatics. You get a +2d bonus when rolling Might+Influence to perform an act of unconventional warfare. This bonus isn't applied for escape, or when they're trying to avoid detection beforehand.

EPIC HISTORY

Your Company, or the people in it, have a history of impressive deeds. Perhaps their ancestors were great heroes ages ago, or perhaps they did something mighty just last year. However it went, the people in the Company know they have something to be proud of, and it shows. +2d bonus every time you roll Sovereignty+Treasure to temporarily increase your Influence.

SMALL HORIZON

It seems like everybody knows everybody else -- and knows their business. Even a huge nation can seem claustrophobic if its gossip web is sufficiently broad. Or your Company may be a claustrophobic small town. When rolling Sovereignty+Treasure to improve Influence, the Difficulty is always reduced by 1.

ENTANGLING ALLIANCE

Your Company is tightly linked with another, though they remain separate and autonomous. It could be through a formal treaty, a political marriage, vassalage to the same master, religious obligations or cultural tradition. Pick one other Company. You have +2 Influence when dealing with them, and they have +2 Influence when dealing with you. This can't push Influence above 6.

Assets

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Eloquent Diplomats

Your company has a cadre of professional negotiators who do nothing but pursue your interests. It may be an entire corps of elaborately-titled ambassadors, it may be a few bards with great hair, or it could just be the village brewer. You get a +2d bonus to all rolls when rolling Influence+Treasure to alter opinions in another Company.

Mole

Someone in a sensitive position owes you. You can call in this debt one time only. After that your mole decides you're even, or gets discovered and loses his authority (if not his life), or he loses power because the results of his betrayal are perceived as incompetence. Pick one Company and one specific use of Influence. The next time you roll that use of Influence against that Company, add a +3d bonus.

Might Assets

Every army has its strengths and weaknesses, so a straight Might rating with no Assets indicates a superbly balanced force. To give a force a little more flavor, use these Assets.

Irregular Forces

People who specialize excel, but often at the cost of versatility. Irregular forces are versatile, often at the cost of excellence at any one task. They can't fight an entrenched battle like heavy infantry. They're not as mobile as cavalry or as devastating as siege engines. But when it comes to dirty deeds and living to tell the tale, they're unparalleled. +2d bonus when rolling Might+Influence to get troops out after an Unconventional Attack. This bonus does not apply to the attack itself or to staying hidden beforehand.

Shipshape Navy

Numbers are a major factor in a military conflict—but only if they can be safely delivered to the battle. A small army may have an advantage if it's experienced with amphibious assault and has reliable boats to drop it at vulnerable points along the enemy's coast. (For ship to ship engagements, the benefits of better boats are obvious.) +2d bonus to all Might rolls made when your Company is fighting aboard ships or boats.

Magic Resistant

Average bulk soldiers are vulnerable to powerful magic. Most soldiers are frightened by magic—and if they've seen a friend reduced to ashes by it, that's a justified fear.

Some fighting forces are less intimidated, however. It may be that they're tough, brave and experienced. It may be they're from a sorcerous culture and regard it with proper fear, but no more than is proper. Or it may be blissful ignorance. Add a +2d bonus to Might rolls when your enemy depends heavily on sorcery.

KEEN

Is there a nice way to say, "your military forces kill with enthusiasm"? It may be bloodlust, or it could be that grim experience has taught them that when you're ahead, you don't relax. +2d to all rolls when Might is brought to bear against a Company with lower permanent Might.

CLASSIC ENEMY

There is some group that has, historically and throughout legend, been the enemy of your Company. Realizing they're behind an attack lights a fire of righteous rage in every defender's heart. Pick one particular other Company, religion, or ethnicity that your followers consider blasphemous, evil, or a rival. If you're attacked by members of that group, you have a +3d bonus to the first Might+Territory roll you make in defense.

UNEXPECTED DELIVERANCE

At some point, a battle turns unexpectedly, due to an unforeseen factor. (At the very least, unforeseen by the people on the bad side of the Asset.) Whether it's fate, a carefully planned long term strategy, the arrival of an unlooked-for hero, or dumb luck, it is a very big deal. You can add a +3d bonus to one attack or defense roll. Choose attack or defense when gaining the Asset. It's a one-time thing.

SOVEREIGNTY ASSETS

Loyalty. Honor. Obedience. These intangible principles are the glue that connect the disparate elements of a culture. Some elements may be a bit more disparate than others.

MASS APPEAL

Something about your Company appeals to the ordinary people who support it. This could be ideological, practical, or a matter of perfect style. When rolling Territory+Treasure to raise Sovereignty, or Sovereignty+Territory to raise Might, reduce any Difficulty by 1.

PATRIOTISM

Your company inspires loyalty above and beyond self-interest. Members go the extra mile, not because they expect reward, but because contributing is itself rewarding to them. +2d to Might+Sovereignty rolls for policing against unconventional attacks.

DEFIANT TRADITION

If your Company has a history of repulsing an invader, citizens are likely to have casual knowledge of insurgent tactics—and encouraging stories to tell. Defiant cultures aren't the easiest to govern, but they don't cave when times turn bad. +1d bonus to all Sovereignty rolls if your Company is under attack from an outside force.

Assets

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Culture of Shame and Gossip

Your group has a self-righteous streak, expressed by a tendency to shame those who transgress the rules (written or unwritten). "Keep your mouth shut about other people's failings" is emphatically not one of those rules. +2 bonus when making Might+Sovereignty rolls to police the populace.

Territory Assets

Land isn't just an unrelieved plain of farmland. The same elements that make a countryside interesting to they eye provide variety to the finances of those who dwell there.

Fortune Smiles

Economies are complex systems buffeted by the effects of other complex systems, making the whole enterprise utterly unpredictable. Sometimes, this produces unlooked-for benefits. +3d to the next roll that incorporates Territory.

Foundries, Smiths and Armorers

Manpower is an element of military strength, but giving soldiers something to stab with and something to hide behind is also important. Your Company can equip its troops and repair or replace equipment broken by the stresses of conflict. +2d bonus to Sovereignty+Territory rolls to increase Might.

Defensible Terrain

Something in your land is a real pain in the arse for enemies to cross. It could be mountains, a raging river, monster-infested woods, a string of fortresses, a blazing desert, a big long wall—whatever it is, it really softens up anyone who tries to attack through it. +2 bonus to Might+Territory rolls to defend your lands, if the attackers try to come through the defensible area.

Cultural Tradition

Your Company has a longstanding artistic history of methods, themes and techniques. Artisans and speakers can draw from these to produce something unique to your people. Companies without these touchstones have to start every act of persuasion from scratch. You get to stand on the shoulders of giants. Add a +2d bonus when rolling Territory+Treasure to temporarily raise Sovereignty.

Treasure Assets

Treasure is specific. You either have gleaming arrays of coin, or you don't. But since Treasure also governs how you arrange and control your money, there are a few Assets that can make your money specialize.

Unbalanced Economy

It's not necessarily bad that your cash flow ebbs predictably. Like the tides, what goes out eventually comes back in. This may be due to yearly loans given to cash -poor nobles before tax time, or a predictable crop. Pick six months of the year. You get +2 Treasure during those months. During the other six months, you're at −1 Treasure.

Permanent Underclass

It's unpleasant, but having a designated ethnic minority, or family, or group of social outcasts who perform the ugly scutwork can be a very slippery grease for progress. Oppressing these underlings can yield bounties, as long as you don't care or can drink yourself to sleep afterwards. They'll recover, right? They're used to it. Once per year you may permanently decrease Sovereignty by 1 in order to permanently raise Treasure by 1.

Rules of Plunder

Your military forces have some sort of discipline that controls their looting and pillaging. It could be a code of honor, or rigidly enforced laws, or an officer corps that gets the goodies first. Whatever it is, it means that your Company is good at making defeated enemies pay for the costs of their own defeat. On the first Might+Treasure roll made to attack in a single month, change one regular die to an ED.

Predictable Bounty

There's some time of year when your Company has it good. It could be a harvest festival, it could be when the snow pack melts and the traveling merchants come, it could be a holiday or religious event. Money flows freely and people let down their guard. Pick one month per year, during which your Company temporarily has +1 Territory, +1 Treasure and −1 Might.

Payoff

Your Company is finally getting the benefit of some lengthy development. For example, a merchant voyage funded years ago finally returns. Or a cabal of conspirators infiltrates the halls of power enough to start embezzling. Or a simple treasure map. Whatever it is, enjoy it because it won't last long. Your Company gains a temporary +2 bonus to Treasure this month, and a temporary +2 bonus to Territory next month.

REIGN resolves on two levels. The PCs as individuals can massacre their enemies, get a load of bonus dice on the Company roll, and still fail. Alternately, they can get beaten up and cuckolded, only to have their Company carry the day for them.

This disconnect isn't typical. Typically, PC success gives critical dice to Company rolls, and PC failure leaves the Company with slim odds. But it's important to understand how these levels interact if you want the outcomes to work.

One useful technique is to alternate between levels. Play a few sessions on the individual level, then start the next session with the modified Company rolls. Then do a few months

of Company action for the rest of that session, ending (perhaps) with a plan for the PCs' next mission. As a bonus, this method lets the PCs make many Vigor rolls between risks.

Another way is to use the Company's rolls as the session climax. A highly structured game would have every session as one month. The PCs do what they can in that time, make their decisions and at the end make their modified Company rolls. Because Company pools are usually lower, this makes the outcome far more uncertain. If your group finds that exciting, you've hit gold.

A third way privileges individual PCs and treats the Company as a tool they use. Some groups prefer gory combat and like to gloss over political machinations, or vice versa. Sometimes you have a GM who wants one thing and players who prefer another—or, perhaps, are more interested in the outcomes of one type of event or another, without dealing in details. With groups like that, setting up a Company with high Influence can take the "boring" detective work out of their hands. Or if they find combat tedious they can develop a Company with tremendous Might and let it clean out the dungeon while they engage in palace intrigue.

Don't be surprised if the characters pursue personal goals, getting as much aid from the group as they can without putting a lot of effort into the Company's intent. That's okay, if the players are all having fun. The PCs could start out with the noblest of intentions, forming a conspiracy to unveil the misdeeds and evils of the state religion. As play progresses, they use the conspiracy to enrich themselves by blackmailing priests, they use its Might to bully their in-laws, they occasionally pander to its Sovereignty but, by the end of many sessions, they're comfortable and rich and influential and… well, suddenly those priests don't seem so bad. If that's a happy ending for your group, they may fondly remember the game without ever contemplating their failure to bring down the temple.

ombat gets its own chapter because it's exciting, popular, and provides a lot of built-in tension. You can run an entire campaign with the 'fundamental' elements. The rest of the material is just a string of interesting options.

Resolving Combat

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Combat is broken down into "rounds." A combat round isn't an exact measure of time—it's as much time as it takes for the combatants to act. It's a contrivance to make the rules work. It could be as little as half a second if the combat is two excellent fighters dueling. If it's a broad melee, it could be as long as five seconds.

The Combat Round

There are three stages to every combat round.

1) Declare

Everyone fighting states what action (or actions) they're attempting. In casual gaming groups, people often do this in whatever order they wish.

If it's important to react to a slower opponent does, characters should declare in order, starting with the character with the lowest Sense Stat. In cases of tied Sense, GMCs have to declare before PCs. Tied PCs and tied GMCs use Sight as a tiebreaker.

(Using this rule means that the people who are less aware are less able to react, even if they're physically faster.)

During the Declare phase, everyone should figure out how many dice they're rolling. Paging through the book can slow things down, so if you want to try something tricky, familiarize yourself with any rules before you use them.

2) Roll

Everyone rolls the appropriate dice pool. This is usually Body+Fight, Coordination+Weapon, Coordination+Dodge or Body+Parry.

3) Resolve

The Widest set gets resolved first. If two sets are equally Wide, Height serves as a tiebreaker. If two sets are identical, they happen at the same time. If it's illogical for them to be simultaneous, roll a die to see which one happens first.

When an attack hits, it immediately does damage. As soon as a character gets hit, that character loses a die out one of his sets (his choice), because being injured is distracting. (In fact, you lose a die even if you take no damage.) If the set that loses a die is a pair, that action fails because, with one die lost, it's no longer a set. (This is one reason it's good to have two sets, even if you're only trying one action: It gives you a backup success.)

Dodge and Parry rolls produce Gobble Dice (see page 14) but those dice can only apply to attacks that are timed after the Dodge or Parry. If the attack is Wider, it happens before you get a chance to react.

Example: Tud swings and Bufo dodges. Tud gets a 3x1 and Bufo rolls a 2x10. While Bufo's Gobble Dice are big enough to counter Tud's hit, he can't get his weapon up in time. If Tud had gotten a 2x1, Bufo would have easily countered it, with a Gobble Die to spare.

Furthermore, only the dice in one set from a Dodge or Parry roll become Gobble Dice—unless you have a Martial Technique that lets you use more, or unless you declared that you were using a multiple action (see page 16) to make more than one Dodge or Parry attempt.

Chapter Five

Resolving Combat

Attacks do damage or otherwise inconvenience someone, depending on the action, the Width of the roll and the weapon used. Dodges and parries avoid damage. These three techniques are explained in greater detail below, but essentially, that's it. Once one combat round is complete, you go to another one until one side prevails.

Damage

Attacks produce damage, defenses avoid it, and it's better to give than to receive it.

Types of Damage

Being punched in the neck isn't like being stabbed there. To represent the difference between superficial injury and serious wounding, the ORE has two types of damage: Shock and Killing.

Shock damage rattles you and makes you uncomfortable, but unless you take lots of it repeatedly, it's unlikely to leave you dead.

Killing damage is also what it sounds like. When a blow does both Killing and Shock damage, the Killing damage is applied first.

On your character sheet, there's an outline of a human body with boxes over various limbs. It's reproduced nearby. These boxes represent how much damage you can take at that spot. When you take a point of Shock to a limb, you put a slash in one unmarked box. If you take a point of Killing damage to that limb, you put an X in an open box.

When there are no more open boxes, Shock damage to that location becomes Killing damage—you put a second slash in a shocked box to make an X. Once a limb is completely shocked, further Shock to that limb is taken as Killing damage. (Killing damage is applied normally—if a limb is completely shocked, Killing damage to that limb just replaces the / in a box with an X.)

Once a limb fills with Killing damage, any further damage to that limb goes into the torso. Furthermore, a limb filled with Killing damage cannot be used until some of the Killing damage gets healed. (The exception to this is the head location. Once your head is filled with Killing damage, you're dead. You also die if your torso fills with Killing damage.)

Once your torso fills with Shock damage, you're dazed. Dazed characters take a -1d penalty to all actions, on top of any other penalties. Once your head fills with Shock damage, you're unconscious.

DAMAGE

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DAMAGE LOCATION

The damage silhouette on your character sheet has numbers corresponding to the different limbs. When an attack hits you, the Height of the roll indicates where the blow lands.

Roll	Hit Location
1	Left leg
2	Right leg
3-4	Left arm
5-6	Right arm
7-9	Torso
10	Head

If a character is missing a limb, any hits to that location go to the torso instead.

HEALING

After the fight, as soon as you've had a chance to shake it off, half the Shock you've taken in that fight disappears (round up).

Example: Lio gets punched up, taking four Shock to the torso, three to his left arm and five to his right arm. Once he's had a chance to wince and feel himself for broken bones, half that damage goes away. He's left with two Shock in his torso, one in his arm and two in his other arm.

THIS IS IMPORTANT

Just in case you missed it in the main text, half the Shock damage taken in a fight disappears when that fight ends.

Various healing skills can relieve Shock. Once per day, a character can benefit from the Healing Skill. If the healer rolls successfully, a number of Shock damage points equal to the Width of the roll is removed, from whichever locations the healer wishes. For this roll, Height of the set does not matter.

Rest and relaxation also cure Shock damage. Every time your character awakens from a good night's rest, make a Body+Vigor roll. If it succeeds, you may remove a number of Shock points equal to the Width of the roll.

Killing damage is another matter. If a character does nothing but rest and recuperate for a full day, a healer can attempt a roll to help him. If the roll is a success—any success— one point of Killing damage is turned into Shock, at a location of the healer's choice. Only one such attempt is permitted per day.

Damage

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If a character goes a week without taking any more damage, one point of Killing damage on each limb turns into Shock all by itself.

Depending on where they are, the players may have recourse to healing magic. Different types of magic have different rules for how they are used.

Dying

When a character's head or torso fills up with Killing damage, the character dies.

Cover

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You cannot take cover from someone if you're already engaged in hand-to-hand combat with him. By that point he's too close. However, you can take cover before someone gets that close, or take cover from long-range attacks.

When you have cover, certain hit locations are immune to attack. If you're standing behind a low wall with both your legs behind it, any hits that would have struck locations 1-2 simply miss, instead. If you're firing at someone from around a corner, you might have protection for your legs (1-2), and part of your torso (7-8). If you're just peeking around the corner to see if he's following, everything but your head (hit location 10) is protected. If you use a mirror to look around the corner, perhaps only location 3 (left hand) is vulnerable.

Cover, then, depends on how good the available shelter is, and how well you rolled trying to get to it. To model this, the GM decides how many locations you can conceal in a hiding place (from 1-10). If you have plenty of time to get situated, you can describe which limbs you want to protect. If you're rushing for cover in the middle of a fight, roll Coordination+Dodge. The Width of the roll indicates how many locations you can conceal. You get to pick which ones you defend, though the GM may veto certain combinations. Once you're in cover, you can get its best protection by spending a round doing nothing but arranging yourself. This happens during the declare phase, so you needn't even roll. If you want to improve your coverage while doing something else, roll Coordination+Dodge as part of a multiple action. If you retain a Dodge set, when it goes off you can protect your bits as you see fit.

Example: A squad of archers blows their cover early. Tud (their target) has a chance to dive for cover.

> "Is there anything that might protect me?" Tud's player asks the GM. On hearing that there's a small boulder—maybe enough to protect three hit locations—the player decides Tud is diving for it. He rolls his 5d Coordination+Dodge and gets a 2x9 and a 2x1, enough to cover two hit locations. The archers fire, getting a 3x8, a 2x8 and a 2x3.

> Even though Tud is trying to protect himself, the 3x8 hits. Because its Width is greater, it happens before Tud has a chance to start his maneuver. Tud gets hit and loses a die from a set, but he luckily has that extra 2x1 set and can take the punishment there.

> His remaining 2x9 action resolves next and he dives behind the rock, asking to protect 10 and 8. The GM asks just how he's protecting his head and body while exposing both arms, and the player comically describes Tud hugging the stone.

> The 2x8 attack resolves next, and because Tud chose to protect location 8, the arrow bounces off the rock. The 2x3 happens after he jumps, but his arm is hanging out gets hit.

Cover

Now, if Tud's player had been smart, he would have protected locations 8 and 7. Why? Because any 2x10 hit would have gone off before his 2x9 roll and hit him before he got behind the stone!

Next round, he wants to protect 10, 9 and 5. He gets himself covered before anything else happens without even rolling. However, three locations are the best he's going to get out of that rock.

Tower Shields

Shields too large to swing around by one arm, called 'tower shields,' are actually portable cover. When you use a tower shield, it protects locations 1, 3 and 4 (if it's on your left arm) or 2, 5 and 6 (if it's on your right). If you don't move more than one step from your starting position, you can hide two other locations behind the shield. If you move, you do so at half speed and the shield only gives cover to the arm locations for the arm you're using to carry it.

You cannot make Stealth or Climb rolls while using a tower shield.

Environment

There are countless ways in which the setting can (and should) impact on your battle, and trying to list them all would be pointless. Most environmental factors can be simulated with cover. For everything else, it's up to the GM's common sense, with the following caveat: Don't sweat it too much.

The only time a GM really needs to assess penalties is when the terrain affects one side and not the other. Suppose you give everyone a –2d penalty for fighting on a bridge in a storm. What does that accomplish? No one has an advantage, and all it does is slow combat down. If it's impeding the attacker's swing and the defender's dodge equally, there's no reason to bother with Difficulty or penalties.

It may help to think of the fight location as if you're a fight director for an action movie. Instead of problems, look for opportunities—cover, yes, but also ambush locations, hazards unto which foes can be lured, makeshift weapons and so forth.

The other easy way to handle environmental circumstance is through simple prohibition: The GM says, "You can't do that." If the bad guy is coming in through a narrow window and all five PCs want to swing axes at him… how does that work, exactly? Unless they get their acts together enough to hit, move out of the way and give another guy a chance, the GM has good reason to rule that only three (or two, or one) PC can strike at a time.

Environment

Smart PCs quickly adapt to this concept and start using choke points to their advantage, of course. If you're being chased by an angry mob, you're much better off to run inside and then chop them down as they come through the doors and windows than to let them surround you like a pack of wolves.

GMs, be firm but fair. PCs, take decisions you don't like with good grace. Depending on the tenor of your group, a GM may permit brief rebuttals from the players as they describe the contortions that let all five of them make club attacks against someone who's peeking through a portcullis. Or it may just be that the players propose, the GM disposes and no debate is permitted. Both ways work for some groups: Find out amicably which works for yours.

Gear

Arms and armor are a critical element of combat, so here are their rules.

Armor

Different types of armor cover different hit locations. A helmet covers only the head , a breastplate only protects the torso, while a full suit of armor covers all of them. The armor descriptions list the protected locations.

Because some armor is thicker or better made, different armor types have a numerical rating, the Armor Rating (or AR for short) that shows just how much damage they stop.

For every point of AR, the armor stops one point of Shock damage and one point of Killing damage.

Example: Morrec is wearing a wooden helmet with AR1. Thorvald swings at him with a battleaxe and gets a 2x10 success. A battleaxe does damage equal to the Width of the roll in Killing and Shock—so if Morrec's head was uncovered, he'd be unconscious with two Killing and two Shock to his head. But the helmet stops one Killing and one Shock, so he's still conscious.

Armor Type	Locations Covered	AR	Weight
Wooden Helmet	10	1	L
Iron Cap	10	2	L
Reinforced Full Helmet	10	3	M
Cuirass (Boiled Leather)	1-9	1	M
Chain Shirt	3-9	2	M
Chainmail	1-10	2	H
Breastplate	7-9	3	M
Full Plate Armor	1-10	3	H
Steel Gauntlets	4 & 6	3	M
Cavalry Boots	1-2	1	L

Armor on your torso does not protect you from damage that leaks into your torso when other locations are filled up.

Example: Lio has on a breastplate that gives him AR3 to his chest (locations 7-9). He gets chopped
in the arm by a 5x3 hit. To make matters worse, the guy is using a greatsword, so it does
Width+1 Killing and Width Shock. Lio only has five wound boxes in his arm, so the first
five Killing go in there, with five Shock and one Killing point spilling over into his torso. His
armor does not reduce that damage.

Next round he takes a blow to the chest from a mace. It's a 4x7 hit, so it does 5 Shock, 1
Killing—just like the spillover damage. But because it hit location 7, which is armored, he
only takes 2 Shock. If that blow had been a 4x3, hitting his mangled arm, the full 5 Shock
and 1 Killing would have bled through into his chest.

Armor Restrictions

Armor is well suited for keeping you unharmed in combat. It's dismal for many other
tasks. To figure out if armor is going to impede a given task, look at the chart and see if
the armor is heavy, medium or light. This is based not only on physical weight, but on
which locations it protects. Armor that covers your arms and/or legs is going to get in
your way a lot more than something that just covers your head or chest.

Heavy armor protects the arms and the legs and provides at least AR2. Light armor provides
AR2 or less to one or two locations. Medium armor is anything that isn't light or heavy.

Light armor doesn't affect Skill use at all.

Medium armor imposes Difficulty 3 on all Stealth, Climb, Run, Endurance and Athletics
rolls. If you're attempting to swim in medium armor, you lose 2d from your pool.

Heavy armor imposes a -2d penalty on all Climb and Run rolls, along with Difficulty 4 on
Endurance and Athletics rolls. Trying to use Stealth or go swimming in heavy armor is
pointless: There's no chance of success.

If you have a combination of armors you always use the highest weight when evaluating
penalties. For example, someone wearing cavalry boots (light armor) and a chain shirt
(medium armor) is impaired as if wearing medium armor.

Shields

When you have a shield, at the beginning of each combat round you can declare that you're
protecting a specific body part with it. If you don't declare a protected part, it protects the
arm with which you're holding it. The protection begins before any actions resolve.

Small shields can protect one hit location at a time. Large shields always protect one
location on the arm, and can either protect a different location (if you wish) or protect
both arm sites (if you don't say what else you're covering).

Example: Blina has heard her foe always strikes for the head. She has a large shield on her left arm.
This shield always protects location 4, and it defaults to location 5 if she doesn't use it for
some other location. As it happens, she says she wants to protect her head, so for one
round it protects locations 4 and 10.

Example: Li has a small shield on his right arm and has already taken damage to his chest. He picks
hit location 7 to defend—a torso location. If he hadn't done that, the shield would have

protected location 6, his arm. That round, his attacker rolls a 2x8. This is a torso hit, but it's not the number that the shield is covering. The blow gets past the shield.

Shield Type	Locations Covered	Armor Rating
Small Wooden Shield	4 or 6 or choice	1
Large Wooden Shield	4 or 6 and choice	1
Small Metal Shield	4 or 6 or choice	3
Large Metal Shield	4 or 6 and choice	3

If you're actively using a shield to defend yourself, it's considered medium armor (as discussed above under "Armor Restrictions"). If you're just carrying it, it doesn't impose penalties, but neither does it offer protection.

Weapons

Whether they work by bludgeoning, cutting, crushing or stabbing, the mechanical effect s of weapons are the same: They produce greater or lesser amounts of damage. Some weapons aid in certain maneuvers, require both hands to use and so forth—but generally speaking, broad classes of weapons work the same way. Characters may prefer the saber or the broadsword over the longsword, but they all do the same damage.

Hand Weapon	Damage	Special Qualities
Bite (human)	1 Shock	
Punch or kick	Width Shock	
Whip	Width Shock	Can use to trip
Short club	Width+1 Shock	
Bottle	Width+1 Shock	
Gauntleted punch	Width+1 Shock	
Small knife	Width Shock, 1 Killing	
Dagger	Width Killing	
Hand axe	Width Killing	
Club	Width+2 Shock	
Mace	Width+1 Shock, 1 Killing	
Flail	Width+2 Shock	Can use to trip
Staff	Width+2 Shock	Requires two hands
Shortsword	Width Killing, 1 Shock	
Longsword	Width+1 Killing	
Saber	Width+1 Killing	
Cutlass	Width+1 Killing	
Broadsword	Width+1 Killing	
Scimitar	Width+1 Killing	
Short spear	Width Killing, 1 Shock	Requires two hands
Longaxe	Width+1 Killing	
Long spear	Width+1 Killing, 1 Shock	Requires two hands

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Hand Weapon	Damage	Special Qualities
Tournament lance	Width+3 Shock	Can only be used when (blunted) mounted
War lance	Width Killing, Width+3 Shock	Can only be used when mounted
Big club	Width+3 Shock	Requires two hands
Polearm	Width+1 Killing, Width Shock	Requires two hands
Battleaxe	Width+1 Killing, Width Shock	Requires two hands
Greatsword	Width+1 Killing, Width Shock	Requires two hands

Weapons that do damage from a distance work the same as melee weapons, except they have range limits. The more powerful weapons can shoot farther, as determined by the **Range** quality. Essentially, a weapon's range limits the greatest distance to which it can operate.

If the range is short, you can only really hit someone who's within twenty paces (or about sixty feet). The missile can probably go farther than that, but past that point it's either ineffective or inaccurate. Medium range is as far as you can see someone and identify her face—call it eighty paces or 250 feet. Long range is as far as you can see someone and see individual limbs—500 feet, more or less.

Missile Weapon	Damage	Range	Special Qualities
Thrown rock	Width Shock	Short	
Thrown dagger	Width Shock,	Short or shortsword	1 Killing
Thrown	Width Shock	Short	hand weapon*
Sling	Width+1 Shock	Medium	
Shortbow	Width Shock,	Medium	1 Killing
Light Crossbow	Width Killing	Long	
Longbow	Width Killing	Long	
Heavy Crossbow	Width+1 Killing	Long	Slow 1: Ignores 1AR
Compound Bow	Width Killing,	Long	1 Shock

*This assumes the weapon isn't balanced for throwing as well as for hitting. If it was crafted to be dual purpose (like some axes, for example) it does Width Shock, 1 Killing. Its range doesn't change.

Massive Weapons

If you choose to use a massive weapon—one that's even bigger and heavier than the typical specimen—it does an extra point of Killing damage on impact. However, you can't use a Massive weapon unless your Body is 4 or more. Only big clubs, battleaxes, polearms and greatswords can be made massive.

Chapter Five

Shooting Into Formations

Long range weapons can actually shoot much farther than 500 feet, of course, but once you're past that distance they're only good for shooting into crowds. An individual person that far away is too small a target to hit. If you're shooting into a large crowd (10 or more people) at extreme long range, any success hits someone. If the crowd is composed of unworthy opponents (see page 125) you might take one out if you roll well enough. If they're not unworthy opponents, the GM decides who you hit, probably with a random roll.

Combat Conditions

Here are the rules for those gray zones between "perfectly fine" and "dead."

Blind

If you're trying to swing at something you can't see, your attack is at Difficulty 4. If you're trying to shoot or throw at something you can't see, your attack is made at a –2d penalty.

Grapple attacks are exempt from this penalty, as long as you had a grip on your opponent before you lost your vision.

Dazed

If your torso is filled with Shock damage, you can't catch your breath and every limb seems to respond slowly. When this happens, your character is dazed, and takes a -1d penalty to every action. This is in addition to any other penalties.

Downed

If you're downed, you're flat on your back, or sitting, or crawling on all fours. It's a bad position to fight from. If you try to take any sort of combat action, you take a -1d penalty in addition to any other penalties. Once you're downed, you stay down until you take a round to stand up. If you stand and do nothing else, you can do it automatically during the Declare phase. If you try to stand and take another action, roll the second action with a –1d penalty. If you get a set, you stand when that set goes off. If you don't get a set, you stand at the end of the Resolve phase.

You can't move more than a few feet in any direction while downed.

Combat Conditions

Unconscious

If your head fills up with Shock damage, you drop. You remain unconscious for at least a half hour, unless revived. (Reviving an unconscious person requires a successful Healing roll. It doesn't restore any shocked boxes—some of them disappear when the combat ends, as described on page 114. But just because you have an unshocked box in your head doesn't mean you're awake and aware.)

The Big Seven

These are, by far, the most common combat actions. You can have a successful combat career using just Attack, Dodge, Move and Parry—Called Shots and Multiple Actions aren't a great bet without big pools.

Attack

All common, straightforward assaults are resolved the same way. You roll the pool (Body+Fight, Coordination+Axe or whatever) and look for matches as described in the general combat rules on page 112. There are no difficulties, no penalties, no special results—just the damage from the weapon if you hit.

The Wider your result, the sooner you act in the round. If you're up against someone with a result of equal Width, the Higher number resolves first. If Width and Height tie, the action is simultaneous. Height determines what part of the other fellow you strike. The weapon type determines what type of damage (Shock or Killing) you do. Weapon type and Width together determine how much damage you do.

If someone else successfully damages you before your attack goes off, drop one die out of a set. If the set is still a pair or higher, it's still good—it just happens later and does less damage. If it's reduced to one die, it does nothing.

If you have multiple sets for a single attack, you can pick which one to use and which one is affected by various effects (such as the die dropping described above).

Example: Hokoto swings at a bully. Hokoto's Body+Fight pool is 7d. He gets a 3x5 and a 2x2. However, the bully rolls a 3x7 to plant a kick in Hokoto's chest. Hokoto loses a die from a set, and decides to ditch one from the 2x2. His 3x5 is unaffected and hits the bully in the arm.

If, however, Hokoto was fighting his uncle after a jealous misunderstanding, he might want to knock the fellow down instead of doing maximum damage. He might drop a die from the 3x5 and either hit his uncle with the 2x5 or (if he knows his uncle will need his arm the next day for their reconciliation hug) he might kick him with the 2x2.

Dodge

If you roll your Coordination+Dodge pool and get successes, you can either dive for cover when your action goes off (see "Cover" on page 115) or you can move your body so that you aren't where the striking weapons go.

You can only protect yourself by dodging: You can't defend anyone else. You can, however, dodge when unarmed and out of armor.

The Big Seven

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Match sets from Dodge rolls become Gobble Dice (described on page 14). Each one can cancel out a die from a set. Dodging, you can apply Gobble Dice as long as (1) the Width of the Dodge roll lets you react in time and (2) the Gobble Die has equal or greater Height than the attack die.

Example: The bully pulls out a dagger. Hokoto decides to dodge for a round. He gets a 2x8 result, and his attacker gets a 3x1. While Hokoto's Gobble Dice are Higher, the 3x1 attack gets resolved first, and Hokoto's leg is sliced before he has a chance to react.

Hokoto dodges again and gets a 3x1 while the knife-fighter gets the 2x8. Hokoto still gets hit—he acts first, but his Gobble Dice are weak 1s and useless against stout 8s.

In the third round Hokoto gets lucky. The bully strikes twice and gets a 2x2 and a 2x5. Hokoto's dodge roll yields a 2x6. With his two Gobble 6s, he cancels one die from the attacker's 2x2 attack (reducing it to 1x2, which isn't a match) and another from the attacker's 2x5 attack, ruining two strikes with one set.

Parry

Parrying is like dodging, except that instead of getting out of the way, you deflect the attack with something hard or interpose something between yourself and it. Knocking a sword away with a shield is a parry, as is blocking someone's punch with the handle of a broom.

If you're normally dressed and not holding something that can block a blow (even once), you can only safely parry unarmed attacks. If you're holding something that can absorb the force of a blow (though something like a chair might be destroyed in the process), you can parry, at least until your makeshift shield breaks.

If you have nothing tough enough to stop a blow and you parry successfully anyhow, you redirect the blow to the parrying arm. It does full damage, but to your arm instead of (for example) your head.

If you're wearing armor of at least LAR 2, you can parry all you want with your arms. If you're wearing LAR 1 armor, you can still parry, but you take a point of Shock damage to the parrying limb each time you successfully do so.

Mechanics-wise, parrying works like dodging, above: Successful Parry dice become Gobble Dice and are wreck incoming attack sets. The difference is, you can parry to protect other people—and you can't dive for cover with a Parry roll.

Parrying is a Body Skill.

Move

Everyone in a fight can move about 15 feet per round without penalty. (Your GM may not let you run through spaces that are occupied by enemies.) If 15 feet isn't enough, you can roll Body+Run and add another 5 feet of movement for each die in your set. Thus, if you get a 3x Run set, you can move another 15 feet.

If you want to run while doing anything else, including attacking, it's a multiple action as described below.

Aim

Aiming is more commonly used with missile weapons, but it is possible to aim in hand to hand combat as well. Instead of launching an attack, you're trying to improve your position for a later strike.

Penalty: When you aim, spend one round without taking any attacking action. It is possible to aim while avoiding damage. This gives a –1d penalty to the Dodge or Parry roll.

Result: If you attack the foe you aimed at next round, you can add one normal die to your pool, or offset a -1d penalty.

It is possible to aim for two consecutive rounds and offset a -2d penalty (or add 2d to your pool) but any aiming after two rounds has no effect.

Called Shot

The standard attack assumes you swing at whatever target presents itself. Sometimes, you may want to strike an arm to impair attacks, or hack a leg to prevent someone from fleeing, or aim at the head for a quick kill.

These are all Called Shots. You can make these with hand-to-hand weapons or with missile attacks.

Penalty: Called shots are made with a –1d penalty to your attack pool. This is in addition to any other penalties.

Result: Take a die that remains in your pool and set it to a number corresponding to what you want to hit: 2 for a leg, 4 for an arm, 10 for the head. Roll the dice that remain, and if you get a match that hits that site, you succeed. (If you get a pair that indicates another location, you can opt to hit that or not, as you wish.) Essentially, you throw one die away to temporarily upgrade another into an Expert Die. (See "Expert Dice" on page 14.)

You have to assemble an actual set of the same numbers—not just a set that indicates the same hit location.

Example: Morgan aims at an enemy's arm with a shortbow. Her pool is normally 5d. She loses one die for the penalty, leaving her four. Of those four, she sets one to hit location 6—a right arm location. She rolls the remaining three dice, hoping one of them comes up a 6. Instead, she rolls 5,8,8. She now has a choice: She can miss altogether, or hit her target in the chest with a 2x8. Even though she was aiming at a right arm, and 5 is a right arm hit location, it does not form a set because.

Note: If you already have an Expert Die in your pool, called shots can't add another Expert Die. If you have an ED you're always making a called shot with no penalty. Similarly, you can't do called shots with a Master Die because rolling with an MD is already better than making a called shot. (Under no circumstances can you have more than one special die—either MD or ED—in your pool.) Special maneuvers that require called shots can be performed with no penalty with an ED or MD.

Multiple Actions

Whenever you try to do two or more things in a combat round, it's a multiple action.

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Swinging at two opponents, firing at one opponent twice, dodging and attacking simultaneously… all these are handled with the same multiple action rules.

Penalty: If you're using one Skill two times, you roll the pool with a -1d penalty and hope you get two matches. If you want to use two different Skills, you use the smaller pool, again with the penalty.

Sometimes, your smaller pool has an ED or an MD while the larger pool does not. If you manage to keep that special die (through use of a Passion, perhaps) you must assign at least one set to that Skill, if you get any.

To use a Skill three times, roll the pool with a -2d penalty. Using three different Skills, use the smallest pool, drop two dice and look for three matches. You use the smallest pool concerned, take a -1d penalty for every action past the first, and need a set for every action.

Result: If you get a number of sets equal to the number of actions you're attempting, you can assign them as you wish. The only restriction on this is that if one of your actions makes another possible, you have to assign a faster set to the one that goes off first.

Example: Tud does a multiple action dodge/punch. His Body+Brawl is a meaty 8d, but his Coordination+Dodge is only 5d. He uses that smaller pool with a -1d penalty, so he rolls 4d and hopes to get two pair. He only gets one set. He can succeed at his attack or his dodge, but not both.

Example: Ruish wants to chop up the Thubor, but there are two guards standing between them. With a Body+Fight pool of 10d, Ruish makes three attacks. This knocks his pool down to 8d. He gets a 4x10 and a 2x3. But Ruish can't hit the Thubor until the guards are out of the way. Splitting the 4x10 into two 2x10 pairs, he hits each one in the head and clears a path for his lunge at the Thubor's arm. He might want to apply that 2x10 head hit to the main bad guy, but a lesser blow on one of the bodyguards might leave him in the fight, and Ruish wouldn't be able to make his third attack at all.

Unworthy Opponents

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Whether you call them "mooks," "minions," or "extras," many stories feature hordes of opponents assaulting the hero.

When PCs fight warriors of equal skill, you can use the same rules, with hit locations, dice pools, multiple actions and so forth. However, against "unworthy opponents"—unnamed thugs whose purpose is to provide a minor tactical challenge, not a climactic battle—the rules are simpler.

Minions roll collectively. The GM rolls a pool of dice equal to the number of attackers, up to a 15d maximum. Ten cultists attack? GM rolls 10d. Fifty soldiers? 15d, until the PCs whittle them down to fourteen foes.

Unworthy opponents have no hit locations or wounds to track. They are binary, either fully functioning or out of commission. (What "out of commission" means depends on what your PCs use against them. If it's hand-to-hand weapons, they could be killed and maimed, or they could be unconscious or surrendering or fleeing.)

Not all mobs are created equal, so unworthy opponents have one stat: Their Threat.

Unworthy Opponents

Threat

Threat measures how dangerous an individual minion is. An unarmed, untrained minion, alone, has Threat 1. Facing a PC, he'd roll 1d to attack. He cannot get a match, no way.

There are three factors that can increase the combat worth (and hence, the Threat) of a thug.

Equipment: If the scrubs are equipped with weapons better than clubs or stones, or with armor (even just shields), or both, their Threat scores go up by 1.

Motivation: Someone who's fighting because a distant ruler conscripted him is less fierce than someone fighting for his children's lives. A fighter who's trained, even partially, shows greater mettle on the battlefield. Someone who's got a leader giving direct orders is more likely to fight hard.

All these factors can provide the motivation boost to Threat. If the scrubs are trained warriors, or are cornered with nothing to lose, or have a leader who has used the Inspiration Skill, their Threat scores all go up by one.

Enchantment: There are many, many spells for making people fight better. Everything from bestowing magical strength to instilling maniacal bloodlust has the same mechanical effect: A +1 Threat bonus.

Thus we see that Threat scores for unworthy opponents range from 1-4. Threat 1 enemies are disorganized, waving rocks, easily defeated. Threat 2 hordes have anedge: Maybe they're the ensorcelled thralls of a magus, maybe they're armed, or maybe they're desperate enough to fight to the death. Threat 3 hordes are decent: This covers any militia that has weapons and knows how to use them. Typical palace guards, pirate crews and field soldiers are Threat 3. Enemies at Threat 4 are top-grade—trained, equipped, and given some sort of magical boost. 4 is an appropriate Threat level for elite units like royal honor guards and the defenders of the temple's sanctum.

Out of the Action

It's easy to remove a scrub from a fight: All you have to do is hit him with any attack that has a Height or Width equal to his Threat or greater. Against Threat 1-2 enemies, this means any success at all. A Threat 4 minion needs a 4x match, or a set whose Height is 4 or more.

Minions are either fighting at their full capacity, or they're done.

Morale Attacks

In addition to being removed by getting hit, they can also be scared away by Morale Attacks. Certain spells, or maneuvers, are so impressive that henchmen who see them may cut and run. (See the "Threaten" maneuver on page 136.)

Some techniques produce a Morale Attack equal to the Height of a roll, or its Width, or equal to some outside factor. But regardless of the value of the Morale Attack, they all work the same way. When used, a number of unworthy opponents equal to the Morale Attack's rating cut and run. The only exception is if their Threat is equal to or greater than the Morale Attack.

Example: Twenty villagers with Threat 2 are storming a sorcerer's castle. He casts a spell which produces a Morale Attack equal to the Height of his roll. He gets a 2x10. The Morale Attack

10 sends ten of them off screaming. If he'd rolled a 2x2, however, his Morale Attack 2 would not have frightened any of them, because their Threat is high enough to resist it.

Ganging Up

The GM does not roll an individual dice pool for each scrub in a group. Instead, she rolls one pool for all of them. The size of this pool is equal to the number of fighters in the group. These pools can never be higher than 15 dice, however.

Example: The PCs face off against ten Imperial Guards, who have Threat 4. The GM rolls 10d. Their Threat does not change the number in the pool.

Example: The PCs face off against fifty rioting peasants, Threat 1. The GM rolls 15d, and continues to do so until there are 14 or fewer peasants.

Unworthies can only gang up when they're massed. If a group of ten mooks splits up, one chasing the hero who fled north and the other chasing the hero who ran south, the GM doesn't roll one pool of ten for both groups: She rolls two pools of five (or however the mob splits). This has a drastic effect. Splitting the pool quarantines Waste Dice from each group, keeping them from finding mates in the other group's Waste Dice.

Minions don't aim or do any fancy maneuvers. They just attack, parry and dodge. They don't have to declare their intentions (since their intentions are so simple). The GM has leeway to use sets from the minion pool as Gobble Dice or attacks, whichever seems most reasonable.

Rolling up to 15d in a pool means large crowds always get matches. But there are restrictions on the minions' use of matches.

1) No fancy moves. As described above, unworthy opponents only attack or avoid.

2) No Wide successes. The GM cannot assemble a set Wider than 3 from a mook pool. Any match of 4x must be broken into two pairs. A 5x match becomes a pair and a trio, a 6x match can be three pairs or two trios, and so forth.

3) Minions are slow. Any time there's a tie between a worthy opponent and an unworthy, the minion goes last.

The normal rule that injuries disrupt attacks does apply to unworthy opponents' sets. Every time a PC takes out a henchman, one die is removed from a successful set.

GMs should keep motivations in mind with big groups. If a mob of twenty people attacks five foreigners and, within seconds, half of them are bleeding on the pavement, the other half runs even if no one makes a Morale Attack.

Unguided gangs fall apart quickly. They're disorganized and tend to spread their attacks evenly among all available targets. Once a leader is present, a group is more likely to concentrate on one enemy (especially one using magic), fight longer, and protect one another. By the same token, if the leader falls the group probably has little incentive to fight to the death rather than fleeing.

Example: Aramis, Lefleur and Schrenck are beset by 15 soldiers. The soldiers have Threat 3. Our three heroes have AR 2 on all locations, swords and 6d pools for Body+Fight, Coordination+Bow and Body+Parry.

Combat

On the first round, Aramis and Lefleur declare attacks, while Schrenck parries. The soldiers don't need to declare their actions.

Everyone rolls. The soldiers get 3x2, 3x1, 2x9 and 2x4. Aramis gets 2x4 and 2x3, Schrenck gets 2x4 and 2x5, while Lefleur gets nothing.

With their 3x2, the soldiers strike Lefleur. Schrenck can't parry this, because it happens too fast. Lefleur's armor takes half of it, but he's still hurt. With a 3x1, the soldiers strike Aramis. He loses a die from his 2x3 set, but still has a 2x4 to use.

With their 2x9, the soldiers hit Schrenck. Again, too fast—he loses a die from his 2x4 set but has 2x5 for backup. However, since he's got AR2, he takes reduced damage.

Aramis applies his 2x4 and nails one of the soldiers. It doesn't matter that the soldier is in armor. The Height is greater than the soldier's Threat, so he's down. This drops a die from the soldiers' 2x4 match, ruining their last attack. Schrenck can act with his Parry dice but there's nothing left to parry.

Next round, the fourteen remaining soldiers roll 14d10 and the heroes all decide to press the attack. The soldiers get 3x9, 3x2, 2x7 and 2x5. Aramis gets 2x5 and 2x3, Lefleur gets 2x8 and 2x6, while Schrenck gets no matches.

The GM considers holding those 3x9s back as dodges and draw out the fight, but instead applies them to Aramis. He loses a die from his 2x3 set. The 3x2 set she pushes on Schrenck.

Lefleur goes next with 2x8. He kills a soldier and ruins their 2x5 set. Too late, the soldiers decide to parry with their 2x7 set, which offsets Aramis' 2x5.

Next round, the soldiers roll 13d, while the wounded heroes roll full pools. Aramis has been rolling hot, so he decides to drop to 5d and do a multiple action—attack and parry. Lefleur and Schrenck both attack.

The GM rolls 3x10, 2x9 and 4x7! But unworthies can't have a set bigger than 3x, so she has to break that x7 set into 2x7 and 2x7. Aramis, with his reduced pool, gets nothing. Schrenck rolls well—a 3x5 and a 3x7. Lefleur gets a 2x7 as well.

The GM hits Aramis with the 3x10—four points of Killing damage to the head, and his helmet only cuts out two. The 2x9 goes against Schrenck, knocking his backup set to 2x5, but then it's the PCs' turn. Lefleur and Schrenck kill one soldier apiece.

Now the tide should start to turn. The PCs press their attack, and the soldiers' pool is down to 11d. The soldiers get 3x6, 2x9 and 2x5. Aramis gets a 2x10. Schrenck gets 2x7 and 2x6. Lefleur gets the same—2x6 and 2x7.

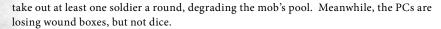The GM hits Schrenck with the 3x6, costing him a die from his backup set. Aramis goes next, ruining their 2x5 by killing a soldier. The GM parries with her 2x9, giving her Gobble Dice sufficient to counteract the 2x7 attacks from both Schrenck and Lefleur.

STRATEGIES AGAINST MOBS

What do we learn from the above example?

Mobs are most dangerous early: There's a good chance that Aramis, Schrenck and Lefleur

Chapter Five

take out at least one soldier a round, degrading the mob's pool. Meanwhile, the PCs are losing wound boxes, but not dice.

Small pool parrying didn't do much at the beginning. Big pool attacks are likely to be Wider and cost dice from your Parry pairs before you can even use them.

Big hits are the same as little hits: Since every scrub folds on a x4 or Higher match, there's no difference between hitting one with a 2x4 and a 4x10. So when you do defend against them, apply your Highest and earliest sets to defense. But at the same time, consider this…

Small hits aren't much good: Against tough mooks, those x1 and x2 sets aren't worthwhile unless they're unusually Wide. They can save your legs from attacks if you assign them to defense, and that's about it. So ideally, you want to apply your High dice to defense (because they protect you better) and your low dice (because they're worthless as attacks) while keeping the middle ranges—3 to 7 or so—as attacks on unworthy opponents.

All this assumes you get the choice, using multiple actions to protect and attack. That's not always a good idea because it narrows your pool, decreases your chances of getting any match, and lowers your chances of getting the Wide matches that put you ahead of the game.

So then. How does one deal with big hordes?

Area attacks are golden: Anything that blankets an area with damage could take out lots of unworthies in one shot.

Morale attacks: Scaring off inferior foes is what morale attacks do.

Choke points: Letting the mob engulf you lets them make as many attacks as they want. If you can get into a narrow space where only two or three can maneuver at a time, the odds change drastically. Clustered mooks still roll their full pools, but if three are facing you, only three sets can be applied.

Martial techniques: Some martial techniques focus specifically on multiple attackers or unworthy opponents, but anything that lets you take multiple actions without penalty evens the odds substantially.

Divide and conquer: Remember that the odds of a match increase drastically as a pool grows. If you can split that 14d pool into two 7d pools, you're better off—and not just because they don't get guaranteed matches.

Now let's look at that combat again—this time with some different choices from our protagonists.

Example: In the first round, the soldiers roll their 15d. But instead of standing there, the three PCs do combined Run/Parry actions, rolling 5d each.

> The soldiers get a 3x6, 2x4, 2x4, 2x2 and 2x1. Schrenck and Lefleur both fail. Athos gets a 2x7 and a 2x6.

> The soldiers apply their first attack to Athos, knocking a die out of his 2x6 set. He uses his 2x7 to get into a nearby copse of trees. Schrenck and Lefleur both get hit twice.

> Athos has a bow, and the soldiers know if they ignore him he's going to pick them off. Or they can split up and divide their forces. On the spur of the moment, the GM decides that five mooks chase Athos and ten stay to 'finish off' Schrenck and Lefleur.

Now the GM has two groups of followers. Schrenck parries while Lefleur tries to take down a soldier. Meanwhile, Athos' player asks the GM if there's enough of a break that he can Threaten the soldiers chasing him. She allows it. (The Threaten maneuver is described on page 136.)

The smaller group of soldiers rolls a 3x7 and the larger one rolls only a 3x3. Schrenck gets nothing but Lefleur rolls a good 2x10. Athos' Command+Intimidate pool is 5d, and he gets a pair of 3s.

The mooks can't make a Run action, so it's going to take them longer to get to Athos, and without ranged weapons, they can't attack. Without a physical attack to parry, their set is wasted.

At the other battle, the 3x3 goes to Lefleur, ruining his 2x10.

Athos yells at the mooks, but they're not impressed.

The next round the five soldiers can attack Athos, but he's fighting back—making a combined Attack/Defense roll at 5d. Lefleur, seeing Athos' success, decides to bolt in the opposite direction, where there's a low earthen berm. His Run pool is 6d. Schrenck stands his ground and attacks.

The big group gets 4x5 but has to break it into 2x5 and 2x5. Schrenck gets a 3x5. Lefleur gets a 2x8. Athos gets a measly 2x2, but so does the squad that followed him.

Schrenck kills a guard and ruins a 2x5 hit. Lefleur makes it to cover. The second 2x5 hits Schrenck. Athos uses his x2 Gobble Dice to block the incoming attack and ruins it.

Rather than pursue Lefleur (who's injured anyhow) the big group decides to concentrate on Schrenck. Hearing this, Schrenck does nothing but parry. Lefleur's player asks if he can take cover while drawing his bow, and the GM says yes—it'll just delay his roll for getting cover, which doesn't much matter since no one's firing at him. Athos decides to make a full attack, counting on his larger pool to ruin the smaller group.

Schrenck gets a fast but inept 3x2. His nine enemies get a 2x2. Lefleur gets a 2x9. Neither Athos nor his enemies roll any sets. Schrenck has ample Gobble Dice to protect himself, and Lefleur gets into good cover with his bow out—the GM tells him that hit locations 1,2, 7 and 8are covered. Not that it matters, since the guards only have swords.

Next round, Athos attacks, Schrenck parries, and Lefleur uses his 6d Bow pool to fire into the crowd.

Athos' group rolls a lucky 3x5. Schrenck's mob gets a 2x9 and a 2x6 on him. Schrenck gets nothing and Lefleur gets a 2x9 and a 2x7.

Athos gets hit. Lefleur kills a soldier, ruining their 2x6. Schrenck gets hit by the 2x9.

Next round, same thing… except Schrenck decides to flee to the berm, his crowd chases while attacking, and now there's only eight of them.

Athos' group gets no matches, and Athos gets a 2x10 and a 2x8. Lefleur gets nothing, but Schrenck gets a 2x9 and a 2x6. Schrenck's mob gets a 2x3 and a 2x4—but neither hits because he runs out of range before they can reach him. Athos kills one of his group (finally!) and Schrenck's mob will reach the berm next round.

Chapter Five

Lefleur feels lucky and takes two shots with a 5d pool. Schrenck stands on the berm and attacks anyone who comes up it. His group reaches it this round and attacks as well. Athos and his enemies continue their standoff in the saplings.

Lefleur gets a 2x8, Schrenck gets a 2x4, and Athos gets a 2x2 and a 2x1—too low for the Threat. But Athos' four enemies get no sets at all. The eight assaulting the berm, however, get 2x8, 2x5 and 2x5.

Lefleur's 2x8 ruins an attacker's 2x5. They apply their first attacks to Lefleur, but his cover protects him from both, while Schrenck takes out another with his 2x4.

Next round, neither the six soldiers nor the five get matches. Athos kills one with a 2x7 and Lefleur kills one with an impressive 2x10. At this point, the GM decides that the soldiers start doing math: They started out with fifteen, now there are nine and their enemies don't seem to be slowing down.

My Loyal Followers

Your character could starts play with some followers, or acquire some. Don't get attached.

Your followers use the same rules as unworthy opponents—they have a Threat, they're vulnerable to Morale Attacks, they gang up, they can't get results greater than 3x Width and they either operate at peak capacity or they're out of the fight. The player with the followers rolls their pool in addition to any actions that player's PC takes.

There are clear upward limits to the effectiveness of your followers, so don't rely on them too much. That said, there are ways to improve them.

Equipment and Enchantment: If you buy them arms and armor, their Threat goes up permanently (or until they get killed, at least). Permanent changes wrought by magic raise their Threat forever, of course, while temporary changes raise their Threat while the enchantment holds.

Inspiration: Unless otherwise stated to justify a high base Threat, your followers lack the Motivation element to their Threat scores. There are ways to temporarily it.

The first is by inspiring them with a pep talk before the fight starts. A successful Command+Inspire roll gives them +1 Threat—if they didn't already have high morale. The Threat bonus lasts the entire combat, but you cannot give a lengthy speech in the middle of a fight.

If you get into a fight when their morale is poor (either because you weren't prepared or because you failed your roll) you can still boost their morale on the fly.

Shouting directions and encouragement, while taking no other action, raises their Threat by 1 for that round. This happens before anything else. You don't need to roll when performing this action.

If you order them around while doing something else, it's a multiple action. One part of the action is a Command+Inspire roll, and the other is any other pool you use. If you succeed at the Inspire roll, your followers gain the morale bonus to Threat for the round. This only takes place after your Inspire takes effect, however.

Simplified Combat

Some people like very explicit rules for combat. Others find it's faster to wing it, and if a maneuver is Difficulty 3 in the morning and a -1d penalty at night—so what? No one cares, or even notices. They see the fight as a narrative or a series of cool stunts, instead of a sophisticated game of give and take between GM and players.

Neither way is right or wrong. If you love rules, use all of the maneuver rules in the next chapter. But if you don't want to run your combats that way, you can use the basic maneuvers (from this chapter) and fall back on the GM's judgment. That's equally valid. When you describe what you want your character to do, the GM decides what sort of penalties or Difficulties (if any) to assess. One GM may weigh in with serious restraints on "unrealistic" actions like parrying three different attackers in a round. Another may love that kind of over-the-top play and make outrageous triple-spinning kicks achievable. That's fine too.

If you go with a simple "GM decides" rule, consider these factors.

Get on the Same Page. If your GM is planning on running something gritty and realistic, you're going to get in trouble when you try something Jackie Chan did with a ladder. Before play begins, make sure you understand what level of actions your character can (or should) attempt.

Trust Your GM. By running combat in a looser, simpler fashion you're trusting your GM to be fair and unbiased. The GM's role is to provide you a fair challenge—not an impossible task against invulnerable enemies, and not a cakewalk full of paper tigers. When you use the simplified combat option, you're giving the powerful GM even more power.

Try New Stuff. The whole point of simplified combat is have fights that are fast, furious and fun. When nobody has to look up a set of modifiers or special-case rules for "I'm going to slide down the banister and slash as the Duke's head as I go past him," there's little reason to stick to dull description like, "I block. I hit him. I dodge." Doing creative stunts are the payoff of pared-down rules. You've paid for it with your trust, so be sure to enjoy the benefits.

For those who prefer very specific rules for combat, a whole raft of options follows. A problem you might encounter with these rules is task saturation. If the system only supported three maneuvers, you'd rarely have problems deciding which to use—but you might get bored. With a long list, you're tempted to try everything, all at once, and combats bog down as everyone searches the book for the situation's perfect move.

The way to prevent this option clog is, give yourself time. When you're starting out, stick to a few moves. When you've got those down, try a few exotic attacks that sound interesting and see if you like them.

Advanced Combat

Simple Maneuvers

These actions tend toward simple mechanics, and even a warrior of poor skill can attempt them with some chance of success. In some cases (such as display moves and feinting) the use of the maneuver improves a later move. Careful uses of these tactics can even the odds against a superior opponent.

Display Move

When insulted on the steps of the temple, the humble monk chops a bully's spear in half with his bare hand. That's a Display Move - an action that intimidates instead of directly attacking or defending. A successful display can scare off uncertain enemies, or spook them into attacking weakly. However, there are few things as embarrassing as an unsuccessful display move.

Penalty: Display moves only work at the beginning of a fight: Otherwise none. It is possible to dodge, parry or attack while displaying, but doing so is a multiple action (see page 124.). The pool for this action is what you'd use to attack—Body+Fight or Coordination+Weapon.

Result: If your display move succeeds, you may add 1d (or offset a -1d penalty) when you next attack anyone who saw the performance. You do not hit or do damage.

Example: Fruad charges a nest of archers while emitting an earsplitting war cry. He rolls his attack Skill, which is Body+Fight, and gets a 2x1. Next round, he makes a multiple attack against two of the archers, and because his howl frightened them, he rolls his full pool while striking. (Normally he'd lose a die for making a multiple attack, but his display move has offset that penalty.)

Draw

If you start a battle without a weapon in hand, you (obviously) have to draw a weapon before you can fight with it. These same rules apply to picking a weapon up off the floor, grabbing it from a display rack, or pulling a torch from a sconce to use it as a club.

Penalty: You do not roll to draw a weapon. If you attack or parry with the weapon the same round you draw it, any set is timed as if its Width was one lower.

If you dodge while drawing, you take no penalty to your Dodge roll. If you're wearing armor, you can parry with your armored arm (instead of your weapon) and draw a weapon without taking the penalty to your Parry Skill.

Result: You unsheathe a weapon.

Feint

A duelist raises the tip of her sword towards her foe's face, then plunges her dagger downward. That's a classic feint, a phony attack in one direction to draw attention off a different—genuine—attack.

Penalty: No penalty applies, just make a standard roll and pick one opponent you're trying to distract. You can feint and attack (or dodge, or do any other action), but doing so is a multiple action (see page 124). If you do a multiple action feint/attack, you can't apply the benefits of the feint to that attack, even if the feint gets resolved first.

Result: If your feint works, your opponent loses a die from a set, just as if you'd really hit him. Furthermore, you get a +1d to your next attack on that opponent, just as if you'd spent the round aiming. You can feint more than once, but never gain more than a +2d bonus, and you can't benefit from both aiming and feinting. If you don't use your bonus the next round, you lose it. You can apply the bonus to another feint attempt, however.

Feints cannot be dodged or parried.

OPTIONAL RULES: MAIM AND COWER

These rules are included as options. If you include the first maneuver, be prepared for your PCs to develop an interesting set of prostheses, but it does permit serious repercussions for combat that stop short of death. As for the second, it can extend the PCs' lives, but possibly at the price of drawing out combat.

MAIM

Sometimes, you really want to cut off somebody's limb. That's all there is to it, really.

Penalty: Make a called shot to a hit location that is already full of Killing damage. You take the normal −1d called shot penalty, and you miss if your strike is less than 3x Wide.

Result: Instead of doing Killing damage that leaks into the torso, the limb immediately comes off. Naturally, this only works on locations 1-6.

COWER

Beyond dodging and parrying, there's the last-ditch defensive cringe. If you cower, you are abandoning anything but damage control. GMs may assess penalties if you later try an Intimidate roll against anyone who saw you use this maneuver.

Penalty: Cower operates differently than any other maneuver, in that you don't announce it during the Declare phase. Instead, you may choose to abandon whatever other action you were taking and try to preserve your life instead.

Here's how it works: When you get hit, you declare that you're cowering. Throw away any sets you have left. (Without sets, you can't cower.)

If you cower, you can only Dodge, Parry or run away next round. You can take multiple actions, but only by combining those three—you can't do a Dodge/Attack, for example.

Result: Instead of taking the damage to its indicated hit location, you choose which arm to take it on. The arm takes the full damage, though shields and armor reduce the damage.

PIN

Sometimes you don't want to kill someone, you just want to hold him down so he can't do something unfortunate. When you're trying to hold someone immobile (usually against a floor or wall, but sometimes standing or sitting) you use the pin maneuver.

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Penalty: Make a Body+Fight or Coordination+Grapple roll. If you're trying to remain standing, drop a die from your pool. If you're pinning him against a wall or pulling him down to the floor, there is no penalty.

Result: If you succeed, you and your opponent are both motionless. Neither of you can attack, defend, or move until (1) your opponent gets free or (2) you let go.

Every round you want to keep him held, you do nothing. He's automatically pinned unless he tries to struggle. He rolls Body+Fight or Coordination+Grapple to get free, but he has do beat a Difficulty equal to your Body score or your Grapple Skill, whichever is higher. If you have an ED in Grapple, he takes a –1d penalty. If you have an MD in Grapple, it's a –2d penalty. Expert and Master Dice in Fight don't give this bonus.

Unless you pinned your foe against a wall or held him while standing, both of you are downed (see page 121) the round the pin ends.

When you have someone in a pin, you can attempt to use the strangle (page 139) or submission hold maneuvers (page 141) without losing the pin or taking any penalties.

Restrain

Instead of a full-body pin (see above) you may want to hold a friend's arms so that he can't get into an ill-advised fistfight.

Penalty: Name the character you're attacking and say if you're grabbing his arms or his legs. Roll the appropriate attack pool (Body+Fight or Coordination+Grapple) with no penalty. You can do other things while restraining someone, but doing so is a multiple action.

Result: If you succeed, you do no damage, but your successes can be used as Gobble Dice (see page 14) against that particular character. (If you successfully did a multiple action with Dodge or Parry, keep those Gobble Dice separate from your Restrain gobblers. You can use those dice against any attack, as usual. Your Restrain Gobble Dice only work against the guy you're holding.) If you grabbed his arms, you can only prevent actions he was trying to do with his arms . He can still move, dodge and kick people (like you). If you seize his legs he can't move around but can still punch, parry, and grab, but he can't kick or get away.

If you want to continue to restrain him, you have to make a roll every round.

Shove

The shove drives someone back. You cannot shove someone who is already downed.

Penalty: Make an attack pool roll (Body+Fight or Coordination+Grapple) with no penalty. If someone tries to trip (see page 140) or slam (see page 139) you while you're shoving, however, she gets a +1d bonus.

Result: Your opponent takes no damage, but is moved back five feet or so. He loses one die from a set, as with a successful attack. If you successfully shove someone, you can try to trip or slam him next round with a +1d bonus.

Stand

Trying to dodge kicks and blows without your feet underneath you is usually hard, which is why most fighters stand up as soon as possible.

Penalty: No roll is made, but if you take any other action or actions while standing, they are made with a -1d penalty (in addition to any other penalties).

Result: You are no longer down. You get to your feet during the Declare phase, before anyone else acts.

Tackle

You seize a guy, wrap your arms around him and plant him into the ground with yourself on top. It is possible to tackle someone who's already down.

Penalty: Make a Body+Fight or Coordination+Grapple roll with a -1d penalty. If someone tries to trip (see page 140) or slam (page 139) you as a reaction to your tackle, they get a +1d bonus.

Result: You do the damage rolled, and both you and your opponent are downed (see page 121).

Threaten

This is like a verbal Display Move (see page 133). Before combat actually begins, you shout out some kind of threat—"I'll eat your kidneys!" or "I am Ladio Heartseeker! None can stand before me!"

Only one person on a side can Threaten—if multiple people try it, the best result is used. The tactic can only be tried on the first round, and only if your opponents can hear you. (Clever roleplaying can get around almost all these prohibitions, but it's up to individual GMs.)

Penalty: Make a Command+Intimidation roll with no penalty.

Result: If you succeed, you produce a Morale Attack equal to the Width of your success. (See page 64 for Morale Attacks. Essentially, they're good for scaring away the riff-raff, but serious combatants aren't affected.)

Wait

Sometimes you want to give up the advantage of acting faster. Whatever the reason, it's possible to hold your action back until you feel the timing is right.

Waiting is something of a meta-maneuver—you can wait to hit, wait to slam, wait to threaten or whatever. (Dodging and parrying already go off only when an opponent acts, of course.) You do whatever action you declared, and then when it's your turn in the Resolve phase you simply say, "I'm waiting." You can then time that action to be simultaneous with any other set that goes off. If you hold your action too long, and there's no one else acting, you lose it.

Advanced Maneuvers

These maneuvers have levels of effect, depending on how Wide the set is. Narrow successes may not do much. Wide successes may provide huge advantages.

Charge

A knight levels his lance and puts in the spurs. By getting a run-up, he adds to the force of the strike. This is the essence of the charge maneuver.

In combat, people can move about fifteen feet without rolling. If you run fifteen feet and swing at someone, it's a standard attack. To get the benefit of extra damage, you need more velocity.

You can only charge if you're using a hand-to-hand weapon.

Penalty: Make a multiple action using your attacking pool with either Run or Ride. The results below depend on the Width of your Run or Ride result.

Standard Success—2x: Your attack does an extra point of Shock damage.

Expert Success—3x: Your attack does +2 Shock and +1 Killing.

Master Success—4x+: Your attack does +3 Shock and +2 Killing.

The Depth Charge

Sometimes, instead of covering horizontal distance, you want to drop down on them from atop the ramparts, or out of a tree. To jump down on someone as part of an attack, use all the rules for the Charge maneuver, only as a multiple action Body+Athletics action instead of Body+Run.

Disarm

Weapons hurt. To avoid getting hurt, take away the weapon. This can be done with skill (by carefully applying torque to the wrist and elbow so that the fingers and hand lose all strength) or with brute force (by bashing the arm with your frying pan until he drops it). The mechanics work the same.

Penalty: Make a called shot to the arm holding the weapon. (If the weapon is held two-handed, pick any arm location.) If you are trying to take away an edged weapon by seizing it bare-handed, you have to make a multiple action with Dodge or accept a point of Killing damage to one of your arms. (If you take this option, any Dodge success protects your hands. Or you might just want to take the cut.)

Standard Success—2x: You do no damage to your opponent, but the weapon flies out of his grip. It lands on the ground X feet away, where X is the Height of your roll.

Expert Success—3x: As above, except that your opponent takes a point of Shock damage to the relevant hand.

Master Success—4x+: Your opponent takes two points of Shock damage to his hand. If you have a free hand, you're now holding the weapon. Otherwise, it's at your feet.

Disfiguring Strike

Instead of killing an opponent, you leave him with such horrific scars it looks like a blind

monk tried to write a poem on his face with a rusty meat cleaver.

Penalty: Do this as a called shot to the head, with all the usual penalties. You must use a weapon that does Killing damage.

Standard Success—2x: You do one point of Killing damage. If your opponent has the "Beauty" Advantage at 5 points, it drops to 3. If he has it at 3, it drops to 1. If he has it at 1, he loses it. If he doesn't have the "Beauty" Advantage, he gains the "Gruesome" Problem.

Expert Success—3x: As standard, but someone with the 5 point "Beauty" Advantage has it dropped to 1, someone with 3 point "Beauty" loses it, and anyone lower than that gains the "Gruesome" Problem.

Master Success—4x+: As expert, but anyone who gets hit loses any "Beauty" Advantage and gains the "Gruesome" Problem.

DISPLAY KILL

You dispatch an opponent in such a horrific fashion that his comrades lose hope. You should describe exactly what showboat maneuver you use to end this opponent's life, and why it's terrifying enough to scare off his companions.

(Note: It is far, far easier to perform a Display Kill on an unworthy opponent. Unworthy opponents are described on page 125.)

Penalty: Make a normal attack with a -1d penalty. You must kill your opponent with this attack to get the benefit of the Display Kill.

Standard Success—2x: You produce a Morale Attack equal to the Height or Width of your roll, whichever is higher.

Expert Success—3x: As standard, but add your Command stat to the Width.

Master Success—4x+: As expert, but also add your Intimidation Skill.

KNOCKOUT

Reducing an opponent to unconsciousness is similar to a called shot (see page 124) to the head, but the difference is that knockouts do only Shock damage, even if you're attacking with a weapon that is usually lethal.

Penalty: Make a called shot to the head.

Standard Success—2x: Your weapon does its normal damage. If it usually does only Killing damage, it does Shock instead. If it usually does a combination of Shock and Killing damage, use the larger amount as Shock.

Expert Success—3x: Your weapon does its normal damage and one extra Shock. If it usually does Killing damage, or a combination of Killing and Shock, its handled as with the 2x match, above.

Master Success—4x+: As with an expert success, but instead of one extra Shock it does three. Furthermore, once the head is filled with Shock, extra damage is discarded instead of being converted to Killing.

Chapter Five

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SLAM

A slam is any move where an opponent is lifted off the ground and smashed down onto it, hard. You cannot use a slam on someone who's already down. In that case, I recommend just kicking him.

Penalty: Make a Body+Fight or Coordination+Grapple roll with Difficulty 3. You can only use this maneuver against opponents who are within 100 pounds of your weight or smaller.

Standard Success—2x: Target is downed (see page 121). Target takes a point of Shock damage to locations 3 & 5.

Expert Success—3x: Target is downed and takes a point of Shock damage to every hit location except for his head.

Master Success—4x+: Target is downed and takes a point of Shock damage to every location. Target takes an additional point of Shock damage to the location indicated by the Height of your set. (If you roll 5x7, the target takes a point of Shock damage to every location, and then another in the torso.)

All the damage assumes that your target lands on a flat, safe surface. Throwing him off a balcony, under the hooves of a galloping horse, or into a lake of lava all do significantly more damage. (The GM decides how dangerous such hazards are, according to guidelines in the "Dreadful Things Happen" chapter.)

STRANGLE

Encircling the neck to cause unconsciousness and, eventually, death works best on people and on smaller animals. Larger animals may have leathery hides or thick manes protecting them from choking out. It's the GM's call whether a given non-human is vulnerable to strangulation. Don't try it on a rhino.

Penalty: Make a called shot to the head. You can't strangle someone if your weapon has a sharp edge, but using an axe haft or a sheathed sword works fine. If you have the target in a pin (see page 134), you don't take the usual -1d called shot penalty. While strangling someone, you can't make additional attacks, dodge, parry, or move more than four or five paces. If you do anything other than choke him and maybe move a little, you lose the constriction.

Standard Success—2x: You do 2 Shock to the victim's head. Next round, you automatically get another 2x10 that does another 2 Shock to the head if nothing dislodges you. (You have to declare your action as "continuing the choke," of course.) Any successful Parry, Dodge or attack against you is sufficient to break your choke, as long as it happens before your action next round. The Gobble Dice from defensive maneuvers don't have to be Wide enough (since the attack is ongoing) or Taller (since the maneuver is trickier than, say, smacking someone with a brick).

Expert Success—3x: You do 3 Shock to the victim's head. Unless the victim does a successful Dodge or Parry this round, or someone attacks you successfully this round, you do another 3 Shock to the victim's head next round before anything else occurs. You must still declare your action next round as "continuing the choke" if you want to get that bonus.

Master Success—4x+: You do Width+1 Shock to the victim's head. Unless dislodged, you do another 4 Shock at the beginning of next round if you choose to continue the choke.

Trip

The Trip maneuver knocks an opponent off balance. It may or may not send him to the ground. You can't use this maneuver on someone who's already downed.

Penalty: Make a called shot to hit location 1 or 2. Do not take the standard 1 die called shot penalty. If your opponent is using the Shove or Tackle maneuver, add a die to your pool. If they're on foot and using the charge maneuver, you also add a die, but you don't get that bonus against mounted charges.

Standard Success—2x: You do no damage but your opponent loses a die from a set and has a –1d penalty to any action taken next round.

Expert Success—3x: As standard, plus target is downed.

Master Success—4x+: As expert, plus he takes a point of Shock damage to each arm as he reaches back to catch himself.

Expert Maneuvers

Just as the advanced maneuvers were more complicated and specific than the basic ones, expert maneuvers are more specialized (or outrageous) still.

The escaped 'sacrifice' dodges a swing from a cultist's ritual knife, picks him up and throws him off the balcony… on top of the High Priest chanting below. A fierce pirate parries a cutlass blow, disarms his opponent, and throws the blade into the torso of another sailor ten paces away.

These outrageous combination maneuvers are not impossible. Any maneuver in this chapter can (if the location permits) be combined with any other. The multi-action rules cover it all: You just take your smallest pool, stack up any penalties, add the multi-action penalties and try to get enough sets to assign to each task.

For example, the escapee above is doing three actions: A dodge, a slam and an attack (using Athletics to throw). The three pools involved are Coordination+Dodge, Body+Fight (or Coordination+Grapple) and Body+Athletics. He needs three sets, one of which must be at least x3 if he wants to do the slam. To have any chance of succeeding at everything, he needs to have at least 8d in his smallest pool. Taking two extra actions gives him a -2d penalty, and the smallest pool that can produce three sets is a 6d pool.

But he's unlikely to get three sets with a 6d pool. That doesn't mean he can't get a partial success. Suppose he only rolls a pair of eights. He might use them to dodge and try his railing kill next round. Or maybe the cultist misses him outright. With no need to dodge, he can apply his 2x8 match to the slam (since it's above the 3 Difficulty) and chuck the unfortunate cultist off the balcony. If he'd rolled a 2x8 and a 2x5, he could also succeed at the Athletics roll and drop the cultist on the High Priest.

The key to combining moves smoothly is to keep it as simple as you can. Was the escapee really better off stacking a Dodge on top of two other actions? Especially since that lost die decreases his chance of getting a Wide attack success that would spoil an attack anyhow.

If he has the martial secret Monkey Dodge (see page 144) he loses the penalty for adding the dodge to any action, so he might as well. Other martial techniques that offset penalties can make combinations far more attainable.

Passions can be a tremendous help with multiple actions. If the pirate in the example has

a Mission to capture that particular ship, a Duty to lead his crew to victory, and a Craving to show off in combat, he now has much better odds. Instead of taking a -2d penalty to his lowest pool, he gets a +1d bonus.

When you're buying off penalties, don't forget that you can keep special dice (EDs and MDs). If our pirate's lowest pool is 7+MD, he might get that 4x success after all.

Iron Kiss

The Iron Kiss is holding a blade against someone's throat without drawing blood. Bad guys like this so they can utter lines like "One more step, and the girl dies!" Good guys have been known to use this to offer a chance to surrender before decapitation.

Penalty: Make a called shot to the head with a -2d penalty instead of the standard -1d called shot penalty. You can only perform the Iron Kiss if you have an edged or pointed weapon in your hand.

Standard Success—2x: No damage, but next round you have the option of attacking this target and automatically getting a 2x10 result. You do not roll. This 2x10 can only be used as a full attack against the head.

Expert Success—3x: As Standard, only you can automatically get a 4x10 roll next round without rolling.

Master Success—4x+: As Standard, only you can get a 6x10 roll without rolling.

Redirect

The Redirect maneuver guides the attack of one opponent against another, getting your enemies to do your work for you. It can be an interesting choice for people whose Dodge pool is substantially better than their attack pools. But it only works against more than one enemy.

Penalty: Make a Dodge roll with a -2d penalty.

Standard Success—2x: When you ruin an attacker's set, it is applied to another target of your choice as if it was a success with one point less Width. You can do this each time you ruin an attack, but only when you've reduced it to Width 1 (so that it would do no damage to you). Note that a Width 1 set is nothing, so you can only redirect attacks that started as 3x successes and which are re-applied as 2x successes. (Normally, a character with only a 2x Dodge success can't stop a 3x attack because it's too fast. Some Martial Techniques make it possible, however.)

Expert Success—3x: As Standard, only the attacker's set is applied at its full Width.

Master Success—4x+: As Expert, only you can redirect any attack you change. If you fail to reduce a set to 1 Width, you still take the reduced damage: However, you also choose an opponent to take the full damage.

Submission Hold

Nerve grips and joint locks cause so much suffering that the person held must either surrender or risk worse injury.

Penalty: Make a Body+Fight or Coordination+Grapple roll with a -1d penalty. If you already have your target pinned (see "Pin" on page 134) you don't have to take the -1d penalty.

Standard Success—2x: You do a point of Shock damage to the indicated limb. (If the limb is armored, the attack misses.) The target has the option of wrenching free, which does 2 Killing to the limb. If he doesn't wrench free, you maintain the hold and automatically get the target in a pin (see page 134) next round.

Expert Success—3x: You do 3 Shock to the limb. If the target wrenches free, it's 3 Killing. Otherwise, this is like a 2x success.

Master Success—4x+: Like a 2x success, except that you do 5 Shock, and if he gets free it's 4 Killing.

COMBAT SECRETS: MARTIAL PATHS

The difference between a warrior who is skilled, and one who makes do with strength and ferocity, is that the skilled warrior has the wisdom of fighters who preceded him. These secrets are Martial Techniques, and sets of them are Martial Paths. Each secret learned makes certain maneuvers or attacks easier or more effective.

Because of their emphasis on learning over instinct, there are no Martial Techniques that are used with the Fight Skill. They need the refinement of a specific weapon Skill (or a Skill like Dodge or Parry).

No human being can ever learn more than fifteen different Martial Techniques. Esoteric Disciplines (which are similar, only for Skills) do not count towards this limit. If you're wondering, it's a Martial Technique if it is based on Parry, Dodge or a weapon Skill (including Grapple or Unarmed Strike).

As with the Esoteric Disciplines, these techniques have the flavor of the Heluso and Milonda setting, but can easily have their tone changed just by changing names and ignoring the flavor text. (For example, The Yielding Way easily becomes Judo.) Also like Esoteric Disciplines, you need to learn the early (cheapest) ones before you can get the later, more expensive, more exclusive ones.

NOT A LOT OF MARTIAL PATHS

Many of the Martial Paths in REIGN have been cut from the Enchiridion. As with the Esoteric Disciplines (on page 63), they were removed to save space and as part of the setting purge. As with Disciplines, many are available free online. The links on page 65 contain plenty of Martial Paths.

THE YIELDING WAY

This unarmed school of combat emphasizes the need to yield to greater force, get out of the way, and let your attacker throw himself. It's based on the Coordination+Grapple pool, although Victorious Submission and the Snake and Grouse Technique can be used without attacking.

Gliding Step (1 point): When you make Shove or Tackle attacks, your opponent doesn't

Chapter Five

Spread vs. Stack

Some sets of techniques "stack up," meaning that as you learn a higher technique, the previous one becomes obsolete. A clear example would be a martial path where the first technique gives you a +1 damage bonus, and the third technique gives you a +3 bonus. Once you learn the third level, there's no incentive to go back to the first.

Other paths "spread out." Every additional level gives you new options, typically better than the lower levels but different enough that you might go back sometimes. Take a martial path where the first level does extra damage, and the second times the attack to go as if its Width was greater (without doing damage as if the Width was greater). Sometimes you want speed, sometimes hurt. Both remain valuable techniques, neither is obsolete.

As a general rule, the final techniques in stacked paths are more powerful, which offsets the narrower focus. Some people prefer stacked paths because they're simple. Other people like the versatility of spread paths. That's fine, as long as they take care to understand the rules and can do their many tricks smoothly.

get a +1d bonus on Trip or Slam attacks against you. You do not have to beat the usual Difficulty 3 when attempting a Slam.

Snake and Grouse Technique (2 points): Snake and Grouse Technique has one of two effects. The "Snake" lets you fight from the downed position without penalty (see "Downed" on page 121). The "Grouse" lets you stand as part of a multiple action without penalty (see "Stand" on page 135). If you use this as part of a multiple action with an attack, it also gives the benefits of Gliding Step.

The Spring Uncoils (3 points): As Gliding Step. This technique enhances a combined Dodge/Slam. You can combine those techniques without the usual –1d penalty. Furthermore, if you succeed at both, your Slam result does damage as if it was 1 Wider.

Inward Winding (4 points): As Gliding Step. Any slam you make is timed as if its Width was 4. If you opt to be land on top of a person you slammed, it also does damage as if its Width was 4, but leaves you in a downed position. (See "Downed" on page 121.) If you make multiple slam attacks in a round, you can only land on the last person thrown.

Victorious Submission (5 points): You cannot be pinned, slammed, tripped, tackled, choked, restrained, shoved or placed in a submission hold. Any attempt to use those maneuvers on you simply fails and the set from the attack pool is wasted. The effects of Victorious Submission affect you at all times—even when you're surprised or asleep. Furthermore, Victorious Submission protects you even when you're using another martial secret.

The School of the Insouciant Monkey

You may use Insouciant Monkey techniques when you are using any Dodge action.

A Note to the GM

When you know a PC is immune to a particular attack or type of attack, that doesn't mean all the GMCs know it. If he's got Victorious Submission, then anyone who has fought him and watched him evade grapples may decide on a crossbow. But you should definitely have the occasional ignorant foe try to strangle him. Otherwise, he gets no chance to strut.

Monkey Dodge (1 point): You do not take a penalty for adding a Dodge to any action.

Bouncing Roll (2 points): As Monkey Dodge. Any attacks made against you are at Difficulty 2—even if you roll no successes. This protection goes into effect before any attacks are made.

Monkey Fist (3 points): If you roll only your Coordination+Dodge Skill and successfully apply a Gobble Die (or dice), you can make one attack to an opponent whose attack you ruined. This strike acts like an Area Die: He rolls one die and takes a point of Shock to the location that turns up. This ignores armor. This attack isn't spoiled if you take damage and is not improved by your weapon. You can only inflict this damage once per round, no matter how many attacks you spoil. You can't use this with Monkey Dodge.

Drunken Monkey (4 points): As Monkey Dodge. Your bobbing and weaving acts like armor. You get an additional 1AR to every location. This works even if you don't roll any successes. If you're already wearing armor, this adds to it. The armor effect occurs before any other actions.

Grand Ultimate Supreme Monkey King (5 points): As Drunken Monkey, except that the armor bonus is now 2AR. In addition, you can use your Dodge Gobble Dice at any time, regardless of the Width of the roll that produced them.

Iron Tortoise Technique

According to the students of this defensive art, the first rule of combat is "Do not get hit." They therefore trained themselves to block hard, fast, and effectively.

Iron Tortoise techniques require the use of the Body+Parry pool.

Iron Parry (1 point): When you produce Gobble Dice with a Parry success, the Width of your narrowest Parry set is increased by 1. This can be used as part of a multiple action.

The Superior Interception (2 points): You can add Parry Gobble Dice together to form a single die equal to the total Heights of the dice combined. You may apply this against any attack that's equal to or less than this combined Height, even if that attack is timed to occur before your Parry. This may be used as part of a multiple action.

Example: Lilith uses The Superior Interception. She gets a 3x2 result, while her attacker gets a 2x5. Normally, her three Gobble Dice would be useless, since they're lower than his attack dice. But she can combine them into a single Gobble 6 die, counteract one of his fives, and foil

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his attack. If she'd rolled 3x1 or even 4x1, she wouldn't be able to stop him. But if she rolled 2x4, she could combine those two dice into one Gobble 8, which she could use at will. Alternately, if she rolled a 2x1 and a 2x2, she couldn't combine all four of those low-Height dice into a single Gobble 6—unless she'd declared she was making two Parries and had taken the appropriate penalty.

Resounding Deflection (3 points): You block with such force that anyone to whom you apply a Gobble Die takes a point of Shock damage to the limb that holds the weapon. (Armor protects against this Shock as usual.) You can use this as a multiple action, but only if you do not combine it with an attack. You do not take the usual multiple action penalties for additional Parry actions with Resounding Deflection.

The Hidden Shell (4 points): This cannot be used in a multiple action. If you roll even a single set parrying, you get AR2 protection on every hit location. This is in addition to any other armor you're wearing. You also get the roll's Gobble Dice to use. The armor effect begins before any attacks are resolved.

The Secret Block (5 points): As with Resounding Deflection, only the Secret Block can be combined with attacks. Furthermore, anyone to whom you apply a Gobble Die is disarmed, in addition to taking damage. Treat this like using the Disarm maneuver on page 137, and getting a 2x success.

Path of the Razor Heart

Razor Heart techniques are used with Coordination+Sword.

Pure Commencement (1 point): You can draw a sword and attack in the same round without penalty. (See "Draw" on page 133 for the usual penalty.)

Single Intent (2 points): If you make a single attack and hit, your blow does a point of Shock damage to your target's torso, in addition to any other damage. That Shock ignores any and all armor. If you begin the round with your weapon sheathed, you can draw and attack with Single Intent and not take the usual draw penalty (just like Pure Commencement). You cannot use Single Intent as part of any multiple action except drawing the weapon.

Submit and Kneel (3 points): If you successfully strike your opponent in the torso, he is immediately downed and loses a die from every set. The benefits of Pure Commencement also apply, if appropriate. Submit and Kneel can be combined with drawing a weapon, but not with any other multiple action.

All Is One (4 points): If you make multiple sword attacks, or take other actions in combination with sword attacks, all your actions are timed to coincide with your fastest set. Furthermore, you do not lose dice from your sets as a consequence of taking damage. If you begin the round with your weapon sheathed, you can draw and attack with All Is One without the usual draw penalty.

Soul Sever (5 points): Make a single attack and hit. Any damage from the strike that would bleed over into the torso (because the limb is already full) doesn't do so. Instead, the limb comes completely off. The limb is also severed if you hit a limb and fill its last box with Killing damage.

If you hit the torso and fill its last box with Killing damage, the target is split in half. Killing someone in this fashion, produces an automatic Morale Attack 5. You cannot use Soul Sever as part of a multiple action, with the exception of drawing the sword. If you begin the round with your weapon sheathed, you can draw and attack with Soul Sever without the usual draw penalty.

T

he biggest difference between a fantasy setting and any other is the presence of magic. This could mean subtle sorceries, army-shattering enchantments, miracles given to the faithful, or eccentric disciplines favored by wan, pretentious intellectuals who insist that it be spelled "magick."

As a GM, you're much better off if you think about its impact, its purpose in the game, and its nature earlier rather than later. Some critical questions to answer include:

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If the answer is "anything," you may want to reconsider. Settings where sorcerers are potentially omnipotent can mean only sorcerers matter. Not every player wants to screw around with magic. You don't want to disappoint them by limiting every non-enchanter.

But "magic can do anything" doesn't just unbalance character ideas: It also throws every other element of the game out of whack. If you can use sorcery instead of thinking things through, you game can only suffer for it. This is especially true for REIGN, where the emphasis is on the interactions of clans, conspiracies and countries… not just a few dominant enchanters.

Magic works best as a weak tool or a specialized one. If magic is strong, versatile and easy, why would anyone do anything else? Magic with a narrow focus has to be used intelligently. It requires engagement, while overly-powerful magic just produces laziness.

Magic with good limits, enhances every element of a game. Here are some interesting, consistent magic concepts, supporting involvement instead of lazy play.

Good Luck/Bad Luck: If magic only stacks on bonuses and penalties, it's dull. You could model hexes and good luck charms that way, but that has more impact on the rules ("add a +1d bonus") than setting or how the players play.

A more interesting option is to build Fortune Deck. I made one from fifty index cards and newspaper horoscope columns. I cut out the most interesting predictions and taped them to the cards. Ta da. Fifty vague plot turns.

Let people who control good and bad luck draw from the deck every time they cast a spell. Now, instead of a dice modifier, they can use a plot twist like "You might spend most of the day untangling other people's messes" or "You can find a way around a seemingly insurmountable problem" or "a romance based on materialism is in for a solid thwack." Sorcerers become temporary, limited GMs. (Countermagic is easy. Instead of dropping a card to get its effect, you can drop it to cancel out someone else's effect.)

Forces: Magic controls energy, period. Wind, lightning, heat, cold, strength—all good. But you can't heal with it, turn someone into a toad, spy from afar or control someone's behavior.

The strength of this approach is that it's straightforward. Surrounded? Lift yourself up and fly away. Undergrowth blocking your path? Blow a hole in it. Supper got cold? Zap it. There aren't a lot of bad surprises where your players want a spell to do X and you have to either deny them or watch your plot derail.

The good thing is that while it's powerful, magic isn't a substitute for being engaged in the story. You can't learn anything with force magic, or control minds, and if the effects are all short in duration you're always going to be vulnerable while you sleep.

Healing: Magic that can only heal, not harm, is a twist I've yet to see used in any game. But think about the implications. Warfare is much less threatening if your side can stick that severed arm back on. But when both sides have miraculous cures, why back down from a fight?

If this power is rare, it becomes a highly-sought commodity. Everyone wants access, and once they have it they want control. Do the healers band together? How do they deal with renegade healers? How do governments react to a healer who goes on strike—can they afford to punish her? Can they afford not to?

This approach, like the Forces example, cuts off a lot of magical laziness because magic solves a narrow range of problems, instead of being the sovereign remedy. PC healers are going to find ways to apply their power at a remove—by surrounding themselves with reckless bodyguards they can "recharge" when injured, by allying with the sickly rich… maybe even by alleviating symptoms but leaving the illness intact until the patient does one more favor for them… Health-only magic is an option that enhances creative approaches, instead of making them obsolete.

Forecasting: Another option is magic that has no physical effect whatsoever. It provides information.

Handled poorly, forecasting and remote viewing are plot-breakers. If your magic-using PC can ask "Exactly how do we get into the castle and rescue the princess?" and expect a clear answer, a lot of player thought and engagement just got flushed down the toilet.

If that question gives a vague answer, or an incomplete one, or if their sorcerous spying reveals only more riddles, then the magic is once more in its proper place as one element among many—not the first and foremost concern of the game.

Informational magic works better for some groups than others. If your players aren't into riddle-solving and figuring out the big picture, this can be a godsend: They want the next big fight scene, and the party oracle guides them there. But players who like to figure things out get cheated if a magic trick makes their role obsolete.

The question of whether spells that figure things out for you are bugs or features depends on your play style. To dungeon thugs who don't mind being railroaded as long as the train stops in Bloodbath Gulch—then clear and present divination is a blessing. Otherwise, you may want to cloud it up a bit.

What Can Magic Not Do?

Magic's limits are often as important as the capabilities—at least, they are for making things interesting.

Consider Unknown Armies. (It's another game I worked on.) Magick in Unknown Armies (yes, it's got that K) is versatile and powerful, but has severe limits, too. One of the principal ones is this: Magick cannot override human will. It just can't. It can make you want something, or fear something, it can take over your body… but it cannot make you choose. Only you choose.

The central issue of Unknown Armies is personal character, so having an inviolate character was essential. Acting under duress or having your body act against your directions—all that raises questions of identity. If my arms strangle someone, am I a murderer? Even if I tried to stop them?

When you're building a game, see if you can identify magic uses that are poison to your central concept. If I'm doing an exploration game, I don't want magic to take the trouble out of travel. For a game of revenge, I don't want the PCs to level up, learn the Spell of Phantom Stalking Doom, cast it on the main bad guy, and then have a light supper while the magic flits off to what should have been the climax of the game. A quest game won't be fun if there's simple magic that leads the PCs where they need to go—or that leads their enemies right to them.

How Difficult Is It?

Similar to the question of limits, the question of difficulty indicates how widespread magic is in your setting. Is it something like reading, where almost everyone can learn it? Or is it more like advanced differential calculus, requiring intense study? Does it demand inner strength that few can muster? Or is it something any dirt-cutter out in the fields could learn, if the Secret Masters bothered to teach him?

Difficult magic is rare. Simple magic can also be rare, but only if the setting has good reasons that it hasn't spread. Sorcerers who've mastered difficult magic may tend to be boastful, vain and pushy because they regard themselves as superior—maybe with good reason. On the other hand, if it's not that hard, people have little reason to regard a magician with awe, or even respect.

How Did It Affect the Setting?

Did the presence of magic concentrate authority into the hands of a few? If so, what are the qualities and stereotypes of that elite? Alternately, did it serve as a social leveler, making societies more just and equitable (perhaps at the cost of making them superficial and short sighted)? Is it practiced in the open and admired, or met with pitchforks and torches? The answers to these questions flow out of the previous ones.

If magic is complicated but not demanding, it could create a ruling class of abstract thinkers with contempt for the brawny peasants. On the other hand, if magic is simple enough that anyone can use it, but it demands that you hack off one of your own limbs to fuel your hex, then you might wind up with a very polite society because no one wants to provoke a deadly magic reprisal. Magic that can only make people sick or insane is going to be the provenance of tyrants or a secretive criminal class. Magic that's easy but only does minor things is to be as common as shoes, and probably have just as little impact on the major events of the world.

Thinking through your magic makes it easier for players to buy in. It removes nagging "why doesn't a wizard just fix it?" questions by pre-empting them. Either the wizard did, or he couldn't. It gives your players a seamless expectation of what magic can accomplish, putting them on the same page with the GM.

Heluso and Milonda: The Big Example

The sample setting for REIGN has a lot of magic. Enchantment is scalable: Most people can do a little bit, just as most modern people can operate a cell phone. But, like technology in our world, the more you want to do, the more training you need. Powerful spells are difficult. Specializing makes it quicker and stronger at the cost of versatility. Want to clean your hair with magic, instead of soap? You can learn that spell in an afternoon. Want to scythe the battlefield of all who oppose you, while your own troops stan untouched? That spell takes a lot more effort to learn and cast. Better get started now.

What Does Magic Do?

Magic on the two continents is a reorganizer. It can transform one thing into another, one form of energy into another, mimic the properties of substances or reassign them.

Magic is also a powerful observational tool. Those who harness it properly can sense the invisible, perceive the trends of the future, find the hidden and perceive the unknown.

Finally, it can contact intelligences that normally have little access to humankind.

How Is Magic Limited?

Enchantment can't think or feel. It can't think for you and it can't make you feel a particular way. An artistic illusion might stir emotions, but as with a painting, that's the artist working through the medium.

Magic is a shortcut around what you could call the sciences. It moves objects and is convenient and can be applied to terrifying effect. But it cannot inspire the people to rise up against injustice, or make someone fall in love.

What Has Magic Done to Heluso and Milonda?

Magic power tends to create elites who use their prerogatives to keep magic power monopolized. It's a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation: Are the wizard cabals powerful because they've kept their magic secret, or do they keep their magic secret because it's so powerful?

Being a great enchanter takes about as much time and effort as being a great warrior—or a bit more. A guy with an MD in both Fight and Counterspell can undermine an entire magiocratic social order. Even those who pursue magics of Charm or Command are at a disadvantage in the political arena, if they're up against someone who became a great leader instead of a great magician.

There are cities and states run by powerful enchanters. You can meet a Lord or a Princess who's a powerful (or merely adequate) adept. But they're no more common than people of quality who are powerful warriors or skilled public speakers.

The vast majority experience only minor magic. They might know Blossom Freshness as a convenience. They may walk streets where the stone was paved in a day by a magician with a drum, but the farther one gets from the Earthquake Drummers' homeland, the more expensive magic landscaping. This makes hiring a hundred masons instead of one adept more reasonable.

Perception and Use

Some people never sense magic until they see someone burst into flames. But those who are truly blind to the flow of magic are few: Far more commonly, people ignore the prickle at the back of the neck, or the strange feeling that an unfamiliar sight has been witnessed before, or the uncanny chill radiating from otherwise ordinary areas.

The sixth sense, awakened by the movements of magic, is as universal as sight or hearing. It can be lost or destroyed, in the same way that one can be deafened or blinded, but to be truly bereft of this sense is as anomalous as any of those other losses.

The easiest magics to detect are the greatest. When a sorcerer unleashes an earthshaking spell of the Tenth Intensity, anyone who can sense such things, does. It demands no effort, any more than it's effortful for a sighted man to spy the growing light of the sun.

Lesser magics are as easily perceptible when produced in one's presence. When cast from an uncertain location concentration may be required to sense them—much in the same way that seeing a man in the open fire an arrow requires no astuteness, while determining the origin of the same arrow fired by a hidden sniper can be taxing.

The same careful examination is needed to identify passive magic—that which resides in enchanted items and in those sorcerers who have permanently aligned themselves with this power or that. It may require care and examination, but a sensitive can identify such persons and items.

Such is the experience of those who merely experience the arcane. Actually manipulating it is another matter entirely.

The stages of casting a spell, from the slightest to the greatest, are universal. First, the adept must gather energy from the flows of magic around him. Once this is internalized, it's organized into a new pattern. Finally, the energies, in their new form, are released to do their task. While this seems terribly complex, it is really no more sophisticated than drawing breath and speaking.

Some magical workings require hours of casting. As a general rule, the longer an enchanter takes, the more powerful his spell can be (in the same way that a speaker with unlimited time can explain complicated ideas).

In Game Terms

Characters perceive magic with Eerie and use it with Sorcery. That seems straightforward enough, but since Eerie has no real-world analogue there may be some confusion. Here it is in simple terms.

When a character is in the presence of a sorcerer and that sorcerer casts a spell, the character senses it automatically.

When a character is near a sorcerer (one room over, for example) and the sorcerer casts a spell, the character may feel it, depending on how powerful the spell is, whether the character is alert, and so forth. If a player specifically asks to make an Eerie roll, it's possible to detect the casting—if it's a powerful spell, he might sense it even on a failed roll. On the other hand, if he's in a fight he's got little chance to sense the spell, unless he takes an action to attempt a roll.

Players can request Eerie rolls to detect attuned sorcerers and magical objects or areas. Any success is sufficient to pick which coin in a pouch is the magical one or which person in a crowd is an adept. This can not be used to detect someone who isn't an attuned enchanter—they're normal folks, as far as magical flow is concerned. Furthermore, even powerful items are undetectable as magic unless an effort is made to examine it.

A good rule of thumb for using Eerie is to compare it to hearing someone speak. The power of the spell equates to volume. If you're in the middle of a swordfight and someone behind a nearby bush said something to you in a normal tone, you probably wouldn't understand it. If it's shouted, you've got a better chance. But if you're not paying attention, you won't be able to understand what's being said in the next room.

General Rules

To cast a spell, you need to know that particular spell and roll it successfully. Minor spells of the First Intensity can be cast by anyone who bothers to learn one. You don't even need the Sorcery Skill: You just roll the appropriate Stat until you get a set.

People with the Sorcery Skill have studied. In addition to casting First Intensity spells more efficiently, they can also learn much enchantments from Second Intensity upwards. People who have not studied Sorcery can only manage First Intensity spells.

Every spell has a Difficulty equal to its Intensity. Any match can set off a First Intensity spell. Only matches of 5+ can activate a Fifth Intensity spell.

Schools of Magic

Spells come grouped in schools. Each school has two key elements: Its method, and its domain.

A school's method describes the mundane actions that create a resonance and yield magical effects. Common methods include singing, speaking, dancing, writing and drumming. Less common schools depend on glassblowing, cooking or knitting. Many spells, particularly the more powerful ones, require a minimum level in a particular Skill to cast.

A school's domain is the element of the natural (or supernatural) world it influences. Domains include fire, earth, weather, crop yield, luck, healing—pretty much anything short of emotion and mind control.

Resisting Magic

Anyone can instinctively resist magic: You don't need to know about music to smash a lute. As with most things, training can improve on nature, but by and large resisting magic works thus: When a character is aware that a spell is being cast on him, he can manipulate the magic flow within himself to break the enchantment.

There are restrictions to this. It has to be accomplished while the spell is being cast. Once a long-lasting spell is completed, only another sorcerer (and few of them) could break it before it finishes. Second, the character has to be aware of the spell as it's being cast. Thirdly, it has to be focused on him—he can't counterspell something aimed at his friend. Or that's aimed at the ground beneath his feet, turning it into quicksand. Personal items—clothes, weapons, anything being worn on the body or held in the hand—is enough of a part of that person's fate that he can counterspell it, so spells that make armor red-hot can be resisted.

Spells that affect many people can be resisted individually, but one success doesn't ruin the entire spell—it just protects the person who succeeded at resisting.

Example: Mirwen casts a spell on ten enemy fighters. They all attempt to counterspell it. Three of them succeed and take no damage. The other seven are still left bleeding and gasping.

When a character knows a spell is coming for him, he can make a Knowledge+Counterspell roll. (If he wants to do something else too, it's a multiple action.) If the roll succeeds, he has Gobble Dice with which to foil enchantment.

It's just like using the Dodge Skill, except that one's for swords and one's for being turned into a toad. Spells that take a long time to cast can only be countered the round they're released, just like you can only dodge an arrow the instant it's fired.

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ATTUNEMENT

Most higher-intensity spells require the caster to be attuned to the spell's domain. There are several ways to be attuned.

Temporary attunement requires you to cast an attuning spell. These spells let you cast one higher intensity spell in the domain.

Many schools have spellsfor permanent attunement. The advantage of permanent attunement is that you can then cast any spell in the domain without first attuning yourself. Often there are ancillary advantages as well—you might become exempt from drowning, or develop an immunity to poison. The disadvantage is that you can never become attuned to any other domain. Depending on the change, there may be additional disadvantages as well.

Then there are the unfortunates who become partially attuned. Like the fully attuned, they can cast advanced spells without temporary attunement. They, too, are unable to cast spells out of domain. But where the fully attuned get associated benefits, the partially attuned have unpleasant side effects—things like your skin developing a sandy texture, or your bones becoming fragile. Also, a lot of people who try to attune fully and fail simply die. (Not player characters though.)

One becomes permanently attuned by casting a permanent attunement spell (such as a Greater Mark of Earthly Attunement). There are three possible results to the casting roll, and three possible results from the spell.

Roll	Result
No match	Caster dies in the attempt (or fails and can never try again).
A match, but it's less than the spell Intensity	Caster is imperfectly attuned.
Match equals or exceeds the spell Intensity	Caster is perfectly attuned.

Note that sorcerers only get a single shot at attunement. If it's bungled, there is no way to re-do it and hope for a better outcome.

FORGETTING SPELLS

It is perfectly possible to begin a game playing a character who used to know a spell but has since forgotten it. If you're wondering why anyone would want to do this, it's because permanent attunement spells can only gainfully be cast once and are typically of pretty high Intensity.

This also means that your character might, at one time, have known a spell that set people on fire. But having lived peacefully for thirty years as a brewer, she's forgotten it and makes do with an MD in Lie.

Chapter Six

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Casting Spells

* You must know a spell to cast it. (Starting characters can buy spells. Later on you have to learn them by gaining access to them and by spending experience points.)

* You can't choose to take a multiple action while casting spells. No active dodging, no fighting, nothing except concentrating on the magic. (There are some exceptions, but not many.) Some spells, however, have to be part of a multiple action. In those cases, you can't add another action in addition.

* If some particular advantage is gained by rolling a particular number, you can "aim" a spell, just like making a called shot with a weapon. You reduce your pool by 1 and set one of the remaining dice to the number you want. (This can be used to beat the spell's Intensity.)

* Some spells take multiple rounds to cast—they have Slow ratings. You have to go through the Slow rounds before you get to roll. (That is, if a spell is Slow 1, you have to spend one round doing the action, and then on the next round you can roll and see if it works.)

* Every spell has a Difficulty equal to its Intensity. Any match can set off a First Intensity spell. Only matches of 3+ can activate a Third Intensity spell.

* Some spells can be dodged, just like a sword blow. Some can be parried. But unless it specifically states that dodges or parries work, they don't. Same thing with armor. If a spell's description says it can be blocked by armor, it can. But the default is, it goes right through it. (There are presumably spells and objects that give AR ratings against magic damage. That kind of AR works. AR from shields, breastplates and Martial Techniques is useless against enchantment.)

Detection

As soon as you start to cast a spell, people have a chance to feel the energies, even if they're not in your presence. If a person makes a Sense+Eerie roll, they can feel the forces. Though they don't know the direction of the effect or its nature or its strength, they do know that magic is afoot.

Anyone targeted by a spell, who is in an area affected by the spell, or who holds an object the spell targets, can make a roll to sense it. Unless, of course, the caster is right there doing it, in which case they just know.

Additionally, strong magics have the potential to alert anyone near the caster.

Spell Intensity	Detection Radius	Spell Intensity	Detection Radius
First	-	Sixth	A mile
Second	Five feet	Seventh	10 miles
Third	Ten feet	Eighth	25 miles
Fourth	Fifty feet	Ninth	50 miles
Fifth	A thousand feet	Tenth	100 miles

This sensing occurs when you begin to cast the spell, so a spell that takes hours to cast can alert people in plenty of time to track the caster down. People who fail their Eerie roll to sense any given spell get another one every hour until the spell goes off.

A few abbreviated schools from the Heluso and Milonda setting are included as examples. After that come rules for building your own schools and spells within that framework. Many more pre-built schools are available in REIGN and online in the supplements.

Pre-built schools are presented thus:

SCHOOL NAME

Domain: What the magic influences.

Method: How the school casts spells.

Associated Skill or Stat: This is the Skill or Stat that combines with your "Sorcery" Skill to form your dice pool for all spell casting attempts.

Society and Beliefs: Where the school comes from and what sort of society it is. (For this short reference book, these descriptions have been cut down.)

Required Knowledge: Mundane Skills or character benefits required before the school is understood.

SPELL NAME

Intensity: How rare and powerful a spell is.

Time: How long a spell takes to cast. It's either Slow, combative or a number of minutes or hours. "Combative" spells can be cast in one combat round. If it's in hours or minutes, you roll after spending the requisite amount of time.

"Slow" spells require a number of rounds of prep equal to their Slow rating. Once those are completed, you can roll. If a spell is Slow 3, you have to spend three rounds doing the actions and then roll for it on the fourth round.

Duration: How long it lasts. If the duration is instant, it means that something immediately happens and then ceases. The spell goes off and is then done. (Typically these are spells with one shot effects—hitting someone with a bolt of lightning, as a popular example.)

Attunement: If "yes," then some form of attunement—temporary, permanent or incomplete—must be achieved to cast it. If "no," then anybody who knows it can cast it.

Effect: What the spell does.

A Word on Terrifying the Riff-Raff

Spells that create an area damage effect (not just Area Dice applied to one person) automatically generate a Morale Attack. The Morale Attack is equal to half the level of Area Attack, rounded up. If your spell generates an Area Attack 3, it gets a free Morale Attack 2 because blanketing an area with occult doom is scary. This Morale Attack isn't a magic effect, so it can't be counterspelled: It's possible that underlings well protected against the magic might run away from sheer hysteria.

This effect occurs the first round a spell goes off. If it remains in effect, it only terrifies once. If it's an instant spell and it keeps crashing down on the hapless followers, the Morale Attack occurs with each new assault.

Dindavaran Death Forging

Domain: This very specific discipline captures spirits at the moment of death and enslaves them.

Method: Every deathsmith creates magic swords. They become magical when the hot blade is cooled in a living being. As the creature dies, the steel captures its spirit and forces it into service.

Associated Skill or Stat: Command.

Society and Beliefs: The clans of Dindavara make warfare their highest virtue, and the making of swords is an honored skill. More honored is the making of magic swords.

Most death-forged swords contain animal spirits, but once per year each clan chief is permitted to condemn one criminal to be death forged—not only executed, but enslaved within a blade forever. Such man-ghosted swords are rare, powerful and precious. Most precious of all are blades with voluntary spirits within them.

Required Knowledge: This school cannot be mastered by anyone with a Skill of less than 3 in Blacksmithing. Furthermore, the benefit "Secret of the Dinda" must be known as well. ("Secret of the Dinda" is an Advantage that costs 4 points to buy.)

DINDAVARAN DEATH FORGING

FORGE THE BEAST

Intensity: 1-3
Casting Time: 1-3 Hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell captures the soul of an animal in a freshly-forged sword. The sword then becomes a level 1-3 magic sword (see "Enchanted Artifacts" on page 207.)

To cast this spell, the deathsmith must make a sword. The smith begins the spell during the final phases of the sword's construction. If the spell fails at this point, the sword is cast aside.

Once the weapon is forged and the spell cast, the smith takes the sword red-hot from the forge and cools it by slaying the animal with it. The nature of its blessing depends on the animal sacrificed, and on the Intensity of the deathsmith's spell.

Intensity 1 spells can produce the following effects, if the right animal is sacrificed.

Eagle: Add a +1 bonus to the Fight Skill.

Horse: Add a +1 bonus to the Parry Skill.

Swallow: Add a +1 bonus to the Dodge Skill.

Monkey: You may add as many uses of the Dodge Skill to a multi-action as you wish, without ever taking a penalty for it.

Serpent: In addition to any other damage, the sword does an additional 2 Shock. Unlike most magic damage, armor affects this.

Falcon: You always have Armor 1 when you're attacked with a bow.

You can get these effects with an Intensity 2 spell, assuming you sacrifice the proper creature.

Dog: Add a Master Die to your Scrutinize Skill.

Cat: In addition to any other damage, the sword does an additional Width in Killing. Unlike most magic damage, armor reduces this.

Serpent: In addition to any other damage, all Waste dice do Shock damage. You still have to hit, though, and armor reduces this damage.

Ox: Armor 1 against all attacks.

The following sacrifice/effect combinations arise from Intensity 3 spells.

Horse: Add a +1 bonus to your Body Stat.

Cat: Add +1 to your Coordination Stat.

Serpent: All Waste Dice do Shock damage when you hit. With this variety of Serpent blade, armor does not reduce this damage.

Falcon: Armor 3 against lightning attacks.

Dindavaran Death Forging

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Forge the Soul

Intensity: 1-5
Casting Time: 1-5 Hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell renders the soul of a human being down into a single skill or ability. No mind remains, but the wielder of the sword can use the skill or ability of the person in the "soul sword" as if it was his own.

To cast this spell, the deathsmith must first make a sword. The smith begins the spell during the final phases of the sword's construction. If the spell fails at this point, the sword is cast aside.

Once the sword is forged and the spell cast, the smith takes it red-hot from the forge and cools it by slaying the person with it.

While forging the sword, the deathsmith chooses one Esoteric or Martial Technique that the target knows. If the spell succeeds, anyone who holds the drawn sword can use that single Technique as if he or she knew it. (The Intensity of the spell required is equal to the level of the Technique to be stolen. The sword's level is the same.) The sword's owner cannot learn the Technique simply by studying how the sword does it, unless she already knows all the prerequisite Techniques she would need to learn it normally.

Forge the Man

Intensity: 5
Casting Time: 5 Hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell captures the soul of a human being in a freshly-forged sword. The soul retains its full memories, it can speak, and it can use its Sense Stat and all Sense Skills. It cannot, however, move on its own or cast any spells. These "ghost swords" are level 5 magic weapons.

As with all the products of this school, a sword must be crafted specifically for the spell. The smith begins the spell during the final phases of the sword's construction. If the spell fails at this point, the sword gets discarded.

Once the sword is forged and the spell cast, the smith takes it red-hot from the forge and cools it by slaying the person with it.

If the smith's only match (or matches) are sets of fives, the weapon contains the ghost, but the ghost is under no compulsion to obey its holder. With successes of Height 6-9, the ghost must obey the letter of the holder's orders. If the match is 10, the ghost must do its best to obey its owner's intent as well.

Dindavaran Death Forging

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Forge the Devil

Intensity: 7
Casting Time: 7 Hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: No.

Effect: This spell captures the spirit of a demon in a freshly-forged sword. The sword then becomes a hellblade, a level 7 magic sword. To cast this spell, the deathsmith must first make a sword of any type. The smith begins the spell during the final phases of the sword's construction. If the spell fails at this point, the sword is cast aside.

Once the sword is forged and the spell cast, the smith takes it red-hot from the forge and cools it by slaying a demon of at least the fourth phase. (See REIGN for a description of the phases of demonic existence. A fourth phase demon usually can't be killed with physical blows, but this spell gives the smith the ability to harm the creature while forging—if he can kill it with a single stroke. Any blow that doesn't finish the job does no damage, but allows the creature to escape.)

When it hits, it does normal damage for a weapon of its type, plus all the Waste dice do Shock damage. The sword appears to become a greenish quicksilvery liquid upon impact, and the person being struck can feel cold, alien tendrils probing his body through the wound. Even as the sword is withdrawn for another blow, strands of evil silver metal stretch from blade to wound, trying to pull the weapon closer for another taste of blood and flesh.

In game terms, every time a hellblade hits someone, it gains a +1d bonus to hit that person again. These bonuses are permanent and cumulative: If Riyan Xuedei (who bears one of the three hellblades known to exist) hits you twice, that sword, in anyone's hands, adds a +2d bonus to all Fight or Sword pools to hit you, until you die. Furthermore, bonus dice accumulated in this fashion can push pools beyond 10d without the excess dice being trimmed off. If you've somehow survived ten hits from one particular hellblade, the next person to whack you with it gets a +10d bonus to his pool, even if that has him rolling eleven dice or more.

Every time a hellblade kills someone, roll 2d10. If it's a 2x10 match, the demon breaks the enchantment and reconstitutes itself. When this happens, it emerges as only a demon of the third phase, however.

The Night Hunter's Art

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Domain: Moonlight and wolves.

Method: These spells are cast by howling at the moon. This means that they cannot be cast during the day or during the new moon.

Associated Skill or Stat: Sense

Society and Beliefs: The Night Hunter Truils worship the moon-goddess Raungmüt and by crying out to her, they receive her power, and that of her chosen creatures, the wolves. That's what they tell you, anyhow. If they tell you anything.

Required Knowledge: None.

Howl of Bloodlust

Intensity: 1
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Width in minutes, or until used, whichever comes first
Attunement: No

Effect: The next set you roll with the Fight Skill is timed as if its Width was one greater.

Whiff of the Blood

Intensity: 1
Casting Time: Slow 2
Duration: Height in minutes.
Attunement: No

Effect: When invoked with a low whine, Raungmüt (or whatever) provides unusually acute senses for a short span of time. While the spell is in effect, add a Master Die to your Scrutinize rolls.

Call the Pack

Intensity: 3

Casting Time: It only takes a single round to sing out the call (which is preternaturally loud) but it can take up to six hours for the wolves to arrive. If they're closer, they arrive sooner. You cannot cast the spell again until the wolves from your previous casting have arrived.

Duration: The wolves summoned serve for a number of days equal to the Width of the roll.

Attunement: Yes.

Effect: This spell summons a group of wolves who serve the caller (to the best of their limited understanding) until slain, driven off, or until the spell ends (at which point they wander away). You get a number of wolves equal to the combined Height and Width of your roll. If you roll a 3x5, you get eight wolves (3+5). If you roll a 4x10, you get fourteen (4+10). You can never control more than twenty wolves at a time.

The wolves are considered unworthy opponents with Threat 2. They can be scared off with Morale Attacks as usual, but their Threat can't be raised above 2.

Lunar Pledge

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Until the next spell is cast.
Attunement: No.

Effect: This spell temporarily attunes you to moon magic, so that you can cast spells that require attunement.

The Night Hunter's Art

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Lunar Vision

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Height in minutes
Attunement: Yes

Effect: While the spell is in effect, you can switch between your normal point of view, and an aerial viewpoint that shows everything the moonlight falls upon in a one square mile radius. If you're planning a large ambush at night, and are able to adequately communicate your intelligence to everyone in your Company, this might give you a +1 or +2 bonus on Might for that attack.

Liquid Moonlight

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: 8 minutes
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: Yes.

Effect: This spell is cast by boiling water into steam by full moonlight in a silver bowl, catching the steam in an opaque bottle. When the bottle is opened, out streams enough moonlight to cast one Night Hunter spell. Until that spell is cast, the neck of the bottle produces about as much light as a candle.

Lupine Form

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Height in hours. You can choose to change back and forth at will during that time.
Attunement: Yes.

Effect: You take the form of a large wolf. Your Charm score drops to zero, and your Coordination score rises by the same amount (maximum 6). Your Command score similarly drops to increase Body (again, to a maximum of 6). Your Knowledge score drops to 1, and your Sense Stat goes up by the amount lost (maximum 6). While in lupine form, you cannot wear armor, use weapons, speak or take any other actions that require human configuration. You can bite with the Fight Skill and your bites do Width in Killing damage. Your base movement changes to 20 feet per round. You also gain a Master die in your Scrutinize pool.

Unlike many such spells, a character whose Body has been raised through this transformation can have it raised further by additional enchantment.

Ecstasy of Carnage

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: A number of rounds equal to Width +1
Attunement: Yes

Effect: As with Howl of Bloodlust, your attack sets made with the Fight Skill are timed as if they had +1 Width. Unlike that spell, this one repeats a number of rounds equal to

the Width of the activation roll. (Thus, if you roll a 3x set, it improves your attack next round, and for three rounds after that.)

Lupine Curse

Intensity: 5
Casting Time: Slow 3
Duration: Width in hours
Attunement: Yes

Effect: You point at one person within a hundred feet, and he instantly transforms into a wolf. While in this shape, he can't speak, wear armor or use tools, and his Knowledge, Command and Charm scores all drop to 1. (He can, however, bite for Killing damage. He also gains an MD to his Scrutinize score.)

Lunar Oath

Intensity: 5
Casting Time: Nine hours
Duration: Permanent.
Attunement: No.

Effect: This spell permanently attunes you to moon magic, so that you can cast spells that require attunement at will. It also, if properly cast, causes the physical transformations of a full Lunar adept (see sidebar).

The Rabid Pack

Intensity: 6
Casting Time: Slow 3
Duration: This spell lasts a number of rounds equal to the Width of the activation roll +1
Attunement: Yes

Effect: This spell has the same effect as Ecstasy of Carnage, only instead of improving your own Fight attacks, you improve the Fight sets of up to 20 other people (or creatures).

If you cast this on followers, you raise their Threat score by 1 while the spell is in effect. Their sets don't go off sooner.
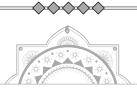
Wolf-Mad Nation

Intensity: 7
Casting Time: 9 minutes
Duration: Width in minutes
Attunement: Yes

Effect: This spell has the same effect as Howl of Bloodlust, only instead of improving your own Fight attacks, you improve the Fight sets every person you see. You may pick and choose, so that everyone in your tribe gets the boost while no one on the other side does. Repeated uses during a close battle can provide a +1 Might bonus (though, remember, it only works at night). If you've got other advantages, even a single well-timed casting might give that +1 Might bonus. Particularly if everyone on the battlefield senses a vast mystic charge streaming towards you.

Flawless Lunar Attunement (5 point Advantage)

Those who permanently pledge themselves to lunar energies gain the usual benefits of attunement. They also gain a Master Die in Scrutinize and, when the moon is full, can cast Lupine Form as if it was an Intensity 1 spell instead of Intensity 4. (If they know the spell.) Even when in human shape, they get the Cannibal Smile Advantage for free.

However, this attunement comes with a cost. Whenever an attuned sorcerer smells wolfsbane, he takes a point of Shock damage to his head from disorientation and pain. (This damage fades after about an hour.) Second, cats develop a dislike that can range from simple antipathy to psychotic hatred. Not just little housecats, either—there's a reason that the territories of Night Hunters and lions don't often overlap.

Imperfect Lunar Attunement (1 point Advantage)

You're attuned, you have all the flaws of the perfect attunement, and none of the advantages.

Building Your Own Magic

Spells in REIGN are defined by a few simple parameters. The balance between these factors determines, in part, how useful a spell is. What follows are guidelines for building spells for the stock REIGN magic system.

How Are Spells Balanced?

Spells are balanced with simple addition. First you figure out what the spell targets. It's harder to effect fifty swords than one, reasonably enough. Next you gauge the cost of the effect, whether it's mild or cataclysmic. The duration is how long the spell lasts. Then you just add Extras and Flaws. Each factor increases or reduces a single sum. When you're done? That sum is the Intensity. No spell can have Intensity less than 1, no matter how flawed it is.

This sounds concrete and precise, and it can be, but it can get mushy. Most significantly, there are many instances that aren't covered on the laundry lists below. It's up to the GM to decide if that effect is Minor (raising the spell's Intensity by 1) or Major (+5 Intensity).

The other question that's purely subjective is "Does the caster need to be attuned?" That's totally up to the GM, as another option for balancing spells.

Building Your Own Magic

Target

What or whom does the spell target? Essentially, it's either changing an entity, an object or an area. Pick one and add the points.

Targeting Creatures

Self	+0
A single creature within a hundred paces	+1
A single creature within eyesight	+2
2-10 creatures within 100 feet	+3
10-20 creatures within 500 feet	+4
20-50 creatures within a mile	+5
50-100 within ten miles	+6
Everyone seen	+7

Targeting Objects

Caveat: 'One item' or 'a series of objects' is vague, terribly vague. Is a catapult one item, or is it a combination of objects, or should 'very large objects' be bumped up a category or two? Up to you and/or your GM. These are guidelines. I pictured these 'objects' as something a person could pick up with reasonable effort. For your game you may want to define it precisely, or evaluate on a case-by-case basis.

One item	+1
2-5 objects of the same type	+2
6-20 objects of the same type	+3
6-20 objects of different types	+4
20-50 objects of the same type	+4
20-50 objects of different types	+5
All of a type seen	+6
All objects seen	+7

Targeting Areas

Fist-sized or smaller	+0
A five foot radius	+1
5-50 foot radius	+2
Size of a large house	+3
A square mile	+4
Ten mile diameter	+5
As far as the eye can see	+6

Effect

A lot of this is a GM judgment call, and that's a good thing. An effect that severs plots in one game can be minor in another. That said, here's a big framework of common effects. They're all specific examples of the General Effects. Just keep a close eye on spells that can alter Company rolls or Qualities.

Building Your Own Magic

General Effects

Nugatory	+0
Minor	+1
Significant	+3
Major	+5
Cataclysmic	+7

Attunement Effects

Ordinary attunement	+3
Attunement with physical transformation	+5

Mental Effects

Standard REIGN avoids emotional and mental effects, but here's what they cost anyway.

Someone automatically succeeds at an Eerie check	+0
Morale Attack X	+half X
+1 Threat (morale)	+1
Suppress a Mission	+2
Suppress a Craving	+3
Suppress a Duty	+3
Add a Mission	+4
Add a Craving	+5
Add a Duty	+5

Protection Effects

Armor X against a specific sort of damage*	+X
Armor X against all damage, at one location	+X
Armor X against all physical damage	+2X
Spell set acts to gobble** a specific sort of damage*	+2
Spell set gobbles** all physical damage	+4
Difficulty X against a specific attack*	+2+half X
Difficulty X against all physical attacks	+X+2
Armor X against all attacks and dodgeable spells	+3X
Spell set gobbles** all attacks and dodgeable spells	+6

*'Specific' could mean "fire" or "swords" or alternately, "all temperature-based damage" or "all cutting wounds." Something that protects against all weapons equally is probably widespread enough to cost more than the cost for 'specific'. If a spell is narrower in effect (protecting only against falling instead of all impact, for instance) you can make it up with slightly greater duration (lasting for Height instead of Width in its duration category).

**Spells that gobble defensively can usually do so regardless of timing -- you get a 2x10 with a gobble spell, you can still use it against a 4x2 to reduce it to a 2x2. But that's also open to GM interpretation and fiat, depending on what seems right and appropriate to the specific campaign.

Building Your Own Magic

Skill / Stat Boosts

What is a 'rare Skill' and what is a 'frequent Skill'? That depends on whether your game focusses on skull-splitting axe attacks or side-splitting Jest rolls.

+1d to a rare Skill	+0
+1d to a frequent Skill	+1
+MD to a rare skills	+2
+1d to a Stat, with some form of restriction	+2
+1d to a Stat	+3
+ED to a frequent Skill	+3
Reallocate some or all stats in a prearranged pattern*	+4
Reallocate some or all stats at will	+5
+ED to a Stat	+5
+MD to a frequent Skill	+5

*For example, 'reduce Command by 2 and raise Body by 2'.

Direct Damage

Width Shock	+0
Width Killing	+1
Waste Shock	+1
Width+3 Shock	+2
Width+2 Killing	+2
Waste Killing	+2
Width+2 Killing, Waste Shock	+3
Width+2 Killing, Waste Killing	+4
All locations fill with Killing damage	+7
Area X Shock attack	+one third X
Area X Killing attack	+half X

Weapon Enhancement

This is the chart for making magic swords and such. Don't use these to beef up the effects from Direct Damage.

+X Shock	X
+X Killing	+2X
Waste Shock	+3
Waste Killing	+4
Ignores X Armor	+2X

Group Damage

Area X Shock	+half X
Area X Killing*	+X

*Don't forget that free Morale Attack at half the value!

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Summoning/Creating Followers

This shows how many creatures can be created or summoned, and their Threat level. If you want a spell to create a number of Threat 2 unworthies equal to the Height of the casting roll, it's a +3 effect. These creatures should do Width Shock and be susceptible to Morale Attacks unless, of course, there's a balancing problem for more damage or Morale Attack immunity. For instance, followers that can only defend and not attack are much more balanced with Morale Attack protection. If you want beasties that can't be scared and do extra damage, you can pay more for them, bumping their cost up a few more points.

One Threat 1	+0
Width Threat 1	+1
One Threat 2	+1
Width Threat 2	+2
Height Threat 1	+2
One Threat 3	+2
Width Threat 3	+3
Height Threat 2	+3
One Threat 4	+3
Height Threat 3	+4
Width Threat 4	+4
Height Threat 4	+5

Duration

Every spell has a duration, even those that are combative, eyeblink-quick effects. True, that duration is "instant" but it can really help with the book keeping. When there is a duration, it's typically Width or Height in the relevant time scale. GMs get to dictate the specifics of those vague durations. Of course, once you exceed 60 minutes you have to pay for an hour and once you exceed 24 hours you pay for days.

Instant	+0
Minutes	+0
Hours	+1
Days	+2
Years	+3
Forever	+4

Fine Tuning

This is the section where you either raise Intensity by adding extras, or reduce it by making it a pain to cast.

Extras

Repeats effect next round	+2
Repeats effect for Width rounds	+3
Repeats effects for Height rounds	+5
Counterspell rolls against it are at X Difficulty	+X
Can't be detected by Eerie sense	+3

Slow Ratings: A Special Flaw

A Slow rating is a Flaw rated at -1, but the exact Slow rating varies. I like having the Slow rating equal to its modified Intensity, with a minimum of Slow 1 and a ceiling around Slow 3. This is a good place for the GM to exercise some discretion, depending on how influential the spell seems. Not all published spells followed this guideline, but they all 'feel right'.

Flaws

Casts in minutes*	-2
Casts in hours*	-3
Can be parried, if an attack spell	-1
Can be dodged, if an attack spell	-1
Must be cast after success with another skill	-1
Must be a multiple action with another skill	-2
Requires simple ingredients and preparation	-1
Requires baroque ingredients and preparation	-2
Kills the caster even if the casting roll fails	-3
Does 1 Shock to each of the caster's limbs**	-1
Does 1 Killing to each of the caster's limbs**	-2
Can be blocked by armor	-2

*The number of minutes or hours a spell takes to cast is equal to its unmodified level -- that is, the total of all the plus factors before you take away the minus factors.

**Meaning, one each to head, torso, each arm and each leg.

EXAMPLES?

If you want to see examples of all these principles in use, they're walked through step-by-step in Supplement 2, "Secrets of Sorcery," which is in the book *The First Year Of Our Reign* and can be downloaded free at http://www.gregstolze.com/reign/supplements.html.

All the issues that arise with putting magic in a general setting also apply on the smaller scale of putting a type of magic into a part of the setting. What does it change to have this sorcery present? How widespread is it? How is it limited? If a GM wants a setting with resurrection magic, fine. But unless it's going to be really limited (say, it's a base effect at +7) or really rare for some other reason (you can only cast the spell if you die in the place of the person who's coming back), it's an upheaval. Think how your neighborhood would react if technology found a way to bring back the dead. Just because a fantasy world's citizens are familiar with magic doesn't mean they won't be shocked by a new magical development (or a rediscovered ancient one).

To build a new school from the ground up, answer the following questions.

WHAT FUNCTION DOES THE SCHOOL FULFILL?

Why do you want to create a new school? This does not have to be a big, thematic reason. "I want guys who can make your guts jump up your throat and strangle you" is perfectly decent. But try to broaden the vision. Is it that you want a body-based school of magic? Or just something that's really gross and scary? There are a couple concepts that can support a gut-strangle spell. The obvious is something based on controlling the flesh of others. Or maybe it's a school based on subversion and betrayal, with a lot of ways to make this turn against that. Or perhaps it's disease-based and has the gut-strangle out on the fringes of general body-wrecking.

This, in turn, helps you figure out what the school does not do.

WHAT DOMAIN SUPPORTS THAT FUNCTION?

A school's domain is often more symbolic than literal. Your school doesn't have to be scientific in the way it connects effects.

WHAT METHOD FITS?

Methods aren't just meaningless surface gloss. They can be as limiting as the Domain or the Stat pick. You can find something, some action that's a good match for the Domain. For instance, dance and fire seem to match because they're both beautiful, mesmerizing

and always in motion. They blend smoothly. But at the same time, you can go for something directly against expectation and generate tension. An example there would as-yet-undescribed Earthquake Drummers, who combine music (which is creative and entertaining) with destruction. (Though there's more to it, since they also build. They're blend and contradict. That's okay too.) The unexpected or the awkward often makes for good roleplaying opportunities, by forcing players to think about how they're going to (say) manage a scarce resource or arrange a cumbersome ritual. It also provides another lever for play balance. Now, 'play balance' is always personal and idiosyncratic, but it basically means "not allowing one player to hog the spotlight because he picked mechanics that trump everything else." If a spell lets someone kill better than an expert warrior, it had better have some other limit. This is sometimes called 'niche protection' and can easily be taken to ridiculous extremes, but there's a lot to be said for allowing the guy who's good at a certain task be good at it, without worrying about being rendered obsolete by a single spell.

What Culture Makes Sense?

Now that you know what the enchantments do and how, figure out the type of person who wants to do that stuff. As with Method, you can play to stereotype. The Death Forgers, for example, are practically a caricature of the ruling elite. They jealously guard their secrets, they're highly trained, and they see everything and everyone as a potential tool for their ambitions. But you can also switch it up: The stereotype healer is saintly, benevolent and boring. The Method for Sunwise Healers (presented in Supplement Five) flips that on its ear. People who are willing to risk going blind in their pursuit of magic power? That sounds a lot more like someone desperate, or crazy, or someone with nothing to lose. Now instead of milquetoasty do-gooders, you get people who are perfectly in character being arrogant, or selfish, or crazy. Isn't that more fun to deal with?

Don't worry about making a distasteful culture, either. If it's too uncool, your PCs who still want the style can have a change of heart or be heretics or apostates hated by the rest of the school. Now you've got a plot hook, too.

What Stat Fits?

Picking the Stat that binds to the Sorcery skill to create a magic system's pool is a place where it's essential to weigh "what seems to fit" against all those questions of niche protection and game balance. A school might be very aggressive and damaging and, thematically, basing it on Body might seem really cool. But if that happens, all this sorcerer needs to do is add a couple cheap Skill points in Fight and suddenly, as an afterthought, he's half-optimized for combat too. Excellence should only come with effort (represented in the game by investment of valuable points). So if the school is going to make you really good at finding out information, it probably shouldn't be based on Sense, the Stat that finds information. If it's going to change your appearance and make you a super-trickster, it might be a good idea to base it on something other than Charm, which is the Stat that mundane tricksters use. A good guideline -- not just for the Stat pick but for all these questions -- is "Does this system achieve some general end so easily and at such little cost that no one would ever bother pursuing it without magic?" People are lazy. If a couple low-Intensity spells let you dominate a fight, within a few generations those spells are going to be well-known and the art of self-defense will be forgotten. No one wins when a new school of magic makes big chunks of established material obsolete.

Where Does Attunement Fit?

Some systems have no attunement at all and some require it for every spell. Some attunement spells make minor or cosmetic changes, and some have the potential to turn the caster superhuman. Some systems don't have temporary attunement -- they demand commitment.

When building your school, the question of attunement is a way to indicate openness. A school that doesn't require attunement is easier to learn, and even if people try to keep it secret, that's going to be harder with one less barrier to learning the effects. A school where attunement is necessary means that getting any effect out of it demands greater devotion of time (from the character) and greater investment of points (from the player). Secretive, private groups probably have required attunement, and it's a chicken-and-egg question whether the demands lead to secrecy or the secrecy leads to the demands.

This is another lever for play balance. If you do the math on a spell and it seems awfully good for its cheap price, making it require an attuned caster takes it a step back from the game-breaker precipice. Now, in addition to just acquiring the cool spell, the player has to also (1) pay for a flawed permanent attunement Advantage, which comes with baggage, (2) pay for an expensive permanent attunement Advantage or (3) buy a temporary attunement spell, which effectively doubles the casting time of combative spells.

This can feel like nickel-and-diming the player to death, so it's always a good idea to keep a few spells without the requirement, to keep the versatile enchanters happy. Just make sure they aren't spells so great that they're getting cast over and over every session.

Don't misread this and think I mean that only weak, wussy spells should be free of the attunement burden. But if you're going to make a powerful spell accessible, make sure it's one that's got some other limit, or is only powerful in a few narrow circumstances, or requires player ingenuity to work well.

The other thing you can do with attunement is put a unique stamp on the school. Attunement and its effects are your chance to make your school stand out. Just make sure the positive and negative effects of permanent transformation work out okay. If a transformation is universally positive, it should cost lots more than the transformation with drawbacks.

Note Well

The different levels of Width in the upcoming One-Roll Spell set charts are not cumulative!

The spells produced by this system are consistent with the spell construction rules in First Year of Our REIGN, but I make no guarantees that they're anything other than crazy and bizarre.

That said, here's how you use the charts. Roll anywhere between 1d and 9d, or set some at whatever result you want if you prefer it that way. For every die you roll, the resultant spell has an additional point of Intensity. Want an Intensity 4 spell? Roll 4d. Intensity 9? Roll 9d.

But! There's an important difference between this One-Roll tool and most others. With One-Roll character generation, increasing Width of sets is cumulative: If you roll a 4x5, you get the effects of 3x5 and 2x5. But with spell effects, there are a lot fewer stock effects to pick from, so each level in a chart stands alone. If you roll a 4x5, the spell has the 4x5 effect and no other from those four dice. I'm boxing it out for the benefit of readers who aren't reading the introduction and are just skimming to the charts.

Most spells in REIGN do one thing, with some powerful spells doing several things that are all tied together. These… aren't like that. Thematic coherence isn't going to come out of these rolls. That's your job, as described under Step Three. Don't neglect it—for my money, that's the fun part.

STEP ONE: ROLL AND SORT SETS

Roll a number of dice equal to the Intensity of the spell you're creating. If any dice come up in sets, consult the following charts for the effects.

2x1:   One item inflicts a point of Shock (or +1S if it's used as a weapon) one time. This can be used to enhance or a bludgeon or to keep people's hands off your favorite beer stein.

3x1:   One item inflicts a point of Shock (or +1S if used as a weapon)for a number of hours equal to the spell's Height.

4x1:   The spell affects a number of items of similar type (all swords, all arrows, all pages, all beer steins) equal to the Width of the casting roll. For a number of hours equal to the Height of the roll, these objects either inflict a point of Shock to everyone who touches them or they do +1S if used as weapons.

5x1:   The spell affects a number of items of similar type equal to ten times the Width of the casting roll. Each object does +1S the next time it's used as a weapon or inflicts a point of Shock damage the next time it's touched.

2x2:   This spell summons a number of Threat 1 followers equal to the Height of the roll. They serve for a number of minutes equal to the roll's Width.

3x2:   Summons a number of Threat 1 followers equal to the Height of the roll. They serve for a number of hours equal to the roll's Height.

4x2:   Calls forth Threat 2 followers, equal in number to the Height of the roll. They serve for a number of hours equal to the roll's Height.

5x2:   Brings the caster a number of Threat 4 followers equal to the Height of the roll. They serve for a number of minutes equal to the roll's Width.

2x3: This spell requires some simple ingredients and preparations. When cast successfully, it suppresses the caster's Craving for one roll.

3x3: The caster can, with a success, suppress his Duty for one roll.

4x3: This spell targets a number of followers equal to the roll's Height. They receive some form of +1 Threat enhancement for Width minutes.

5x3: This spell targets a number of unworthy opponents equal to the roll's Height. They suffer a rank 4 Morale Attack.

2x4: The spell's activation set serves as gobble dice against the next spell (helpful or harmful) directed at the caster. They can apply at any time, regardless of timing.

3x4: The caster has AR2 against all damage to Location 10 for a number of hours equal to the spell's Height.

4x4: The caster takes a point of Shock to each limb, but gets AR2 protection from all physical damage for a number of hours equal to the roll's Width.

5x4: The caster gets AR1 protection against one type of weapon. This is permanent.

2x5: One target gets a +1d bonus to his Weapon: Bow skill for one roll. Multiple castings neither extend the duration nor increase the bonus.

3x5: A number of people equal to the Height of the roll receive a +1d bonus to their Expert: Swimmer pools for a number of minutes equal to the Height of the roll. Multiple castings neither extend the duration nor increase the bonus.

4x5: The caster gets +1d to his Coordination for hours equal to the Height of the casting set. Multiple castings neither extend the duration nor increase the bonus.

5x5: The caster has his Mind, Command and Charm Stats all reduced to one. His Body score rises an amount equal to the diminishment of his Command. His Sense score rises an amount equal to the Mind reduction. His Coordination increases by the same number that his Charm dropped. This lasts for Width hours. Multiple castings extend the duration.

2x6: One target within a hundred paces is targeted with an instant attack. It can be parried, but if it hits, it does Width Killing, Waste Shock.

3x6: One target within a hundred paces takes Width Shock to the indicated location. This spell repeats automatically next round, doing the same damage to the same place at the same time.

4x6: One target within eyesight is hit with an Area 6 Shock attack.

5x6: One target within a hundred paces takes an Area 4 Killing attack. The waste dice do Killing damage.

2x7: All targets within a fifty foot radius take an Area 2 Shock attack. This spell is Slow 2.

3x7: All targets within a fifty foot radius take an Area 1 Killing attack.

4x7: All targets with a fifty foot radius take an Area 4 Shock attack.

5x7: All targets within a square mile take an Area 1 Killing attack.

2x8: The caster gains a +1d bonus to Intimidation for Width in days. If the spell has other effects that aren't instant, they either last Width days or their original duration, whichever is longer.

3x8: One target gets a success at any Eerie roll he makes for the next Width in days, regardless of whether there's any reason (other than this spell) for it to go off. If the spell has other effects

that aren't instant, they either last Width days or their original duration, whichever is longer.

4x8: The spell summons a Threat 1 follower. He obeys loyally until killed or until the caster dies. If the spell has other effects that aren't instant, they also become permanent.

5x8: The caster gets AR1 against any attack by arrows or crossbow bolts. This is permanent. If the spell has other effects that aren't instant, they also become permanent.

2x9: This spell affects the caster only. For minutes equal to the Width of the spell roll, any other spells the enchanter casts are timed as if they had +1 Width. (They don't do more damage or have more effect.) Successive casting can extend the duration but don't increase the effect.

3x9: This spell must be cast after a successful use o f Expert: Chef. If successful, the caster needs no food for a number of years equal to the Width of the roll. He gets all he needs from water and air.

4x9: For a number of hours equal to the Height of the activation roll, any attempts to detect the caster's magic with the Eerie sense face Difficulty 3.

5x9: The caster grows an impressive set of antlers from his head. They're permanent. They do WK damage and give him AR1 on his head against physical attacks.

2x10: This spell targets one person within a hundred paces. That person turns bright yellow (hair, clothes, skin, possessions) for a number of hours equal to the Height of the roll. Additional castings extend the effect.

3x10: This spell targets one individual within a hundred paces, and its effects last for a number of hours equal to the Height of the set. Anyone targeting that individual with magic gets +1d to to his Sorcery pool.

4x10: One individual within a hundred paces becomes enchanted for a number of years equal to the Width of the roll. The enchantment sets off Eerie rolls but has no other effect.

5x10: One object develops a permanent blue glow and is always icy cold to the touch.

STEP TWO: ASSIGN LOOSE DICE

Any dice that aren't in sets produce additional effects for the spell, as listed below.

Roll	Effect
1	One target within a hundred paces hears a sentence spoken as if the caster was right next to him.
2	The caster's hand does a point of Shock damage to the next person it touches (other than the caster).
3	This spell requires elaborate, baroque ingredients and paraphernalia. When cast, it repeats its casting automatically a number of times equal to the Width of the first casting.
4	The caster takes a point of Shock to each limb and becomes indistinct to the eye. Any Sight rolls to spot the caster have their Width reduced by one for a number of hours equal to the Width of the spell.
5	The caster gets a +1d bonus to Scrutinize rolls for a number of hours equal to the roll's Width.
6	One target within a hundred paces is targeted with an arcane projectile. It can be parried, but if it hits it does Width Shock and the Waste dice do Shock as well.

◇◇◇◇◇

7	This spell takes hours to cast. (The number of hours is equal to the number of dice rolled plus three.) (This is a bit of a fudge on the numbers if other Flaws came up, but let it ride.) The spell can take effect on any object, individual or location the caster can clearly picture in his mind, as long as that target is within a hundred miles.
8	A single Threat 1 servant appears and obeys for a number of hours equal to the Width of the roll.
9	The area immediately proximate to the caster floods with music and pleasant aromas for a number of hours equal to the roll's Height.
10	One person nearby immediately has the sensation of making a successful Eerie check.

Step Three: Making Sense

The spells you roll up are unfinished. There are a lot of details that can't possibly fit on this list without weirdly repetitive randomness. When it summons followers, what are they? What type of weapon does it affect? Is there any circumstance under which all its effects make perfect sense?

Let's roll some dice and find out.

Example One: An Intensity 3 Spell.

I rolled 1,3,3.

My 2x3 outcome is that the spell requires simple ingredients and preparation, and suppresses the caster's Craving for one roll. The x1 Waste Die tells me that a person within 100 paces hears a sentence as if the caster had spoken it.

Well. That certainly seems random, all right. What's a setting where people are suppressing their desires and want to communicate clearly? I guess some kind of monastic order. Sure, these guys have taken a vow of silence and, on top of that, are eschewing various other fleshy indulgences. So when someone tries to tempt them, they have a spell that lets them communicate "Keep your filthy liquor to yourself or I'll break your back" without violating their vow of silence.

Actually, let's imagine that the spell is the only way they're permitted to communicate (other than writing, I guess). It's like a prayer. Not only do they get their point across, but it burnishes the armor of their faith by removing their next temptation. Perhaps the simple preparation for the spell is spinning a prayer wheel or reading from a holy text.
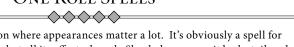
Example Two: An Intensity 5 Spell With No Sets.

I rolled 2,3,5,6,9. Let's see what craziness that yields.

x2 means the caster's hand does a point of Shock the next time he touches somebody. x3 adds baroque ingredients to the spell and makes it repeat a number of times equal to Width. x5 gives a +1d Scrutinize bonus for Width in hours, and x6 targets someone nearby with a magic projectile. Finally there's the x9 result which… makes everything around smell good and projects charming music?

◆◆◆◆◆

The x9 puts this in a situation where appearances matter a lot. It's obviously a spell for dealing with troublemakers, but all its effects do only Shock damage, so it looks tailored for a caster who doesn't want to hurt anyone… permanently.

So let's imagine a palace sorcerer. He has some elaborate badge of office, a medallion or amulet, that fulfills the requirements for casting the spell. If someone makes trouble during a cotillion, he swings into action. He gets at least three shots at anyone raising a ruckus, which should be enough to stun the average loutish noble. The music and aromas mask most signs of the struggle, so other guests don't panic and any important people aren't disturbed. (Possibly, others in palace security would recognize the song and know they should turn up.) His enhanced senses let him spot any hidden brawlers (or assassins who arranged a distraction) and his Shock hands give him a little something extra if he wants to persuade a captive to talk without leaving telltale hand prints.

Example Three: An Intensity 8 Spell.
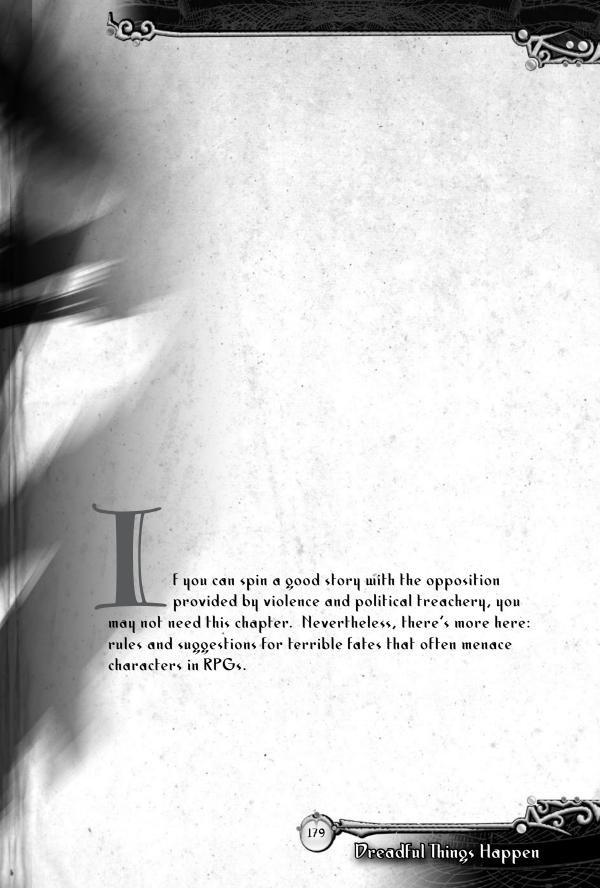
I rolled 3,3,4,7,8,8,9,9. Let's start with the sets.

2x3 shows up again, giving us simple ingredients and suppressing the caster's Craving. 2x8 gives him an Intimidate bonus and amps up all the spell's effects (including that Craving block) for days. 2x9 gives the caster's later spells a timing boost. Mm, that's going to be sweet with that duration extension.

For loose dice we have a 4 (the caster takes 1S to each limb but inflicts a penalty to Sight when being pursued) and a 7 (which kicks the casting time out to hours but lets him target anything out to a hundred miles away, as long as he can picture it).

On the surface of it, that 7 kind of messes whole thing up, doesn't it? Everything else in the spell is a caster-specific effect, and then along comes 7 that makes it work at great distance. What to do?

Well, one obvious solution is to just re-roll the odd digit. But I love a challenge so I'm going to suggest that the 7 works as a conditional trigger. He can picture a person or an object or a situation or a location, and as soon as he comes into its presence, all the other goodies—resisting temptation, moving unseen, casting quickly and scaring people) all kick in. This seems like a pretty good spell for infiltrating an armed area, especially if your enemies are known for inflicting artificial Cravings with magic. You cast it long beforehand, so the casting doesn't set off any Eerie checks, then waltz right in, knowing your bennies won't kick in until you need them, and that you won't even have to take the time to cast it.

I F you can spin a good story with the opposition provided by violence and political treachery, you may not need this chapter. Nevertheless, there's more here: rules and suggestions for terrible fates that often menace characters in RPGs.

Dreadful Things Happen

Burned At the Stake

Fire is an Area attack. A small, guttering fire provides a low Area Shock attack (1-5 dice) if you accidentally step in it or can't avoid running through it. An intense fire scalds with an Area Killing attack. The rating of the attack depends on just how hot and how large. If it's intense but small (like a scalding steam) Area 1-3 Killing is appropriate. If it's a raging holocaust that fills an entire room, Area 4-8 Killing.

Even a large, hot fire is unlikely to instantly kill somebody. Since the area effect is going to hit every round someone's in the fire, it's important for GMs to know how fast the characters can get through.

Poisoned by a Scorned Lover

While some are administered in exotic ways the most common methods for poisoning someone are through the mouth or through the skin.

Getting someone to swallow poison depends on how strongly the poison smells or tastes, but mixing it in particularly strong flavors (or force-feeding) can mitigate those problems.

Injected poisons take some time to absorb into the victim's body, so a sword painted with poison is more scary than practical. Unless you leave it buried in there, the free flowing blood of the wound is likely to wash the poison out. Consequently, when poison is added on a weapon that doesn't stay in the wound, the poison's Potency rating (explained below) drops by four.

Other weapons are designed to stick in the wound, and these can be poisoned without any loss of Potency. Knives and daggers are light enough that their own weight won't pull them out. Arrows and blowgun darts are ideal, as are harpoons. (Crossbow bolts are more likely to punch all the way through. They take the same Potency penalty as other weapons.)

Potency

Every poison has a Potency rating, a Major Effect and a Minor Effect. When a poison is administered, its Potency is rolled as a die pool. If a match comes up, both the Major and Minor effects occur. If no match comes up, only the Minor effect kicks in.

Even if a match comes up, prompt action can counteract the toxin. If a character realizes she's been poisoned, she can take an action and a Body+Vigor roll to shake it off. Alternately, she can try to use Knowledge+Healing (or she can have a healer try it on her). Each success on these rolls removes an effect. Some virulent poisons may place Difficulties on the Healing or Vigor rolls.

Example: Bunis eats a poisoned muffin. It's got Potency 5, so when he consumes it, the GM rolls 5d and gets a match. This means that Bunis gets both the Major effect and the Minor. The Minor effect is a deep sleep with nightmarish dreams. The Major effect is a coma that lasts for 1-5 days, deteriorating into death.

Bunis induces vomiting in an attempt to expel the poison, but his Body+Vigor roll produces no matches. A colleague makes a roll on Knowledge+Healing and (thanks to a Master Die) gets a pair. Bunis still experiences the Minor effect, but he's safe from the coma.

Had both Bunis and the healer gotten successes, he would have suffered no ill effects.

Poisoned by a Scorned Lover

If an exceptionally large dose is administered, the Potency may be rolled multiple times. However, these rolls are not combined.

Thrown Off a Cliff

For every five feet a character falls, he takes 1d in an Area attack, to a maximum of thirty dice. A character who takes a moment to dangle and drop in a controlled fashion can reduce the pool by 2d. This damage ignores mundane armor.

The type of damage done depends on the landing surface. If it's something yielding—water, deep mud, a snowbank after falling through many evergreen branches—the dice do Shock damage.

If it's an unforgiving surface, like soil or flat rock, the dice do Killing damage. Particularly vicious surfaces add more dice to the pool at the GM's discretion, though more than 10d is probably uncalled-for.

Falling Is Bad, But Is It Bad Enough?

The mortality rates for people who plummet thirty feet onto hard surfaces are pretty high in real life, whereas an unharmed REIGN character is going to have a better than 99% survival rate at that distance. This is intentional. If you want to have the game be extra-gritty, just amp up the damage. One easy way to do that is to have sets that turn up in the Area roll do an extra point of damage or two. On the other hand, if you want the game to be more like a kung-fu movie where people can jump from the tops of trees and hit the ground running, you can reduce the damage, both in type and in severity. As it is, the damage is set at about the level of an action movie: Implausible to sticklers, but most people are willing to suspend their disbelief that far. Besides, people have survived falls from airplanes without parachutes, so who's to say what's impossible?

Drowned

Most of the time, characters bathing or swimming for recreation don't need to bother rolling. Drowning should only threaten when it's dramatic.

When your character goes in water over his head, roll Body+Athletics. (Remember armor penalties: -2d if you're in Medium armor, no chance of success in Heavy.) For every die in a set, she can either move five feet in any direction (including up or down) in one round; or stay afloat without rolling for a minute. Every five rolls, she should make a Body+Endurance

Dreadful Things Happen

check. If she succeeds, nothing changes. With each Endurance failure, all future Athletics rolls to swim are at –1d, until she gets out of the water and catches her breath.

Difficulties are a good way to model other hassles of staying afloat, such as stormy weather, high seas, or people on shore trying to murder you. If you're hauling someone out of the water lifeguard-style, for example, that increases the Difficulty of your Athletics roll by 2 if they're small, 3 if they're normal-sized or larger.

Dying a Slow, Agonizing, Helpless, Meaningless Death

I don't recommend it.

Specifically, I don't recommend having starvation, thirst or exposure play a frequent and major role in your games. These threats can produce some tension, but only up to the point that the characters either extricate themselves or get rescued. Getting rescued is okay, especially if you want to introduce some new characters and give the PCs a reason to be friendly, but empty threats don't work. Your players have to believe you'll pull the trigger. Otherwise, they're accepting it as a plot contrivance.

Are there ways to use thirst and privation well in a game? Yes. They can raise the pressure by acting as a ticking clock. For instance, siege is tense: Siege without food is much moreso. Starvation on its own, though, is most likely just tedious.

If you're going to use these elements, make sure you think it through and satisfy yourself that it supports the players' fun. Realism at the cost of fun is a bad deal, when a little hand-waving allows players to get to the good stuff.

Starving to Death

With that in mind, the best way to model starvation is to let people go foodless for about a week without ill effects. Then, for every day of lean rations, give each character a point of Shock damage in the torso. Vigor rolls can cure this, as usual, so strong characters can survive indefinitely on moss, nuts, rotten fruit and grasshoppers. But after they've gone through their grace week, every day with no food gives a point of Killing damage to the torso. Even if they're making Vigor rolls to turn Killing damage into Shock, they're still accumulating a point of Shock every day.

Once they get some food, they can begin recovering. Just drop the daily attrition and their Vigor rolls can catch them up. If they don't, it represents some lingering illness.

Dying of Thirst

Dying of thirst works like starvation, but faster. Every day a character goes without any water at all, he loses a point of Body. Every day a character has to make due with very minimal water (say a pint, or a more for people working hard or in hot climates), she can make a static Body+Vigor roll. Any success keeps her from losing her Body Stat. (Thus, a very Vigorous individual can theoretically survive indefinitely on extremely lean water rations. That's fine.) Once Body hits zero, the character dies of thirst.

Recovering from thirst is easier than recovering from starvation. Once the character is getting sufficient water, the lost Body points return at the rate of one per day.

Exposure to Extremes of Temperature

Heat and cold work the same way: You lose a point of Body per day if you're without shelter or any way to regulate your body temperature. When Body hits zero, you die. If you're stark naked with no way to get cover, you lose a point of Body every hour if it's below freezing, and every two hours if it's punishing desert heat. Once you return to normal temperatures, the lost Body comes back at one point per day. (If you're dying of thirst, by the way, these losses are cumulative.)

Mauled By a Wild Animal

To help make crocodiles and boa constrictors scary again, I'm offering some guidelines on portraying wild things.

1) Animals don't fight to the death, unless it's your death. A wild boar isn't like an indoctrinated soldier. Unless you corner it or threaten its young, most animals turn tail after anything but light injuries. Predation is an efficiency game. That lion's looking for a meal, not a challenge.

2) Animals strike without warning. If that bear growls, it's not because it wants to kill you. It's because the animal is alarmed and hopes you slink away. Handled smartly, a lot of animals that can cause serious harm won't because they just want you to leave them be.

3) Animals hit the weak. Any time something goes in a herd and gets eaten, it's the slow ones who wind up as meals. A lone hunter, then, is going to drop on the guy at the end of the line, and group hunters are going to gang up on the character who looks most vulnerable.

4) Animals hate surprises. Most flee loud noises or bright lights. But if startled by pain, many animals that have horns, claws or poison spittle immediately lead with their strongest stuff and plenty of it.

Therefore, instead of sneaking up on an animal and fighting when it won't get out of the way, the typical REIGN encounter should involve a hungry animal trying to get food from the characters' supplies (or carcasses), stalking for a while, striking unexpectedly and (probably) fleeing when wounded. But by then the damage is often done, in the form of lost rations, dead followers or a savagely bitten forearm.

None of these rules have to apply to trained animals, except possibly the one about hating surprise. Even then, if the trainer is present or the rider is mounted, the will of the master may prevail. So the other interesting animal encounter is the one backed by the devious mind of humankind.

By and large, inhuman opponents break down into three categories.

First, there are unworthy animal attackers. These are managed just like the Unworthy Opponents described on page 125 of the Combat chapter. They have a Threat rating, they don't do fancy maneuvers, there may be some descriptive text to clarify particular actions or unique attacks, but by and large they're only dangerous in swarms.

Secondly, there are more significant animals. Their stat blocks look like this.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR [#]

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	[#]
BODY	7-9	[#]
RIGHT HINDLEG	5-6	[#]
LEFT HINDLEG	3-4	[#]
RIGHT FORELEG	2	[#]
LEFT FORELEG	1	[#]

The damage silhouette works just like with humans. Height determines where you hit, weapon determines damage.

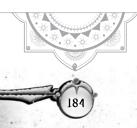| Body [#]	Coordination [#]	Sense [#]
Bite [#]	Claw [#]	Hearing [#]
Run [#]	Stealth [#]	Sight [#]
		Scrutinize [#]

Stats and Skills work just like they do for humans, though animals don't have Charm, Knowledge or Command abilities.

Trainability: This number is the Difficulty of teaching an animal a new trick. Each Command (or Charm) + Expert Animal Trainer (or whatever Skill a character is using to train an animal) roll represents a day's effort per point of Trainability, if the character is doing nothing else important. You spend all day training that beagle not to pee on the rug, you get fast results. If training is going on between other activities, you get to roll after a number of weeks equal to Trainability.

Some animals just can't be trained. In that case, this entry reads "not applicable."

Tricks: This is the maximum number of actions an animal can be trained to perform. (There's variance between individuals within the species, but generally only by 1-2 points in either direction.) Note

(Continued...)

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR [#] (CONTINUED)

that "don't attack people" is one trick, usually the first one dangerous animals must be taught. All wild animals also need to be taught "Don't run away from me." If you're going to ride a particular steed, "Carry a rider" is a trick too. So your warhorse already has three of its tricks taken with "Don't attack me," "Don't run away from me" and "Carry me on your back." If you want to train it to wear armor and kick for the head when you shout "Slay!" that's two more tricks.

Special: Any special rules that apply to this animal go here.

Movement: Its movement rate goes in here.

Attacking: A description of how it attacks and what damage it does. Many animals get to attack twice or more times per round. If that's the case, the animal rolls two separate pools. It's not a multiple action.

There are no naturally occurring animals in the third category, but a few overwhelming monsters in REIGN are handled with Company rules. Instead of wound boxes, they have Might: One lone warrior with a spear has as much chance of defeating a behemoth like this as he has of subduing an armed fortress all by himself. Some of these creatures are intelligent. Others are merely so vast they operate on a different scale than humanity.

UNWORTHY ANIMALS

Like human unworthies, the only thing an animal pack has going for it is numbers. Unlike human thugs, some of these are too dumb to run away before death.

WOLF PACK

Wolf packs typically run in numbers from five to fifteen, though a large pack (with a powerful alpha pair) might number as many as thirty. They've got Threat 2. If they're very hungry, they get Threat 3 from motivation. Their bites do Width Killing.

PIRANHAS

Piranhas are sharp-toothy fish legendary for skeletonizing prey in minutes. (As it happens, this is factually untrue.) In REIGN, of course, devouring swarms are far more possible. These fish roam in schools of 10-30 (though oceangoing schools might be as big as 60). They have Threat 1. Each bite does only a single point of Killing damage, but they're immune to Morale Attacks.

Stinging Insects

Bees, wasps, hornets, horrific hordes of army ants—these sorts of things rarely kill unless their victim is feeble, felled by some environmental danger, or allergic. (No PCs are allergic to bee stings). They have Threat 1, and a typical swarm is only 10-20 strong. That doesn't mean "fifteen bees." It's an abstraction. A grown man in armor can clobber about a tenth or a fifteenth of a swarm by swatting. They're immune to Morale Attacks, but there's a limit to their damage: They do only Shock damage, and can only do a maximum of 2 Shock to each location. They do ignore armor, however.

Primate Pack

Monkeys, gorillas and apes often operate in packs to bring down dinner or defend themselves. Carnivorous primates such as baboons tend to encircle their prey and attack from behind, darting in to bite the legs or buttocks so it can't get away. Then they just harass it until blood loss does its work.

These creatures have Threat 1-3 (monkeys at the low end, big critters at the high) and move in extended families numbering between 10 and 30. Their bites do a single point of Killing damage if they're small monkeys driven by hunger. Bigger primates do Width Killing or Width+1 Killing.

Meaningful Threats

Larger animals, or simply more cunning and capable specimens of pack species, are menacing in their own right.

Big Cats

Tigers should be towards the top of the Body scale, cheetahs are at the top speed, lynxes and pumas have the best Stealth. There is no real life big cat with maximums in all these Stats.
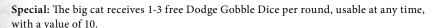
HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR THE BIG CAT

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	5
BODY	7-9	21
RIGHT HINDLEG	5-6	8
LEFT HINDLEG	3-4	8
RIGHT FORELEG	2	5
LEFT FORELEG	1	5

Body 3-6	**Coordination 4-5**	**Sense 4-5**
Bite 2-3	Claw MD	Hearing MD
Run 1-3		Sight 2-4
		Scrutinize 3-4

Trainability: 8
Tricks: 3

Special: The big cat receives 1-3 free Dodge Gobble Dice per round, usable at any time, with a value of 10.

Movement: Can move about 20-40 feet a second and still attack. Run rolls add 10 feet per point of Width.

Attacking: The cat can make two claw attacks per round, doing Width +1 Killing, or one claw attack and one bite. The bite does Width +2 Killing

ALPHA WOLF (OR TRAINED DOG)

An exceptionally strong or cunning wolf is modeled with these stats. These can also be used for trained dogs.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR WOLF OR DOG

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	3
BODY	7-9	6
RIGHT HINDLEG	5-6	4
LEFT HINDLEG	3-4	4
RIGHT FORELEG	2	3
LEFT FORELEG	1	3

Body 3-4	Coordination 2-3	Sense 4-5
Bite 1-2	Dodge 2-4	Hearing 2-3
Run 3-4		Sight 1-3
		Scrutinize +MD

Trainability: 3 (1-2 for a dog)
Tricks: 5 (7-10 for a dog)
Special: --
Movement: 20' per round. Each die in a Run set adds 5' to their movement rate.
Attacking: A wolf's bite does Width Killing.

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Elephant or Woolly Mammoth

These huge herbivores are generally even tempered, which would be more reassuring if they couldn't calmly trample a human to paste. Usually pachyderms move in family packs of 3-12, but some old males get driven out and go rogue. Aged solitary males tend to be extremely foul tempered.

The damage silhouette is unusual. Some numbers are assigned to two different locations. This represents how hard it is to hit an elephant's head from the rear, or one of its right feet from the left side. If two locations share a number, apply damage to the location closest to the character. That is, if your character is standing in front of it and rolls a 2x3 hit, it hits the right foreleg and not the left hindleg. If it's standing by the tail and rolls a 2x10, the damage goes into the torso instead of the head.

All locations on an elephant or mammoth have Armor 1, unless its rider has armored the creature, in which case it's AR 2-3 and tough luck for you.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR ELEPHANT OR MAMMOTH

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	9-10	8-10
BACK	9-10	0—damage goes into Body
BODY	5-8	30-50
RIGHT FORELEG	3-4	10-15
LEFT HINDLEG	3-4	10-15
LEFT FORELEG	1-2	10-15
RIGHT HINDLEG	1-2	10-15

Body 7	**Coordination 1-2**	**Sense 2**
Fight 0-3	Grapple 4	Hearing 2
Run 1		Sight 2

Scrutinize: 3
Trainability: 1-3
Tricks: 6-8

Special: Elephants can bash through walls, push over trees and tear apart fortifications with their trunks.

When an elephant rears and trumpets, it's a Morale Attack 4, or Morale Attack 10 against people who've never seen one before. It can only do this once per combat.

Movement: 10-15' per round, but only 5' per round the first round it starts moving. It can't corner very well, either.

Attacking: The elephant or mammoth has three major attacks. It can use any one of these once per round.

First, it can gore or bash with its tusks as a Body+Fight roll. This does Width+3 Shock and leaves the target downed.

It can grab with its trunk, which is a Grapple roll that does Width Shock the first round. The next round, the character must roll to escape against its Body+Fight or take 3 Shock to the torso automatically. Furthermore, the elephant may choose to use one grappled person as a club. This is a Body+Fight roll. If it hits, the target on the ground takes Width+1 Shock, while the fellow being grappled takes an Area 4 Shock attack.

Finally, it can trample, which is a Slow 1 attack made with Body+Fight. It does Width+2 Killing, waste Shock, and leaves its target downed.

Rhino

The rhinoceros is a tough, fierce animal that subsists on vegetation. They hate fire, like most animals, but unlike most animals their response is to charge the fire and trample it out.

Rhinos have AR 1 at all locations except for the head, which has AR 2.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR RHINO

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	6
BODY	7-9	20
RIGHT HINDLEG	5-6	9
LEFT HINDLEG	3-4	9
RIGHT FORELEG	2	9
LEFT FORELEG	1	9

Body 6	**Coordination 3**	**Sense 3**
Fight 2		Hearing 3
Run 2		Sight 0

Scrutinize: 2
Trainability: not applicable
Tricks: 0
Special: --

Movement: The rhino can accelerate or decelerate 10' per round to a maximum speed of thirty miles an hour (call it 130' per round). Surprisingly, they corner well.

Attacking: Once per round a rhinoceros can gore with its horn, using a Body+Fight pool. It does Width+1 Killing. It can also perform a modified charge. When a rhino charges, it rolls its Body+Run as a separate pool from its Body+Fight pool. If it takes a few rounds to gather momentum, it can make a Run roll each round and use the Widest result for its charge bonus. (The charge bonuses are listed below for quick reference.)

Run Roll Width	Bonus
2	Extra point of Killing
3	+2 Shock, +1 Killing
4+	+3 Shock, +2 Killing

Shark

These predators are found from the deep ocean to shallow bays. Sharks vary greatly in size, from tiny bioluminescent deep ocean sharks the length of your forearm to the great whites. They are all fierce and hungry, all the time. As a general rule, the farther from shore you are, the bigger and stronger the shark. Smaller sharks have less Body. Smaller sharks also have smaller Bite Skills, even though that's been listed as a Coordination trait.

Sharks have AR 1 at all locations.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR SHARK

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	9-10	2-6
BODY	5-8	5-20
TAIL	1-4	5-20

Body 1-8	**Coordination 3**	**Sense 3**
Ram 0	Bite 3-6	Hearing 1
Swim 4		Sight 2
Vigor 2		Scrutinize 5

Trainability: not applicable
Tricks: 0

Special: Sharks can use the Scrutinize Skill to track prey through the water, even in silent darkness, for up to a hundred yards. If the prey has been blooded, they can scent it for miles.

Movement: 20'

Attacking: The bite of the shark does Width+1 Killing. Exceptionally large specimens may do Width+2. Sharks can also ram to do Width in Shock. This is usually used to batter holes in boats when they can't get purchase with their jaws.

Viper

A 'viper' is any of the class of snakes whose poison attacks by instantly stopping the heart. Cobras are the biggest and deadliest of the class. Generally, the bigger the snake is, the more wound boxes and Body it has. The smaller it is, the greater its usual Stealth, though the brightly-colored coral snake is an exception to this guideline.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR VIPER

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	1-2
BODY	1-9	1-12

Body 1-3	Coordination 3-6	Sense 2
	Bite 2-4	Hearing 1
	Stealth 0-2	Sight 2

Scrutinize: 3
Trainability: not applicable
Tricks: 0

Special: When vipers bite, they drip viper venom in the wound. This toxin is described below.

Movement: 10-15'

Attacking: The bite of a viper usually only does a point of Shock. The danger is not from the size of the teeth or the strength of the jaws, but the intensity of the venom.

VIPER TOXIN

Description: It acts in seconds and, if successful, paralyzes both your heart and lungs. Any questions?

Potency: 4-9, depending on the snake's age and how long it maintains its bite.

Major Effect: Instant death.

Minor Effect: The character's heart hammers and his limbs shake violently for about five or six minutes. During this time, no actions can be taken.

Special: Like most snakes, cobra fangs aren't long enough to penetrate even leather, so any armor rating on a limb protects. Furthermore, while their venom is sophisticated, its delivery system is not: They have to hang on and let the poison drip into the wound. Thus, even a mature snake's poison may take a –1 or –2 penalty to its Potency if you pull it off the wound right away. Killing it may or may not dislodge the head: If it doesn't, the poison keeps right on drip-drip-dripping away.

RATTLESNAKE

Rattlers are found in plains and deserts. Every time they shed their skin, they leave a ring of dried flesh at the end of the tail, forming the distinctive rattle. Before striking in defense, they shake the tail and give a chance to step back. When they're attacking prey, they give no warning.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR RATTLESNAKE

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	1-2
BODY	1-9	2-8

Body 2	**Coordination 3**	**Sense 3**
	Bite 2-6	Hearing 1
	Stealth 3	Sight 2

Scrutinize: 3
Trainability: not applicable
Tricks: 0
Special: This snake's rattle produces a Morale Attack 2.
Movement: 10-15'
Attacking: The bite does Width Shock. Its poison is described below.

RATTLESNAKE VENOM

Description: Rattlesnake toxins attack the heart and disrupt the regulated functioning of the body. They're nasty, but slow.

Potency: 6-8

Major Effect: The character loses a point of Body every hour until successfully treated. If her Body score hits zero, she dies.

Minor Effect: The character feels dizzy, nauseous and gets terrible stomach cramps. All actions are at a –2d penalty for a full day.

Special: Rattlesnakes have teeth like syringes, so when they bite you, special muscles constrict and push the poison in, so any bite yields a full dose. Any form of armor, even AR 1, is sufficient to keep the bite out, however.

Horse

Horses vary greatly in size and speed. Some have been bred for one trait, some for another. Generally, you can have one, or both, or a nice balance, but it's a rare (and potentially very pricey) animal that's towards the top of both Body and Run.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR HORSE

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	4-5
BODY	7-9	13-17
RIGHT FORELEG	6	4-6
LEFT FORELEG	5	4-6
RIGHT HINDLEG	3-4	5-7
LEFT HINDLEG	1-2	5-7

Body 5-7	**Coordination 3**	**Sense 2**
Bite 0	Kick 1-5	Hearing 2-3
Run 3-6	Dodge 0-1	Sight 2
Athletics 2-4		Scrutinize 2

Trainability: 2-4

Tricks: 3-9

Special: --

Movement: 40-50' Normal horses can increase that by 5' per round for every point of Width in a Run roll, up to double their normal movement. Particularly swift horses can accelerate by 10' per round and are highly prized.

Attacking: The horse's bite does Width Shock, while a kick does Width Killing for horses with Body 5, with an extra point of damage for every point of Body above 6. (Thus a horse with Body 7 does Width+1 damage with a kick.)

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Boa Constrictor

The boa constrictor and the python are the really big, really strong snakes. They drape themselves in jungle trees, wait for prey, then drop on them and grapple. Once the victim stops struggling, they eat it whole, lie there for a few days with a huge lump in their bellies, eventually pass the bones and then climb a tree to wait for the next meal. These critters can get to be twenty feet long. They're neither fast nor poisonous. They don't need to be.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR BOA CONSTRICTOR

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	4
BODY	1-9	10-20

Body 3-6	Coordination 2	Sense 2
Constrict 4-5	Stealth MD	Hearing 2
		Sight 1
		Scrutinize MD

Trainability: not applicable
Tricks: 0
Special: Constricting snakes can use Scrutinize to detect if someone is passing beneath them.
Movement: 5-10'

Attacking: The snake makes a Body+Constrict roll to drop on its prey and get a good purchase. If the roll is a success, the target is pinned. While the target is pinned, the snake can roll its Body+Constrict pool every round as an Area Shock attack. If the victim is dressed in flexible armor (chain or leather, for example) this attack ignores the AR rating.

Gorilla, Orangutan or Baboon

As with wolves, the typical primate roams in a pack. But most packs have an alpha calling the shots. Here's how you stat up the silverback.

HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR PRIMATES

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	10	4
BODY	7-9	12
RIGHT ARM	5-6	6
LEFT ARM	3-4	6
RIGHT LEG	2	6
LEFT LEG	1	6

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Body 4-6	Coordination 3-5	Sense 3
Fight 3	Dodge ED	Hearing 2
Athletics 3	Climb 2-6	Sight 3
Run 1		Scrutinize 2

Trainability: 1-3
Tricks: 6-10
Special: --
Movement: 15'

Attacking: Gorillas strike with their fists for Width+1 Shock or they can bite for Width+1 Killing

Crocodile or Alligator

These beasts tend to lie in the mud or drift in the water, just eyes and nostrils over the surface, acting like floating logs until something edible comes into range. Then there's a burst of movement. The smaller caiman species are only 2-3 feet long, but crocodiles can get as long as 30. Adjust Body and wound boxes appropriately, with a standard six-foot alligator at Body 5 and 15 torso boxes.

Gators and crocs have AR 1 at all locations.

[[HIT LOCATIONS AND BOXES FOR CROCODILE

LOCATION	ROLL HEIGHT	# OF WOUND BOXES
HEAD	9-10	3-6
BODY	5-8	5-30
RIGHT HINDLEG	4	3-5
LEFT HINDLEG	3	3-5
RIGHT FORELEG	2	3-5
LEFT FORELEG	1	3-5

Body 2-7	Coordination 3	Sense 3
Fight MD	Stealth MD	Hearing 2
Swim 4		Sight 2
		Scrutinize 2

Trainability: not applicable
Tricks: 0
Special: These creatures can only use their Stealth MD in their native environment.
Movement: 20'

Attacking: If you're in front, it bites doing Width+1 Killing damage. If you're in back, it smacks with its tail, doing Width in Shock.

For the first ransom after REIGN Enchiridion, I've got a mini-setting named "The Kingdom of Nain." It's a fantasy setting distinct from Heluso and Milonda. For one thing, it has traditional astronomy and geography. More important, it's influenced by J.K. Rowling and Fritz Leiber instead of Robert Silverberg or China Miéville.

One of REIGN's fans suggested doing One Roll Monsters as a bonus for the ransom on REIGN Enchiridion, and I immediately realized how perfect the idea was for Nain, a kingdom where monsters are supernatural and often symbolic (not just strange animals, as on Heluso or Milonda). The monsters milled out of these charts, then, are more likely to fit traditional mythology than the pseudo-biology of Milonda. But they're vague: With enough imagination and descriptive text, they probably fit anywhere.

A nice side effect of the charts is that a pile of puzzle-piece monstrous attributes makes it easy to sum up a creature simply by giving the numbers in its roll. Like monstrous DNA, I don't have to publish a long description for a Nainian unicorn. I can just give the roll code 2x1, 2x4, 3, 10 and some short text to explain the details.

As with REIGN's many, many one-roll tools, this one is meant to inspire and not to constrain. The more dice you roll, the tougher and nastier the monster is. (Feel free to set some dice to ensure results you want.) But just copying a set of attacks and defenses from the lists misses the point. That's just the framework, the blank canvas on which you can draw the details that make a creature interesting even before (or after) fighting it.

The Foundation, and Rolling

All monsters start out with the following traits, even before any dice are rolled.

They have a normal human wound silhouette. If the monster is shaped like a horse or a lizard, it still has four Wound Boxes in the head at location 10, ten Wound Boxes in a torso at 7-8, and so on.

It has a Fight pool of 4d and its attacks do Width in Shock damage.

It has 2d in Body, Coordination and Sense if necessary.

Rolling

For a weak monster that could slow down a few starting magic students, roll 2d. For a serious threat to several adolescents, or to one well-trained fighter, roll 5d. Want something terrifying? Sky's the limit. Ten dice, fifteen… some Nainian dragons have twenty.

Once you've made your roll, sort them into sets and isolate the waste dice. The more dice you roll, the greater the possibility of getting a set Wider than 5x. If that happens, just re-roll until they're gone.

Sets

Consult the charts for your results. Each includes the previous levels, so if you roll 4x3, your monster doesn't just get AR1 over its whole body. It gets that, plus another AR2 everywhere (the 2x3 result) and an additional AR2 on its head (the 3x3 result).

x1: Natural Weapons.

Does your creature have talons, fangs, antlers or something more exotic?

2x1   Damage from Fight attacks is Width in Shock and Killing. Fight pool +2d.
3x1   Poisonous bite or sting. The poison is Potency 4. The Minor effect is -1 to Body for a day.
      The Major effect is a point of Shock damage to every location.
4x1   +1d Fight. Its attacks ignore a point of armor.
5x1   +1d Fight. Its damage increases by +1SK.

x2: Ranged Attacks

Does it spit acid? Swallow stones and expel them with great force? Magically animate nearby trees to attack?

2x2   It has 4d in a ranged attack pool, range equal to a longbow, and it does
      Width in Shock damage.
3x2   The ranged attack also does Width in Killing.
4x2   +2d to ranged attack pool.
5x2   +1d to ranged attack pool, does an additional +1SK.

x3: Armor

What makes it so tough? An affinity to the earth, making its flesh stone hard when struck, but swift and supple when it strikes? Thick, matted fur? Does it craft elaborate leather armor made from human skin?

2x3   +2 AR on all locations.
3x3   +2 AR to location 10.
4x3   +1 AR to all locations.
5x3   +2 AR to all locations for defense against magic only.

x4: Size/Toughness

Mechanically, this is just extra wound boxes, but does that mean it's really big? Or is it just dense like lead and a blow that would behead a man merely dents it?

2x4   +1 Wound Box on every location, +1d to Fight pool.
3x4   +1 Wound Box on every location.
4x4   +1 Wound Box on every location.
5x4   +1 Wound Box on every location.

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x5: FEAR

Monsters are scary, pretty much by definition, and some augment their native terror with magical enhancement. What about the creature is so frightening? Its roar? Its hideous face? The icy chill of death that all mortals feel when its gaze falls upon them?

2x5	The creature produces a Morale Attack 6 every round. This is in addition to its other actions, it requires no roll, and it doesn't penalize its other rolls.
3x5	The creature has a 4d Terrorize pool. If it rolls a set with it, all who perceive the terrifying act (be it a sound, a look, or some other threat) lose a die from the Widest set they have.
4x5	Terrorize pool gets +1d. In addition to causing all around it to quail, it can focus on one specific target. That target takes a penalty to his next attack on the creature, equal to the Width of the creature's Terrorize set. This occurs whether the victim attacks the next round or after ten years of having nightmares about it.
5x5	Terrorize pool gets +1d. In addition to the 4x5 effect, if its Terrorize roll beats a Difficulty of 6 and the target doesn't counterspell, he's turned to stone. Magic can restore him exactly as he was before petrification, if the statue is undamaged, but it requires a lengthy ritual.

x6: WINGS AND FLIGHT

Just what wings does it have? Flame-wreathed angel pinions? Leathery ones like a bat? Transparent insect wings? What tactics does it use its flight for?

2x6	Locations 4 and 5 each become wing locations with 3 Wound Boxes each. The creature can automatically fly 15' per round and has a 4d Flight pool. With a Flight success it can perform a difficult maneuver or increase its speed by 5' per point of Width.
3x6	Its base flight speed increases by 10'/round and it gets +1d to its Flight pool.
4x6	It gets two more Wound Boxes on each wing and +1d to its Flight pool.
5x6	+1d Flight, speed increases by 5'/round, each wing gets another Wound Box.

x7: SUPERNUMERARY HEAD(S)

The creature has one or two extra heads. Are they identical to its primary head, or are they different altogether? How do the heads interact with its other abilities?

2x7	Location 9 becomes a secondary head with four Wound Boxes. As long as the creature has a Wound Box in one head and in its torso with no Killing damage, it's still alive, even if the other head is completely severed. It is not unconscious until both heads are full of Shock.
3x7	The secondary head gets +1 AR and another Wound Box.
4x7	Location 8 becomes a third head with two Wound Boxes. As long as it has an unshocked Wound Box in any head, it can stay awake. As long as it has a box without Killing damage in one head and in its torso, it survives.
5x7	The third head gains a 4d Bite pool that does Width in Shock damage. This is entirely separate from its Fight pool and is rolled separately.

Chapter Seven

x8: Flame Affinity

You can change this to "Frost Affinity" or "Acidic" or any other similar effect you wish. Perhaps it constantly gives birth to horrid, skittering offspring and it is these that produce the listed effects.

2x8   It gains +2 AR against fire at all locations. Anyone who gets within ten feet of it suffers an Area 1 Killing Attack.

3x8   It produces a Morale Attack 3 every round without a roll. If it already produces a Morale Attack from another result, that Morale Attack rating increases by 3.

4x8   It can create an Area 2 Killing attack on everyone within fifty feet, but this attack is Slow 1. This does not penalize or interfere with any Fight or other attacks.

5x8   Its Area attack rises to Area 3 Killing and it can do it every round.

x9: Speed and Cunning

What gives it these extra attacks? Is it just blindingly swift? Does it have swarms of tentacles, each semi-independent? Is it all down to craftiness?

2x9:   The creature gains +1d+MD to its Stealth and Sight pools.

3x9   It can attack with its full Fight pool twice per round.

4x9   Its attacks with full Fight pool are now thrice per round.

5x9   It gains +2d to Stealth and +1d+MD in Scrutinize. Now it stalks is prey…

x10: Evil

In Nain, there is the everyday evil of cruel choices and selfish weakness, but there is also supernatural Evil—a force of chaos and destruction that revels in sadism and seeks to subsume all that is kind and good and beautiful. Creatures with x10 sets are infected with supernatural Evil.

2x10   By taking an action and doing nothing else, it can strike an individual within its sight with blasphemous terror. This replaces the target's Craving (if it has one) with a temporary Craving to get as far from the creature as possible. (People without Cravings are unaffected.) This lasts until the person can no longer see, hear or otherwise perceive the creature.

3x10   All spells cast against the creature are at +5 Difficulty.

4x10   It produces a Morale Attack 5 every round without a roll. If it already produces a Morale Attack from another result, that Morale Attack rating increases by 5. However, none of its Morale Attacks affect creatures or persons already dedicated to the principles of Evil.

5x10   By taking an action and doing nothing else, it can inflict a stifling sense of despair on one individual within sight. As long as that person can perceive the creature, his Duty has no effect.

Waste Dice

The Waste Dice that turned up outside of sets indicate unique factors about the creature.

Roll	Effect
1.	Its natural weapons do Width in Shock and Killing. Are these fangs, thorns, razor scales or does its touch simply cause unnatural aging and disease?
2.	It spits venom or some other noxious substance. This attack has Potency 2 and its Minor effect is an Area 4 Killing attack on one target. The Major effect is that the target loses a point of Body per hour until death at Body 0, or until healed. Once the Major effect is stopped, Body returns naturally at the rate of one point per day.
3.	It gains +1 AR to all locations.
4.	It gains an extra Wound Box at every location.
5.	It can inflict an Area 3 Shock attack on people in a ten-foot diameter ring within a hundred paces. What is this? A noxious scent, an eldritch blast, deceptively sweet poison?
6.	The creature can swim 20' per round and breathe easily underwater.
7.	It has a deadly tail. Location 7 becomes a separate location with 3 Wound Boxes. If the target is standing behind the creature, its Fight attacks do an extra point of Shock and Killing damage.
8.	Anyone who successfully attacks the creature with a hand to hand or magical attack takes an Area 1 Killing attack. Is this a mystic curse? Does its flesh roil with unearthly cold that chills the blood of all who touch it, whether they use body or will?
9.	The creature has a specific vulnerability, and other than that it's hard to harm. (What's the vulnerability? Silver? Yew wood? Weapons anointed with phoenix blood or covered over and over with a particular rune?) All Killing damage that originates from sources that don't incorporate the vulnerability becomes Shock. But any source that uses the vulnerability can ignore all the creature's armor (if any).
10.	The creature is infused with supernatural Good. It seeks to defend beauty, purity and innocence. It can give itself or another person a +MD bonus to his next Vigor roll at will. (This requires an action in which it does nothing else.)

Wanting something fairly nasty, I roll 7d and get 3x1, 2, 5, 6, 9.

3x1 indicates that the thing does WSK with its 6d Fight pool and has poison. (That's Potency 4 with -1 to Body as the Minor and a point of Shock to every location for the Major.) So whatever this is, it's probably a predator with some pointy bits. On to the waste dice.

2 gives it more poison. This attack has Potency 2 and its Minor effect is an Area 4 Killing attack on one target. The Major effect is that the target loses a point of Body per hour until death at Body 0. This sounds kind of like the first poison, so it's probably a different application of the same venom. Hm…

That loose 5 gives it an Area 3 Shock attack on people in a ten-foot diameter ring within a hundred paces. Oh you know this is just more toxin, right?

The loose 6 puts it underwater, and that's good because it gives me some ideas about how it's propagating its venom.

9 means it has some kind of kryptonite action going on. I was just thinking this thing was all offense and no defense, and then the dice read my mind.

This thing lives in lakes and rivers, it has a long neck with rows of gills down the sides. Its skinny legs let it move around on land, but it has a big fan-shaped tail that propels it smoothly through the water.

Its poison glands are in its wide, triangular head, so that when it bites you you get a dose right at the wound site and then it's in your blood, causing weakness and pain. (That's our 3x1.) Or it can spit a concentrated stream at an individual from a good twenty paces. If that hits you, it corrodes your skin and the fumes can rot out your lungs, slowly weakening and eventually killing you. (Loose 2.) Finally, it can take a huge mouthful of water, mix that with poison, and blow it out through its gills while shaking its head vigorously, gassing everyone nearby with dilute venom. (Loose 5.)

On Heluso, I'd make its vulnerability something like cobalt from the local mines. PCs can either make Lore rolls to recognize the "Humped Lake Beast" of legend, or make nice with the natives to hear the stories, or just take the course of most resistance and punch it with shock until it dies.

For Nain, I'd make this a sort of elemental water nasty. The weakness is for fire, meaning the PCs have to summon fire bolts to strike it, or heat up their spear-tips, or use flaming arrows. A bit tricky near a lake, where it can always dive down for safety...

For the bold and the cunning, there are no end of rewards available to restore flagging spirits and provide a haven of bliss between episodes of terror and rage.

Splendid Things Occur

Love Blossoms

I can speak only from my own experience, but love is the penultimate reward of the human experience. (Hi, Martha!) Finding another person you can implicitly trust, who illuminates every facet of your life with joy, someone who is interesting and fun and lively and who inspires you to try harder and be better… what could exceed that? Yet most games give more attention to magic swords than these bonds of affection. (To be honest, this game is unlikely to be an exception.)

Why is this? Probably because, while genuine and uncomplicated love is great in real life, it's boring in a game. Here's why.

It's bad for the group. A romantic subplot between a PC and a GMC can leave the other PCs twiddling their thumbs. They can get involved by helping out like Cyrano, or they can try to sabotage the burgeoning romance. In the first instance, if they succeed you either have a player acting deeply content (which raises the question of why he'd continue a risky lifestyle) or he's ignoring his inamorata, so why bother? In the second instance, it can end up funny or tragic or with the characters despising one another, all of which are acceptable but certainly aren't "uncomplicated love." The possible outcomes, then, are: The other players are bored; The other PCs help de-motivate the lover; The other PCs get involved and there's no character development whatever; The other PCs attempt to thwart it and things get interesting, but at the risk of the group disintegrating.

Short version? Yoko breaks up the band.

It's against type. The heroes of great fantasy fiction are generally lone wolf types. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser probably changed sex partners more often than socks. Elric had an early tragic thwarting, while Aragorn had a little bit of love triangle and a little bit of star crossing going on. That worked fine as a minor subplot but, again, it was hardly "uncomplicated."

Many players hate it. Many players don't want their characters to pick flowers and write poetry and discuss their feelings. Their characters might marry for political advantage but, as in real life, the marriage of convenience is likely to be trotted out only for company.

Sometimes playing through a romance scene, even an "I'ma let'cha down easy 'cause I'm a rambling man an' no good for you" scenario, is uncomfortable between PC and GM, regardless of their genders. Likewise interactions between PCs where one player is really interested and one is really really not. If it's all in fun, that's cool. Understand that for many players, it's neither fun nor cool.

If a player doesn't want romance, trying to stab him in the back with it is going to end badly. GMs can certainly leave it out as a lure. Just be prepared for players to ignore it.

Am I saying that romance has no place in games? Oh no. I'm saying uncomplicated and genuine love has no place. Complicated and treacherous love can be loads of fun, even for those players who are mainly in it for the crown-seizing or heretic chastising.

Forbidden Love

Forbidden love allows you to tempt the PC with the promise of happiness that is simultaneously the threat of misery. It can define a character's attitude towards honor in conflict with desire, and that's a powerful story. But if it's something a player wants to set aside, he's got the easy out ("You're… very nice. But I've taken a sacred vow") that even makes him look good. If he wants to have angst and chew scenery, he now has an excuse

to do as much or as little as he wants (within the bounds of the other players' enjoyment). If he wants to create plot, he can but he doesn't have to.

On the other hand, if a PC bites on the forbidden love bait, you've got a fine story hook. The lover can become false or star-crossed pretty easily, in addition to all the issues that come up with keeping the affair secret.

Star-Crossed Love

A star-crossed romance can be forbidden, but doesn't have to be. It's one where there are physical or magical or political barriers to the relationship.

The plot potential of star-crossed affection is obvious because issues exist on the level of plot. If your sweetheart gets kidnapped by pirates, it's time to get a ship. If your fiancé is dying and the only man who can cure her is a prisoner miles away... the travel plans are clear, aren't they? Far from easy, but they're obvious.

A different form of star-crossing is the love triangle. Now, it's an emotional and character issue instead of a plot issue. (If it doesn't also have plot impact. Jealousy drives people to some crazy behavior.) Some players really groove on her character being the ethical paragon who sacrifices her own happiness because she knows she'll only bring trouble to her beloved. Even if she's not going to make that choice, she could get her heart broken when he chooses the other woman (though, to be fair, you might want to assume that he picks the PC by default and only goes to the GMC rival due to the choices of PCs. That could be the lover screwing up, by choosing to take a perilous mission after he begs him not to. Or it could be that the other PCs sabotage it for her own good.)

The wickedest love triangle is between PCs. If your players can keep it all in fun—great. If not, you may want to let it stew a session or two before detouring it to tragedy.

The problem with a star-crossed love is, eventually the GM has to fish or cut bait. If you endlessly dangle the romance just out of reach, eventually the players get tired. Endlessly striving for something when there's no sign they'll ever be permitted to attain it is not heroic. It's just exhausting

No, if you establish a star-crossed romance, you have to permit the characters to resolve it. Then you can give the PCs a break, some emotional bliss (possibly glossed over in downtime, or possibly as a subplot while you focus on other PCs) and either settle the lover/husband/concubine into a position where he doesn't get in the way... or you transition to having the relationship get complicated again, by becoming false, tragic, forbidden, or star-crossed once more.

False Love

For long-term play, this may be the best arrangement. Either the PC is lying to and using someone for gain or gratification, or the PC is being used.

In the first case, you can get characterization out of it—how does the PC handle deceiving in order to get sex or money or whatever? If she's okay with it (even delighted) you can move to plot repercussions when the love becomes star-crossed. Alternately, the sucker might get wise, and suddenly all the advantages the PC enjoyed are not only cut off, but turned against him. Then again, what if some competition steps in? What if the

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character knows that he doesn't really love her, while his rival genuinely does? Yes, he was kind of a swine before, but is he willing to raise the swine ante? (If you go this route, be ready for the answer "Hell yeah!")

Or, the PC may be the naïve tool instead of the deceptive craftsman. You can put a lover in play who says and does all the right things while secretly spying on behalf of the characters' most venomous rival. (If the lover is also sexually involved with said rival, it just cranks in the betrayal that much deeper.) In this case, you (as GM) are obligated to give the PCs an opportunity to resolve the betrayal. Maybe the lover has a chance to kill her despite her pleas, Othello-style. Maybe he can't bring himself to do it, despite her treacherous cupidity, and it falls to one of the other PCs to bring the hammer down. Maybe his forgiveness shows her the error of her ways, she realizes that the venomous rival was just using her and that her true loyalty should always have been to the PC. Is it too late? Will she betray again? How much damage did she do to the Company and can she undo it by becoming a double agent? All these plots arise from discovering the betrayal.

The final type of false love is barely a plot or character issue at all: It's the loveless marriage where both partners go in clear-eyed, pursuing political or financial advantage. It's quite possible to establish a marriage like this to shield a character from future romance plots, if the player wishes. Spend the XP, take some combination of Ally or Wealth Advantages and get on with the non-erotic focus. A GM may offer forbidden loves later (such as that handsome warrior whose dash and courage only highlight the qualities your older, plodding statesman husband lacks) but as always, it's up to the player to get involved or walk away. Either way tells something important about the character's identity and priorities.

TRAGIC LOVE

On the other hand, players who want a reason to turn down romance without sacrificing angst-ridden speeches may opt for tragedy. (If you've never made an in-character, angst-ridden speech—give it a try! It's surprisingly satisfying. Just know when to quit.)

A tragic love is one in which your lover dies (or is driven incurably insane, or is exiled or otherwise becomes permanently unavailable). There's no "happily ever after" here. It's possible and permissible to build this heartbreak into a character's backstory—like the loveless marriage of convenience, it provides a reason for a character to pass up erotic entanglements.

But if the tragedy occurs during play, it affect the character a lot more. Especially if the disaster plays out in full view the rest of the group. If you're going to do it that way, it's best to start out as a simple case of star-crossing, with tragedy as the consequence for character choices. A predetermined sad ending is just as unsatisfying (and infuriating) as having a character shoehorned into a relationship that the player, doesn't want. The likelihood of crushed hopes is something individual GMs have to gauge, ranging from "really probable unless the PCs do everything right" (if the relationship threatens great disruption—like when PCs are rivals and it's stopped being fun) to "only going to happen if they totally drop the ball" (which is a better choice if the players are okay with a character getting married, and the spouse provides lots of plot possibility).

Don't shortchange the character who just lost his One True Love. On the other hand, don't drag things out when the other players are bored. A reflective scene during the funeral and some questions about how the character plans on dealing with grief may be all you need.

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REIGN has two categories for enchanted objects. There are charms—little knick-knacks that have a minor function or only operate once. These can be purchased with Wealth. Then there are artifacts—items that have powerful effects, or which repeat their effects over and over. These are scarce, valuable, and can be bought only with Treasure.

To determine the cash cost of an item, find a spell that the item duplicates. If the item's a charm, it costs Wealth equal to the spell's Intensity, with a minimum cost of 1. If the item does the effect over and over, it costs Treasure equal to the spell's Intensity.

If your players are wondering how to get Treasure sufficient to buy an artifact that duplicates a spell of Intensity 7+, they can't. Items that powerful are beyond the purview of general rules like this. If you, as GM decide they're going to touch on your campaign, they're unique. Anyone who has one won't sell it. (See the "Magic Items and Social Order" header, below.)

Example: A character is given a magic stick that changes the weather. Basically, it allows a non-spellcaster to cast the spell Weather Change (page 266 in the main REIGN book) one time. It's an Intensity 4 spell. The stick costs Wealth 4.

When used, items operate exactly as if they were cast by the sorcerer who created them. This means they can fail, and it means they don't just click into action, unless the spell is an instant spell.

Example: A sorcerer whose pool was 3+MD with the Weather Change spell created the magic stick. When cast, the character spends nine hours using the stick—in this case, reading from a lengthy text that came with it, speaking the same words the caster would have, even though the stick-buyer doesn't need to understand them or gather the magic personally. Then the GM rolls the creator's pool. In this case, she gets 1,2,2 and makes the MD another 2. Unfortunately, the Difficulty of an Intensity 4 spell is 4, so even with an MD the item has failed.

One advantage that magic items of either type have are that the user doesn't need to be attuned. In fact, some sorcerers permanently attuned to one style of magic rely on items from another style to get effects they can't produce themselves.

Particular spells are used to make magic items, and they're not as readily taught as other spells. Most spells, with the exception of First Intensity cantrips, are guarded. Spells that create permanently enchanted artifacts are tightly guarded.

Creating a charm requires a number of days equal to its Intensity, working on it a number of hours per day equal to its Intensity. Thus, the fellow making charms for a First Intensity cantrip can spend five hours in the course of one day and make five petals. To create charms that cast a Third Intensity spell he could spend three hours a day for three days and make one. Or nine hours a day for three days and make three.

For artifacts, it's a number of months. In both these cases, that's in addition to the casting time for the spells themselves. No artisan can work on more than one artifact at a time.

AVAILABILITY

The costs for magic items are a rough outline. At no time is there any guarantee that any magic object, even a trinket that lets you cast a cantrip one time (Wealth 1 to purchase) is available where the PCs are. The cheaper it is, the easier it is to create, and the more likely you

are to find one. You might find a First Intensity charm for sale even in a small village… if it's for a spell that's common in the area. In a large city, there might be one or two artifacts on the market at any given time. Or three, if the city's militia recently plundered a temple. Or none.

Varying this availability gives the setting an important element of its flavor. Just keep it consistent. If artifacts are cheap and widespread, assume they've been that way for a long time. Keep society consistent with high magic access.

Magic Items and Social Order

If you're building your own setting, you may want to have magical objects be common. But if you don't, here are some plausible reasons why they're rare.

The Creators Aren't Eager to Create

It's strange to think someone would undergo years of training, become a sorcerer, put forth the effort to learn a powerful artifact-making spell and then not cast it.

But it's equally odd to think someone would undergo that rigorous schooling, and then blithely hand over his power to the highest bidder. If a basketball player discovered a way to teach anyone to make unblockable three-point shots, how widely do you suppose he'd spread that knowledge? He might teach a few team-mates, or his kids, and he'd certainly use it himself, but if you're a genius at lowering barriers you might just think yourself out of a job.

It is unreasonable to think that magicians would never want artifacts built. But it is equally unreasonable to think they'd want a market glutted with them, since ready availability just drives the prices down and makes other enchanters obsolete (and therefore, angry). To put it another way, if you could earn a handsome living producing a magic sword every decade, or a less lavish livelihood busting your hump to make two of the same swords every year, which would you pick? If you're smart, you take the lazy option. If you're cunning, you collude with other lazy magicians to make sure no other greedy fool ruins the market for everyone.

Magicians have a monopoly and they benefit when the market is tight.

Buyers Want Uniqueness

If you're an infantry captain, there's nothing like a flaming sword to make the enemy pause—unless their captain has one too. If impressive magic becomes common, it turns into an arms race with diminishing returns as those troops get blasé. In other words, not only does your magic sword scare the enemies less because they've got one, it encourages your troops less if it's just one of the many. Keeping artifacts rare makes them unpredictable, mobile and impressive. When they're common, battles go from being risky to being completely random, and every general wants a battle that's predictable to him and not to his opponent.

There Are Cheaper Alternatives

Standard REIGN artifacts aren't completely reliable, and that's a tough sell at the prices they fetch. Furthermore, a ring that shoots fire does one thing. A magician who can shoot fire can do other things. He can drag your unconscious body to safety, if he's

Finds an Enchanted Artifact

loyal. It's often cheaper to hire a magician to cast the spell than it is to buy a device that recreates it, the market doesn't have much pressure on the supply side. Finally, a magic staff doesn't do you much good if it gets stolen—and the loss of revenue and morale when a nations' citizens learn their most powerful artifact has been boosted by the other side is often far more damaging than any use the artifact itself might have.

The final word on magical artifacts is this: Those in power tend to see them as shortcuts. Powerful people don't like there to be shortcuts to power (for anyone but themselves). Someone who trains for years to master a martial skill is worthy of respect, while someone who's dangerous only by virtue of an enchanted goblet is a cheater who deserves to be manipulated. After all, the master warrior has an ability that can never be taken away. Once you take the magic goblet, its last owner is used-up tool, no longer required.

Acquires Lands, Titles and Awards of Merit

It's one thing when the Empress thanks you for thwarting a plot against her domain. It's something else when she decides that you will take the conspirators' property instead of the blood heir.

No extra rules are required to stack more Territory or Treasure onto a Company, and certainly there are any number of plots that can arise when the displaced heir schemes for redress, and the bigoted citizens start making trouble, while the blue-bloods close ranks against the upstart with battle-gore under his fingernails… but having a title is nice, getting official rewards impresses people and it doesn't hurt to have some guidelines on how that might affect the rules.

Titled Nobility

Only kings and emperors (and the like) have the right to ennoble an entire bloodline, and only duke-equivalents have the right to even propose a name to the king for such a singular honor. However, some dukes overstep their bounds when their master is weak and, in a region where the duke's word is law, no one is going to contest his mayoral appointment.

Knight

Also Known As: Gentleman, Reeve, Mayor, Overseer, Tax Collector

The lowest level of the gentry is knighthood, often bestowed for valor on the battlefield but also possibly given for cultural achievements or because you leant the king money he needed for his battle mages' back pay.

In many nations, only the nobility are permitted to carry swords (though often, in the hinterlands, no one's going to make a big deal about it). Furthermore, nobility often have legal recourse that peasants lack. Commoners appeal to the local gentry to mediate their disputes and, if they don't like the declared solution there's no court of appeals. Sometimes nobles can, if 'provoked,' seize a peasant's property, if peasants even have such. (True feudal systems have the peasants working land that belongs to their lord, and since he does have legal pull, just taking that stuff is more likely to have consequences. On the other hand, when it's a commoner's word against a knight, many lords find for the knight and make it up to the serf later, if at all. Governance involves choosing conflicts carefully.)

What this title really does is officially recognize any achievements the character has done on her own. Knights are common enough that the mere title won't provide the Status Advantage, but it gets you the benefit of the doubt from village elders, blacksmiths and local merchants. The higher grade of commoner—witches, con men and outlaws—are probably smart enough to know how little a knighthood means.

It is perfectly reasonable for a knight to govern a Company of Territory 1 or even 2. The title isn't necessary for that level of authority, but it is typical.

Lord

Also Known As: Emir, Governor, Baron

Just as knights control small companies (Territory 1-2), lords usually govern larger ones (Territory 2-4). Lords with smaller territories are unusual (and pitiful), but not outlandish.

Lordships are rarely just bestowed, unless a kingdom has undergone a sudden expansion. In most big kingdoms, the desirable pies were cut up and distributed long ago. Getting the title "Lord" either means (1) new lands have been discovered and you have to colonize them, (2) territory has been seized from an enemy nation and you have to pacify it or (3) some other lord has fallen from favor, you're getting his ancestral home, and a food taster might be a good idea.

If a character has no Status upon being appointed lord, he should get the Advantage Status 1, at least. No wealth comes with the title (other than what he can wrest from his land), but there are other privileges. Lords have the legal right to maintain a cadre of men-at-arms, typically up to Might 3. (Unofficially, many go higher, just as many knights and commoners who lack the right to order soldiers often control groups of armed 'guards' or 'escorts.') The biggest advantage of lordship, however, is that there's one less layer of control on top of you.

Duke

Also Known As: Great Lord, Earl, Province Commander

Where the lord controls a town and the knight controls a village, the duke is in charge of a province, possibly with a city or two in it. Territories of size 3-4 are most often under the thumb of a duke, and some powerful dukes in large kingdoms have Territory 5. Everything true of lords is more true of dukes, who are the next level in the hierarchy. Their Status Advantage can never fall below 2 unless they're stripped of their title, and they can typically enjoy Wealth 3 at least. Even if they're flat broke or deep in debt, there's always someone willing to lend money to a duke or accept his letter of credit.

In a typical large nation, the army of a duke can officially reach Might 4 without the king interfering. By Might 4, it's probably too late to interfere anyhow.

King

Also Known As: Pasha, Sovereign, Overlord

There are nations that use other forms of government, but typically there's a single person with supreme authority. When things go well, the king takes credit. When disaster strikes, it is to the king that the people cry for leadership.

A king often claims divine mandate. Emperors can "recognize" someone as a king who's already running a country, but it's very rare for a whole new nation to spring into being. When that happens, the king most likely crowns himself.

There are kings whose nations are too small to subdivide into ducal provinces or even lordly domains. Some kingdoms are small enough to have Territory 1. That doesn't matter: The king is still a king and, as such, can never have Status lower than 3. Furthermore, people raised in any kingdom are susceptible to the title. They can't help it: They were raised in a culture that trained them to respond to "Royal Highness" with awe and deference. Accordingly, when a king makes a roll to influence a commoner with Command or Charm, he gets a +1d bonus to his pool or can offset any number of dice in penalty. This only works on those with no noble title of their own, and those who weren't raised in nations with notions of "the equality of all before God" or something, and of course it only works if the commoner knows he's talking to a royal sovereign. But even a wealthy merchant talking to the king of some tiny piece of mountain scree, a merchant whose personal honor guard could take over that wee nation… that merchant still feels, deep down, an instinct to submit. The king who has bad teeth and gets his hands dirty helping the cows give birth is still a king.

Emperor

Also Known As: Supreme Overlord, High King

If you weren't born to it, you can only claim to be an Emperor if you have Territory 5, and you'd better have a meaningful Might to back it up. Emperors universally crown themselves (or are crowned by heaven, if you prefer), since no one else has the authority. Unlike kingship, there's no Status protection in calling yourself an emperor: If you don't already have the clout to back the claim, people consider you a madman.

On the other hand, if you can back the claim, your power is limited only to what you can grasp.

Awards of Merit

Sometimes a ruler doesn't want to go all the way to bestowing the rights of noble birth, but still wants to provide a reward. These titles of merit are narrower than noble status, but within their purviews can be just as impressive.

Officer of the Crown

Also Known As: Agent, Courier, Bearer of a Letter of Mark

An officer is someone a ruler has recognized with a specific duty. The recognition usually takes the form of a document, signed by the king (or duke, or lord) and suitable for framing. There's also typically a ceremony, of a varying degree of pomp.

The prerogatives depend entirely on the office. A tax assessor can decree how much (or little) property is worth and call in the army if the owner won't pay. A military officer commands troops, and is commanded by his general. A defender of the faith has a responsibility to ensure that lesser priests and lay people follow doctrine correctly. If the church is powerful, he may have the right to arrest blasphemers and bind them over to a judge for trial. Alternately, an official may have a duty to oversee one particular part of a region (like making sure that all the bridges are strong enough to support a full wagons of goods). In those cases, he's probably in charge of a budget, or is given authority to levy tolls to fund the project.

In short, an official is someone with a narrow duty and an equally narrow set of rights that he needs to pursue that duty. In that bailiwick, his word is law. Until, that is, he runs into someone in the same bailiwick with a higher level of right. For instance, a ducal officer in charge of ensuring the roads remain unobstructed and in good repair is going to have to cave in if he's at cross purposes with a royal officer who has the same duty.

General

Also Known As: Admiral, Supreme Commander

The troops, as represented by a Company's Might, respond to the general, and the general responds to the leader who invested him with authority. Or not. When the general issues one order and the king says another, it can all come down to what the soldiers want to do. One thing's for sure: Attempts at coup d'etat typically end with either the old leader or the upstart dead, dying or exiled.

Judge

Also Known As: Inquisitor, Arbiter

The duty of the judge is to interpret the laws of the land, or the edicts of the church, or the rules of concord that sustain a Company, with the ultimate goal of seeing that justice is done and grievances settled.

This is a noble calling, to hear it told, and sometimes it lives up to that ideal. Sometimes a judge rights a great wrong and is the only person standing between the whims of the strong and the dignity of the weak. It must be noted, however, that siding with the weak against the strong can earn a judge strong enemies. Beyond that, a judge may have to choose between "justice done" and "grievance ended." In some cases, the lawful choice is obvious, but clinging to the strict words of the legal formula cause more strife, while actually satisfying no one. Who is the good arbiter in that case? The one who stretches the lawmaker's intent in the name of a tranquil city? Or the one who opts for hard justice, hoping it's for the enduring good?

There are no rule modifications for those with authority to interpret laws, whether those laws be broad, specific, religious, secular, voluntary or sovereign. Crooked or self-interested characters typically have little problem earning coin from their willingness to sell an opinion: Then the adventure becomes one of concealment and deceit. Genuinely virtuous judges, on the other hand, inevitably make enemies of those very people who are inclined to ignore rules of decent conduct, and the adventure becomes one of self-defense, both political and physical. Either way, a judge character is a fountainhead of plots, as long as (1) the GM genuinely lets him decide what's right and wrong without leading or resisting and (2) the cases resist to easy answers.

Master _____

Also Known As: Living Treasure, Craftsman Laureate

The title of "Master" indicates supreme skill in a narrow field. There are master poets, master smiths, master swordsmen (of course), master potters and so forth. In some nations, there is only one Master Poet at a time, appointed by the sovereign (who may have a tin ear for verse). In others, a council of brewers may confer the title of master brewer, while only professional musicians can induct a singer as one of the elite. In any case, whether the official title comes with a stipend or simply has cachet, the master never goes broke. A master's personal Wealth can never drop below 1 and the cost of anything the master creates—a dress from a master tailor, the sword of a master smith, education from a master archer—is 1 higher than it would usually be. In other words, the item is paid for as if it was of exquisite workmanship, even if the master has become a drunken wretch with only a shred of her former skills.

_____ to Her Royal Highness

This title applies to a group, rather than individual, and it functions much like the "Master" title. It means that the Queen (or a Duke, Emir, or Mayor) pays the Company for its services and, presumably, deems them of superior quality. Thus a winery might be "Vintners to the High Priest" or a group of architects and masons might be "Builders of the Tyrant's Palace." The group's Treasure can never drop below 1 from expenses, because there's always someone willing to employ a firm with a good reputation (or extend credit to it).

Champion

Also Known As: Defender of the Faith, The King's Blade, Inexorable Warrior

Typically, there is only one champion in an army, and he is recognized (often rightly) as its most potent fighter. He gets unique armor, visible at a distance, and he goes in at the front to encourage the soldiers around him. Sometimes, armies send champions out for single combat before the main battle. This only happens if both sides want more time to prepare or maneuver, however, and furthermore if both think they can make better use of the time than their foes.

It is possible to be the champion of a town, a country, a religion or an empire. The only difference is the scale on which the fighter fights and the skill of his competition.

When champions clash, the winning champion can influence his army's Might roll for that battle, by squishing a successful set one step. Furthermore, champions get a +2d bonus on any speeches to give unworthy allies the Morale bonus to their Threat (as described on page 126).

Of course, the most prized perquisite of the champion, in addition to getting the best rations and finest weapons, is admiration. It's not hard to get bought a drink or find a willing sex partner when you embody of your society's warrior ideal.

Splendid Things Occur

Advisor to the Throne

Also Known As: Sage, Vizier, Palace Wizard, Royal Librarian, Oracle

Someone with at least a bit of skill at sorcery typically occupies the role of "learned advisor to the ruler", if for no other reason than those inclined to study rarely forgo the thinking person's route to power. It happens, however, that the job sometimes falls to a pure intellectual with no practical magic skill. But even those sages who don't command the forces of magic understand them, just as they might have a grasp of farm policy without getting their hands dirty, or a knowledge of military history without going onto a battlefield. Their job is to know and provide the perspective of ages as filtered through a thorough education.

Advisors seldom have any actual authority, though they may surround themselves with lackeys, research assistants, specialist scholars and apprentices. Indeed, the best of them rely on experts, to save the advisor from having to be anything but a generalist who distills the wisdom of the knowing.

While they have direct control over nothing, the Advisor is consulted on nearly everything. (Unless he falls from favor, in which case he probably won't remain Advisor.) Unless the king personally intervenes, it is the Advisor who gets to decide the priority of tasks that use a Company's Influence Quality. He may not decide exactly what's to be done, but (in mechanical terms) he decides which tasks get the highest dice pools and which have to make do with exhausted ones.

Confidential Pursuer

Also Known As: Spycatcher, Thief Taker, Left Hand of the Prince

Everyone has a private life, from the pig-stall mucker to elegant ladies of the realm. The difference is, an elegant lady can appoint a confidential pursuer to keep her private life private while the pig-boy does his own dirty work.

Whatever you call the position, it's a delicate one. Confidential pursuers clean up messes for the powers that be, without any hint getting out to anyone who matters. Sometimes this is accomplished through elegant deceptions that re-interpret the visible facts. ("Stole the jewels? Heavens no, he gave her the jewels in an attempt to cozen her into an intimate liaison! Of course she refused, which is why I'm bringing them back to you now. I only hope that you can keep this indiscretion quiet, for both our employers' sakes. It would certainly smirch both dignities if accusations of seduction and theft began flying recklessly about.") Alternately, matters may be solved with bribes, blackmail, kidnapping witnesses or even murder. Murder is a matter of last resort, of course, since it has the potential to yield an angry ghost, and ghosts are notoriously hard to silence.

A thief taker can rely on the Influence apparatus of his patron to protect him, but only to a point. Because his missions are sensitive, their priority may be high. However, that very sensitivity impedes any other agents and operatives because the thief taker may not be permitted to explain his mission in full. It's fine for him to show a letter of authority and ask his aides to get him some food, a place to stay, and a nice deep hole to stash certain items. But when they don't know the details, they can't take initiative and foresee obstacles.

Confidential pursuer is a position that has no rules material associated with it, but it's a good source for plots. Furthermore, a spycatcher's patron often goes to great lengths to ensure that his skilled asset doesn't get interrogated. This can mean she bends over backwards to keep him from getting jailed… or that behind the shadowy investigator there's someone in deeper shadow, ready to kill him if matters get out of hand.
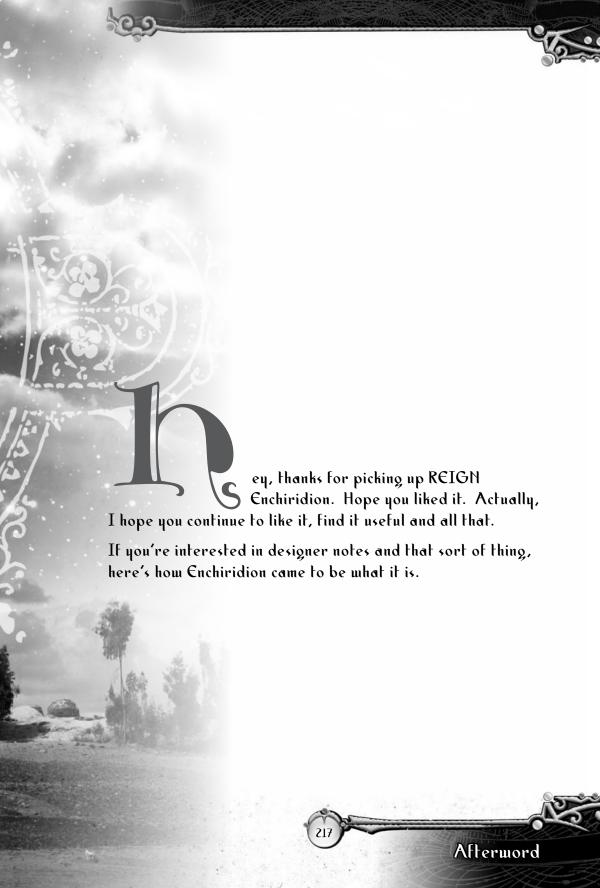
Ambassador

Also Known As: Envoy, Messenger, Diplomat, Emissary

The ambassador negotiates on behalf of a country, in the same way that an envoy or minor diplomat conducts business on behalf of a province, business concern or religion. Diplomats answer to senior diplomats, and the most senior diplomat answers to the ruler. In theory, their duty is to convey the desires of their employer to the sovereigns of other lands (or the mayors of towns and so forth). In practice, diplomats pursue private agendas as well—influencing local politics, settling personal grudges or practicing the arts of seduction. In many cases, their bosses don't care about these side-projects, as long as the master's main goals are met.

In rules terms, diplomats get to use a Company's Qualities in their immediate region—but only after all the "official" tasks to which those Qualities were assigned are finished. Often this leaves an ambassador with a very low pool of 1 or even no dice. That's still useful: By their own initiatives, they can boost those pools (as explained on page 92) and roll them. Without the authority of a Company, a normal person can't even attempt those actions.

In addition to getting to play with the toys after the king is done, many nations and organizations confer a great deal of pomp and grandeur on their ambassadors. Mechanically, the ambassador can freely spend Wealth equal to his Company's current Treasure.

Hey, thanks for picking up REIGN Enchiridion. Hope you liked it. Actually, I hope you continue to like it, find it useful and all that.

If you're interested in designer notes and that sort of thing, here's how Enchiridion came to be what it is.

AFTERWORD

A lot of REIGN fans wanted a small, cheap, concise summary of the base rules. Something they could flip through quickly as a reference, or give to their players while they hogged the big red book for themselves.

Other people were interested in REIGN's system and concept, but didn't like what they'd heard about my (admittedly nontraditional) fantasy setting. Or they were turned off by the price tag. They wanted to use it to add a political dimension to another game, or to run their own homebrew setting, or to run someone else's setting with rules they kinda liked from *GODLIKE* or *Wild Talents*.

I tried very hard to keep both groups in mind when deciding what to keep and what to throw out. This led me to come down on the side of editing out as much as possible. For the REIGN early adopters, repeating examples from a book they already had would be wasted space. For the REIGN newcomers, I just wanted to keep the book as small (and therefore affordable) as possible.

An important part of REIGN since the very beginning has been internet support. There are two huge files of supplementary material, available for free. You can go to www.gregstolze.com/downloads.html and find them there along with character sheets, a few articles and some other games that have been underwritten by generous fans.

You may also want to check the REIGN home page, www.gregstolze.com/reign and see what supplements I'm on and to find out how you can get involved. With Enchiridion out, the possibilities are far more open for interesting, self-contained settings for the mechanics. See you there.

Greg Stolze, September 23, 2009

REIGN Acknowledgments

Enchiridion Supporters

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Daniel Westheide

Donald Wheeler

Terry Whisenant

Christopher Williams

Stew Wilson

Matthew C H Winder

Stacie Winters

Xander

Kai Yau

Sam Zeitlin

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Reign

Character Sheet

Character _____ Company _____

Mission _____

Duty _____

Craving _____

Problems _____ XP: _____

_____ XP: _____

_____ XP: _____

Body

Athletics	+	=
Endurance	+	=
Fight	+	=
Parry	+	=
Run	+	=
Vigor	+	=
	+	=
	+	=

Sense

Direction	+	=
Eerie	+	=
Empathy	+	=
Hearing	+	=
Scrutinize	+	=
Sight	+	=
	+	=
	+	=

Charm

Fascinate	+	=
Graces	+	=
Lie	+	=
Jest	+	=
Plead	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=

Coordination

Climb	+	=
Dodge	+	=
Perform	+	=
Ride	+	=
Stealth	+	=
Weapon:	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=

Command

Haggle	+	=
Inspire	+	=
Intimidate	+	=
Perform:	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=

Knowledge

Counterspell	+	=
Healing	+	=
Language:	+	=
Lore	+	=
Strategy	+	=
Tactics	+	=
Student:	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=
	+	=

Wounds and Armor

5-6
OOOOO
OOOOO

10
OOOOO
OOOOO

7-9
OOOOO
OOOOO
OOOOO

3-4
OOOOO
OOOOO

2
OOOOO
OOOOO

1
OOOOO
OOOOO

Attunement Effects

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Sorcery

Spell	Effect	Pool	Intensity	Page

Weapons

Weapon	Dmg.	Attack Pool	Range/Notes

Advantages and Esoteric Disciplines

Name	Effect	Page

Description/Personal History

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Dirty Secrets (Own and Others)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Grudges and Enemies

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Property

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

MORE SPELLS

Spell	Effect	Pool	Intensity	Page

PREFERRED MOVES

Move	Rank	Effect	Page

More Weapons

Weapon	Dmg.	Attack Pool	Range/Notes

Martial Paths

Technique	Path	Level	Effect	Page

Reign

Company Sheet

Company Name:

_____

_____

Goal:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Company Leaders:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ASSETS

Name	Effect

NOTES

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

INFLUENCE   Permanent: Current:

Temporary and Conventional Bonuses/Penalties

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

MIGHT   Permanent: Current:

Temporary and Conventional Bonuses/Penalties

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

SOVEREIGNTY   Permanent: Current:

Temporary and Conventional Bonuses/Penalties

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

TERRITORY   Permanent: Current:

Temporary and Conventional Bonuses/Penalties

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

TREASURE   Permanent: Current:

Temporary and Conventional Bonuses/Penalties

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Reign

Spell Worksheet

Spell Name: _____

School: _____

Requires Attunement?   Yes   No

Cost Factors: _____

_____

_____

Cost: _____

_____

_____

Target: _____

Effect: _____

Additional Effect: _____

Additional Effect: _____

Additional Effect: _____

Additional Effect: _____

Additional Effect: _____

Duration: _____

Extra or Flaw: _____

Extra or Flaw: _____

Extra or Flaw: _____

Extra or Flaw: _____

Extra or Flaw: _____

Extra or Flaw: _____

TOTAL (Intensity): _____

Note that all Italic entries are required. Every spell has them.

The Essential Handbook for REIGN

REIGN: A Game of Lords and Leaders expands the frontiers of fantasy roleplaying games by elevating the action to an international stage. Monarchs, mercenaries and merchant princes gamble armies and fortunes to win nations. REIGN's simple but complete rules model the triumphs and disasters of societies as small as a village or as large as a realm-spanning religion. With REIGN, your characters can defend threatened nations, bring prosperity to desperate provinces, make laws and perpetuate justice… or, if you prefer, loot, conquer and pillage on a vast and awesome scale.

The REIGN Enchiridion contains the complete rules REIGN, plus the most essential material from REIGN's supplements.

One Roll Does It All

Powered by a fantasy-optimized version of the One-Roll Engine (or ORE) popularized by *Godlike, Wild Talents,* and *Monsters and Other Childish Things,* REIGN can take your characters from beggars to emperors. The ORE resolves events in delicate detail without cumbersome layers of contingent rolls.

The Personal and the Political

The group-resolution rules from REIGN are self-contained and modular. It's a simple matter to stack them on top of any other RPG system. Want a concrete way to model what happens to the city when your superheroes destroy the Cult of Moloch Triumphant? Use REIGN to stat up the city and the cult. Ever wonder who'd win if two rival government conspiracies went head to head? REIGN lets you measure their weaknesses and strengths, then test them against one another. Fantasy kingdoms, cosmic empires and secretive cabals can all be easily managed and modeled with REIGN.