

The Heights is a bustling community of decent folk in dark times, rough and tumble types and hard asses with something to prove. In one story, it is Dagger Heights, border capital between two warring magical kingdoms. In another story it's the Neon Heights, corporate controlled megalith sullied by cyber mercenaries in the grungy streets below. In still another story it's Rocky Heights, a gold miner's town turned gunfighter's haven in the wild west. The characters are the same in each of the stories, as are the nature of the events. All that changes are the motifs and methods, flavors and themes.

Whether it be by mysterious artifact, chasing a shadowy figure, or some other unique circumstance, the player characters have been awakened to the reality of their multiverse. They now plunge through the veil chasing clues (or a person) from one version of the Heights to another, each time adding rich backstory to their own. When they enter a new story, they are fully 'written in' to that story, and 'remember' who they are as it relates to the story. They may have been a town guard in their native version of the Heights, but are a beat-cop in this new one. Either way, they know both sets of their history as soon as they cross the veil. The actions taken in one version of the Heights ripple through the others. A bartender in a saloon in one version may be an Alien restaurant owner in another, or a piece of liquid replicating software in another. If that bartender is killed, he dies in all other iterations as well, under similar circumstances. The reputations carried by the players also cross over: "Hey, aren't you those guys who killed Mac the Bartender? / Vaporized Mac'loth the Maitre D? / Destroyed the MacServe software?"

Character Creation: Character creation centers around the nine principal obstacles all characters in tabletop games face, and the archetype best suited to handle that obstacle. The advantage of using loose, obstacle-defeating archetypes is that they can translate to any setting fluidly. As characters transition from one story to another, say from a space opera story to a high school drama story, their skills can be interpreted laterally into the new setting.

The interpretation of each skill will vary from setting to setting. Some may not even interpret literally. "Warrior" will almost always represent physical combat, but in, say, a cooking themed story, it may represent iron chef battles. Some degree of abstraction is required, even in the most literal of campaigns. For example, someone wanting to play a Brute in a fantasy setting will want to have high ranks in "Traveller" to represent their ability to not only leap great distances and scale walls, but also to burst through doors and barriers. Anything that physically translates to travelling. That same skill in the same setting could be used for a wizard who likes to teleport around.

Sage	- Lore and knowledge.
Face	- Manipulating man or beast
Hero	- Mental resilience
Warrior	- The arts of combat
Rogue	- Bypassing security and perception
Traveller	- Physical travel
Tough	- Physical Resilience
Fixer	- Interacting with devices
Sleuth	- Perceiving the world around you

Players will rank the nine Archetypes from 1 to 9. Rank 1 represents a weakness in this element, 2 the most minimal amount of ability, and 7-9 extreme levels of character focus. As important ranking each of the archetypes is, explaining it's context in the setting you are currently in is equally important. At the beginning of a campaign, the players have a starting version of the Heights. They write backstory for this setting.

Crossing the Veil: When the characters are first introduced to a new version of the Heights, entering a new story, they should be given time to consider how their character "translates" to this new story. If they started in a quirky high school sitcom story, "Heights High," and were playing a geek with aspirations of being a football star despite their own weaknesses, and are crossing to a fantasy version of the Heights, they may consider translating "geek" to "wizard" and "jock" to "warrior." They may translate their complicated relationship to their Sheriff father, to a complicated relationship with the Captain of the Guard. This is on top of translating the raw skills. If their character had "Sage" at 9, representing super nerd lore, they may translate the same ability to access lore and knowledge into occult dealings with spirits from the nether realms. Either way, the storyteller should be giving the players ample time to work on these translations. Remember, the character will remember BOTH sets of backstory, as they retain all knowledges and backstories from any version of the Heights they have visited. They are aware of the uniqueness of their travel.

Game Mechanics: The mechanics of this game are based off of the idea that each obstacle to the player has an inherent **cost** and **risk**. Cost is the amount of time, resources, or even consequence that the player must pay to overcome the obstacle. Risk is a possible cost, usually in the form of consequences. Usually, players will be aware of both the costs and risks of trying to overcome an obstacle, though story may necessitate a secret cost or risk. Storytellers will decide on each obstacle if they want a 'soft cost' - basically a story based complication, such as time or resources - or a 'hard cost' - which uses the "hard consequences" mechanic below.

Overcoming Obstacles: When the storyteller wants to put in an obstacle, they assign it a 'primary archetype' required to get by the obstacle, and possibly a 'secondary archetype.' These are the archetypes that are ideally used to overcome the obstacle, and can be used to get by the obstacles with no added complications. The Obstacle will have a difficulty rating from 1-9. This is the number the primary archetype must

be in order to defeat the obstacle with full effectiveness. The secondary archetype can be used in the same way, though it's difficulty is always 2 higher than the primary (a difficulty level 6 'sage' obstacle, may have a secondary level 8 'face' option.) A player may opt to use a completely different archetype, with two caveats: The difficulty is +3, and the effort has an added consequence (either soft or hard) automatically applied. Additional cost may be added as well.

The storyteller has added discretion to create benefits for those who overshoot the obstacle difficulty, such as decreased cost or added cool effect. They may also allow players to negotiate using the primary archetype at a lower level, if they take added cost or risk. It can create fun elements to allow this sort of flexibility.

Storytelling Obstacles: It is important to understand that a character may still be performing excellently in the story, but only the archetypes that are used to defeat the obstacles actually are focused on for the purposes of the story. They are "instrumental" in getting the job done. For example: A group of investigators faces down an amphibious sub-human. The storyteller explains the challenge is a "Fixer" primary, because someone needs to figure out the arcane machine that manipulates the creature. The boxer in the party declares he charges in and fist fights the monster. That's fine. Essentially, that player is layering "flavor" onto his option to not participate in trying to actually beat the obstacle. He does so knowing you have the freedom to narrate how well that fight goes.

Risk: The storyteller decides if the obstacle has a light or heavy consequence (or both) for it's risk. When a player tackles the obstacle, he rolls a 1d6. On a 6, the character suffers the worst consequence. On a 5, they get the lighter consequence. Some challenges are so risky, the storyteller may consider adding another light risk on 4. It's not advised to go further than that.

Hard Consequences: While soft consequences are story based, hard consequences are numerical. When a player takes a hard consequence, they will reduce one or more of their attributes by a certain number. For light consequences, the storyteller rolls 1d6 for the number. For heavy, 2d6. The player can decide where to distribute the penalties. Hard Consequences are healed at a rate of 3 per day. If a player ever has 0 archetype points left in any archetype, they are taken out of play. Since soft consequences can literally be anything, including death, a storyteller doesn't really need to use hard consequences at all - they can merely use arbitrary story consequences that keep stacking up and getting worse. Hard consequences can be described as anything from wounds, to faltered confidence, to social pressure, or anything else that fits.

Narrative Points: At the beginning of each game night, the players gain 1d6 Narrative Points. Each time they suffer consequences (soft or hard) they gain 1 Narrative Point. The most any character can start a brand new session with is 10 Narrative Points.

You may spend 2 narrative points to heal 1d6 hard consequence points from another player (though not yourself.) This cost may be shared among players, though not the one with the consequences. You may also spend 2 consequences to make any archetype of yours considered a secondary archetype for a single challenge. If the obstacle requires any single player who wishes to bypass it to face it to defeat the challenge, then for 2 narrative points, any one player may "Share" their archetype score for the challenge. Finally, you may negotiate with Narrative points to try and reduce cost or risk with the storyteller, or to change some detail about the story.

Abstraction and Mechanics: An important concept to discuss is the nature of abstraction. This game uses a lot of it. The basic mechanic, the requirement to have a ranked archetype to overcome an obstacle, does not really tell the story of what happens. That's the player's job. The mechanic is just a number loosely tied to a 'real' concept, but the translation of how that plays out is up to the player. It is important for both players and the storyteller to understand that you must have faith in the abstraction and the mechanic, and not fall back on what is "realistic." If you want to tell the story of the mechanic in a "realistic" fashion, that's great. If it fits with the setting, then by all means, we encourage it. But put your faith in the mechanic and the abstraction first, and secondly tell the story catered to your tastes in realism.

Fairness, and Randomly Generated Challenges: One of the benefits of this game is you can "share the airtime" among all the players by not prioritizing combat (or any other of the archetypes) over any other way of handling a situation. In fact, optionally, you can roll randomly to determine the primary and secondary skills for any challenge - and then tell the story *around* your generated results. If, for example, the players are supposed to encounter a dragon that threatens a nearby town, the ideal archetype to handle this could be any of the 9, depending on how you look at it. Maybe knowing the secret language of the Dragons is the key, so a "Lore" check is required. Maybe the dragon can be fast talked, using "Face." Maybe the fear radius around the dragon is so palpable it requires "Hero" to defeat. This is something you can roll randomly, distributing a lot of fairness into the game.

Roll 1d6 to determine the Group, and another for the specific archetype: 1,2= Action Group 3,4 = Reaction Group 5,6 = Planning Group

Action:	1,2= Warrior	3,4 = Traveller	5,6 = Rogue
Reaction:	1,2= Hero	3,4 = Tough	5,6 = Sleuth
Planning:	1,2= Fixer	3,4 = Face	5,6 = Sage