

praxis...

the
BLACK † MONK



A GAME OF FOREVER

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The Black Monk is part of the *Praxis* game series.

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Praxis is an original game system, powered by Protocol.

DISCLAIMER

Praxis games contain some mature subject matter. While most Post World Games products aren't for kids, the materials contained in these pages are for adult readers and gamers. No attempt has been made to be overtly offensive, but these games tackle themes requiring a deeper sense of the world.

Or at least ourselves.

Also, I don't always watch my language.

DEDICATION

This *Praxis* is based on a conversation I had with Timothy Hidalgo, while trying to brainstorm characters for a different game. Each character idea was weirder than the last. So. This one is for Tim. In the few short years I've gotten to know Tim, I realize he's one of the kindest and most selfless people I've ever met. I can't imagine having a better advocate for my work. Thank you.

praxis...



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PRAXIS: THE BLACK MONK

Praxis is a series of story roleplaying games that thrusts characters into dramatic situations and is based on the principles of the *Protocol* game system. Each game uses the same set of rules, with vastly different parameters, start-points, roles, plot twists, and finales. *Praxis* does not play like a traditional roleplaying game. It does not require a gamemaster. There is no script. No endpoint. No cumbersome or extraneous mechanics detracting from the story. An entire epic can be played in under four hours.

Players are directors outside the story **and** characters inside the story. Seven different scene-framing styles help players tell meaningful stories about characters in crisis. The goal is not to succeed to the next level, but to tell interesting stories. *Praxis* worlds aren't safe. Characters suffer, grow, and possibly die. Failure is a story ingredient, like any other. This may seem new... and that's okay. This guide takes you step-by-step through your first game.

REQUIREMENTS

Each game in the *Praxis* series is zero-prep for four to six players. Game length is roughly three to six hours long. This *Praxis* requires pens, paper or index cards, a deck of playing cards (without the jokers), five dice (d6s), the character sheets (starting on page 74), and tokens to track drama points.

I'll explain drama points later. For now, just be aware they give you authority over the story and allow you to break the rules.

WHY PRAXIS?

Praxis takes GMless game principles and makes them digestible for people who've never played this kind of game before. Conversely, players familiar with these ideas will find *Praxis* a little more focused on the outcome, encouraging characters to struggle for theirs, while collaborating to tell a great story.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Praxis is a dramatic game system that allows players to work together to write deep stories. The game can be played with or without a gamemaster. In fact, it plays best without one (the default setting). But even with one, the scene-framing system in *Praxis* is simple and elegant.

You'll probably ask yourself why no one else does this. I know I do.

Scene-framing forms the basis of *Praxis*, but character roles are more important. Each role provides context, flavor, and its own unique point of view. Character abilities allow players more varied authority over the game.

GETTING STARTED

Praxis games are designed to start almost instantly. As soon as you sit down and crack open this book, you can start making characters. Just print out the character sheets and make sure everyone has something to write with.

Read the next section to everyone and follow the steps below:

THE BLACK MONK

In *The Black Monk*, the characters are people living in a desolate, but vibrant world where time seems to have lost meaning. Living for decades, perhaps longer, in isolation from others, the people of Elysia toil in work, only to be visited once a year by the Black Monk.

In between these visits, their lives are interrupted by sometimes trivial and other times confusing events. Everything seems to fit together like an elongated jigsaw puzzle, but no one can see the starter pieces stretching across the horizon.

But they don't complain. There is always more work. The village needs workers.

Then one evening, the sun stayed in the sky all day. When there should have been night, the sun remained. And now it feels as though it's been years since the Black Monk came. But perhaps it was yesterday. Nothing is right...

Is that blood?

DISCLAIMER

This game is weird. Weird games produce weird stories. Weird stories do not feel like traditional stories. If you walk away with a weird experience then the game did its job. If you try to hammer it into a dungeon-crawl or traditional mission-based story, it's going to be even stranger. Don't do that.

Unless that's what you want?

WORLD VIEW CANON

When making characters, it's important to determine how everyone knows each other and what brings them together. There are scenes where everyone is in one place at one time (or perhaps someone is teleconferencing in, etc.). In any case, there needs to be a reason why everyone knows each other.

What is the group's overall affiliation. Are they in a cult? A road crew? A gang? A desolate world devoid of any other humans? The next few pages are an overview of what to expect from *Praxis*. Page 18 is where character creation start. From there, you'll learn to make characters and develop the environment those characters inhabit.

Game on.

HOW TO PLAY PRAXIS: QUICKGUIDE

- First, gather together 4 to 6 friends, including yourself.
- Next, make characters by selecting roles, objectives, relationships, and so on. This should take about 20-30 minutes, so take your time exploring the world before you finish.
- Choose someone to narrate the opening vignette, followed by another player to narrate the opening ensemble.

Ensembles involve everyone. Flashbacks take place in the past. Forks create important choices in the story. Intercuts allow creative freedom for 90 seconds. Interludes involve only two characters. Interrogations pose five weighty questions to a single character or player. Monologues are exactly what they sound like. Vignettes are action, establishing shots, exposition, or mood pieces devoid of dialogue.

- Take turns framing scenes from your character sheet, while attempting to complete your milestones. Every character is different. The story you tell is your own!
- Roll dice when conflict emerges.
- When you fail, mark trepidation and make sure you narrate how it affects you.
- Play for 2 to 10 hours, depending on how fast you like your stories to move.
- Once someone checks off all her scenes or milestones or four trepidation, the game is over.
- Narrate the finale.
- You're done. Talk about how awesome that story was.



OVERVIEW

CHARACTERS

Characters are the heart of *Praxis*. Every piece of the story grows from the successes and failures of the players' actions. Unlike traditional roleplaying games, where characters are insular until they interact with the environment, *Praxis* characters are the environment, protagonists, and story, all wrapped into one. Everything needed to write a story is on the character sheets.

Characters are defined by roles, names, objectives, relationships, and abilities. Players develop an understanding of the game world they inhabit by answering *world building* questions. Each of these steps is explored on the following pages. Character sheets detailing this information are found on pages 74 through 87. A reference sheet for play appears on page 90.

Each player must perform the following steps:

- Select one role for your character from the six provided
- Name your character
- Take a moment to identify your character to the other players
- Determine your character's objective
- Determine your character's relationship to at least one other character
- Answer one world building question
- Choose one quirk
- Choose your character's ability

ROLES

Roles are like character classes in other games. Your role in the story helps create context for who and what you are, and what you'll be doing inside the story. It's an anchor for all your other ideas. Being a rifleman might not be enough context at first, but once you decide your character is also an alcoholic, dedicated to traditional values, with a vendetta against her brother-in-law, you'll have a better sense of who she is.

Each role also has its own unique goals, objectives, abilities, and failings.

Character sheets for these roles appear on page 74.

THE BLACK MONK

There are six roles to choose from: Belltower Watcher, Bloodletter, Fireman, Muleskinner, Piper, and Prisoner. The Belltower Watcher stands vigilant against the Black Monk's approach. The Bloodletter excises dark humors from the body. The Fireman keeps the city safe from ash. The Muleskinner feeds the people. The Piper is an anomaly. And The Prisoner doesn't belong here.

NAMES

Naming your character is an important step. It gives the other players a sense of who you are. A mythic name (Athena) conjures the imagination. A heroic name (Richard) inspires confidence. An allegorical name (Atticus) sets a tone and gives meaning where there might not have been without it. A traditional name (Sarah) gives the other players the sense this character is an anchor for the story. A silly name immediately tells them not to take you seriously.

A list of character name suggestions appear on each character sheet.
You are welcome to use any name you like, however.

OBJECTIVES

Praxis uses objectives to define characters. While each story has its own distinctive plot, each character has a *want*. A character drives toward this want as an extension of the story. Once you know your role, you can further examine the objective you pursue. Your objective can be to save another character from herself, but it is not the courage you need to accomplish this end.

Courage motivates you.

Determine your character's objective by drawing one playing card and consulting the related role. The objectives are vague enough that you can always add more. For instance, you may draw a ♦, indicating wealth as your objective. Why is this your character's objective? Perhaps your character seeks wealth to change her life for the better, or to invest that money into the community.

What motivates a character to chase a goal is as important as the goal itself. It's okay for a goal to be dramatic without being beneficial.

A character obsessed with money cannot eliminate every problem with her wealth (i.e. being trapped in the desert). Think of how a character's wants and needs might not be fulfilled, despite her efforts.

The best stories revolve around characters whose objectives are tested.
See page 24 for more on three-dimensional characters.

Objectives are a tool for roleplaying. There are no hard and fast rules on how to use them in the game. Like everything else in *Praxis*, the tools are there to make your games better. If anything is holding you back, ignore it.

RELATIONSHIPS

Traditional roleplaying games gloss over the issue of relationships. Sometimes players sit down to ask the question, “How does everyone know each other?” But not every time. In *Praxis*, the characters rely on their relationships with each other to define themselves. The relationships between characters reveal more than what is on the page. Relationship mapping is essential.

Relationship mapping is a term that describes how everyone knows everyone else. **NPCs**, villains, characters, and so on, all go onto the relationship map. Some people actually draw out the map, showing how everyone is interrelated. Some just list on their sheets how the characters know each other. Use this time to talk out loud with one another about how best to explore these relationship prompts.

In *Praxis*, relationships are important when setting up the established **canon**. But they also play an important part in the rules. Later you’re going to read about **interludes**. Only characters sharing a relationship can be in an interlude together. When making your relationships, be sure to create them with characters you want to share scenes with.

I’m going to use the word canon a lot. And agency. And community. At the end of this document you’ll find some definitions for terms that may not be part of your usual gaming jargon. For now, just understand agency means authority and the ability to impact the canon, or established ‘laws’ or ‘facts’ of the story you’re creating together. Community is how well you share this authority.

I promise, it won’t be too painful to learn all this.

To figure out who has a relationship with whom, each player selects one character to have a pre-existing relationship with before the game starts.

For instance, Abe selects Diana’s character to have a relationship with his character.

Each pair of players with a relationship defines their relationship by drawing a playing card and consulting the chart on the acting player’s character sheet. The relationship descriptions are vague, so — just like objectives — specificity is up to you. For instance, you may draw a prompt of *decaying trust*. The players sharing this relationship may define it as an ongoing issue of trust between two life-long friends who now lie to each other at every turn, or a mother and daughter pair who once trusted one another on the surface, but now...

A list of relationships appears on each role.

Page 19 has a walkthrough, detailing each step. With examples.

QUIRKS

Each character sheet includes three unique quirks to help players get ‘into character’ faster. Choose one (or all) and go with it. They are loose and devoid of rules. Ignore them all if you want to.

A character might enjoy collecting souvenirs from the people she’s killed, or sing out of tune while sitting alone at bus stops.

WORLD BUILDING

Traditional roleplaying games have hundreds of pages of information to describe every facet of a game world. Nothing is left to chance. Even the price of wheat is etched in stone. At the end of the day, players typically remember the three most important facts that matter to their characters. This means a 20-book game series is overkill.

In *Praxis*, games are often less than four hours long. Reading two hundred pages of world information in order to play a character for a few hours doesn’t make a lot of sense. We only need to define a few canonical facts to inhabit this game world since the plot has already established.

And unlike traditional roleplaying games, everyone has agency over what the world looks or feels like. This **canon** is built together, instead of by a single authority (e.g. gamemaster). Everyone has a voice in determining which ingredients go into the mix.

Each role comes with a two world building questions. From this list, each player answers one question to solidify the canon. I recommend a random method of answering questions, but there is no right or wrong here. Do what feels right.

Jump ahead to any role. Take a look at the questions. See how each question is loaded. Each one has built-in conflict or drama. And when it doesn’t, it’s adding new flavor and elements to the world from which to build drama. This is all intentional.

ABILITIES

Each role comes with three unique abilities to choose from. The titles of each ability provide flavor, while the mechanics provide power over the story. Because of the nature of *Praxis*, these abilities provide the player with authorial control, rather than ‘combat’ abilities like a traditional roleplaying game.

MILESTONES

Each character has a list of five unique milestones that help tell her story. Completing each milestone eventually leads to the story's conclusion. Each time a character does something befitting of a milestone (helps a friend in need, stops two people from fighting, etc.), she can make a die roll (see page 41) to see if this satisfies her milestone.

Sometimes an event is too insignificant to matter. Sometimes things don't go a player's way.

If she rolls well enough, she checks off the milestone. Once all five are checked off, the game ends.

LEVERAGE

Leverage represents additional abilities that unlock when a milestone is reached. As a character's story unravels, she gains more control over the narrative. These 'leverages' give the player abilities that can be used at different times during the game.

Each role list the same five leverages, though each is tied to a different milestone. Whenever an action would allow a player to trigger a leverage, she may select from those unlocked.

Rolling dice is explained on page 41.

Leverage represents additional narrative authority in the game. As the characters achieve their goals, more agency is unveiled. Leverage is triggered whenever a player rolls a specific result on the action charts. However, only the associated leverage from completed milestones can be triggered.

TREPIDATION

When things go wrong for a player (i.e. the dice are against her), she must select one of the five unique trepidations listed on her character sheet. Each trepidation represents something bad that a character suffers as a result of failure. These are mostly flavor that the player interprets on her own, adding to the larger story. Each 'point' of trepidation moves a character closer and closer to death, or some other inescapable conclusion.

When four of the five trepidations are checked off, the game ends.

FINALES

Finales represent the five different ways in which a particular character's story might end. In *Praxis*, only one character's finale is relevant (though there are advanced rules that can change this fact). The person who triggers the endgame narrates a scene based on one of her remaining finales. Since finales are tied to trepidation, whenever a trepidation is checked off, that potential finale for a character is gone. Not all finales are happy endings, so it's important to monitor which trepidation one is suffering at any given time.

SCENE TYPES

Praxis uses a scene-framing system that is foreign to traditional games. Players take turns directing scenes, essentially narrating situations the other players may or may not roleplay in. Based on the outcome of a particular scene, a player may achieve a milestone, suffer trepidation, or trigger leverage. It's possible for none of these things to happen as well.

There are seven basic scene types in *Praxis* and each has its own rules, which are explained in detail later. For now, just know that some scenes take place in the past, some have no dialogue, and some involve everyone. A short-hand explanation of scene types appears on each character sheet.

Each character has a different list of scenes available to her. When all of the scene types are checks off, the game ends.

OPENING SCENES

There are always two opening scenes to get the game started. One is a vignette and the other is an ensemble. These scenes do not count against a player's total number of scenes, nor can a player attempt to check off a milestone during one of these opening scene. Players are free to decide who directs these scenes, but in each *Praxis* the opening scenes are different.

See page 57 for more information on these scenes.

FLOW

Once the game starts, the flow of play is the same. A player directs a scene, setting the stage for what is to happen, roleplays (when necessary), and then passes the responsibility of directing another scene to the next player. In this regard, *Praxis* is like any roleplaying game, except that there is not a singular gamemaster, but rather the shared responsibility of directing the story.

Everyone gets a turn. Everyone gets a chance to shine.

DRAMA POINTS

Each player starts the game with one drama point and only gains more as a result of specific abilities, scene types, and trepidation. Drama points provide players with more control over the story.

Drama points are explained in greater detail on page 37.

DICE

Praxis uses six-sided dice, sometimes call d6s. Players generally roll about two or three dice at a time, but may roll as many as five.

Make sure you have enough dice for everyone.

PLAYING CARDS

A standard deck of playing cards is used to determine objectives, relationships, and story milestones. They aren't used for any other situations. If a deck isn't available, any random method of determining 1–4 can be used to replicate the suits of a poker deck. A 1d4, for example.

Each chart in Praxis is unique. When a card is drawn it is compared against a specific chart on a specific character sheet.

ALMOST THERE

You're just about ready to start making characters and building relationships. Get some friends together. Print out the character sheets. Shuffle a deck of playing cards. Get some pens and paper, and start playing.

A reference sheet for play appears on page 90.



MAKE CHARACTERS

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graph TD; A[MAKE CHARACTERS] --> B[CHOOSE ROLES]; B --> C[NAMES]; C --> D[DETERMINE OBJECTIVES]; D --> E[DETERMINE RELATIONSHIPS]; E --> F[WORLD BUILDING]; F --> G[CHOOSE QUIRK]; G --> H[CHOOSE ABILITY];
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CHOOSE ROLES

NAMES

DETERMINE OBJECTIVES

DETERMINE RELATIONSHIPS

WORLD BUILDING

CHOOSE QUIRK

CHOOSE ABILITY

PLAY GAME

OPENING VIGNETTE

OPENING ENSEMBLE

TAKE TURNS DIRECTING

TRACK STORY MILESTONES*

DIRECT PLOT TWIST*

DIRECT FINALE

DIRECT EPILOGUE*

*REPRESENTS OPTIONAL RULE

CHARACTERS

ROLES

Each player starts by selecting a role. Roles provide context, flavor, and some mechanical benefit. Who you are is as important as what you are doing. The game changes every time by merely including new roles and answering questions differently.

One thing that separates historic life and modern life is the cultural evolution of roles into goals; your place in society vs. your relationships. It's also what separates traditional roleplaying games from modern storytelling games. Who you are is only half the equation of your role in the group. Who you know is the other half. Changing one means you impact the other. And this is strange to players who are used to creating characters in a vacuum.

Who cares if I change my character's birthplace half-way through the game, right? Well. The people playing with you do. Who *you* are affects who *we* are.

The roles can be found on pages 74 through 87.

In *The Black Monk*, the characters are undying individuals forced to toil at mundane and strange tasks. Elysia is their 'prison.' This is what keeps them together. Advanced players might look for some cohesion that allows characters from disparate backgrounds, but it won't be easy to pull together. *Praxis* doesn't control how you play, but any deviations players make from the original intentions fall squarely on them.

THE WALKTHROUGH

At the end of each segment is an example of four players who are about to play *Praxis*. The walkthrough shows them setting up their game, as the players define their characters and the world. These examples reveal a thought process on setup. But these are not absolutes. Rather they are examples of how *I* do it.

There are no wrong answers.

WALKTHROUGH: ROLES AND NAMES

Four people sit down to play *The Black Monk*: Abe, Bianca, Carl, and Diana. They have selected the roles Belltower Watcher, Fireman, Mule Skinner, and Prisoner and named them August, Barron, Vesper, and Verillin, respectively. These players appear throughout the following pages.

Next, determine character objectives.

OBJECTIVES

Once roles have been selected, each player determines her character's objective. Each player draws a single card and compares the suit against the unique chart on her character sheet. Each character sheet lists four objectives tied to the four playing card suits.

Interpreting the objectives chart is open-ended. Define for your character what it means to be *rewarded for a job well done*. Or a *new deal*. The charts reveal prompts to spark the imagination. They are not limitations. Character objectives are tied to the character goals of a particular *Praxis*.

If you're struggling to figure out what your objective means, ask around, or **spend one drama point** to draw or pick something else.

WALKTHROUGH: OBJECTIVES

Using the players and characters from the previous page, we determine the following:

Abe draws a ♠, indicating *free self from eternal misery of work*. Abe concludes that his work is exhausting. Never blinking. Never wavering. He wants nothing more than to be free from this work. If only the Black Monk would come and end his suffering...

Bianca draws ♥ — *teaching the law of fire*. Since she is a Fireman, and already a tad unhinged about her responsibilities, Bianca decides her character constantly lectures the others about fire. "Not a single ash. Anywhere." The Fireman's obsession is alienating.

To say the least.

Carl draws ♦. This is *glory at the end of the road*. Carl is a Mule Skinner who sees his work as being the most vital to Elysia's survival. When this ordeal is over; when the moon returns, he wants some kind of recognition for the work he's done. A simple 'thank you' in the mean time would be nice.

Diana draws ♥, which is *recant your lies*. Diana is the Prisoner. She clearly doesn't belong here. And yet, something about her past suggests she does. Maybe if she just tells the truth...

Bear in mind, we are making these decisions without fleshing out the world. The characters are the center of the story here, so objectives and relationships are more important than the other elements in the game.

RELATIONSHIPS

Now it's time to determine the relationships the characters have with one another. In turn, each player selects one other character for her character to share a relationship with. This ensures every character has at least one. For each, draw one card and look at the unique chart on **your** character sheet.

Relationships between characters are dynamic. They can be positive or negative, but they aren't easy. In most cases, two players can easily work out the details of their characters' relationship. However, there are instances when two players do not like the result drawn. Topics of romance and sex, for instance, are uncomfortable for some. Take the safest route to the conclusion without crossing the line of your gaming comfort.

Conversely, dive in with both feet. This game tackles adult themes. Nothing is gained by avoiding them.

This is an important step in game play, but it can feel foreign to players coming from traditional gaming. The walkthrough explains everything in-depth, using real examples.

WALKTHROUGH: RELATIONSHIPS

Abe would like to explore his relationship with Diana, so he selects their characters to have a pre-existing relationship. Drawing ♣ reveals *hollow*. Abe feels nothing for Diana's prisoner character, treating her like the guilty piece of trash he believes she is.

The unique relationship charts for each role, mixed with the dynamic of picking someone to share a relationship with, provide numerous avenues of play. Had Abe selected Bianca or drawn a ♦, the results would have been much different.

Bianca decides she and Carl know one another. Another ♣ is drawn, but because Bianca's character sheet is different, this indicates a *dying/fading from too much contact* relationship. Bianca and Carl are the heart of Elysia, performing the bulk of the work. But Bianca's obsession with the 'law of fire' is a drain on Carl's soul. Her adherence to an impossible code has caused Carl to pull away. Hard.

The players continue in this manner until everyone has selected a character to have a relationship with.

Since Bianca elected to have a relationship with Carl, Carl must pick someone else. Similarly, since Abe has already established a relationship with Diana, Diana must select someone else on her turn.

In the rare instance a character cannot select someone to have a relationship with, that player skips this step.

WORLD BUILDING

This stage is where players add details to the canon before the game starts. *Praxis* games open with a short premise, and players add to this premise by answering questions. Each character sheet includes two questions, but each player answers only one from her sheet.

The Black Monk is set in a strange, desolate fantasy world. The characters all live in the same village (Elysia), where they work and wait for the Black Monk to return. Players should consider putting the characters in a prison compound, or a strange walled city without an exit. Anyone not comfortable playing a game without the normal rigors of a fantasy setting would be wise to avoid this game altogether.

Each answer is kept secret until all players have answered one question, at which time the answers are revealed to the group. These answers are canonical.

No one can change your answer for you.

Character and player knowledge are not universal. Just because the players all hear the answers does not mean that the characters share in canonical facts.

These questions are answered in secret and revealed to the group in any order. Your answers aren't affected by the rest of the group.

WALKTHROUGH: WORLD BUILDING

Abe elects to answer the first question from his character sheet: *"Who among you is unprepared for the black monk's return?"*

The easy answer here is Diana, but Abe decides to go with Bianca, playing upon her obsessive tendencies. Bianca isn't ready for the Black Monk's return, despite all her preparations. Emotionally, she's ill-fit to be the Fireman. Physically, she's awash with stress.

This also plays in with their relationship and now he knows why.

The players reveal their answers, one at a time. A lot of information is revealed here. Write down what you need to and explore ideas that intersect.

For instance, if another player also selected Abe or Diana for her world building question, how does that impact what Abe has established?

Reconcile issues that don't add up and feel free to leave some things vague so you can explore them during play. Ultimately, the person answering the question has final say.

Note: Some world building questions may affect other characters. This may imply a relationship, but it does not impart a relationship.

QUIRKS

Each character sheet includes three quirks. Players choose one quirk to round out their characters. Quirks are roleplaying prompts. There are no rules on how to use them and you are welcome to ignore them. Don't let them narrow your play and don't feel like you need to honor them 100%. Play off them and make your character unique.

They are included to help the game start faster.

WALKTHROUGH: QUIRKS

Abe looks over his characters sheet and selects *an ancient bopne staff, carved by the previous watcher* from the list of three options.

To round this out further, Abe suggests that the previous watcher became the Black Monk, giving him the staff as a way of signalling for him. But it's been so long, Abe has forgotten this detail. Or how to use the staff.

The remaining players choose character quirks they are comfortable with.

ABILITIES

Each character sheet includes three abilities, and each player chooses one. Abilities give characters (and players) influence over the story in unique ways. No two abilities are the same, so each session is made different by the combination of abilities at play.

Abilities impact the game at either a micro or macro level.

WALKTHROUGH: ABILITIES

Abe looks over his sheet and sees the Belltower Watcher can avoid his first two points of trepidation. The *watcher* ability is nice for staying out of trouble.

Watcher: Lose one drama point. You may ignore your first two points of trepidation.

The rest of the players follow suit, selecting abilities for the characters based on what they've generated so far.

THE REST OF THE SHEET

The remaining elements of scenes, milestones, leverage, trepidation, and finales are all explained later. Everyone is ready to play.

If you already know how to play *Praxis*, jump ahead to page 57 for details about the two opening scenes. Otherwise, the rules of play start on page 28 and the scene types begin on page 46.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERS

Characters are comprised of a number of elements. Players need to understand they are building three-dimensional characters with wants they can't always satisfy. The choices players make form complex relationships.

That's a lot to expect if you're only going to be playing for four hours.

When players make choices during character creation that intersect in strange or uncomfortable ways, that's good. Conflict is the heart of drama. Internal conflict is where the best characters come from. Take your time to reconcile all the information going on at the table before moving on...

THREE DIMENSIONS

The first dimension of a character is what. As in, *what* is she?

She is the mother of a sickly child.

The second dimension of a character is *what does she want*?

She wants her life back.

The third dimension of a character is what stops her from getting what she wants. This third dimension is critical to making an interesting character full of *ethos*, *logos*, and/or *pathos* (see page 72).

A character might be good with a rifle. She may even want to go home to see her family, but she can't because her friends need her. Such a character is more complex than one who gets her way all the time.

Characters with personal obstacles in front of them are more fun to roleplay. Instead of focusing on how to 'win,' these characters have built in dramatic conflict.

RESULTS

Praxis is a game where the successes and failures all flow together to build a story. 'Losing' not only adds drama, it advances the story. Look to the ingredients to inform your ideas.



THE BELLTOWER WATCHER

Names: August, Gozen, Gray, Magog

The Belltower Watcher stands atop the belltower all day, waiting for the Black Monk's return. He never blinks. Never averts his gaze. He is the watchful eye upon a dead village going no where. Everyday, he waits for a sign of the Black Monk and wishes his fate was something else.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ Tear Down the Belltower
- ♦ Find Inner Worth (Again)
- ♥ Find the Lost Graves
- ⊙ Free Self From Eternal Misery of Work

August sees the work as habitual toil. This can't go on.

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ Hollow
- ♦ An Opportunity That Has Not Manifested (Yet)
- ♥ Voyuer
- ♠ Disgust

Verillin is trash and August feels nothing for her

WORLD BUILDING

- ⊙ Who among you is unprepared for the black monk's return?
- Why do you stand watch for the others? What about them makes you care (despite never showing your true feelings)?

Barron is so obsessed with her work, that she can't see the forest for the trees. She's an emotional wreck.

QUIRKS

- ⊙ An ancient bone staff, carved by the previous watcher
- Bloody tears that have stained your skin
- Jaw bolted shut, yet you still speak

Though August has forgotten its importance

ABILITIES

Anarch: When directing a fork, other player gains one trepidation instead of a drama point. Trepidation gained this way does not trigger the endgame.

Pride: During an ensemble, you may remove yourself from the scene at any time without impacting the scene. In addition, you may take one other character with you if you so choose.

Watcher: Lose one drama point. You may ignore your first two points of trepidation.

SCENES

- Fork*
- Flashback Interlude
- Interlude
- Interrogation
- Monologue
- Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

- Target player* makes a choice
- Flashback with two characters
- Two characters with a relationship
- Ask five questions
- Deliver a speech in character
- Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

- Climb to the Crying Prince >>
- Drink from Cup of Memories >>
- Evict a Citizen of Elysia >>
- Show Respect When Earned >>
- Sound the Bell >>

LEVERAGE

- Direct another scene
- Gain two drama points
- Gain one ability
- Give one trepidation
- Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

- Blind >>
- Loss of Status >>
- Teeth Fall Out >>
- Undeath >>
- Wisdom Regression >>

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

- Black Monk Rejects You
- Banished
- Voice Lost
- Crawl Back into the Earth
- Death

PUSHING LIMITS

MILESTONES

Milestones are specific goals unique to each character. They represent elements of a character's accomplishments over the course of the story. Each role has its own list of five milestones. Some characters may only complete a few, while others may ignore this part of play entirely. However, completing all a character's milestones is one of the endgame triggers.

Milestones are simple enough to use, though foreign to most roleplaying games. Milestones are 'events' players race toward when writing out a character's story.

An example of Abe's milestones:

MILESTONES		LEVERAGE
<input type="checkbox"/> Climb to the Crying Prince	>>	Direct another scene
<input type="checkbox"/> Drink from Cup of Memories	>>	Gain two drama points
<input type="checkbox"/> Evict a Citizen of Elysia	>>	Gain one ability
<input type="checkbox"/> Show Respect When Earned	>>	Give one trepidation
<input type="checkbox"/> Sound the Bell	>>	Remove one trepidation

Each character sheet lists five milestones. Each milestone indicates a significant event in the character's story. They are vague enough for unique interpretations, while being specific enough to be tailored to each role.

Milestones can be completed in any order. Only one player can reach all five milestones.

To complete a milestone a character must:

- be in a scene that allows for milestones
- perform an action related to that milestone in the scene
- successfully **get what you want** or **make things happen**, which requires rolling dice on the respective chart (see pages 42–44)

Some scene types do not allow for milestones. Flashbacks and forks, for instance. Players may not even attempt to roll dice in these scenes.

Since some milestones are vague, it is up to the players involved whether or not a game action qualifies as a milestone.

If a die roll results in failure, the milestone is not checked off. Story-wise, this means someone attempted to do something, and failed, or not significantly enough to warrant mentioning as a milestone. How each player writes that into the game is up to them.

TIMING

In a scene with more than one character, the director has the first opportunity to roll dice for a milestone. Under no circumstances can someone complete a milestone before the director.

MILESTONE WALKTHROUGH

Abe wants to *drink from the cup of memories*. At this point in the story, he hasn't done anything to introduce the cup into the story. So, Abe figures he must go somewhere special to find the cup, fill it with someone's blood, and then drink from it.

Since this doesn't require a lot of interaction, Abe selects a vignette. Before narrating, he chooses to roll dice — **get what you want** — and narrate the results with the vignette.

Abe spends one drama point and rolls three dice. He rolls 1, 1, and 3, a total of 5. Horrible. While a 5 is a success and he can mark off the milestone, Abe also suffers one trepidation (explained on page 32).

This example continues on page 32.



LEVERAGE

Leverage represents additional narrative authority in the game. As the characters achieve their goals, more agency is unveiled. Leverage is triggered whenever a player rolls a specific result on the action charts. However, only the associated leverage from completed milestones can be triggered.

For instance, these are Abe's milestones and leverage.

MILESTONES		LEVERAGE
<input type="checkbox"/> Climb to the Crying Prince	>>	Direct another scene
<input type="checkbox"/> Drink from Cup of Memories	>>	Gain two drama points
<input type="checkbox"/> Evict a Citizen of Elysia	>>	Gain one ability
<input type="checkbox"/> Show Respect When Earned	>>	Give one trepidation
<input type="checkbox"/> Sound the Bell	>>	Remove one trepidation

Each character sheet lists five milestones and five associated leverages.

Whenever a player checks off any given milestone, the leverage to its right is unlocked. That leverage can now be used whenever leverage is triggered on the appropriate chart.

LEVERAGE WALKTHROUGH

Abe has checked off *climb to the crying prince* and *evict a citizen of Elysia* milestones, indicating that he has also unlocked the *direct another scene* and *gain one ability* leverages. If Abe were to roll a '10' on bring harm to others, he could choose to trigger either of those leverages (but not both).

TREPIDATION

Trepidation represents the outcome of a character failing or reaching too far. Each character sheet has a list of five points of trepidation. Most trepidation is negative and each line of the sheet impacts the character's finale. When trepidation is rolled as a result of action, the player chooses one of the five trepidation from her character sheet and marks it off.

An example of Abe's character's trepidation and finales:

TREPIDATION*		FINALE
<input type="checkbox"/> Blind	»	Black Monk Rejects You
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of Status	»	Banished
<input type="checkbox"/> Teeth Fall Out	»	Voice Lost
<input type="checkbox"/> Undeath	»	Crawl Back into the Earth
<input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom Regression	»	Death

When a player marks off a trepidation, she also marks off the associated finale. In addition, that player **gains one drama point**. This is one of a handful of ways drama points are gained.

*Abe suffers one point of trepidation and marks off *loss of status*, and therefore he can no longer develop the *banished* finale.*

Trepidation is fast and loose. The player suffering the trepidation may interpret the results however she likes. But they are designed to be dramatic events of the story. A public shaming, for instance, shouldn't just be called out for lousy cookies at the bake sale. It should have resounding effects.

When Abe loses status, he cuts off connection with everyone. He seals off the stairs of the tower and retreats to his perch. If the next player chooses to direct an ensemble after Abe's scene, it is assumed to be much later, to honor Abe's scene. Otherwise, what's the point?

TREPIDATION WALKTHROUGH

Abe attempts to reach a milestone by drinking from the cup of memories. He succeeds, but also earns a point of trepidation. He has already marked off *wisdom regression*, so he selects *teeth fall out*.

Obviously he did something wrong while preparing the cup. As the Prisoner's memories flood into his mind, Abe awakens to find his teeth on the ground next to the spilled cup. Abe adds to the canon that he is hiding his disfigurement from the others. He may know the truth about the Prisoner, he'd have to open his mouth to tell the others.



GAME PLAY

GAME PLAY

In *Praxis*, players take turns directing scenes involving some or all characters. Being a director is like being a gamemaster. You'll decide what the scene is about, who is in it, where it takes place, and so on. But you won't have to work from a blank slate. *Praxis* utilizes milestones to guide the story and help directors set up scenes, if necessary. These prompts give a launching point for ideas. Ultimately, you'll want to frame scenes that help you reach your milestones.

Each turn the active player (director) determines the scene type she would like to direct — ensemble, fork, interrogation, etc. — from the list of available scene types on her character sheet. Not all character sheets have the same scene options, or the same number of scenes.

For instance, the Belltower Watcher can direct up to 3 interrogations, while the Fireman can direct only 1. Additionally, the Belltower Watcher cannot direct an ensemble.

Once the director has selected the scene type, she selects location, mood, weather phenomenon, or whatever themes are needed to frame the scene properly. All this informs who is in the scene, what it's about, and what is happening.

Details on how to frame each scene type are explained in the appropriate sections. For now, you just need to know how it works.

Once the players have a sense of what is going on, they can roleplay their characters within the scene. Roleplaying a scene is essentially engaging the ongoing conversation of the story — arguing, compromising, consoling, fighting, negotiating, or outright undermining one another. This is the heart of the game: these interactions within the scenes. The results of these scenes compound onto one another to create a full and complex narrative (which is a fancy way of saying tell a story).

This last point is critical, because it is what separates a campfire story from *Praxis*: conflict within a scene could end in compromise or die rolling; milestones or trepidation. Or some combination of the above. These results aren't always guaranteed. A die roll could fail, resulting in a character losing face in front of an entire community, or a foot from a tragic accident.

And these results form a story unique to each gaming group.

Dramatic conflict is an essential ingredient in stories. Characters shouldn't always get what they want without repercussions. And *Praxis* measures that with die rolls (see page 41). It's not that success isn't good for a story, but if the characters never face challenges, there are no surprises.

IMPORTANT

If you've only played traditional roleplaying games, *Praxis* presents its own challenges. Scene framing isn't much different from traditional play. It gets the players into dramatic roleplaying situations, as any game would. But instead of having a gamemaster who controls the ebb and flow of the story, the players take on this responsibility by setting scenes vital to their characters' interests.

For newer players, don't worry about all that 'traditional roleplaying hooey.' This game is designed to support you. It wants you to play it well.

Throughout this book are examples of how to setup a scene so the players can roleplay. There's also a game aid on drivethrurpg.com called the *Protocol Primer* that can help here if these ideas seem foreign. In any case, you already know how to roleplay. *Praxis* isn't difficult. It just shifts the traditional mindset of who is in charge.

Sometimes a director might provide a lot of information when framing a scene. Other times she may give players bare bones, expecting them to bring something to an 'empty canvas.' Neither method is wrong.

WEAVING THE STORY

Praxis is about the path to getting what you want. Characters have unique milestones that point to their objectives. They also have trepidation to impede their successes. Whenever a milestone is reached (or trepidation is suffered), it's checked off a player's character sheet. Together, milestones and trepidations form the complex web of a character's story

Both have their own sections (pages 29 and 32).

Success and failure are just different forks on the narrative path. Even if you fail at everything, you are still writing your story. Understand that 'winning' and 'losing' are merely ingredients that flow together. The effects of "losing" add as much to the drama as anything else. Stories are informed by the results, whether the players view them as positive or negative.

Abe has rolled poorly and failed to accomplish one of his milestones — *evict a citizen of Elysia* — so he suffers one trepidation: *blind*. Abe must now explain how his character's failure has led to this problem. This can go a number of ways, but Abe decides the person he tried to evict was more powerful than he expected. Glass and powder were flung into his eyes during the scuffle. Once he was blinded, he fell and the other person ground the glass deeper into his face before running off. This does not stop Abe from roleplaying or being in scenes. But his story has taken a strange turn.

Had Abe succeeded, his story would go in another direction.

DRAMA POINTS

Drama points are a key ingredient of *Praxis*. They are used to break the rules, add to the existing canon, and give players advantages when rolling dice. Drama points can keep people out of scenes, change outcomes, and speed up play. The list of uses is nearly endless. They are your authority over the story.

Some designers call this narrative agency.

The rules on spending drama points are purposely vague. Anything is possible. Any rule you want to break, break it by **spending one drama point**. Want to avoid answering a question during an interrogation? Spend one drama point. Want to direct an additional scene or go out of turn? Spend drama points. Want to win a fight against another character? Spend more drama points than anyone else. Each section has specific rules and a few examples of how drama points can be used to break those rules.

A player once spent one drama point to have an interlude between herself and an NPC. And she roleplayed both characters.

It's counter-productive to list everything drama points can do, but the quick math of determining how to spend them is to calculate how many rules you are breaking. Each broken rule is one drama point.

Jumping into an interlude (see page 52) would be expensive, if you intend to also create dramatic conflict inside that scene.

Under no circumstances can drama points be used to check off additional abilities, milestones, or trepidation.

IMPORTANT

Drama points are mostly gained during fork scenes, when trepidation occurs, and under certain character abilities. You may have anywhere from three to five points at any given time, though some roles have more points than others. Players can hoard points or spend them during play. Either style is valid.

DRAMA POINT WALKTHROUGH

Abe wants to direct an interlude with Bianca, but the two do not share a relationship. Before the scene, he spends one drama point, draws a card, and checks it against his relationship chart. Abe now has a relationship with Bianca (*disgust*). The pair can now appear in interludes together, regardless of who directs.

During the interlude, Bianca has decided she has seen enough and she spends one drama point to end the scene before Abe can roll for his milestone. If Abe still wants to roll, he'd have to spend one drama point to continue the scene.

THE CANON

A story's canon is defined as everything we know to be true. Every time a player defines a facet about her character, or answers a world building question, or something happens in the story, the canon grows. The canon is not law, but it's as close to it as possible.

Players disrespecting or contradicting the canon deserve to have their contributions ruined as well.

This doesn't mean the canon cannot be changed. A good twist is always appreciated. Great stories pull the rug from out under us, defying what we know to be true.

“Oh man. I thought he was dead.”

But the players shouldn't be allowed to undo everything out of whim.

That's where **making things happen** comes in. Changing the established canon, or taking agency away from another character is not guaranteed. There is risk in trying to change things. And despite the fact the player is the one taking this risk, the character is the one who suffers if she fails.

This does not mean that player can't add details by spending drama points. Adding to the world is different than altering the canon.

This is a game of storytelling and not crunchy mechanics after all.

Players know the difference between mucking with the world and adding to it. The **making things happen** chart is there to protect players from being steamrolled over by other aggressive players.

If players are using the optional plot twist rules on page 61, the director of the plot twist may alter one element of the canon during her scene.

MILESTONES AND TREPIDATION

Milestones are what a character does. **Trepidation** is what happens to the character. Whenever a character marks off one (or both), the story changes. The player is responsible for addressing how these ingredients affect the game, noting both milestones and trepidation have impact on the story, but neither is 'good' or 'bad.' They are merely moments in the story that change the direction of the narrative.

And that's a good thing.

EBB AND FLOW

There's an inherent logic to scene framing. Imagine you are playing a 4-player game. Each turn around the table is an act of the story and each scene is a scene in a movie. Movies do not go from crowd shot to crowd shot to crowd shot, or action to action to action. Instead, the scenes bend and twist their way through the story as short interruptions in what you expect to happen next.

If a story follows the logic of this-then-this-then-this, why are you watching it? Or playing in it?

It especially works when players are flexible and committed. The scene types and prompts give you the tools you need to fill a blank page with new ideas. Taking what comes your way is the hallmark of good writing. What doesn't work is when a stubborn player tries to force an agenda onto a scene and make a fifth interlude in a row, strips another player's character of agency, etc.

I cannot stress this enough. Your goal is not to win anything.

The roles, motivations, relationships, world building, scene prompts and types, and locations all work together to form a story collage. Resisting what the game is designed to do and trying to create new tensions that weren't there before is a great way to spoil your evening.

Being raised on books, movies, and television, people have an inherent understanding of drama and story. Not every person commands the vocabulary to explain why a jump-cut from one scene to another felt awkward, but "you know it when you see it." The same is true of characters no one cares about, or story arcs that go nowhere. *Praxis* scene types take care of a lot of the messy work for players, leaving the group with the creative and fun elements people read books for in the first place.

PASSAGE OF TIME

Scenes are snapshots of a story. Each one takes place in rectilinear order, unless there is a flashback, but it is not necessary for them to occur one after the other in chronological order. That is to say, a great deal of time can pass between scenes. One scene can end with a cliffhanger, devoid of resolution, while the next scene takes place a week later, making us wonder what happened in the intervening time.

Good stories make us ask questions. Nailing down the resolution happens when the story starts coming to a close.

ENDING THE GAME

The *Praxis* finale is triggered when one player completes four of the five trepidation, all five milestones, *or* marks off all ten scenes from a character sheet. Once this happens, the player who ends the game writes the finale based on the remaining finale's available on her sheet. If there are no remaining finales, the story ends on the last trepidation that was marked off.

More information about finales appear on page 63.

Finales are tied to the remaining trepidations on a character sheet. Each trepidation checked off also checks off a potential finale.



DICE

There are three occasions in *Praxis* when dice are used to resolve problems: **bringing harm to others**, **getting what you want**, and **making things happen**. These broad concepts are explained below. Each has its own specific rules and charts for dealing with problems.

One doesn't just roll dice to roll them. Instead, dice are used in roleplaying games whenever there is conflict or crisis to overcome. How and when you deal with this conflict is up to you. After all, a character can always step away from a situation, compromise, or choose to lose a fight.

Praxis allows for a greater deal of inter-character conflict than most GMless games. You can actually hurt each other, instead of ending a scene with a cliffhanger or spending drama points to step away from conflict. Dice bring a level of uncertainty to the conflict.

Praxis uses a game system called **5-10-20**. The basic mechanic of 5-10-20 is to roll dice, add them together, and compare the total against the values on the specific chart. Since there are only three actions to take in *Praxis*, there are only three charts.

The dice pool starts at 2d6 [two traditional six-sided dice]. Players may choose to roll additional dice by spending drama points (on a one for one basis). These dice are added to the total. Should an action or ability result in an **advantage**, that player rolls one additional die per advantage. As one might expect, disadvantages remove dice. Advantages add dice to the dice pool before disadvantages remove dice.

Note: At no point can a dice pool have more than five dice.

Abe wants to hurt someone. He has an ability that gives him an advantage during a physical conflict. In addition, he spends one drama point to roll one additional die. Abe rolls 4 dice in total. He could spend one more drama point to increase his dice pool to 5, however additional drama points beyond that would be lost, as his dice pool can never exceed 5. Other players could now spend points to give Abe disadvantages, if they wanted.

Once the dice are rolled, they are added together. There is no other math. There are no +1 or -1 modifiers to compute. Nothing can change the result once the dice are rolled. Drama points cannot be spent after the fact. The total is then compared against the appropriate chart. If a roll does not exceed a given value (5, 10, or 20), compare the total against the value below it.

Each action has its own inherent rules and results (see pages 42–44).

BRINGING HARM TO OTHERS

At times, *Praxis* can be competitive. At other times, you just want characters to suffer. In either case, **bringing harm to others** is how you take other characters down a peg. *Praxis* does not have hit points, but it does have **trepidation**. Trepidation slowly builds up and eventually pushes a character toward failure (or death).

A player might have very specific reasons for wanting to do this. For instance, another player has one unchecked milestone remaining and you want to knock her back a step. Or maybe just to make a point. Or put her in her place. You get the idea.

Use this chart when harming others, or making others do what you want. You can harm another character or an **NPC**, but she must be in the scene in order to be harmed. Actions taken on this chart **rarely** lead to a character reaching a milestone.

- 0 acting character suffers trepidation
in addition, choose:
the target character may immediately bring harm to you, or
the target character gains two drama points
- 5 both characters suffer trepidation
- 10 choose:
target character suffers trepidation, or
acting player triggers leverage
- 20 target character suffers trepidation, and choose:
acting player triggers leverage, or
target player loses two drama points

Note: If someone brings harm to a character and that character has not acted, she in turn can bring harm to another character before the scene ends.

EXAMPLE

Abe and Bianca have been having trouble lately and he wants some closure on their infighting. Abe decides to direct an interlude where they can argue things out in person. Things don't go well, however. At the close of the scene, Abe attempts to **bring harm** to Bianca and rolls on the chart.

Spending two drama points, Abe rolls four dice and gets a 19 — 1 short of 20, the best result in the game. Looking at the 10 result, Abe selects the second option of Bianca gaining one trepidation. Looking over her list, Bianca selects *trapped*. Her character won't be coming around to any of the group meetings for a while. Adding to the canon, Bianca excludes her character from future scenes for two weeks.

GETTING WHAT YOU WANT

In *Praxis*, you can always do whatever it is you want. But for your actions to have lasting effects in the story, you're going to have to work for it. **Getting what you want** is how you accomplish things important to you. It doesn't matter what the odds are or how difficult something may seem. The only thing that matters is whether or not the action produces lasting results.

If you're trying to check off a milestone, chances are you'll need this chart. A great example of getting what you want is anytime an element of the environment (NPCs, bureaucracy, laws, etc.) is between you and your goals.

Use this chart to get what you want. Successful actions taken on this chart **almost always** lead to a character reaching a milestone.

- 0** acting character suffers trepidation
in addition, choose:
acting player loses two drama points*, or
uncheck one milestone
 - 5** acting character succeeds and suffers trepidation
 - 10** choose:
acting character succeeds, or
acting player triggers leverage
 - 20** acting character succeeds, and choose:
acting player triggers associated leverage, or
acting player unlocks an additional ability
- * this option is only available if the acting player has two or more drama points

EXAMPLE

Looking over his milestones, Abe sees *climb to the crying prince*, and decides his character wants to enter a forbidden part of Elysia to locate the crying prince. If Abe can get climb to the top of the singing tree (something Abe has made up), he can reach the prince.

If Abe succeeds at his roll, he can mark off the milestone and narrate the effects of meeting the crying prince. If he fails and suffers trepidation, he can mark off any one trepidation and explain how his failure changes the story.

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

When something doesn't serve a character's personal needs and it doesn't hurt another character, it must (by default) impact the world. Changing the world for the better (or worse) can be a lot of work. That's when characters start **making things happen**.

Making things happen is the most abstract of the three rolls. While the player still needs to have a story reason for how the character is changing the world, how the world changes is sometimes more macro than a simple 'get what you want' situational roll.

Use this chart whenever a player wants to change the world, without the character getting involved, or wants to alter the game canon. Successful actions taken on this chart **can sometimes** lead to a character hitting a milestone, but oftentimes not.

This chart is meant to get NPCs to behave differently, or have the police arrive at an inopportune moment. This is the one chart a player rolls on when she is not in a scene. The extent to which the world changes is up to the players. A player cannot, for instance, alter physics, or change a nation's entire economic system.

- 0 acting character suffers trepidation
- 5 acting player changes the world and loses one drama point
- 10 choose:
 - acting player changes the world, or
 - acting player triggers leverage
- 20 acting player changes the world, and choose:
 - acting player gains two drama points, or
 - acting player removes one trepidation

EXAMPLE

Abe thinks the local school board should ban some questionable books, but doesn't think his character should be involved. Since this is a lot bigger than just sneaking into a meeting, Abe explains how the policy will change through meetings, petitions, and make forceful phone calls to key members of the PTA. Finally, the superintendent is cornered by an angry mother in a parking lot, where threatening remarks are made.

To see if any of this works, however, Abe still has to make a die roll. Even if he fails the roll, the actions take place and fallout ensues. Even though Abe isn't directly doing anything, trepidation still falls on his shoulders if the roll fails.

See page 38 for more on **canon** and making things happen.

NPCS

Praxis focuses on the characters, putting them at the center of the drama. Collectively, the characters are the protagonists of your story, though some may work against the common good. Nevertheless, the four to six characters are the focus of the game.

The opposite of a player character is an NPC.

NPC is an acronym for non-player character. These are characters who may appear during play that no single player controls. A cop on the street, a bartender at a restaurant, and a cashier at the check-out line are all NPCs. Sometimes they are the background noise from the world and sometimes they interact with the player characters. How often they appear and how much they influence play is up to you.

NPCs' value to the story never trumps the characters' value. They are easy enough to kill off, should they become a nuisance.

Creating them for the game is easy. If you're the director, you can create one NPC during any scene. Each scene type provides information on how NPCs are used in those scenes. When you are not the director, you can **spend one drama point** to create an NPC in a scene, following the same rules.

Keeping track of NPCs should be done on a separate piece of paper or index card easily available to all players.

Whoever adds the NPC to the scene plays that character in the scene. Later, this NPC can be played by anyone.

If an NPC suffers **trepidation**, she dies.

DEATH

Death can add a great deal to stories. In fact, death can happen easily in some games. But most games don't allow players to continue playing without a character. In *Praxis*, players can direct the story in significant ways as if their characters had lived. If a scene requires a player to join and her character is dead, she can either play an NPC or sit out, though she would still be required to play her character if a **flashback** required it.

It should be obvious that dead characters cannot accomplish milestones.

Some trepidation can force characters out of the game without being dead. The terms should be obvious, especially if it's the last remaining trepidation a player has been avoiding to check off: abandoned, bed-ridden, left-behind, and so on. The character is out of the story, but not the player.

SCENES

SCENE TYPES

There are seven basic scene types (listed in alphabetical order): ensemble, fork, intercut, interrogation, interlude, monologue, and vignette. Each type has its own inherent operating system, with different characters in it. An ensemble, for instance, includes all the characters, but an interlude has only two. In addition, some scenes may be designated as flashbacks. These scenes take place before the opening scene of the story.

When a player takes her turn as director, she selects from the list of remaining scene types on her character sheet. Taking into account the factors of the relationships, world, conflicts, and her own milestones, she sets the scene, giving the players in the scene enough information to roleplay. It's the director's job to make things as clear or vague as necessary to achieve these ends. If the scene is going to have conflict, this needs to be stated. If the scene is an attempt to reach a milestone, this also needs to be stated.

Scenes sometimes go in unplanned directions. Players shouldn't be upset about this. It's the nature of *Praxis* (and GMless games) in general. If the scene goes in a direction that doesn't fit your plans or that you just don't like, just end the scene.

All scenes should be allowed to run their course. Not too short and definitely not too long. Players can slow down play and distract from the story if the scene runs too long and voyages into unrelated territory. Knowing when to stop is a semi-intuitive (and teachable) sense. It's almost an art form. Give everyone their moment in the sun, reward ingenious ideas, and know when it's time to cut the action.

Once you've resolved the scene's primary focus, you're done.

ENDING A SCENE

A scene can end organically, e.g. everyone knows it's over.

A scene can end when the director calls cut.

A scene can end when a character walks out of the scene.

A scene can end with unresolved conflict.

I would punch you, but I don't want to roll dice.



ENSEMBLES

Ensembles include all the characters together in one place. The director determines the focus and location. She may preempt the scene as much as she likes, but once the ensemble starts, the players should let things develop organically. There's no end-point to run toward and the director can't tell anyone how to play their characters.

The director still has the right to call "scene" at any moment, but any player may override the director by **spending one drama point** to end a scene early, or to extend a scene. Once this point is spent, the original director no longer has authorial control, unless she also **spends one drama point**.

Any player may **spend one drama point** to take on the role of an established NPC instead of her character. The director may take on the role of an NPC in the ensemble, instead of her character, without spending a point. However if anyone takes on an NPC role in an ensemble, she cannot attempt to hit a milestone.

Under no circumstance should a player take on the role of two characters in an ensemble, but switching (once) from one character to another is fine.

The director must address why everyone is in the same place, at the same time, dealing with the same issue.

Characters that have disappeared and suddenly reappeared need an explanation. If you don't want to be responsible for explaining how a missing character has suddenly reappeared, don't select an ensemble or be prepared to spend one drama point to keep her out of the scene.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to keep one player out of the scene.

MILESTONES

It's possible for any character in an ensemble to check off a milestone, so long as the action matches the milestone.

ENSEMBLE WALKTHROUGH

Abe needs to complete his *sound the bell* milestone, so he's signalling the bell at the top of the tower, in an attempt to summon everyone together. Before the scene can start, Abe decides to **get what you want** and then roleplay the scene from there. Rolling a '10,' he succeeds and proceeds to play the scene under the auspices that he successfully sounds the bell, summing everyone to the base of the tower.

FLASHBACKS

Flashbacks are tied to a specific scene type (ensemble, interlude, etc.) and must be set in the past, before the story began. The director determines the focus of the flashback, as well as the location. The director may preempt the scene as much as she likes, but once the flashback begins, let things develop organically. The director still has the right to call “scene” at any moment, but any player may override the director by **spending one drama point** to end or extend a scene.

The important distinction of a flashback vs. playing out of order is a flashback takes place *before* everything started to happen. A flashback might even reveal a time when characters felt differently about one another.

Flashbacks are not there to fill in the gaps of the story we already know. A good flashback takes us to a time and place we didn't expect. Sometimes, it adds a twist we didn't see coming.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to turn a flashback into a flashforward or a dream sequence.

MILESTONES

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during a flashback.

The past is the past. Milestones that change the canon before the canon is canonical makes for confusing sentences.

FLASHBACK WALKTHROUGH

Abe directs a flashback interlude involving his character and Bianca's. It's before things were bad between them. Abe decides it's the day they first met in Elysia. It's nighttime and the two are sharing mule meat around the fire.

From there, the players can roleplay their characters, giving voice to their concerns.

FORK

Forks are different from other *Praxis* scenes. They are quick decision-making scenes where the director poses a problem to another player. Essentially, the director creates a dilemma with only two options, leaving another player to choose one of two options. The choices do not require obvious conclusions or repercussions, but the choices should be clear and meaningful.

From this choice, the director then narrates the conclusion to the group, regardless of whether or not all the characters would know the outcome. At the end of the fork, the director and player **gain one drama point** each.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to follow up on the decision and offer another fork.

MILESTONES

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during a fork.

FORK WALKTHROUGH

Abe posits to Bianca her character has one mule left. Her choices are to tell the group that there's no more food, or to kill the mule and deal with the consequences later. There is no need to establish where the scene takes place. Abe explains the fallout of Bianca's decision, once it's been made. Afterwards, **each player gains one drama point**.

INTERCUT

Intercuts are special scenes. They are only 90 seconds long. They can be about anything. Anything at all. They can involve any characters, but they have to be done in 90-seconds. In fact, from the moment you choose this scene type, you have 90 seconds to finish it.

You may want to use a timer.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to extend an intercut another 90 seconds.

MILESTONES

Only the director of an intercut may check off a milestone.

INTERCUT WALKTHROUGH

Abe writes a short vignette, then jumps to a short interlude between his character and Diana's. Then he switches to an interrogation, where he asks Bianca's character two questions. However, before she can answer the second question, the time is up.

INTERLUDES

Interludes involve two (and only two) characters with a pre-existing relationship, but neither character needs to be the director's. The director sets the scene based on the cards drawn. The scene runs as long as the director likes, without being self-indulgent — calling “scene” when the characters have said or done enough. An interlude involves only one location. If the characters leave the location (or reach a moment of conflict), the scene ends.

Interludes are mostly about the drama between two characters. While interludes can be used to advance the plot, this is secondary to the interpersonal actions and reactions of the characters. Let them explore their relationship in the context of the scene's focus.

Unlike an interrogation, both characters are the focus of the scene. Questions can be asked and ignored. Players can even respond with questions of their own, without consequence. Interludes provide an opportunity to focus the roleplaying and therefore the story. The best interludes advance a character's personality and the story's tension. Some even introduce more complications.

As always, be aware of where you are in the story. Early interludes reveal much about a character, while late interludes resolve tension about a character.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to put two characters into an interlude who do not share a relationship.

Spend one drama point to add a third character to the scene.

MILESTONES

Only the characters in the interlude may check off milestones.

INTERLUDE WALKTHROUGH

Abe directs an interlude involving his character and Bianca's. Abe wants to mark off his *show respect when earned* milestone and proceeds to set up a scene after Bianca has fed everyone. He helps her clean up after the fact, being attentive to what she's saying.

The pair roleplay the scene like any other. At the conclusion, Abe rolls to **get what you want** to see if he has successfully shows her the respect she has earned. Regardless of his success, afterwards Bianca uses this opportunity to lash out at Abe, rolling on **bringing harm to others**. She hopes to give him a point of trepidation to counter any successes he's had.



INTERROGATIONS

Interrogations are complicated to explain, but are quite simple once you understand the purpose. There are many ways to direct an interrogation, but the core concept involves one player asking another player up to five questions. What makes interrogations unique is how these questions are asked.

Interrogations focus the attention of the story on a single character or NPC. This is the moment in the story where players try to glean more information or press a character into a corner. Interrogations are an opportunity to learn more about a character, the plot, or the world.

METHOD

The director selects one player to take on the role of the interrogator and another player to become the subject.

The interrogator asks the subject up to five questions. The interrogator can be anything: a voice in someone's head, an application, a character, a diary, an NPC, or anything she can think up. The setting is flexible, too. The environment can be static, like a confessional, cubicle, or prison cell. Or the interrogator can ask the subject questions inside a montage that takes place over several days.

The subject must play her character or an NPC of the director's choosing.

This process is organic. The interrogation may be out-of-character as well, in which case the interrogator asks the questions in an abstract fashion, as though going down a list. Regardless, the questions can be anything befitting the director's setup.

The director can be intimately involved in the scene as the interrogator. Or she can be hands off by giving the reins to another player. Conversely, the director may choose to be the subject of an interrogation, setting up the scene and seeing where things lead.

Note: Unlike *Protocol*, drama points do not move during an interrogation.

QUESTIONS

The subject cannot say “no,” nor can the subject avoid answering the question **without spending one drama point**. If a question paints the subject into a corner, all the better.

An interrogation is not about the interrogator, but about the subject. Ask pointed questions. Avoid questions that can be reduced to short answers. “*Why are you waiting for your friends?*” beats “*Are we waiting for your friends?*” Avoid questions/interactions that are valueless (i.e. “How are you?” and then not listening to the answer).

ANSWERING A QUESTION WITH A QUESTION

It is easy to turn an interrogation into a conversation. Subjects get carried away or rambunctious, turning questions around on the interrogator. While a question is an acceptable answer, the interrogator doesn't have to answer the subject's question unless the subject **spends one drama point**.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to ask another question.

MILESTONES

Only the interrogator of the interrogation may check off a milestone.

INTERROGATION WALKTHROUGH

Abe is playing the voice of a mule's head, lying on Bianca's butcher table. If that sounds weird, welcome to *The Black Monk*.

Abe: "Why did you kill me?"

Bianca: "We need to eat. We are out of food. You are all that's left."

Abe: "But why you over me? Don't I need to eat, too?"

Bianca does not know what to say here. She spends one drama point not to answer.

Abe: "What happens to me now?"

Bianca: "I will skin the rest of you from the flesh, and cook everything, even the bone. We will eat everything we can from you, except the tainted meat and offal."

Abe: "You need to stay alive, but you didn't tell me why."

Notice how this isn't technically a question, but clearly implies one.

Bianca: "The Black Monk is coming back. Soon. He has to come soon. We are out of food. And patience. Everyone is so upset with one another. It's one thing to leave us here like this. But without food. We are doomed. If things don't change, we'll have to eat the prisoner."

Abe: "What are you waiting for? You should have eaten her first."

Bianca: "The Belltower Watcher thinks she's innocent. Or guilty. I don't know. He changes his mind all the time. But if she's innocent — and important to the Black Monk — we'll all be punished if we bring her harm. We can't eat her, unless there's no other choice. I won't starve because of her."

MONOLOGUES

Monologues are solo scenes where the director delivers a single speech that cannot be interrupted. The director must take on the role of her character or an NPC. The director also decides who else is at the location where the speech is delivered.

Monologues can go sideways fast. If the director wanders or strays from her point, the scene becomes incredibly indulgent. To borrow a metaphor, get to the ‘podium,’ say what you have to say, and get off the ‘stage’ fast.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to interrupt a monologue.

MILESTONES

Only the director of a monologue may check off a milestone, and *only* if she delivers the monologue in her character’s voice.

MONOLOGUE WALKTHROUGH

Abe stands at the top of the tower, unconcerned with who can hear him. “I have lost count of the hours since the sun first stood still in the sky. It feels like forever, but it could just be a brief moment. I don’t have the answers. I’m the warden. The guardian. The beacon of the Black Monk’s arrival. I’m tired, but I can’t sleep. I can’t rest my eyes for one moment. I must remain vigilant. Wait. Was that a shadow? A silhouette upon the earth, miles out from here? Or just another mirage, vexing me? I need to be sure before I sound the bell. I have to go out and look. I have to...”



OPENING SCENES

All *Praxis* games open with an opening **vignette** (page 58), followed by an opening **ensemble** (page 49). Select a random player to direct the vignette and another player to direct the ensemble. These do not count against the player's list of scenes. Milestones and trepidation cannot be gained in the opening vignette or ensemble.

If players are having trouble getting started, three different opening vignettes appear on page 68.

In *The Black Monk*, the opening vignette takes place in the distant past — the last time the Black Monk visited. The opening ensemble takes place yesterday, the last time everyone was in the same place at the same time, allowing the characters an opportunity to talk about their fears of the Black Monk.

After those two scenes, play develops normally.

OPENING SCENE WALKTHROUGH

In the opening vignette, Abe describes a scene about the Black Monk putting shackles on the Prisoner and walking away. When he's done, he passes play to a random player (Diana), who sets up the opening ensemble.

Diana sets a scene at the base of the tower, where the Prisoner is chained. The others are there to find out more about her, as she disrupts their patterns.

From here, the players take turn directing scenes. Use any order you like, so long as everyone gets a chance to direct.

MILESTONES

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during an opening scene.

VIGNETTES

Vignettes are short scenes that set the atmosphere for the story. They do not involve dialog or character interaction. The director simply narrates a brief scene about anything relevant to the game world. A vignette takes no more than a minute or two to describe.

Keep your vignettes short and simple. Narrate enough information to set the tone, but don't overdo it by dragging the action on too long. Concise sentences are a storyteller's best friend.

Vignettes are an opportunity to show what else is going on in the story that doesn't involve the main characters. They can highlight a single event, resolve a crisis from another scene, or set up future tension. No one can interrupt a vignette, so explore the game space as much as you like.

Vignettes are a great way to check off a milestone.



Vignette are like the establishing shot of a movie, or the landscape shots between tense scenes. The reader or viewer needs a break from the action, just to cool down. Vignettes can also be the action between dramatic scenes. A chase on foot, a fight between two combatants, or a full-scale war. Sometimes they are cut-scenes or voice overs. Whatever you like. The key is to keep the vignette focused.

You don't need to include every character that comes to mind. Sharpen the action into a narrow lens and make sure the other players are engaged. Use their reactions to help drive the vignette further, or to pull back (as needed).

If the director intends to reach a milestone with a vignette, it's better to roll the dice before the scene starts, rather than at the end of the scene. This isn't always true, but it allows the director more room to improvise after the fact.

NPCs

Any number of NPCs may color the story background. In fact, since vignettes can be about anything or anyone, this is an opportunity to show the 'audience' what is going on elsewhere in the story. Point the lens at NPCs, or someone less vital to the story. Drop hints of things to come.

Normally players must **spend drama points** to pull NPCs into scenes. Vignettes are a chance to do so without giving up precious points.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to interrupt a vignette or add one detail.

MILESTONES

Only the director of a vignette may check off a milestone.

VIGNETTE WALKTHROUGH

Abe wants to mark off his *drink from the cup of memories* milestone and chooses to roll the dice before narrating the vignette. He announces to the group which milestone he is aiming for and rolls a '4.' Abe gains one trepidation and loses two drama points.

Abe narrates a vignette about how he was trying to remember what life was like before Elysia. Unfortunately, the cup causes Abe to lose his grasp on reality. The past and present are merged and he's forgotten things that were true.

Abe checks off the *wisdom regression* trepidation, **gains one drama point**, but loses two more. He then ends his scene.

THE END

THE END

Praxis can end with up to three different scene types: plot twists, finales, and epilogues. Plot twists are optional. Only use them once the players understand all the rules. Finales end the story and focus on one player's goals. Epilogues follow finales, sometimes allowing a player to slip one final detail into the story before it all wraps up. Each is explained below in detail.

The finale is triggered when one player checks off four trepidation, five milestones, or all ten scenes.

THE PLOT TWIST (OPTIONAL)

Plot twists extend the story, giving players time to wrap up their plans before the impending finale. These rules add a lot of drama to the game, but should only be used once the players are comfortable with *Praxis*.

The player who triggers a finale condition, triggers the plot twist. This player **gains one drama point** and unlocks a second ability from her list. In addition, immediately after the present scene, that player directs one additional scene without checking one off her list.

The plot twist is any scene the director wants to direct, even one not on her character sheet. It does not count against her scene total, but the scene's theme must be derived from one of her character's remaining finales.

Once the plot twist scene is over, play continues until a **second player** triggers the finale, which causes the game to end normally. Once a second player has completed her finale, the player who triggered the plot twist may direct one *epilogue* vignette so long as she has at least one drama point remaining.

This epilogue takes place before any other normal epilogue.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to interrupt a plot twist or add one detail.

Spend one drama point to eliminate one finale option from the list.

PLOT TWIST WALKTHROUGH

Abe is the first player to check off all his milestones. After the scene ends, Abe gains one drama point, chooses another ability for his character, and chooses to direct a fork that is aimed at Bianca. The fork is based on one of his remaining two remaining finales. Rather than determine the finale randomly, Abe spends one drama point to narrow it down to the one he wants. After the fork, both players gain one drama point. Play continues normally from there.



THE FINALE

In *Praxis*, the finale belongs to the person who ends the game, either by checking off four trepidation, *or* five milestones, *or* all ten scenes. Regardless, after a player triggers one of these conditions, she randomly determines a finale from those remaining and narrates a vignette based on that finale's theme.

For instance, the Belltower Watcher has crossed off *loss of status* and *teeth fall out* from his list of trepidations. That leaves the possible finales of *black monk rejects you*, *crawl back into the earth*, and *death*. Using a random method of his own devising (rolling a die, drawing one of three poker cards, etc.) to pick from three remaining finales, the Eagle gets a '3' indicating *death*.

The Belltower proceeds to narrate a vignette about his death.

Once the finale is narrated, the game is over.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to interrupt a finale or add one detail.

Spend one drama point to eliminate one finale option from the list.

FINALE WALKTHROUGH

Abe has checked off three trepidations, leaving the finales of *black monk rejects you* and *crawl back into the earth* remaining. He has a 50-50 chance of getting either one, so Abe rolls a die. He rolls low, indicating *black monk rejects you*.

Abe narrates a vignette explaining how the Black Monk returns to the village and releases everyone from their bondage. However, with a glance, the Black Monk rejects Abe. He must remain behind, while the rest are freed. The Black Monk will never return to the village.

EPILOGUES

Once the finale is over, the player with the single most drama points remaining may direct one vignette following the finale. No more than one player may direct an epilogue.

If two or more players are tied for most drama points, no one directs the epilogue. Players may not spend drama points to break this rule. They can however spend drama points before the epilogue happens to ensure there is not a tie.

Just like a finale, the scene's focus is derived from the remaining finales on the character sheet.

OPTIONS

GAMEMASTER

Praxis can be played with a gamemaster, though it is not required. With a gamemaster, the rules remain the same, but the director never changes from scene to scene — effectively the game master is a single director all game. The gamemaster can take on the roles of NPCs, interpret results, and select trepidation (instead of the players). Players used to traditional games should have no problem with the transition.

The players may point out to the gamemaster what milestones they have remaining, but the director is under no obligation to create scenes about their milestones. Playing *Praxis* in this manner allows the gamemaster to run a game as long as she wants, adding more and more details to the story.

Make sure everyone gets a ‘turn.’

Scene types are also at the director’s discretion. The only important rule the director needs to follow is making sure everyone gets equal screen time to accomplish her goals.

Normally, characters may only check off milestones during specific scene types. These rules do not apply with a gamemaster. The gamemaster alone has authority of when a character may attempt to complete a milestone.

SUGGESTIONS

When the half-way point of the game feels obvious, create a *plot twist*.

When the game is slowing down, create a story milestone.

Create vignettes the players have no authority over, detailing the actions of NPCs and antagonists behind the scenes.

Introduce NPCs into interrogations, interludes, and ensembles.

Spend drama points, just like the players, to generate game effects. This means the director gains drama points during forks.

Never have two scenes of the same type in a row.

Create interludes with any two characters you like. Just not all the time.

Play *Praxis* once as a GMless game first before running it with a gamemaster, unless the group is predominately used to traditional play.

Some character abilities may not make sense when gamemastering *Praxis*. Err on the side of the character when interpreting an ability.

IMPORTANT NPCs

The strongest feature of a gamemastered game is the ability to add numerous NPCs to the story. Typically, games revolve solely around the characters. This is great in a short, directed game, where the players are the stars of the show. But it can also feel artificial. The players rarely interact with anyone else. This makes the world feel plastic.

The gamemaster is encouraged to create NPCs who interact with the players. To make things easier, each game comes with three sample NPCs. These NPCs might also make an appearance in the GMless version of the game.

BEGGAR HORACE

One of Elysia's strangest anomalies is a beggar named Horace. Horace serves no function in the community. He is not a prisoner and yet, he does not wish to leave. Horace doesn't work, nor does anyone require him to. It's as though Horace were a permanent feature on an already damaged landscape — another mole on a haggard face.

Randomly determine which character has an unsatisfying relationship with Beggar Horace.

GRAVEDIGGER IVES

Ives digs graves for the fallen of Elysia. But since no one ever dies, his/her work is never done. Ives is both a man and a woman, magically living as both genders. They have no memory of arriving in Elyisa, but Ives has worked as the gravedigger for as long as anyone can remember. They wear a sash that transforms Ives into a man when tied a specific way and a woman when tied in another way. Otherwise, without the sash, they are both a man and a woman at the same time. In this visage, Ives appears androgynous and pale. Ives greatest strength stems from their ability to adapt to any social situation, showing the utmost care for ceremony and ritual.

Randomly determine which character has a obsessive relationship with Gravedigger Ives.

ROPEMAKER TANNA

Tanna is a simple woman, who works at the center of Elysia. She works and sleeps inside the same shop, producing a large spool of rope every week... if such a measure of time still exists. Tanna speaks in simple, short sentences. Her thought process is not complicated, nor does she require much more than a meal of mule-flesh everyday. She is contented, in a place where contentment is nearly impossible.

Randomly determine which character has a thoughtlessly cruel relationship with Rope-maker Tanna.

ADVANCED RULES

There is no way to make comprehensive *advanced rules* for a game like *Praxis*. The rules are so simple, players can easily come up with their own. The following is an attempt to address the rules I enjoy playing with. I don't recommend using them all at once.

- Be sure to read the suggestions on page 65, regardless of whether or not there is a gamemaster.
- All players answer both world building questions.
- Players may **spend one drama point** to give another player a disadvantage, even if they are not in the scene.
- The players who direct the opening scenes **gain one drama point** each.
- Each drama point a player has during the finale can be used to narrow down the available finale options.
- Players may not trigger the finale until they have directed a **fork** scene.
- Players may not attempt to reach a milestone until every player has directed one scene.
- Players may choose their finales from those remaining, instead of determining randomly.
- The player to your left is your 'foil.' The foil is responsible for interpreting your trepidation. See page 68.
- Character death can be avoided by **spending five drama points**.
- Once per game, the players may (collectively) **award one drama point** to a director who has framed a particularly good scene or a player who has contributed to a scene in a dramatic fashion. If there is a gamemaster, she alone has this prerogative.
- Continue playing one more time around the table after the director reaches the finale, but before the finale is narrated.
- The first player to trigger the finale, triggers a **plot twist** instead. See page 61.

FOIL

The foil is a contrast to a given player's goals. The foil interprets all of the bad things that befall a character. She also splits decisions on whether or not something constitutes a violation or adherence to a rule. The foil sits to the player's left (clockwise).

MILESTONES

Some actions constitute a milestone. Others do not. While GMless games usually share narrative authority with all players, confusion can lead to game tension. The foil is the final arbiter of what is (and is not) a milestones.

LEVERAGES

A player that brings harm to another character may not give that character more than one trepidation in a given scene, regardless of the outcome of the dice. In the unique instance where harm generates one trepidation and a leverage generates on trepidation, the second trepidation must go to another character **and** everyone involved must explain how and why this trepidation came about.

FLASHBACK RESOLUTION

Whenever a total of '5' is rolled on any chart, the director must direct a short flashback interlude or flashback vignette about the incident. The flashback should reveal why this trepidation is happening, perhaps explaining the present circumstances. If the flashback still isn't enough to explain the circumstances of the die roll, spend two drama points and direct another scene, chosen from the list of remaining character scenes.

RULE OF '19'

Remember. These are optional "advanced" rules. Apply them with discretion. After any roll, a player may **spend one drama point** to turn a 19 into a 20.

I personally don't like this rule, but I'm including the option, because so many players seem upset about missing a '20' by 1.

There is no rule of 18. And there never will be.

STORY MILESTONES

Story milestones are different from player milestones. Story milestones reflect the changes in the environment the players cannot control or account for. Each Praxis comes with a list of things that can happen once the group (collectively) reaches four, eight, and twelve milestones. Simply draw a playing card when a personal milestone triggers a story milestone.

FOUR MILESTONES

The next director must incorporate one of the following facts/rumors into her scene. How this information reaches the characters (if any) is up to the director.

- ♣ **The Black Monk approaches Elysia astride a white horse, acrid smoke from its nostrils.**
- ♦ **The Black Monk approaches Elysia, bearing one gift.**
- ♥ **The Black Monk intends to free someone.**
- ♠ **The Black Monk has vengeance in his dark and ugly heart. He intends harm to all who dare look into his eyes.**

EIGHT MILESTONES

Though the Black Monk has not yet arrived, he meets with one character in some surreal manner. The next director creates an interlude with any one character and the Black Monk. Under no circumstance can anyone else join this scene, regardless of abilities or drama points spent. This scene does not count as the director's scene and she may take her normal turn after this scene.

- ♣ **The Black Monk judges someone's actions (mercilessly).**
- ♦ **The Black Monk offers salvation in exchange for something else.**
- ♥ **The Black Monk offers forgiveness, but nothing more.**
- ♠ **The Black Monk offers a tool (or weapon) in order for the character to do what needs to be done.**

TWELVE MILESTONES

The Black Monk arrives in Elysia. The next director must incorporate one of the following facts into her scene.

- ♣ **The Black Monk enters Elysia astride a bloodied, white horse. Those who have reason to fear the Black Monk's wrath should prepare for the worst.**
- ♦ **The Black Monk bears one gift.**
- ♥ **The Black Monk intends to free someone.**
- ♠ **The Black Monk arrives with a mysterious stranger.**

OPENING VIGNETTES

Below are three possible opening vignettes for players having trouble devising their own. I can't write your ensembles for you, so this is as far as it goes.

Feel free to select one randomly or let the players decide.

Disclaimer: This is a complex *Praxis*. These opening vignettes do not shy away from modern views about abortion, race, or sexuality.

With a single word whispered into the ear of the Fireman, the Black Monk turned and rode from Elysia. The occupants watched as he neared the horizon and then vanished, only then turning to face one another. The Fireman lifted his long, narrow finger and pointed it directly at one of the others, who turned to smoke.

The Black Monk looked at everyone with a deep, hateful glare. The people of Elysia could sense the disappointment and anger trapped behind his soulless eyes. Taking his time, the monk handed each person a uniquely-colored stone. Once each prisoner of Elysia had a stone, he cinched his bag closed, climbed atop his horse, and rode away. Minutes passed before anyone looked up from the now-warming stones in their hands. Minutes turned to hours. And before anyone was aware, the sun still hung in the sky, directly overhead, warming Elysia's bones.

One morning the corral was burned to the ground, all the mules dead. Burned alive from a single ember that grew into a furnace. The Fireman was the first upon the scene, but it was too late. The others followed suit, quickly assessing who was there and who was not there. After an hour, the Black Monk arrived, looking for answers. The food supply was gone. There would be nothing to eat now. Unless the Black Monk was charitable. The Black Monk offered a solution to the residents of Elysia. If they found the person who started the fire before the day was over, the mule herd would be replaced. With that, he left, the sun hanging in the air, until someone confessed to the crime.

VARIANTS

Below are four possible setup variants for advanced players or people uncomfortable with the topic of real-world faiths.

Feel free to select one randomly or let the players decide.

Elysia is a single, spotted oasis in an otherwise barren and lifeless landscape. The town is a tiny silhouette against an ocean of empty earth in every direction. Even walking five miles away from the town, it is impossible to see the town's shape against the wavering horizon line. Those who remain in Elysia do so because there is no where else to go.

Elysia is a complex and oblong towering city of gears and tunnels, makeshift homes and hidden passageways. The city floats in the middle of space, with no land beyond its edges. Voiceless stone guardians float around the city at various key points to ensure no one can leave. Armed with spears and magic, the guardians cannot be dissuaded from their appointments. Throughout the various buildings and shops live the eternal (i.e. the characters) who perform vague and meaningless tasks that somehow keep the city thriving.

Elysia is both a prison and a temple. The characters serve as parishioners and wardens to their own imprisonment. Each keeps tabs the others, reporting their comings and goings to the Crying Prince. Should anyone step out of line or do something that fractures that delicate balance of banality that Elysia ensures, the entire system falls apart. Salvation is for those who know their place...

The prisoners of Elysia do not know they are in a prison. They believe Elysia is paradise. Expecting nothing from their supposed 'afterlife,' the workers of Elysia toil, day after day; year after year. Once a year, they celebrate the day of their 'death.' But since the sun never sets anymore, no one knows how much time has passed. Or if there is anything to celebrate anymore.

NOMENCLATURE

The following is a general list of terms that might make communicating about gaming easier. It might also help with your understanding of GMless gaming. Otherwise, obsessing over these kinds of details can be pedantic to those who don't care so much about them.

AGENCY

A buzzword for a character's authority within a story. In gaming circles it includes a player's authority as well, both inside and outside the story. If a character has agency, she has the power to impact her fate. A character without agency is nothing more than a plot point.

CONTEXT

I use this word a lot. It's a dying subject, but I believe you can't have a good story without it. Context is all the things that go together. Too many ingredients and you lose context. For instance, if you create a game about pirates stealing treasure in a supernatural world, adding zombies at the bottom of the ocean is contextual. Adding fire-breathing Russian bears is not.

CONCEPT

Concept is the abstract idea of a (written) work. For *Praxis*, it is the plot of the game you are playing. In *The Deep Country*, the concept is the infighting amongst fantasy clans. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the concept is a futuristic wasteland where people are chattel and women, especially pregnant ones, are bartered or controlled. In *Star Wars*, the concept is a moisture farmer who finds a laser sword and kills his dad.

ETHOS

Ethos is a character's credibility or ethical appeal. In order to believe something a character says, we must respect her. If a player wants to be heard during play, she must create a likable character. This is not always true, but an evil character who is charming gets away with a lot more than an antisocial hero.

GENRE

Genre is a term that gets bandied around a lot. At its simplest, genre is a combination of structure and veneer. In literature, the fantasy genre follows specific structural rules, while maintaining a veneer of elves, dragons, magic, and the like. People love to argue whether or not something is within a genre. For the purposes of this document, it is merely to explain what makes up a genre, not whether your favorite science fiction show is sci-fi or not.

LEITMOTIF

When people say theme, they usually mean leitmotif. It is what something looks like. A cowboy-themed party where people only dress up as cowboys, but don't brand cattle (for instance) is actually a party with a cowboy leitmotif. In order for it to be cowboy-themed, people would have to do some cowboy stuff, including listening to Merle Haggard.

LOGOS

Logos is a character's appeal to reason. In order to respect the character, we must believe her decisions are based in logic. If she makes fool-hardy decisions, she loses credibility.

PATHOS

Pathos is a character's appeal to emotion. In order to empathize with a character, we must feel what she feels. If she over-reacts or displays inhuman emotions, the character is likely to lose our sympathy.

THEME

This word never gets used correctly. It does not mean genre or veneer. The way something looks is not a theme, though one could decorate their home in an art deco theme, the term theme is more complicated than that.

Theme is the combination of all underlying subtext in a story: family division, hopelessness, love, valor, and so on are all themes. The list of themes is near endless. What it is not is "fantasy village."

TOPE

Tone is the mood of a piece... what it feels like. The specific tone of a game might be subtle or obvious. For instance, a dark tone might be oppressive, with each scene making the players more and more depressed. Conversely, a mysterious tone might only be noticed in scenes where people aren't getting direct answers to their questions.

ZEITGEIST

Zeitgeist literally means spirit of the age, which is a high-brow way of saying "of a particular period in time." In game design, it primarily refers to what the game is about and what am I doing in it. What is the zeitgeist? In *The Black Monk*, the zeitgeist is undying people detached from the real world and enduring the meaningless of eternity.

ROLES



THE BELLTOWER WATCHER

Names: August, Gozen, Gray, Magog

The Belltower Watcher stands atop the belltower all day, waiting for the Black Monk's return. He never blinks. Never averts his gaze. He is the watchful eye upon a dead village going no where. Everyday, he waits for a sign of the Black Monk and wishes his fate was something else.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ Tear Down the Belltower
- ♦ Find Inner Worth (Again)
- ♥ Find the Lost Graves
- ♠ Free Self From Eternal Misery of Work

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ Hollow
- ♦ An Opportunity That Has Not Manifested (Yet)
- ♥ Voyuer
- ♠ Disgust

WORLD BUILDING

- Who among you is unprepared for the Black Monk's return?
- Why do you stand watch for the others? What about them makes you care (despite never showing your true feelings)?

QUIRKS

- An ancient bone staff, carved by the previous watcher
- Bloody tears that have stained your skin
- Jaw bolted shut, yet you still speak

ABILITIES

Anarch: When directing a fork, the other player gains one trepidation instead of a drama point. Trepidation gained this way does not trigger the endgame.

Pride: During an ensemble, you may remove yourself from the scene at any time without impacting the scene. In addition, you may take one other character with you if you so choose.

Watcher: Lose one drama point. You may ignore your next two points of trepidation.

SCENES

- Fork*
- Flashback Interlude
- Interlude
- Interrogation
- Monologue
- Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

- Target player* makes a choice
- Flashback with two characters
- Two characters with a relationship
- Ask five questions
- Deliver a speech in character
- Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

- Climb to the Crying Prince >>
- Drink from Cup of Memories >>
- Evict a Citizen of Elysia >>
- Show Respect When Earned >>
- Sound the Bell >>

LEVERAGE

- Direct another scene
- Gain two drama points
- Gain one ability
- Give one trepidation
- Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

- Blind >>
- Loss of Status >>
- Teeth Fall Out >>
- Undeath >>
- Wisdom Regression >>

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

- Black Monk Rejects You
- Banished
- Voice Lost
- Crawl Back into the Earth
- Death

THE BLOODLETTER

Names: Azazel, Boudica, Gareth, Kahina

People never get sick in Elysia. No one ages. No one ever fades. Yet the bloodletter still cuts away at the foul humors hiding inside everyone. Black bile and blood must be excised. Everyone will be clean when all the dark blood is gone.

Her scalpel is salvation.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **To Flense the Flesh**
- ♦ **To Hone the Precious Blade**
- ♥ **Love Yourself**
- ♠ **To Become the Black Monk**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Unending Hatred**
- ♦ **Shared Valuables and Trinkets**
- ♥ **Uncomfortable Lust**
- ♠ **Targets**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you is most afraid of the Black Monk's return?**
- **Why do you bother living among the others? What keeps you here? (Wait. You can leave, can't you?)**

QUIRKS

- **Hollow eyes, devoid of any milk color**
- **No fingertips**
- **Stares at others while they sleep or work**

ABILITIES

Bloodied: Whenever you direct a fork scene, you gain both drama points.

The Scalpel: Once per game, you may turn someone else's scene into a vignette for yourself.

The Veins: At the end of any scene you are in, in which there is only one other character, you may spend two drama points to bring trepidation to that character.

SCENES

Flashback Ensemble

Fork*

Interlude

Interrogation

Monologue

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

Flashback with all characters

Target player* makes a choice

Two characters with a relationship

Ask five questions

Deliver a speech in character

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Collect a Debt >>

Judge Something Unclean >>

Open an Old Wound >>

Protect Yourself from Others >>

Unmake a Promise >>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION

Control Lost to Another >>

Cutting Yourself Open >>

Hand is Burned/Severed >>

Something Special is Lost >>

Visions of Mother >>

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

The Worm Unravels

The Crying Prince Returns

The Sun Dies

A Broken Rocking Chair

Skies Part, Winds Fade

THE FIREMAN

Names: Aldus, Barron, Galica, Macha

Elysia is a special place. It cannot be burned. It won't be burned. It is the task of the fireman to assure it is never singed. The task of protecting Elyisa for centuries has always fallen to the fireman. Should there be a single speck of ash when the Black Monk returns, the fireman's fate is assured.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Protecting Elysia From Itself**
- ♦ **Ruling Elysia**
- ♥ **Teaching the Law of Fire**
- ♠ **Hiding Your Fears**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Dying/Fading from Too Much Contact**
- ♦ **Your Only Intellectual Nourishment**
- ♥ **Passionate and Suffocating**
- ♠ **Shared Respect for 'The Work'**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you fears the droughts that come with the sun?**
- **What about Elysia displeases you the most?
If it burned down, who could you blame?**

QUIRKS

- **Lives on the edge of Elysia**
- **Scars on skin from excessive cutting and/or lashes**
- **Skin dark and brittle, like ash**

ABILITIES

Fear of Death: You begin play with four additional drama points, however you may not narrate the finale. If you trigger the endgame, the game continues.

Fear of Fire: You begin play with four additional drama points, however you may never join another player's ensemble.

Fear of Man: You begin play with four additional drama points, however you may never join another player's interlude or interrogation.

SCENES

Ensemble

Flashback Interlude

Fork*

Interlude

Interrogation

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

All characters present

Flashback with two characters

Target player* makes a choice

Two characters with a relationship

Ask five questions

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Memories Recalled >>

Offering to the Crying Prince >>

Suffer a Rebuke >>

Take What is Yours >>

Warn the Others >>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION

Flashback: Black Monk's Gaze >>

Flashback: Burned Alive >>

Flashback: Dead Spouse >>

Burned Alive >>

Trapped >>

FINALE

Released from Cycle

Death

The Sun Fades

Death

Fear Consumes You

* Gain one drama point

THE MULE SKINNER

Names: Ovid, Rani, Vesper, Xerses

The Mule Skinner toils at the work of Elyisa. Each day, she plants crops, feeds livestock, and cuts the mule flesh that all subsist on. Each day, she hears the braying sounds of the mule's death. Each day, she prays there will be no more mules. Each day, she is wrong.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Needs Before Wants**
- ♦ **Glory at the End of the Road**
- ♥ **Find Love, Mate, Make a Family, Die**
- ♠ **"Damn This Cycle of Toil!"**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **"I Want You to Want This"**
- ♦ **Someone to Share the Work?**
- ♥ **Meaningless, Pitiful Sex**
- ♠ **Shared Vision of Tomorrow**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you does not eat what you prepare?
How is this not an insult?**
- **Why do you always eat the mule and never the pig?**

QUIRKS

- **Deaf in one ear**
- **Leather apron, stained in blood, locked around your waist**
- **Never washes her flensing blades**

ABILITIES

The Constant Host: Gain three drama points. However, you may not trigger the endgame. Instead, after the finale plays out, you may direct one last scene remaining from your scene list. If there are no scenes remaining, it is an interlude.

Harvest Day: Once per game, after you direct a scene, you may direct a second scene.

Thousand Yard Stare: Gain one drama point. You may ignore any rule that would keep a character out of a scene, including relationship requirements for interludes (for example).

SCENES

Flashback Ensemble

Flashback Vignette

Fork*

Interlude

Interrogation

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

Flashback with all characters

Flashback action or moment

Target player* makes a choice

Two characters with a relationship

Ask five questions

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Bring Up the Past >>

Confront the Dying Prince >>

Deny a Want >>

Feed the Hungry >>

Words Lead to Resentment >>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION

Death >>

Go Hungry >>

A Jealous Display >>

Remove Your Own Hand >>

Too Much Change All at Once >>

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

Butchered

Good

Black Monk's Disproval

Starve to Death

Good

THE PIPER

Names: Dagon, Diana, Enyo, Rion

The Piper is an anomaly in Elysia. Only arriving in the last decade or so, the Piper has no 'normal' relation to the others. In fact, at one point the Piper could come and go as he pleased. But that isn't the case anymore. He's done something wrong and it's only a matter of time before the Black Monk finds out.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Overcome Insatiable Grief**
- ♦ **Rainmaker**
- ♥ **Compose the Perfect Song**
- ♠ **Empty Elysia of Vermin**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Friendship That Has Dissolved Away**
- ♦ **Love of Music**
- ♥ **Stargazers**
- ♠ **Commiseration**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you is not affected by your songs?
Why do you think that is?**
- **Why do you only know one tune?
What was it originally composed for (other than clearing vermin)?**

QUIRKS

- **Fife made of gold and diamonds**
- **Inexplicable and extensive knowledge of potions**
- **Not human, but something else**

ABILITIES

Elegy: Whenever you direct a flashback monologue, you may direct an additional scene.

Funeral Dirge: Once per game, when another player's action would trigger a milestone, it becomes a trepidation instead.

The Perfect Note: Once per game, you may direct one additional scene out of turn. After wards, play order returns to normal.

SCENES

Ensemble

Fork*

Flashback Monologue

Intercut

Interrogation

Monologue

DESCRIPTIONS

All characters present

Target player* makes a choice

Flashback speech in character

Anything for 90 seconds

Ask five questions

Deliver a speech in character

MILESTONES

Drown/Seduce Someone

>>

Compose/Play a Dirge

>>

Summon the Crying Prince

>>

Summon the Wind

>>

Summon the Worm

>>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION

Death

>>

Fife is Broken

>>

Rows of Fangs

>>

Sorrow from Your Own Song

>>

The Wind Fades

>>

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

Consumed by Grief

Consumed by the Plague

March Out of Elysia

Consumed by the Worm

Drowned

THE PRISONER

Names: Cleo, Goss, Michael, Verillin

The Prisoner does not belong here. She's innocent, after all.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Seek Black Monk's Pardon**
- ♦ **Atone for Your Crimes**
- ♥ **Recant Your Lies**
- ♠ **Everyone Should Be Free**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Shunned**
- ♦ **Sympathetic**
- ♥ **Lust (For)**
- ♠ **Your Jailer**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you believes you should be punished for your crimes, regardless of guilt or innocence?**
- **What are you accused of? How do we know you are innocent? Why does the Black Monk not care? How long is your sentence?**

QUIRKS

- **Covered in magical tattoos that bind you to this place**
- **Strong enough to lift half-a-ton overhead**
- **Wears a neck collar with a 200-ft. chain**

ABILITIES

Guilty: Once per game, you may steal two drama points from one player you are in a scene with. You leave that scene, but the scene does not end. The player to your left becomes the new director, if you directed that scene.

Innocent: Gain two additional drama points.

Strong: Once per game, you may steal two drama points from one player you are in a scene with. That player may choose to immediately leave the scene, checking off one milestone, and one trepidation. If this would trigger the endgame, the game continues.

SCENES

- Ensemble
- Flashback Interlude
- Fork*
- Intercut
- Interrogation
- Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

- All characters present
- Flashback with two characters
- Target player* makes a choice
- Anything for 90 seconds
- Ask five questions
- Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

- Break the Shackles >> Direct another scene
- Challenge Authority >> Gain two drama points
- Release Hidden Magic >> Gain one ability
- Scout for the Black Monk >> Give one trepidation
- Submit to the Crying Prince >> Remove one trepidation

LEVERAGE

TREPIDATION

- Beg for Absolution >> Private Confessional
 - Crippled >> The Iron Maiden
 - Death >> Public Execution
 - Gain one Drama Point >> Become New Black Monk
 - Suffer a Public Beating >> Beheaded
- * Gain one drama point

FINALE

BRINGING HARM TO OTHERS

- 0 acting character suffers trepidation
in addition, choose:
the target character may immediately bring harm to you, or
the target character gains two drama points
- 5 both characters suffer trepidation
- 10 choose:
target character suffers trepidation, or
acting player triggers leverage
- 20 target character suffers trepidation, and choose:
acting player triggers leverage, or
target player loses two drama points

GETTING WHAT YOU WANT

- 0 acting character suffers trepidation
in addition, choose:
acting player loses two drama points*, or
uncheck one milestone
 - 5 acting character succeeds and suffers trepidation
 - 10 choose:
acting character succeeds, or
acting player triggers leverage
 - 20 acting character succeeds, and choose:
acting player triggers associated leverage, or
acting player unlocks an additional ability
- * this option is only available if the acting player has two or more drama points

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

- 0 acting character suffers trepidation
- 5 acting player changes the world and loses one drama point
- 10 choose:
 - acting player changes the world, or
 - acting player triggers leverage
- 20 acting player changes the world, and choose:
 - acting player gains two drama points, or
 - acting player removes one trepidation



REFERENCE SHEET

All information in one place, including the set-up info, opening scene information, and shorthand for what each scene type is.

MAKE CHARACTERS

- Select roles (pages 74 to 87)
- Name characters (page 9)
- Determine objectives (page 20)
- Determine relationships (page 21)
- Answer world building questions (page 22)
- Select quirks (page 23)
- Select abilities (page 23)

MAKE SENSE OF EVERYTHING

- Address where the game takes place
- Reconcile relationships and world building questions
- Define where the game is set and how everyone knows each other

START PLAYING

- Narrate opening scenes (page 57)
[One vignette about tragedy, one ensemble regarding reaction to tragedy]
- Take turns narrating scenes (page 46)
- Track milestones and trepidation (pages 29 to 32)
- Track story milestones* (page 69)

FINALE

- Narrate plot twist* (page 61)
- Narrate finale (page 63)
- Narrate epilogue* (page 63)

* Optional rules

REFERENCE SHEET

ENSEMBLES

It's possible for any character in an ensemble to check off a milestone, so long as the action matches the milestone.

FLASHBACKS

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during a flashback.

FORKS

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during a fork.

Each player in the fork **gains one drama point** at the scene's conclusion.

INTERCUTS

Only the director of an intercut may check off a milestone.

INTERLUDES

Only the characters in the interlude may check off milestones.

INTERROGATIONS

Only the interrogator may check off a milestone.

MONOLOGUES

Only the director of a monologue may check off a milestone, and *only* if she delivers the monologue in her character's voice.

OPENING SCENES

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during an opening scene.

VIGNETTES

Only the director of a vignette may check off a milestone.

NOTES

DESIGNER NOTES

The Black Monk is the last game in the first run of *Praxis* games. At the time of this writing, I don't know if I'll do anymore. I have some ideas outlined, but nothing I'll kill myself trying to finish. Maybe in a year, I'll do a series of five more.

I need to finish Protocols 51 to 75 next.

Ahem. So. What's the deal with this Black Monk anyway?

I don't know if I can rightly explain how this game came about. It is among my strangest games. Purposely so. A lot of this is due to Timothy Hidalgo trying to help me brainstorm character class ideas for a different fantasy game. Mix that list with some books I was reading and well...

This one just got away from me.

I honestly almost gave up on it, because I couldn't find an artist that fit the bill.

But.

Juan Ochoa kept at it. He really wanted to try. It took a while to get that Belltower Watcher the way I wanted him. I had an image in my head that wasn't conventional and Juan pushed through.

And once that was done, the light bulbs went off. The other six characters just fell into place.

That's right. $6 + 1 = 7$. Seven characters for kickstarter backers.

Don't you feel cheated now 'person who is buying this too late?'

My favorite piece of art is the mule skinner. She just breaks so many conventions of fantasy art.

I want to take her home, get her to fall in love with me, and then cheat on her, just so I have to earn her love again.

That's how awesome that piece of art is.

And that's how much I love this game.

Really. Really. Weird.

— jim pinto

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