



# CAGE of REASON

A GAME OF

PILE-DRIVING PHILOSOPHES  
&  
EYE-GOUGING ESSAYISTS



Written by Mark Vallianatos, March 2006

## **Cage of Reason is an age of enlightenment game of pile-driving philosophes and eye-gouging Essayists.**

Characters are intellectuals and reformers struggling to bring the light of reason to societies weighed down by despotism, superstition, and stultifying custom. The characters' struggles against censors, priests, and reactionary aristocratic twits are played out as professional wrestling matches.

Cage of Reason was written an entry in the 2006 Game Chef competition. It is organized to be played over four game sessions of two hours each. During the first session, players create characters and plan out the upcoming wrestling events. The last three sessions are main event wrestling extravaganzas, with interviews and other rituals leading up to matches between characters and villains that represent the clash of ideas in the age of enlightenment.

The game also incorporates three 'ingredients' from the Game Chef competition: law, team, and steel. Law becomes the enlightenment era ideological struggles over the laws of nature and laws of men and nations. Team and Steel are present in the wrestling rules that allow tag team action throughout and require the final session matches to be fought in a steel cage with elevated brutality.

## **You got your Driving Elbow Smash in my Separation of Powers... You got your Discourse on the Origins of Inequality in my Blatant Choke Hold.**

As the Age of Enlightenment meets modern Professional Wrestling, Cage of Reason will test your ability to hold two frames of reference in your head simultaneously

The Enlightenment. Intellectual debates shape modernity for good or ill. Paradigms shift in a maze of salons and courts. Documents penned in drafty garret apartment shake the palaces of Europe. Intellectuals test the limits of free thought in continent of autocratic polity.

Wrestling. Brawny, oiled dudes bearing ridiculous

monikers grapple in a battle as old as the classical Olympiad and as now as the latest digital medium. Ringside Linnaeuses name and codify a taxum of strategic, near homoerotic maneuvers. Entertainment collides with athletics. A spectacle grows in popularity even as it crystallizes as a metaphor for everything inauthentic & needlessly aggressive about our society.

Because it's a game, holding these two frames simultaneously will hopefully be more 'double your pleasure' than 'doublethink.' In cage of Reason, Professional Wrestling provides the structure and the Enlightenment provides the content. You play out 18th century ideological and political conflicts inside wrestling rings and steel cages.

The two sides of the game constantly cross-fertilize (and contaminate) each other, hopefully with entertaining results. Player narrate struggles to reform society and create a modern worldview – but resolve these controversies through pins and submissions, signature moves and wrestling nicknames, tag teams and press-conference trash-talking. Professional wrestlers clash in the ring, but instead of performing suplexes and leg-clamps, they recite long sections of Galen's On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Human Body and dedicate their next book to enlightened monarchs.

## **You will not be tested on this week's reading**

You can play and fully enjoy Cage of Reason without needing to delve into the nuances of enlightenment era thinkers and controversies. After all, the game breaks ideological conflict down into punchy slogans and tactics – the rhetorical equivalent of wrestling moves. Simple, exaggerated pieces of information work best in this framework. The following super-basic overview of the Enlightenment, with lists of important enlightenment and anti-enlightenment themes, should provide some inspiration for the characters and conflicts you will be placing in the game's steel cage testing grounds.

The enlightenment was an 18th century European intellectual movement. It was dedicated to the proposition that reason would allow humanity to understand nature, history, and human behavior. That men who dared to know could clear away the thicket of autocracy and superstition that doomed the greater portion of mankind to a life of submissive ignorance. And that social progress would improve laws, customs, and technology, advancing human happiness and freedom.

The movement was driven by a relatively small core of

active proponents. These men (and a handful of women) were essayists, philosophers and philosophes, scientists, economists and merchants, historians and a few politicians. They wrote and acted as individuals, but also communicated across national borders and self-identified as members of a continent-wide movement. Perhaps inspired by the transformations of their era – the growth of literacy and an urban middle class, the loosening of feudal ties, monarchs' flirtation with the new philosophies -- figures like Voltaire, Diderot, Locke, Gibbon, Rousseau, Kant, Paine, d'Alembert, Smith, Jefferson, etc. pursued their writings and advocacy with a zeal that belied their numbers. By the end of the century, enlightenment ideas had helped lay the groundwork for the American and French revolutions and Latin American independence struggles and unleashed a modernist view of human potential that continues to resonate – and to inspire fear and backlash – to this day.

Like many intellectual movements, the enlightenment contained internal contradictions and lacked a single, uniform platform. Still, on the whole, enlightenment thinkers stood for: reason, progress, the application of scientific methods to the study of human societies, cosmopolitanism, religious tolerance, a secular, engaged philosophy, education, universally applicable ethics, individual rights and liberties, historical and textual analysis of religion, broader participation in politics, the classification and organization of knowledge, the free exchange of ideas and trade across border.

They struggled against: arbitrary authority and autocracy, aggressive nationalism, superstition, ignorance, war, slavery, torture. Censorship, the waste of national wealth on the luxurious trappings of aristocracy, feudalism, literal reading of miracles and scripture, state mandated religious belief and practice.

Opponents of the Enlightenment – a diverse group in their own right -- generally supported:

tradition and customs (even odd and wasteful ones), religion as the key regulator of society and behavior, the supremacy of all-mighty God, the organic nature of society, anti-rationalism, the limits of scientific inquiry, nationalism, repressive legislation to enforce morality and police speech, hereditary aristocracy, the divine right of monarchs, the individuality of every culture, original sin as a limit on human progress, natural inequality, social hierarchy and racialism, the divine right of kings.

Counter-enlightenment forces were against: atheism, mechanistic metaphors for society, the questioning of

authority and custom, libertinism, egalitarianism, democracy, clandestine literature, an erosion of aristocratic privileges, guarantees of rights for all class, the concept of progress, limits on capital punishment, bold claims for the potential of science, industry and nascent capitalism.

## Session One: Let's Get Ready to Role-play Rhetorical Wrestling!

During session one, players prepare for the wrestling to come. They make characters from out of the age of enlightenment, choosing debate and campaign techniques that are arranged as a list of wrestling moves. Players define political or social conflicts for their three upcoming sessions. They then map out these intellectual controversies as wrestling storylines, complete with rivalries and rematches. If it helps you stay within a two-hour time frame, think of this first session as a meeting of wrestling league executives. You are planning the contents of the three showcase events of your league's upcoming season. By the end of the initial session, players will have created characters, chosen or created villains, planned out the upcoming matches, and made a separate list of brutal moves to spice up the final steel cage showdown.

The sequence of play in the first session will be:

- A. Create characters
- B. Choose conflicts
- C. Choose and/or create Villains
- D. Set wrestling storyline
- E. Program matches and assign promoters
- F. Set victory conditions
- G. Set steel cage moves

### A. Create Characters

Each player creates one character. Characters are advocates of the enlightenment in 18th century Europe. They can be philosophers, writers, politicians, artists, scientists and others engaged in public debates about the laws of men and laws of nature.

Character creation has seven steps:

1. Choose Concept
2. Determine Biography
3. Pick eleven Moves
4. Choose Signature Move from among eleven Moves and determine six sub-moves
5. Distribute 250 points to Moves and Traits:
  - Set levels of Conviction, Expediency, Fame, and Reputation
  - Place and set levels of ten ordinary Moves

- Set levels of Signature Move sub-moves
  - Buy submissions and reverses
6. Choose Wrestling Name and Signature Song

### Step 1. Choose character concept

A character concept summarizes who your character is and what contributions they are trying to make to the cause of enlightenment.

If you are having a difficult time coming up with a satisfying concept, answer four questions. What is your character's profession? What area(s) of knowledge are they interested in? What ideas or policies are they trying to advance? What accepted ideas or practices are they seeking to change?

Our sample game will have three characters. One will be a doctor who is conducting research in anatomy. Another will be a lady writer and campaigner for the rights of women, negro slaves, and child laborers. The third will be an aristocrat committed to enlightened educational methods.

Let's follow the doctor through a step-by-step design process. He is seeking to promote a mechanistic view of the human body and to improve access of all sick individuals to the latest surgical techniques. He views the concept of the 'soul' as at best superstitious and harmful nonsense when it interferes with scientific advances. He also wants to eliminate all religion-based restrictions on the dissection of human cadavers.

### Step 2. Determine Biography

A character's biography is a list or short paragraph setting down a few facts about their life. Include the character's name, age, gender, profession, nationality (nation of origin or current citizenship), and current place of residence. Feel free to add a few additional details on family or close friends, habits, etc.

Our sample doctor character will be named Pietr van Gosse, a 44 year old male surgeon and lecturer in anatomy. He is Dutch, born in Amsterdam and currently residing in Leiden. Pietr is married with two young daughters, and tries to pull himself away from the dissecting table one or two evenings every week to spend time with his family. He has a wide correspondence with learned anatomists throughout Europe.

### Step 3. Pick eleven moves.

At the heart of each character is a list of eleven moves

that define how they wrestle in the world of ideas. Each move is an action a character makes during a match to outmaneuver an opponent and contribute to victory in the match. Moves can be rhetorical techniques, appeals to powerful patrons, statements of core beliefs, personal attacks on your opponent, citation of authorities in the field, manifestations of personal characteristics or national stereotypes, etc. Moves can be expressed through publishing written works, writing letters, speaking in confidence or in public, or taking physical actions.

Players can create eleven Moves or base them on the Moves of the sample wrestlers (altering them slightly if you wish to fit your character concept). Your list of eleven moves should contain some that represent your specific character concept and biography as well as some more general Moves that will be applicable in any intellectual debate.

At least four of your character's eleven moves must be Defensive. These moves are actions taken to avoid giving in to the opponent's position rather than actions that advance your position. They can represent temporary retreats, deflections, concessions on minor points, feigned surrender, protective postures, pauses to gather energy and allies, etc.

Write down the eleven Moves you have chosen in any order on a scrap piece of paper. Note down the letter (D) next to the defensive moves you have chosen.

Our sample anatomist character has the following eleven moves:

speculate on opponent's illnesses based on their posture, appearance, and habits  
 Admit that the body still holds many mysteries (D)  
 recite long sections of Galen's On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Human Body.  
 Donate to local religious charity to deflect accusations of atheism (D)  
 Accuse opponent of willful ignorance.  
 Boast of the awards received from scientific associations.  
 Visit aging mentor to seek advice (D)  
 Brandish real human skull  
 Analogize the circulatory system to the uncensored flow of ideas.  
 Circulate satirical poem among friends and allies  
 Revise scholarly paper to fix a mistake (D)

### Step 4. Choose signature move.

Each character has one Signature Move chosen from

among their list of eleven moves. A signature Move helps define the character's persuasive style and demeanor in the wrestling cage. The Move you choose as your Signature must be general enough to be divided into six sub-moves, or specific types of the Signature Move.

Doctor van Gosse's Signature Move will be "speculate on opponent's illnesses based on their posture, appearance, and writing style." This fits with his medical background, plus six specific illnesses will work nicely as sub-moves.

The six sub-moves associated with the Doctor's Signature move will be:

- Speculatively diagnose a venereal disease, likely Pox
- Speculatively diagnose Melancholy
- Speculatively diagnose Consumption
- Speculatively diagnose Dementia
- Speculatively diagnose Worms
- Speculatively diagnose Hysterical Affection

#### Step 5. Distribute 250 Points to Moves and Traits

Players have 250 points to set the placement and damage of their Moves, set the levels of four additional traits that impact wrestling, and buy special features (submission attempts and reverses) for some of your moves. Your choices in distributing points will determine how your character functions mechanically during wrestling matches.

The following sections explain how to spend points on Traits, Moves, and Special Features. Read through all three sections before you decide how to distribute your points. As a general guide, you'll want to allocate approximately 50 to 100 points on your traits, 150 to 200 points on your moves, and 0 to 50 points on Special features. Keep track of how many points you've spent on a piece of scrap paper.

#### Traits

Characters have four Traits that each measure effectiveness in an aspect of wrestling: Conviction, Expedience, Fame, and Reputation.

Conviction measures the strength of your commitment to Enlightenment ideals. During matches, if your opponent rolls a move with the special feature of Submission, you will have to roll to see if your character immediately gives up. The higher your character's Conviction trait, the less likely it is that your character will submit to the pressure.

Expedience measures a character's willingness to abandon their principles for a strategic advantage. Characters with a high level of Expedience are better at cheating during matches to help themselves or one of their teammates.

Fame measures how well known your character is (primarily to his or her peers and secondarily to the public at large.) During tag-team matches, Fame determines how easily a character outside the ring can 'tag in' to relieve a team member who is in trouble. Fame measures tagging-in because the better known a character is, the more readily they can insert their opinions into ongoing ideological disputes. For example, if a small French village is embroiled over a debate on freedom of religion and Voltaire writes a letter in support of the local freethinking school teacher, it will likely impact the local controversy. Reverse the situation and the missive of support from a no-name rural tutor might give inward solace to Voltaire but it wouldn't help him in his high-stakes international debates.

Reputation measures whether a character is viewed positively or negatively by his or her peers and the public at large. Characters with a high Reputation level are more likely to get inspired by a cheering crowd during a match, and be able to regain energy or make a more effective Move.

All traits are given numerical levels from 3 to 11. When a Trait is being used during a match, roll two six-sided dice, add the results, and compare to your character's Trait level. If the roll is equal to or lower than Trait level, your character succeeded in the action. High Trait levels are therefore desirable and cost more points:

- 3: 0
- 4: 3
- 5: 7
- 6: 12
- 7: 18
- 8: 23
- 9: 27
- 10: 30
- 11: 32

Dr. van Gosse will have an average conviction since he mainly focuses on medical and scientific issues rather than the full range of enlightenment causes. His expedience will be high (those who dissect human cadavers must often skirt the laws to obtain needed corpses). His Fame will be low since he is mainly known to fellow anatomists and his Reputation will be low to middling since he pushes the envelope of his profession beyond

what many anatomists find acceptable. His four traits cost a total of 58 points, leaving 192 for moves and special features.

Conviction: 7 (18 pts.)

Expedience: 9 (27 pts)

Fame: 5 (7 pts)

Reputation: 6 (12 pts)

## Moves

A character's eleven Moves are written down on the Moves Chart on the character sheet, each assigned to one of the positions from 2 to 12. Remember that at least four of your Moves must be defensive. At least two of defensive Moves must be placed between positions 5 and 9 on the chart. Moves are also given damage levels. Damage ranges from 1 to 10. Offensive Moves must be rated between damage levels 4 and 10. Defensive Moves can range from level 1 to 3.

It cost points to buy damage levels and to place moves at positions on the Moves Chart. One point buys one level of damage. It costs more to place a Move at a position that has a higher probability of being rolled during a match. Each position on the Moves Chart has a multiplier that range from x1 to x6 . The cost of moves = damage level x position multiplier:

- 2: x1
- 3: x2
- 4: x3
- 5: x4
- 6: x5
- 7: x6
- 8: x5
- 9: x4
- 10: x3
- 11: x2
- 12: x1

For example, a Move that inflicts 5 damage points placed at the 4 position would cost  $5 \times 3 = 15$  points. It costs 30 points to place the same move at the 7 position.

Van Gosse's player arranges the character's 11 moves on the Moves Chart and tries to give prominent placement and high damage ratings to medical-related traits. The moves cost 169 points. Van Gosse's Moves and Traits cost a total of 227 points, leaving 23 points for special features.

2: Boast of the awards received from scientific associations = 9 damage (9 pts)

3: Revise scholarly paper to fix a mistake (D) = 3 damage (6 pts)

4: Analogize the circulatory system to the uncensored flow of ideas = 5 damage (15 pts)

5: Recite long sections of Galen's On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Human Body = 7 damage (28 pts)

6: Visit aging mentor to seek advice (D) = 1 damage (5 pts)

7: speculate on opponent's illnesses based on their posture, appearance, and habits (SM) = 8 damage (48 pts)

8: Brandish real human skull (to make point about mortality, anatomy, etc) = 4 damage (20 points)

9: Admit that the body still holds many mysteries (D) = 1 damage (5 pts)

10: Accuse opponent of willful ignorance = 7 damage (21 pts)

11: Donate to local religious charity to deflect accusations of atheism (D) = 2 damage (4 pts)

12: Circulate satirical poem among friends and allies = 8 damage (8 pts)

## Signature Moves

While placing and setting damage levels for your Moves, do the same for your Signature Move. It costs the same as ordinary Moves do. During a match, when you roll a character's Signature Move, you do not inflict the damage level you set for your Signature. Instead, you'll roll on your character's Signature Move chart. Go ahead and write the six sub-moves of your Signature on the chart. It doesn't matter where you position them because there is an equal chance of rolling between 1 and 6. Now assign damage levels to the sub-moves. The six different damage levels you distribute among the the sub moves are: Signature Moves' damage level -3

SM's damage -1

SM's damage

SM's damage +1

Sm's damage + 3

SM's damage +5

Dr. Van Gosse's Signature Move was set at 8 damage, so his six sub-moves will inflict 5,7,8,9,11, and 13 damage. The player designing the doctor arranges and assigns damage to the sub-moves:

1: Speculatively diagnose a venereal disease, likely Pox = 11 damage

2: Speculatively diagnose Melancholy = 8 damage

3: Speculatively diagnose Consumption = 9 damage

4: Speculatively diagnose Dementia = 13 damage



- 5: Speculatively diagnose Worms = 5 damage  
6: Speculatively diagnose Hysterical Affection = 7 damage

### Special Features

Once you have set your Moves, you can decide whether to buy Special Features to enhance any of Moves or sub-moves. The two kinds of special features are Submission and Reversal.

Submission means that the move has such a painful or humiliating impact on an opponent that the opponent must immediately roll to see if they concede the match. Submissions can be added to any one offensive move (except the Signature Move) and up to two sub-moves of the Signature. Submissions on a normal offensive move cost ten points or half the total cost of the move (whichever is higher). Submissions on sub-moves cost half the damage level of the sub-move (round down). Write an (S) next to any moves that have the Submission feature.

Reversal means that when an opponent rolls an offensive move and you roll a defensive move with the Reversal feature, an opportunity arises for your character to reverse the situation, avoid the blow, and seize the initiative. Both players will roll two six-sided dice and if the defending player rolls higher, then the move results for the round are erased and both players roll again on the Moves chart. The Reversal feature can be added to one defensive move. It costs ten points or the total cost of the Move, whichever is higher. {or if defender rolls higher, defender switches to closest offensive maneuver; defender switches to closest defensive maneuver}

Van Gosse gets a Reversal on the "Visit aging mentor" defensive move. This costs ten points. The player designing the doctor pays ten points for a Submission on the "Brandish real human skulls" offensive move, which seems dramatic and creepy enough to cause a submission check. With just three points remaining, there are exactly enough to pay for a submission on the sub-move "Hysterical affection."

### 6. Pick wrestling name and signature anthem

Give your character a nickname that he or she will use in the ring. The wrestling name can signify the character's profession, key belief, signature move, or other identifying feature. It can be a variation on the character's real name (adding a modifier, title, or invented middle name) or an entirely new, super-hero style name establishing a wrestling identity.

Dr. van Gosse will be known as The Vivisector (with The Corpse-stealer and Dr. Skull as close runners-up). For future reference, his colleagues the lady-advocate and the enlightened aristocrat will take the wrestling names Sphinx and The Bookish Baron.

After choosing a wrestling name think about a song that you want played every time your character enters the arena. This will be your signature anthem, and it will give your character a temporary mechanical advantage when played before a match. You can choose a contemporary song or a baroque or classical piece suitable to the era. They grant different bonuses. Contemporary songs boost Reputation by one; period songs grant one re-roll of the dice.

Although a re-roll is tempting, the doctor's player cannot resist picking a contemporary anatomy-related song. Samantha Fox's Touch Me (I want to feel your body) will usher The Vivisector into the arena.

Van Gosse is complete and ready to wreak some serious havoc.

## B. Choose a Conflict for each wrestling session

Each two hour session after your first planning meeting will play out an enlightenment-era conflict. These conflicts are intellectual battles (matches) chosen by players to showcase the ideological debates of the time period. The best conflicts will showcase your characters' beliefs and have a range of possible outcomes, from total victory by your characters to partial success to defeat.

Conflicts can all relate to one overarching enlightenment theme, or touch on different aspects of the laws of nature, laws of men, and laws of god. The three conflicts you choose can link and build from the first to the last, or be separate controversies.

Players should collectively pick the three conflicts. You can define a conflict by answering four questions. What main goal are your characters trying to achieve? What decision maker(s) or audience do they have to convince to achieve their goal? Who or what are the main opponents working against the goal? And what is the scope of the conflict in terms of the time frame and geographical scale of the conflict?

Consider this example.

Goal: proving that a famous relic in the local church is a fake. Audience: general public, elders of the church, and higher members of the church hierarchy with authority over the local branch. Opponents: local priest and church members, pilgrims who visit the church to seek healing. Scope: six months until the annual parade of the relic through the town, mainly local in the town and region but also drawing in experts from afar.

The players in our sample game choose three conflicts that escalate out from an initial controversy. The first conflict will draw in Dr. Van Gosse directly. One of the working men who supplies him with cadavers has been caught with a corpse of uncertain origin. The fellow is being charged with the capital crime of grave robbing and desecration of a body. The characters' goal is to free the accused or at least spare his life. The plight of the accused man's wife and family during his imprisonment leads to the second conflict: a national debate over the rights of women to testify at courts of law, and control and inherit their husband's property. The characters' goal is to grant women equal rights in both areas of the law. Repercussions of the first two conflicts lead the characters to seek to have one of their own (The Bookish Baron) named as tutor to the royal heir so that they can influence future state policy in a more enlightened direc-

tion. This campaign on the naming of the royal tutor is the final conflict. To help remember the conflicts, we'll give each session a name: 'Habeas Corpus,' 'Weaker Sex,' and 'Hand that Rocks the Cradle.'

## C. Choose or create villains that are appropriate for each conflict

Your characters are all teammates, struggling for similar goals, wrestling on the same side. You will create or choose a set of villains to represent the minions of reaction – the forces of darkness who will challenge your efforts to bring light and reason. The opponents you've built into your conflict concepts are an obvious source of inspiration. Villains are designed exactly like characters – except their goals and moves come from the opposite side of the intellectual and political spectrum. You choose a concept and assign points to traits, moves, and special features.

Pick a manageable number of villains. Recurring rivals are more dramatic than having an entirely new set of opponents each session. Choose a number of villains equal to the number of characters plus one or two.

To keep things simple, our sample game will have just three villains, balancing the number of characters. They will be a populist preacher, a hanging judge, and a counter-enlightenment philosopher. Let's give one of these more detail. He'll be the populist preacher with passion equal to any reformer and an ill-concealed sadistic streak. He may distrust elements of the political and religious establishment, but he loathes these enlightenment troublemakers with their mechanistic universe primed to squeeze God out of the hearts of men. The preacher, call him Reverend Wilmots, will be a useful foil to the anatomist doctor. We'll create him at the same 250 point level as Van Gosse.

Traits:

Conviction: 7

Expediency: 8

Fame: 6

Reputation: 5

Moves:

2: drink heavily out of depression at sinfulness of our time: 3 damage (D)

3: adopt meek demeanor to lull opponent : 7 damage

4: label freethinkers 'the new idolaters': 5 damage

5: fast for two days: 2 damage (D)

6: turn other cheek but plot revenge: 2 damage (D)

7: whip mob into frenzy: 7 damage



- 8: recite scripture (SM) : 8 damage
- 9: petition governor to stamp out this brazen display of blasphemy: 8 damage
- 10: sputter with rage, loosen collar, fan self with black, austere hat: 1 damage (D)
- 11: ask congregation to pray for opponent: 4 damage
- 12: reference a clever automaton of a fiddler displayed at the Düsseldorf fair : 7 damage

Signature Move: Recite Scripture

- 1: “You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” (Revelations 3:15): 13 damage
- 2: “you will discover in the annals that this is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that sedition was stirred up in it from long ago” (Ezra 4:7): 5 damage
- 3: “I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you.” (1 Corinthians 11:2): 7 damage
- 4: “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools” (Prov 26:3): 11 damage (S)
- 5: “Wake up you drunkards and weep; and wail, all you wine drinkers over the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.” (Joel 1: 5): 8 damage (S)
- 6: “Do not invite everyone into your home for many are the tricks of the crafty.” (Sirach 11:29): 9 damage

Special Features: Submissions on Signature sub-moves 4 and 5.

Wrestling Name “The Preacher”

Signature Song: period choral rendition of A Mighty Fortress is our God.

## D. Set a wrestling storyline

After creating characters, conflicts and villains you will take off your enlightenment gowns and caps and slip into the shiny suits and Barnum-esque mindset of Professional Wrestling executives. It’s time to re-envision those 18th century conflicts as the three prime-time events of the upcoming league season. The characters and villains become larger than life wrestlers, the fan favorites whom you want to showcase as much as possible. Discuss and agree upon a few main storylines that you want to see develop over the three sessions. The best storylines will revolve around rivalries, team unity, and revenge. A place to start in developing a storyline is to look for natural rivalries and pair off each character with one particularly-hated villain.

In our sample game, the characters and villains pair off

nicely as: Doctor vs. Preacher; Lady-writer vs. Hanging Judge; and Enlightened Aristocrat vs. Reactionary Philosopher. The players will make sure that these rival pairs get a chance to face each off twice during the three upcoming sessions. Fleshing out the storylines behind these rivalries, say that the doctor and preacher have been enemies since they entered the league. The lady-writer used to date the judge. The aristocrat and philosophers were tag team partners for years but had a bitter split.

## E. Program the matches and assign Promoters

Now that you know the enlightenment context and wrestling storyline, program the matches for the three wrestling sessions. Decide how many matches will be in each session, the order of the matches, and which characters and villains will fight in each match. Also decide that the context of each match is. All matches should contribute to the underlying conflict. Try to vary the number and type of matches from session to session and to rotate wrestlers to create different match-ups.

Choose a player to promote and stage-manage each of the wrestling sessions to make sure that sessions provide 2 hours of high-energy entertainment. The promoter will set an agenda and time-schedule of the matches and pre-match rituals. Promoters also assign players to control the villains who will be wrestling during the session matches. If you have more than three players then players can share promotional responsibility for some of the sessions.

The three sessions in our sample game are programmed as follows:

First Session: Habeus Corpus

Match 1: lady-writer petitions court for leniency so that accused can be reunited with his wife and children. Lady-writer vs. Hanging Judge.

Match 2: Enlightened aristocrat and reactionary philosopher testify about the seriousness of the crime and the legitimacy of dissection. Aristocrat vs. Philosopher.

Match 3: Preacher and accompanying mob harass Anatomist who is helping guide defense of the accused. Anatomist vs. Preacher

Second Session: The Weaker Sex

Match 1: Tag team match as characters engage in free-wheeling written and oral debate over women’s right to manage property and testify at court. All 3 characters vs. All 3 villains. Lady-Writer and Philosopher will start out in ring.

Second Session: Hand that rocks the Cradle (Steel Cage Matches)

Match 1: Tag team match as characters lobby and pull strings to get Aristocrat named as tutor of royal prince (and Villains nominate the Philosopher for same position). Anatomist and Lady-writer vs. Preacher and Hanging Judge. Anatomist and Preacher start out in ring.

Match 2: Aristocrat and Philosopher meet King in separate interviews for tutor position. Aristocrat vs. Philosopher.

## F. Set victory conditions for each conflict

Every match played will end with one side being pinned or submitting. Map these victories and losses back onto the enlightenment conflicts. Decide what the numerical results of each session (wins and losses) mean in terms of character's progress toward their goals for the conflict. You should define a perfect record (characters win all matches) as a total victory, a mixed record as partial progress or an ambiguous result, and getting shut out (characters lose all matches) as a total defeat.

In session one of the sample game, 3 victories will earn characters the acquittal and release of the anatomist's supplier and a greater acceptance of the dissection of human cadavers. Two victories result in a fine and short sentence for the supplier. One victory means that the supplier of bodies is sentenced to a long term of harsh labor. Three losses and the poor supplier is publicly executed and opponents of dissection are emboldened to ensnare more grave diggers and even doctors.

## G. Set Steel Cage Moves

During the last session – the final showdown between characters and villains – all wrestling matches take place in a steel cage. The battles waged inside this galvanized grid impose a desperate isolation and are more brutal than ordinary matches. To crank up the violence level, a special Steel Cage Move Chart is added to all cage matches. Players collectively pick assign damage and features to 11 moves. All wrestlers will use the same Steel Cage Move Chart so make sure that moves are general enough to apply to all characters and all villains. Steel Cage moves should be dirty but effective.

Follow the same rules you used to buy moves during character creation, with the following modifications. You get 400 points to pay for the 11 moves; damage levels can be set to a maximum of 15 rather than 10; you

don't need to include any defensive moves; there is no signature move; and you can buy up to two submissions. You can agree on 11 Steel Cage moves from the samples provided here, invent your own, or pick some and make some. See the wrestling section for further information on how steel cage matches work.

The Steel Cage Move Chart for our sample game will be:

- 2: Accuse opponent of engaging in deviant sex act: 14 damage
- 3: Challenge to duel: 11 damage
- 4: Hire ruffians to waylay and thrash opponent: 10
- 5: Publish forged documents 'proving' that foe is conspiring with seditious elements: 11
- 6: Turn opponent's spouse or lover against them: 10 damage
- 7: Blackmail decision-maker with compromising information: 13 damage
- 8: Hire musician friend to compose embarrassing ditty about opponent: 7 damage
- 9: Pull strings to have opponent assigned to lengthy stay in the colonies: 13 damage
- 10: Have opponent's family members arrested: 11 damage
- 11: Seize or destroy opponent's library and draft manuscripts: 8 damage
- 12: Draw upon freemason contacts (to do something suitably conspiratorial - up to player who rolls to specify): 15 damage

## Wrestling Sessions: Two jam packed hours of entertainment

Players acting as promoters stage-manage each wrestling session (sessions 2-4). Promoters have two duties. First, they assign control of villain. Decide which players will play which villain during the matches. Write up a roster at the beginning of the session. Second, they are in charge of time management. They will plan out a schedule for the session, including some pre-match rituals that impact the game mechanically.

Think of each two-hour wrestling sessions as a major public event. A big time, pay-per-view, blockbuster show. Crowds stream into the stadium. Outside, scalpers hawk tickets with predatory mark ups. Concession stands are packed with fans stocking up on pricey beer and black t-shirts bearing the

images of philosophers, clergy, and nobles flexing, strutting, and putting the hurt on. There's a buzz of anticipation in the air. The arena seats fill rapidly. Fans unfurl banners inscribed with the witty bon mots of their favorite thinkers. That pasty kid with the mullet sitting two rows from the ring you has written – classily – on a day-glow orange poster: “A thing is not proved just because no one has ever questioned it. What has never been gone into impartially has never been properly gone into. Hence skepticism is the first step toward truth. It must be applied generally, because it is the touchstone” – Denis Diderot. Young Mr. mullet tries to get a chant started. ‘Di-de-rot, Di-de-rot’ ... but the energy in the vast arena hasn't focused quite yet, and his words collapse back into the hum of a thousand conversations.

You're sweating as you scan the crowd over a closed circuit feed – and not just because of all the lights blazing in the control room. As the promoter and producer of today's event, you're excited to have sold out the house, but also a little bit nervous. There are 20,000 fans in there – paid fans – not to mention the millions watching live on TV, and every one of them is expecting two jam packed hours of entertainment.

All three wrestling session have to last two hours. Any more, and you'll run past your pay per view slot and incur penalties on your stadium lease. Any less, and the fans go home pissed. With the way they're drinking, maybe they'll even trash the place, and the last thing you need is more bad publicity and another lawsuit.

As promoter, it's your job to come up with a two-hour slate of entertainment. Before you meet the other players for the session, write down a time line of activities: the program for your session. The wrestling matches that you and the other players have scheduled will be the main events and will hopefully take up much of the two-hour time slot. But promoters should build up to these matches with a set of pre-match activities and rituals to help frame the main events.

Be creative. You can schedule mini-concerts or other live entertainment in the ring to fire up the crowd, replays of earlier matches on the stadium

jumbotron, amateur bouts as undercards. For game purposes, there are six pre-match rituals that you will probably want to include. These rituals can help fill the two-hour session. They also impact the mechanics of the main wrestling events by temporarily boosting wrestlers' traits or granting dice-rolling advantages.

**Pre-match Interviews.** This is a interview with one wrestler or one team of wrestlers. Role-play out a couple of questions and answers, which can be about the upcoming bout, the wrestlers' personal lives, whatever. The promoter can act as interviewer and other players can answer in character. The promoter decides whether to interview both sides of the upcoming match or just talk to the player characters. Characters (and villains) who get interviewed receive their player's choice of +1 on Fame or +1 on Reputation for the duration of the day's matches.

**Hidden-camera scenes.** A camera crew zeroes in on a wrestler or team of wrestlers unaware that they are being filmed. The wrestler's true nature is revealed by these candid scenes of pre-match preparation. Role-play the scene: perhaps a lone wrestler quietly meditating, or looking at photographs of his wife and kids, or hiding a foreign object in his costume. You can also have a group of wrestlers, managers etc. planning out strategy or conniving to trick the referee. The promoter decides which wrestlers to feature. Each wrestler shown in a hidden camera scene gets their player's choice of +1 Reputation (for honorable behavior) or +1 Expedience (for sneaky, underhanded behavior) for the duration of the session.

**Trash-talking at press event.** During the pre-match weigh in, the opposing wrestlers and their entourage show up in the same room to answer media questions. There's no love lost between these athletes. Fueled by the frenetic click of cameras, the session inevitably spirals out of control into trash-talking, finger pointing, wild swing-and-a-miss chaos. You can role-play this scene, starting with Q & A (like the interview) then unleashing players to boast and talk smack. All characters and villains involved in a trash talk session get extra motivation in the form of +1 on their conviction trait for the duration of the session.

**Announcer Commentary.** The camera focuses on the announcer and color commentators, who preview the match and discuss each side's strengths and vulnerabilities. Role-play this conversation with two or three characters providing the analysis. Comment on each wrestler, noting one of their offensive moves (not their signature move) that is a particular strength and one of their defensive moves that is a particular weakness. Mark down a + next to the named offensive move and a – next to the named defensive move. Use a pencil because the '+' represents a temporary bonus of +3 damage that is added to the move every time it is rolled for the duration of this session. The temporary '-' means that the defensive move has a damage rating of zero during the session.

**Signature Song.** Almost as important as your signature move is your signature song, the rocking anthem that heralds you as you strut down to the ring, setting the tone for your wrestling persona. During character creation, player choose a song that is blasted while their wrestlers enter the arena. You can pick a classical piece (17th or 18th century) or a contemporary song. A wrestler with a contemporary song whips up the emotions of the crowd and gets a +1 on Reputation for the duration of the match. A wrestler with a classical music intro focuses on the upcoming battle and gets one re-roll of dice anytime during the match.

**Introductions.** "Ladies and Gentleman, in this corner, in the crimson and white vestments and the medallion of St. Peter, Chastiser of Impiety and past Ambassador of the Vatican to the Strasbourg Court, his Excellencyyyyyyyyyy Bishop Emanuel of Saa-aaaaaaalzburg!" You get the idea. Players' whose wrestler receives a formal introduction get to shift the result of a dice roll on their move chart once during the match. Shifting the result means that you can alter the result of a dice roll up or down by one number. For example, a roll of 5 can be shifted to a 4 or a 6.

The player promoting the first session of the sample game decides to include five of these six rituals into the match build up. Trash-talking will be excluded because the player likes the idea of the opposing wrestlers seeing each other for the first time across the ring. During pre-match interviews during which

the wrestlers expound upon their views on dissection and the ongoing trial, the players controlling the Vivisector and the Preacher both choose to raise their wrestlers' Reputations. There are no tag team matches this session, so fame is less important. Hidden camera scenes grant another choice: the Vivisector's player boosts Reputation one more point while the Preacher is shown acting villainous so as to gain an additional point of Expediency.

The camera switches to a panel of players commenting on the wrestlers' strengths and weaknesses. The Vivisector gets +3 damage on his brandish skull move but his visit aging mentor defensive move is downgraded to zero damage. The Preacher's petition governor move gets the +3 damage bonus and his fast for two days defense is knocked down to zero damage.

The arena lights dim and the power chords of A Mighty Fortress is My God blast out as the Preacher proceeds down to the ring, smiling meekly and blessing the booing crowds. Then Touch Me reverberates through the hall as the Vivisector strides down the aisle. The Vivisecotr receives his third +1 adjustment to Reputation and the Preacher's player gets one re-roll to use at any point in the match. Finally, the announcer introduces both wrestlers, whose players note down that they can shift any roll during the match.

## Wrestling Rules

Each round, the players controlling the player character and the villain wrestler in the ring roll 2d6. Consult the Moves Chart on the character sheet and announce what move your character has performed.

After stating the Move, try to add some additional thoughts to situate the move back into the underlying Enlightenment-era conflict. If your conflict is a debate before a philosophical society, you can expand upon the message and rhetorical intent of your character's move, or perhaps mention how the audience reacts. If the conflict is a years-long campaign to change policies of state you have more narrative leeway, and can explain how your move shifts the balance of power on a number of levels. If you can't

think of how to link your move into the conflict, you can ask the other players for suggestions or just state the move this time around.

While players active in the match are rolling and talking, another player can stand in for the referee and keep track of the damage being dealt. On a scrap piece of paper, write down the names of the characters taking part in the match. Each time moves are rolled, keep a running track of the amount of damage each character has taken. This record of damage is public information that all players can look at. The referee player should pay close attention to the damage levels and announce when a pin attempt can occur.

Pin Attempts

If both wrestlers make defensive moves during a round, then the combatants are circling each other, conserving energy and testing for weaknesses. If both wrestlers make offensive moves, they are standing toe-to-toe (metaphorically), trading blows. When one wrestler performs an offensive move and the other is on defense, then the defensive wrestler is temporarily at the other's mercy.

There will never be a pin attempt made when both wrestlers are on defense. A pin attempt occurs when:

- One wrestler makes an offensive move while the other wrestler makes a defensive move or one wrestler's offensive move inflicts 5 or more higher damage than the opposing wrestler's offensive move; and
- The wrestler with the advantage has sustained damage that is 10 or more lower than the defensive's wrestler's damage total (after factoring in damage dealt during the current round to both wrestlers)

When a pin attempt is made, the player controlling the offensive wrestler rolls two six-sided dice. If they roll low enough, their wrestler has pinned the enemy and the match is over.

\*\*\*Important note. Three of the game's special actions give defensive wrestlers subject to a pin attempt the chance to escape before the offensive player ever rolls. These three are "Cheat," Crowd

Inspires," and "Reversal." Make sure to players have the chance to use these special actions before a pin attempt roll is made.

The target number that the offensive player is trying to roll (equal to or under) to pin the opponent is determined by the amount of damage that his opponent has sustained. If the defensive player has taken 11-20 total damage, then a roll of 2 results in a pin. As the damage level rise, the defensive player is more disadvantaged (tired, stunned, injured etc.) and puts up less resistance, increasing the likelihood of a successful pin:

Damage total	Pin occurs on a roll of:
0-10	no pin attempt allowed
11-20	2
21-30	2-3
31-40	2-4
41-50	2-5
51-60	2-6
61-70	2-7
71-80	2-8
81-90	2-9
91-100	2-10
100+	2-11

Special Actions and Rules

**Cheat** means that a wrestler breaks the rules to gain an advantage. Wrestlers can attempt to cheat once per match to help themselves, plus once per session to help one of their teammates. A wrestler inside the ring can cheat by utilizing a concealed object (player's choice of what it is – in the context of the enlightenment setting, the object could be an unusual idea, phony logic, or an actual physical item). To cheat with a concealed object, state your intention to cheat before you and the other player roll on your move charts. Roll two dice. If the result is equal to or lower than your character's Expedience trait, your wrestler has successfully broken the rules and gained a temporary advantage. This round, your opponent is befuddled and does not take a move while you choose any move from your move chart. If your roll is above your expedience trait your opponent or the referee detect your concealed object. Proceed with both players rolling as normal for this

round. Whether you succeed or fail in the attempt, your Expediency is temporarily raised by one for the remainder of the session, and your reputation is lowered by one for the same period (the fans always spot your foul play).

To Cheat and help another character, a wrestler waiting outside the ring (part of a tag team or just observing the match) jumps in to distract the referee or to whack a wrestler from the opposing team. You can cheat to free your teammate from a pin attempt or to free them from a submission move. If a roll of two dice is equal to or lower than your wrestler's Expediency trait, you successfully nullify the submission or pin attempt before the two wrestlers involved ever roll for the outcome. You can also cheat to get a free blow against an opponent. If you succeed on your Expediency roll, roll on your character's move chart. If you get a defensive move roll again until you roll an offensive result. The move damages your opponent. Submission moves deal regular damage but do not cause a submission attempt because your sneak attack does not last long enough to be a true submission 'hold.' On the other hand your attack can lead to a pin attempt because your ally in the ring can fall on the enemy as you scoot back out. As with self-help cheating, your wrestler temporarily gains one point of Expediency and temporarily loses a point of reputation whether your attempt to cheat & help succeeds or fails.

**Crowd Inspires** means that the cheers and chants of the crowd grant you extra motivation. Wrestlers who succeed in being inspired can automatically escape a pin attempt or reverse any defensive roll. Any wrestler can attempt to be inspired by the crowd once per match and up to twice per session. To use the crowd to escape a pin attempt, roll two dice and compare to your wrestler's Reputation (make this roll before the offensive player rolls for the pin). If your roll is equal to or lower than your character's Reputation the crowd take your side, chants your name, and urges you on so that you break free of the pin attempt. You can also draw upon the crowd to reverse a situation where your wrestler rolled a defensive move and the opposing wrestler is on offense. If you succeed in your Reputation roll, your character switches to offense and the opposing wrestler is flipped into a defensive move. See the Reversal action for details of a suc-

cessful reverse.

**Re-roll** means that a player whose wrestler received a formal introduction before a match can re-roll any one roll during the match.

**Rest** allows wrestlers who have received damaged in the ring then tagged out to recuperate and lose some of their damage. Wrestlers lose 3 points of damage every round spent out of the ring. Only half of the damage received in each stay in the ring can be reduced through rest. All damage is erased between matches.

**Reversal** means that when an opponent rolls an offensive move and you roll a defensive move with the Reversal feature, an opportunity arises for your character to reverse the situation, avoid the blow, and seize the initiative. Both players roll two six-sided dice. If the offensive player rolls higher or there is a tie, the reversal attempt fails and play continues. If the defending player rolls higher, then their wrestler switches to be on offense while the opposing wrestler is reversed to a defensive maneuver. The defending player switches to the offensive move that is closest on the Moves list to the defensive move that triggered the reversal. (If two offensive moves are equal distance the player chooses which to use.) The offensive player similarly switches to the closest defensive maneuver, choosing if two are equidistant. Note that the formerly offensive wrestler can be reversed to a defensive move with the Reversal special feature—and this triggers a new reversal roll. The wrestlers can potentially switch back and forth several times as long as the player attempting to reverse keeps winning the roll-off.

**Shift** means that you can lower or raise the result of a move roll by one. This gives a player the choice of three moves for that round (or a choice of two if the roll is 2 or 12). Wrestlers who enter the ring to a classical anthem can shift a roll on the move chart once during the match. Shifts can not be applied to any other types of rolls.

**Steel Cage** means that the match ring is surrounded by a chain-link fence or steel cage. Wrestlers not involved in the match are blocked from cheating to help those in the ring. Player choose one of their

wrestler's offensive moves to be replaced with "Use the Cage." The player in charge of your wrestler's opponent picks one of your defensive moves, which is also replaced with the 'Use the Cage' option. When Use the Cage is rolled, re-roll on the special Steel Cage Move Chart.

**Submission** means that the move rolled has such a painful or humiliating impact on the opposing wrestler that the other player must immediately roll to see if their wrestler concedes the match. The player whose wrestler is on the receiving end of submission move rolls two dice and adds the results. If the total is equal to or lower than their wrestler's Conviction trait, the wrestler manages to overcome the temporary pain and continues the match (without any ongoing disadvantage or extra damage). If the total is greater than the wrestler's Conviction trait the wrestler is overcome by the intense pressure and concedes the match.

**Tag Team** means that a player in the ring can 'tag' a teammate who enters the ring while the first wrestler exits and takes a rest. Tags can be attempted any number of times during a match as long as: the players of the wrestlers in and out of the ring both want to tag; and the wrestler in the ring was not on defensive and the opposing wrestler on offensive the previous round. Tag team attempts are rolled for at the start of a round. Both players roll two dice. If both player roll equal to or under their Fame trait, or if one player rolls four or more under Fame, then the Tag is successful. The outside wrestler immediately enters the ring and their teammate in the ring leaves. The round then proceeds with the new wrestler.

## The Vivisector vs. The Preacher

The bell rings in our sample game. (All actions in this example are based off actual dice rolls). As the crowd roars, the Vivisector and the Preacher move out of their corners to start the match. As a reminder, this match covers the efforts of the Dr. Van Gosse to fend off protests and slander by the Preacher and his flock so that Van Gosse can continue to support the defense of the accused body snatcher. Both players roll dice and consult their wrestlers' move

charts. The Vivisector rolls a 6: "Visit aging mentor to seek advice" while the Preacher's roll of 3 equates to "adopt meek demeanor to lull opponent." Those moves make sense as opening gambits in a debate over human dissection. Both players prepare to narrate a bit of additional context. But wait – the Vivisector's visit mentor move is defensive with the Reversal feature and the Preacher's move is offensive. Before players narrate or the referee notes down damage, the players need to roll again to see if the Vivisector successfully reverses the situation. They roll and the Vivisector's result of 9 is higher than the Preacher's 5. The Preacher's player considers using his special re-roll but decides to hold onto it since the match has just begun. Now the Vivisector's player can choose an offensive move closest to the reversed visit mentor move – and what to you know, his signature move of 'speculate on opponent's illnesses' is right next to visit mentor. Rolling on the signature move chart, the result is a 3: 'speculatively diagnose consumption.' The preacher's player is forced to switch to his wrestler's closest defensive move: 'drink heavily out of depression at sinfulness of our time.'

Now both players narrate their gloss on the moves and exchange of damage. The Vivisector's player explains that as soon as the Preacher shows his face to lecture Dr. Van Gosse about the wickedness of butchering the sacred human form, the Doctor looks over the preacher, frowns, inquires if the Preacher has been experiencing a cough, and warns that "consumption may be wracking your body, lurking in your chest like the serpent in the garden. I'd advise you to avoid any unnecessary exertion or loud speechifying." The Preacher's player adds that his man is stung by this warning and, against his best nature, overindulges in gin that night. During the exchange the player acting as referee notes down that the Vivisector has sustained 3 damage; the Preacher has taken 9.

The next round the Vivisector rolls a 7 (his signature diagnosis move again) and the Preacher rolls 8 for his signature move: 'recite scripture.' They roll an additional die each, both receiving 4. The Vivisector diagnoses Dementia for 13 damage—his most potent move. The Preacher counters by reciting Proverbs 26:3. "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools." This



move deals 11 damage and causes a submission attempt. The referee marks down that the Vivisector has sustained 14 damage and the Preacher has taken 22. The players decide to roll for the submission attempt before narrating this round because the outcome will shape how they describe their wrestler's moves. The Vivisector's players look at his character sheet and get worried. Dr. van Gosse's Conviction is 7 gives him a better than average chance of staying in the match- but just barely. His newly boosted reputation of 9 would help appeal to the crowd so as to avoid a pin attempt; but it is useless against submission. Consulting the rules, the player sees that another wrestler on the team could jump into the ring and try to cheat to break the submission hold. The Sphinx hasn't cheated yet this session, so she rushes the ring and tries to save her team mate. Let's assume that she has a Expedience Trait of 6. The Sphinx's player rolls two dice. The result of 9 means that the Sphinx fails to break the hold before the referee escorts her out of the ring. The fate of match (and potentially the life of the jailed body-procurer) now rests on the Vivisector's submission roll. It's a 4! The Vivisector escapes the Preacher's clever hold.

Now that the players know that the match will continue, they narrate the rounds' actions. The Vivisector's player describes how a hung-over Preacher returns the next day to harass Dr. van Gosse. "I interrupt his rambling sermon to question the soundness of his mind." The preacher's player narrates how the preacher retorts with a quote from Proverbs, and how the clever quip about a fool sends the preacher's flock into convulsions of laughter, with passers by in the street even joining in the merrymaking at van Gosse's expense. Factoring in the submission attempt, the players describe how the Doctor, used to dignified exchanges with other medical professionals, is humiliated by the exchange, and considers withdrawing his support from the court case. Hearing of her colleagues' wavering spirit, the lady-writer comes calling to lend moral support, but Van Gosse is too embarrassed to see visitors and instructs his butler to turn her away. He ultimately draws upon his calling as a doctor and his belief in the social and scientific benefits of dissection, and rallies to re-engage in the conflict.

In the third round the Vivisector 'admits that the

body still holds many mysteries' while his opponent drinks heavily again. Both men seem shaken from the near-submission. In the fourth round they go back on the attack, with the Vivisector accusing his opponent of willful ignorance and the Preacher whipping his mob of parishioners into a frenzy. By the end of the fourth round the Vivisector has taken 24 damage and the Preacher 30.

In round five, the Preacher rolls a weak though entertaining defense: he 'sputters with rage, loosens collar, and fans self with black, austere hat.' The Vivisector rolls another 7 and diagnoses his opponent's eccentric behavior as a symptom of a venereal disease, "likely pox" (what we today know as syphilis). Because one wrestler is on offense and the other is on defense, and the Preacher's damage total of 41 is more than ten higher than the Vivisector's 25, the Vivisector gets a pin attempt. The Preacher's player decides to draw upon the crowd's inspiration to break free before the attempt is rolled for. The Preacher looks out into the sea of fans and sees a few waving his picture. A roll of 8 is two higher than the Preacher's (boosted) reputation, so the crowd does not energize the wrestler enough to break free from the Vivisector's pitiless VD diagnosis. Recalling the words of his signature song, the Preacher draws upon his mighty fortress and uses his one re-roll of the dice. This time the player rolls 11 – another failure. The crowd and almighty God have both turned on the Preacher and he receives no respite.

The Vivisector's player gets to roll for the pin attempt. Consulting the pin chart at the Preacher's 41 damage level, the player sees that a roll of between 2 and 5 is required to complete the pin and win the match. The player rolls a 4 and gleefully narrates the events of the round and end of the match. "As soon as I announce that the Preacher is exhibiting signs and symptoms of the Pox, he withdrew behind that hat of his like a box turtle and slunk away. Like many men of the cloth, he must have dark obsessions with the procreative act and the shame of my accusation silenced his bitter tongue for the duration of the trial."



## CAGE OF REASON CHARACTER SHEET

**CHARACTER NAME:** Dr. Pietr van Gosse

**WRESTLING NAME:** the Vivisector

**PLAYER NAME:**

### CONCEPT

an anatomist seeking to promote a mechanistic view of the human body advances. He wants to eliminate all religion-based restrictions on the dissection of human cadavers.

### BIOGRAPHY

van Gosse is a 44 year old male surgeon and lecturer in anatomy. He is Dutch, born in Amsterdam and currently residing in Leiden. Pietr is married with two young daughters.



**CHARACTER PORTRAIT**

### TRAIT/ LEVEL

**CONVICTION:** 7      **FAME:** 5  
**EXPEDIENCY:** 9      **REPUTATION:** 6

### MOVES

ROLL	MOVE	DAMAGE	FEATURES
2	Boast of the awards received from scientific associations	9	
3	Revise scholarly paper to fix a mistake	3	D
4	Analogize the circulatory system to the uncensored flow of ideas	5	
5	Recite long sections of Galen's On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Human Body	7	
6	Visit aging mentor to seek advice	1	D + R
7	speculate on opponent's illnesses based on their posture, appearance, and habits	*	SM
8	Brandish real human skull	4	S
9	Admit that the body still holds many mysteries	1	D
10	Accuse opponent of willful ignorance	7	
11	Donate to local religious charity to deflect accusations of atheism	2	D
12	Circulate satirical poem among friends and allies	8	

### SIGNATURE MOVE

1	Speculatively diagnose a venereal disease, likely Pox	11	
2	Speculatively diagnose Melancholy	8	
3	Speculatively diagnose Consumption	9	
4	Speculatively diagnose Dementia	13	
5	Speculatively diagnose Worms	5	
6	Speculatively diagnose Hysteric Affection	7	S

## CAGE OF REASON CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER NAME: Reverend Wilmots

WRESTLING NAME: The Preacher

PLAYER NAME:

### CONCEPT

populist preacher with passion equal to any reformer and an ill-concealed sadistic streak. He loathes these enlightenment troublemakers with their mechanistic universe primed to squeeze God out of the hearts of men.

### BIOGRAPHY



CHARACTER PORTRAIT

### TRAIT/ LEVEL

CONVICTION: 7      FAME: 6  
EXPEDIENCY: 8      REPUTATION: 5

## MOVES

ROLL	MOVE	DAMAGE	FEATURES
2	drink heavily out of depression at sinfulness of our time	3	D
3	adopt meek demeanor to lull opponent	7	
4	label freethinkers 'the new idolaters'	5	
5	fast for two days	2	D
6	turn other cheek but plot revenge	2	D
7	whip mob into frenzy	7	
8	recite scripture	*	SM
9	petition governor to stamp out this brazen display of blasphemy	8	
10	sputter with rage, loosen collar, fan self with black, austere hat	1	D
11	ask congregation to pray for opponent	4	
12	reference a clever automaton of a fiddler displayed at the Düsseldorf fair	7	

## SIGNATURE MOVE

1	You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked	13	
2	you will discover in the annals that this is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and that sedition was stirred up in it from long ago	5	
3	I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you	7	
4	A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools	11	S
5	Wake up you drunkards and weep; and wail, all you wine drinkers over the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth	8	S
6	Do not invite everyone into your home for many are the tricks of the crafty	9	

CAGE OF REASON CHARACTER SHEET

CHARACTER NAME:  
WRESTLING NAME:  
PLAYER NAME:

CONCEPT

BIOGRAPHY

CHARACTER PORTRAIT

TRAIT/ LEVEL

CONVICTION:            FAME:  
EXPEDIENCY:         REPUTATION:

MOVES

ROLL	MOVE	DAMAGE	FEATURES
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

SIGNATURE MOVE

1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			