Resourceful

A 24-hour RPG by Aaron Stone

This is a game about resource management, strategy, outwitting the GM, and telling a cool story to justify all the stuff you want to do with game mechanics.

OR

This is a game about adventurous types out looking to recover lost artifacts, mighty weapons of power, and ancient relics. The default setting of the game is a soft sci-fi post-apocalyptic world where high-tech items may still exist in ruined cities, forgotten bomb shelters, hidden compounds, or remote and inhospitable wilderness regions. You can also send people looking for treasure in the pulp age, or on distant worlds, or in a fantasy realm if you like. Most of the setting stuff is just window dressing that will affect how things are described but not how the game mechanics work.

The game is written for a group of 3-6 people, one to GM. Someday I will add rules for one-on-one play. You will need pencils, paper, ten-sided dice (at least 3, maybe 3 per player), and some kind of chips or beads or markers in four distinct colors. (You could use several decks of playing cards, treating each suit as a color.)

Some key universal rules

Description and vetoes

To do anything that has a game mechanics effect, you need to describe it in the game world. Anyone can veto your action if they think the description is feeble. You can try to talk them into changing their mind once, but after that you have to change your description. If you can't come up with a description people can buy, you can't do the thing. *This goes for the GM too*. So if you want to present the players with a death robot in the middle of the badlands, and they don't buy it, you have to come up with a better description or move on to a different obstacle. If something is vetoed, it just doesn't happen. There is no other penalty or cost.

The purpose of the veto power is to make sure that the story part of playing is at least as entertaining as the game part. Don't try to use it to make the game easier to win. If you're a jerk about it, don't be surprised if somebody in the group vetoes you being part of the next game.

Resources

The players have resources in the game. The GM can never take them away. Once a resource is earned, it can only be lost or spent in the specific ways specified in the rules.

Final say

The last word resides with the entire group. If there is disagreement about how the rules should be interpreted or something, the group should try to find consensus and settle for majority rule if necessary. If in doubt, err on the side of keeping the adventure moving forward.

Building a protagonist character

PCs have info in four categories: fields of battle, approaches, gear, and passions

Fields of battle
There are four fields of battle: physical, mental, social, and technical.
Physical means doing stuff with your body: fighting, jumping, dancing, racing
Mental means doing stuff primarily by thinking and remembering: chess, codebreaking, strategy
Social means interacting with other people to get what you want: haggling, seduction, bluffing
Technical means manipulating tools and processes: repairing, building, operating

In the default setting, technical mostly refers to handling high-tech equipment like computers, robots, and quantum transmodulators. In other settings, the group should clarify what technical refers to: alchemy, engineering, or what.

Fields of battle are rated high, medium, or low. Set one to high, one to medium, and the other two to low, OR set three to medium and one to low. High is most likely to yield success. Once set, these are pretty much set forever.

Approaches
There are four approaches: direct, covert, improvised, and planned
Direct is a no-nonsense, straightforward approach: attacking directly, or climbing over the rock, or telling people what you think they should do, or taking it apart and replacing the broken bit.
Covert is an indirect approach that depends on stealth or misdirection: assassination, fraud, planting a computer virus.
Improvised is an approach based on seeing how it goes and adapting: jury-rigging repairs, making up a story to inspire people, or hitting 'em with a handy bar stool.
Planned is a methodical approach involving forethought and precision: laying a trap, building a device to solve the problem, or maneuvering someone into a favorable decision.

Each approach is associated with one of the four resources you can have:
Direct goes with *determination*
Covert goes with *cunning*
Improvised goes with *inspiration*
Planned goes with *patience*

Approaches get a numerical rating that can change over time. To start, you can assign the numbers +2, +1, 0, and -1, then add 1 to any one rating.

Classes / Archetypes / Whatever

Fields of battle and approaches have the most effect on your success or failure at things and do the most to define your basic character type. So we can build some classes/archetypes/sample characters from just those:

Fighter
Physical H Mental L Social L Technical M
Direct +3 Covert 0 Improvised +1 Planned -1

Scavenger
Physical M Mental M Social L Technical M
Direct 0 Covert +1 Improvised +2 Planned 0

Engineer
Physical L Mental M Social L Technical H
Direct 0 Covert -1 Improvised +2 Planned +2

Socialite
Physical L Mental M Social H Technical L
Direct -1 Covert +1 Improvised +2 Planned +1

Gambler
Physical L Mental M Social M Technical M
Direct -1 Covert +1 Improvised +3 Planned 0

Thief
Physical M Mental L Social L Technical H
Direct -1 Covert +3 Improvised 0 Planned +1
(This is a thief who's good at using tools and defeating mechanical obstacles like locks and traps. You could switch physical and technical ratings to get a thief who's more focused on picking pockets and running away.)

Gear

The stuff you carry only matters if it has a game effect. Common gear adds a bonus to a certain combination of one field of battle and one approach. You start out with a total of +3 in gear that you can spread between one, two, or three items.

Example gear
Massive shotgun (+3 to physical / direct)
Handheld computer (+1 to mental / planned)
Tool belt (+2 to technical / improvised)
Makeup (+1 to social / covert) (or social/direct, if it's a different kind of makeup)

Passions

If your character really cares about something, that's a passion. Passions can be very big ("justice") or very specific ("making sure my sister gets the drug that will cure her disease"). Picking a passion or two helps define your character and guide your roleplaying. More important for the game, it gives the GM a big ol' target to shoot at. So every time you list a passion on your character sheet, you gain 1 determination. (This is a "resource," which we'll get to very quickly.) You can't start with more than two passions listed, but it's a good idea to start with at least one.

Resources

Much of the gameplay revolves around acquiring and using resources, which are represented by the four types of chips or cards or beads you've chosen to use. To try to make things clearer (and make this document a little more visually interesting), I'll assign each resource a color and use that color when giving the resource's name or abbreviation. Of course you can change how you assign the colors if you want to. If you're playing online or just don't have tokens available, you can just write down your totals. They just change pretty frequently, so it's easier with something physical you can move around the table.

All resources come out of and are paid into an infinite bank.

Determination

This is the energy you get from being passionate and committed. You gain 1D every time you write a new passion on your character sheet. When you get confront an obstacle because of your passion, you get another 1D. If you are presented with an opportunity to confront an obstacle because of your passion but choose to ignore it, you have to pay 1D.
Anytime you act directly, you may spend 1D to buy a boost (CROSS REFERENCE).

Cunning

This is your cleverness and wisdom of experience. Every time you successfully assist another player facing an obstacle (CROSS REFERENCE), you gain 1C. (This gives you a good reason to tag along while other characters go off to confront obstacles related to their passions.)
You may spend 1C to buy a boost any time you act covertly.

Inspiration

This reflects the ability to come up with a sudden idea or have a burst of renewed energy. You get inspiration from the other players (including the GM). Once per obstacle faced, you can give anybody who does something impressive 1I.
1I may be spent at any time for a boost when you are doing something improvisational.

Patience

Sometimes you just have to wait for it. You will get patience from the GM for "overspending" on obstacles. If the GM decides to arrange a cruel coincidence (such as putting two of your passions in conflict), you'll get paid 1P for that too.
If you act with planning, you may spend 1P to get a boost.

So your starting character will begin with 1 or 2D depending on how many passions you listed when creating the character. You'll get patience from the GM in pretty short order. Cunning you'll have to earn by being a good co-star and helping other people when they're center stage. Inspiration will come your way when you do something cool: come up with a great idea or a strong description.

With these resources, you can buy boosts to your die rolls as mentioned above and described later. You can also spend combinations of resources to do all kinds of other cool things, as we see in the (next page)

Resource Allocation Chart

Remember that doing any of these requires you to provide a description that is subject to veto.

Cost	Effect	Cost	Effect
1D	"Not on my watch!" Direct boost: reroll one die on a roll involving direct action	2I 1D	"I'm back!" Recovery: return to a conflict you have been eliminated from
1C	"Very clever" Covert boost: reroll one die on a roll involving covert action	2D 2C	"That's enough!" Pressed advantage: remove 1 point from any stat of an obstacle – your choice which one
1I	"Let's try this" Improvisation boost: reroll one die on a roll involving improvised action	3I 2P	"The moment I've been waiting for!" Superboost: reroll all three dice, then reroll any one die
1P	"I had expected this" Planned boost: reroll one die on a roll involving planned action	2I 1C	"That's not what it's intended for" Makeshift: Use an object for a field or approach other than its stated one
2 alike	"I have a suggestion" Helper: Spend 2 of the same resource: give one to another player	any 4	Desperation: trade any 4 resources (mixed ok) for 1 of any other resource
3 alike	Tradeoff: You may swap 3 of any resource for 1 of any other resource	2P	"That was the old me" Dispassionate: remove one passion from your character sheet
2 or 3D	"This time, it's personal" Until the next obstacle is overcome, raise one L to M (2D) or one M to H (3D)	2D 2C	"That's enough!" Pressed advantage: remove 1 point from any stat of an obstacle – your choice which one
2C 1P	"Now I see you" Scrutiny: force the GM to reveal any one stat of an obstacle you face	2C or 2I	"This is just crazy enough to work" Lower your rating one step (H to M or M to L), but reroll all three dice
1D 1C 1I 1P	"The tables have turned" Switcheroo: change the field of battle to one of your choosing	1C 2P	"Brilliant!" Each PC gets a free boost on their next roll (use it or lose it)
2P 1D	"I made this" Builder: create one piece of gear with a +1 bonus, or raise a gear bonus by +1, to a max. of 3	3D 2I 1P	"To victory!" Inspired leadership: until this obstacle is defeated, all L ratings for all PCs become M ratings
2I 2C	"Surprise!" Flexibility: change BOTH field and approach for one assistance attempt	3D 3C 3I 3P	"Level up!" Upgrade: Permanently raise one of your approach scores by 1, max. of 4

Obstacles

An obstacle is something that stands between the players and what they're trying to do. An obstacle can be a physical barrier (like a locked door or a swamp), a situation (the players are exiled from a town they must enter), a challenge (find a way to provide the village with water), critters (five mutant badgers), people (a warlord and his three best fighters), or about anything else (a disease, an army, a rogue robot, a philosophical dilemma). In this game, there is no automatic difference mechanically between "we have to cross the pit of fire" and "we have to defeat the bandit army."

Introduce obstacle

The GM introduces an obstacle and explains what it is and why it stands in the way. The GM explains whether this is a simple, universal, multiple, or complex obstacle, and establishes the field of battle for facing it.

A simple obstacle is something that can be overcome by any one of the PCs alone. This might be a trap or security system that one person can shut off, or a duelist who must be defeated one-on-one, or a guard who needs to be distracted while the others slip in.

A universal obstacle must be overcome by everyone in the group to proceed. The group can work together or singly, but they must all be involved in facing the obstacle to overcome it. For example, if you have to get through a swamp, you can't have just one person find the way through and everyone else just suddenly appear on the other side. One person can be the guide and help the others through, but everybody has to make it.

A multiple obstacle has several parts that are basically the same that must all be overcome. A gang of ninjas, a series of puzzles, a squadron of guards might all be treated as multiple obstacles. (They could also be treated as simple obstacles, so it's important that the GM make it clear which way they're being handled.)

A complex obstacle must be overcome on more than one field of battle for success. This is primarily for climactic scenes where you have to outsmart the villain and shut off the bomb and defeat the thugs all at the same time.

If nobody vetoes it, then the protagonists have to overcome the obstacle.

Establish risk and reward

The GM should publicly declare the risks and rewards in facing this obstacle. The reward is what you get if you overcome the obstacle; the risk is what you pay if you don't. Some games call these "stakes." By default, the reward is **move on to the next obstacle and take any one resource (player's choice)**. By default, the risk for any obstacle is **loss of one resource (whatever you have the most of, GM's choice in event of a tie) and encounter a setback**. A

setback means that you can't try to overcome this obstacle again with the same approach and field of battle.

If the GM says, "Default stakes," then that's how it is. But the GM may propose other stakes and the players may negotiate on the point. In general, any alteration of rewards should bring a corresponding alteration of risk.

Rewards
Rewards beyond the default could include extra resources, gear, or particular story events.
Examples:
If you kill the mutant leader, you can take her plasma whip (+2 direct/ physical)
If you stop the flood, people in the village will love you
If you withstand the poison, your body will grow stronger and you will be at "high" on physical for the next obstacle
If you get past the security systems, you will each get at extra 2C

Risks
Risks beyond the default could involve loss of gear, loss of resources, reduced character stats, particular story events, or even character death. This is the **only** way for a PC to die in this game: as an agreed-upon risk.
Examples:
If you lose the drinking contest, you will be at "low" mental and have your planning score reduced by 1 for the next obstacle you face
If you lose, your character is out of the contest and can't act until someone else overcomes the obstacle
If you can't persuade the guard, they'll throw you in jail and take all of your gear: to get it back, you'll have to overcome another obstacle.

For multiple and complex obstacles, risks should be defined as "per failure" or "for complete failure."
Examples:
To get out of the prison, the PCs have to trigger three separate override controls without being detected. This is a multiple obstacle with a technical field of battle. The group agrees to this reward and risk scheme: If the group succeeds completely (all three on the first try) they get the default reward plus a +2 item of the group's choice that they find on the way out. If they fail completely, they get the standard loss plus guards are alerted so their next attempt will be at -2. For each individual failure, the person who fails will lose one resource.
The PCs are facing a deranged robot that has shut off the air and elevators in its sealed underground base. This is a complex obstacle with both mental and technical fields of battle. The group agrees to apply the default risks on a "per failure" basis.

If the group can't agree on rewards and risks, then the default stakes are used. Otherwise, once

Rewards are earned or risks are paid only by those PCs who are actually involved in rolling dice to overcome the obstacle.

Confronting the obstacle

Confronting an obstacle involves picking an approach and then rolling the dice. For a simple obstacle, there's not much to it. We'll start with that, then move on to more complex cases.

Confronting a simple obstacle by yourself
Pick what approach you want to use. This will be based on what you're good at and on what you suspect the weaknesses of the obstacle might be. Describe how you're using that approach in this situation. As always, you're subject to veto if your provide a weak description. Once the approach is established, the GM will announce the target number for this approach and field of battle.

Roll three ten-sided dice. The field of battle will tell you whether to take the highest, middle, or lowest result. Modify this result by your score in the approach you've chosen and any gear that applies.

If you roll equal to or higher than the target number the GM gives you, you succeed and get your reward, plus you get to describe how it went. Lower and you fail and pay the risk cost and the GM describes how you screwed up.

Simple, eh? Just to be sure, though…
Examples
Mary is trying to disarm a bomb, a technical obstacle. Unfortunately, she's rated L in technical. She says she tries to put the timer in and endless loop, and declares she's using an improvisational approach, where she has +2. The GM says the target number is 6. She rolls 8, 5, 3. Taking the lowest number (3) and adding 2, she gets a 5. She fails to overcome the obstacle. BOOM.
Wing is trying to destroy a bridge before an army of robots can cross it. This is on the physical field of battle, where Wing is rated M. He tries to talk the group into letting him use a covert approach, but gets vetoed. Instead he just hacks the thing down by chopping at the supports, obviously a direct approach. His axe is useful here (physical/direct +1), which is good since his direct score is 0. The target number is 4. He rolls 9, 8, 2. He takes the middle result (8) and adds 1 for a final result of 9, a clear success.

Boosts

By spending one of the associated resource, you can buy a "boost" that allows you to reroll any one die from your roll. (This will probably be your lowest die, but maybe you have a weird situation.) So
Mary decides she doesn't want to blow up and uses a boost by spending 1 inspiration (which is associated with improvisation). She rerolls the 3 and gets a 7. Now her results are 8, 7, 5. She takes the lowest (5) and adds 2 for her improvisation score and gets a final result of 7. No boom.

Assists

Sometimes you want to give a helping hand. This is called assisting. Providing an assist can help a fellow PC succeed and can also earn you 1 cunning if your assist is successful. (Note that it

doesn't matter whether the obstacle is overcome: you earn the resource for rolling a success on your assist.)

You can assist in one of two ways. If you just want to pitch in and take on a lesser role in whatever the protagonist is doing, you describe your assistance and then role as if you were facing the obstacle but with a +2 to your roll. If you succeed, the main character gets a +1 from your help.

But if you suck at whatever the main character's doing, or if you can't come up with a sufficient description for helping that way, you can also come up with a way to help that uses a different approach OR a different field of battle (but not both). As always, you must describe this help to everyone's satisfaction. Once that's done, you roll against the obstacle's target number using the approach you've chosen, but without the +2. As before, if you succeed, the main character gets a +1 thanks to your help.

If you fail at either kind of assistance, the main character suffers a -1 penalty due to your interference. And thanks a lot, by the way.

Examples:
Joey and Blade are trying to stop a mutant attack on a village in the desert. Here they are:
Joey Physical L Mental M Social L Technical H Direct +1 Covert -1 Improvised +1 Planned +2
Blade Physical H Mental L Social M Technical L Direct +2 Covert +2 Improvised 0 Planned -1

The first obstacle is their broken-down jeep. Unless they get it running, they can't get to the village in time. Joey decides to patch it up (Technical / improvised). The target number is 7: the damage is pretty bad, and she's worried about her chances given her limited tools (tool belt, +1 tech/improv). Plus, Blade is running short on cunning. Blade wants to help, but with tech at L and improv at 0, his odds are low. Blade's player says he is just going to function as a straight lackey: bringing stuff, lifting stuff, and rubbing Joey's shoulder's when she gets tired. This is physical/improvised, which lets Blade use a high roll instead of a low roll.

Blade rolls 3d10 and gets 7, 4, 1. His high roll is 7: just enough. (He doesn't get a +2 bonus because he changed the field of battle.) He gains 1 cunning.

No Joey rolls, with a +1 from Blade's help. She rolls 4, 4, 2. It's a poor roll, but her +1 for improvised and +1 for the tool belt and +1 for the help, she gets to 7 and succeeds.

Later, at the village, Blade has to convince the villagers to join the fight instead of just surrendering or running away. His plan is to just tell them like it is (social / direct), but the villagers are scared (target number 6). Joey says she'll join in, adding her comments when she can. She will roll and take the low roll with a +1 (for direct) and a +2 for assisting without changing approach or field of battle. She rolls 9, 7, 3, for a final result of 6 (3+1+2). She gains 1 cunning.

Blade rolls 7, 3, 2. The middle result is 3. He adds +2 for direct and +2 for Joey's help to get 7 and succeeds.

Failing to assist carries no direct penalty for the assistant (but remember the -1 penalty for the main character). However, all PCs who assist are involved in a roll and share in the risks unless those have been specifically negotiated to exclude assistants beforehand. Extra rewards beyond the default belong only to the main character unless negotiated otherwise.

Universal obstacles

A group can overcome a universal obstacle in one of two ways. First, they can just each roll against it and individually accept the rewards or risks. Depending on how the risks are defined, individuals who fail may have to try again or face a different obstacle or deal with some other consequence.

It is also possible, if sufficiently described, to place the entire success or failure in the hands of one character. This would be the case of getting through the swamp by appointing the tracker to serve as a guide. In this case, use the assistance rules. The character charged with the task is the main character. Everyone else make assist rolls, and the main character's outcome determines whether the obstacle is overcome or not.

Multiple obstacles

A "multiple obstacle" is a series of similar or identical obstacles that work together or occur in proximity. This is a good way to handle mooks or a series of traps to let individual group members show off or face individual consequences. Generally, let each character roll against one iteration of the obstacle or assist another character in doing so. Continue until all the iterations are overcome.

Complex obstacles

At climactic story points, it's a good idea to let different people shine and to up the tension. A complex obstacle presents more than one field of battle that must be faced to overcome the obstacle. This works somewhat like multiple obstacles, but the players must decide which field they will concern themselves with. If they all succeed at once, it really feels like teamwork. And if some of them have trouble, then those risk penalties can start to mount, and then things really get interesting.

A big-ass complex obstacle example

Joey and Blade save the village but the mutant leader escapes with a hostage. Fortunately, they're joined by a mutant who has turned traitor (played by a player who was late to the session). The stats are these

Joey Physical L Mental M Social L Technical H Direct +1 Covert -1 Improvised +1 Planned +2
Blade Physical H Mental L Social M Technical L Direct +2 Covert +2 Improvised 0 Planned -1
Freakboy Physical M Mental H Social L Technical L Direct -1 Covert +1 Improv +2 Planned +1

The mutant leader has gone all-out for final revenge. The hostage is inside a cage with a combination lock rigged to poison the hostage if the wrong combination is entered (tech).

Meanwhile the mutant leader tries to argue the group into seeing that he is the victim here and they have no right to interfere (mental). Plus there's a couple of mutant cougars he's set loose just to "protect himself" (physical).

Success against all parts of the obstacle is necessary to successfully save the hostage, plus gain a reputation as heroes and one free +1 item each (reward). Failure to open the lock means that the hostage is poisoned, presenting another obstacle to overcome to save him (target number starts at 7 and goes up 1 with every failure). Failure to win the debate means that the character attempting it is convinced and is out of the struggle until this obstacle is overcome. Failure to overcome the cougars means bad injury: Lose 3 resources of the player's choice and drop physical by 1 level until the next obstacle.

The PCs have pretty good numbers, but the stakes are high so they can't afford a lot of failure. They each try to take on their strong suit. Joey's player tries to argue that she can plan her approach to picking the lock, but she gets vetoed by pretty much everybody. She describes a plan to bypass the lock and convince the brain that the code has been entered even when no code has been entered, and people buy that. She does still have the toolbelt for a +1. She's rolling for H +1 +1 against a target of 7. She rolls 10, 1, 1 for an easy win, pops the lock and rescues the hostage.

Meanwhile Freakboy wants to win the debate with his former leader. He has to make up reasons as he goes, but he's good at that, though the mutant leader is smart. (Rolling H +2 against a target of 9.) His roll goes poorly, and he gets 4, 2, 1. His total is 6, which indicates failure. He burns his last inspiration for a boost and describes suddenly turning the victimization argument around to emphasize the threat to the hostage. He rerolls the 1 and gets a 5, which even with the +2 is not enough. Demoralized, he acknowledges the mutant leader's point.

Blade meanwhile is glad to be in his own element, taking physical action. He's tempted to use a weapon for a bonus, but suspects that the cougars will be very strong against physical/direct. He decides to take a risk and try to lead the cougars to chance him and give them the slip by putting them onto some other trail (physical/covert). He's rolling H +2 against a target number of 6. He rolls 6, 3, 2 and succeeds.

Now there's still the mutant leader's moral argument to deal with, and the smartest character is out of it. Joey takes the role of main character, and Blade's going to help. Joey too would like to go to planned as an approach, and describes how her character has spent years thinking about how mutants and humans get along and how that should be handled. People buy it, and Freakboy's player mutters under his breath. So Joey will be trying mental/planned (M +2) against a target number of 8.

Blade would be at L -1 to assist, so he wants to make a change. He describes how often he's gotten Joey out of a tight spot just by adding his physical presence to her words, standing behind her in an intimidating fashion. This description lets him switch to physical/planned, for H -1. It's better, but it still may be tricky with that high target number. Blade rolls 9, 5, 2 for a final result of 8: just enough to get the bonus for Joey.

So now Joey's rolling M +3 (with the assist bonus) against 8. She rolls 8, 7, 5, and the mutant leader is caught in a contradiction and must concede. He vows never to trouble the village again and to pay restitution.

Of course you're wondering where all these target numbers are coming from. For that, and a complete list of ways to hose the players, read on…

Gamemaster's section

Building obstacles

It's easy, and you can do it on the fly without any trouble. Your obstacle just needs ratings in the four fields of battle and the four approaches. Assign the numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 to the fields of battle and to the four approaches. To get the target number for any attempt to overcome the obstacle, add the field of battle to the approach the player chooses.

Remember that when someone assists, they still use the same target number you announced even if they change fields or approaches.

If you want to build a tougher obstacle, you can, but you have to pay off the players for doing so. (See the bit about hosing your players a little later.) For every 1 patience you pay to every member of the group, you get 2 points to spend to raise the stats on your obstacle. You can raise these stats as high as 5. If you want, you can raise any one stat in each category to 6, but then you must tell the players that this is an extreme obstacle.

You do not get to "re-use" an obstacle once it's been defeated. If the same obstacle comes back, it must be built or bought anew. So if you throw the main villain at them in scene 5 and they hand him his lunch, then when you bring him back from the dead for scene 10, he's going to look different. And he should since this time **he's a cyborg!** Or he's mutated again, or raised an army, or whatever.

Building universal, multiple, or complex obstacles cost extra too: this will come up in a bit.

Structured adventures

An easy generic adventure structure is a series of 10 obstacles. Obstacles 3, 6, and 9 are multiple. Obstacles 4 and 8 are universal. Obstacles 5 and 10 are complex. The players may end up pursuing other obstacles, either enticed by their passions into side quests or bringing additional obstacles on themselves through their failures, but this gives a basic structure with some variety and a decent progression through two acts.

When you screw the players in certain ways, you have to pay them off. Notice that you never have to pay them for any cost incurred as a result of failing to overcome an obstacle. If they agree to a risk, then that's their problem if they lose. If, however, you just want them to wake up and find all their stuff missing or wander into town and learn that some PC's sister has committed a murder, you've got to pay.

"Pay to" indicates which players get paid. "All" means every player gets the indicated cost. "Affected" means only the players directly involved get paid. So if just Blade gets all his stuff taken, only Blade's player gets paid.

These costs apply only to the GM doing things. Players can veto with impunity. The GM has to care about that second consecutive veto enough to pay for it.

The Complete Guide to Hosing Your Players (with costs)		
Type of hosage	Pay to	Cost
Putting two passions in conflict with each other	Affected	3P
+2 stat points for an obstacle	All	1P
Stealing one item of gear (recoverable by overcoming obstacle)	Affected	1P
Stealing all gear (recoverable by overcoming obstacle)	Affected	2P
Destroying all gear (unrecoverable)	Affected	5P
Presenting universal or multiple obstacle	All	1P
Presenting complex obstacle	All	1P per field
Selecting field of battle every involved PC is rated L in	Affected	2P
Vetoing same player twice in a row	Affected	1P

Some advice

Vary the obstacles: change fields of battle and sometimes surprise them with how you rate approaches. Mix up simple, multiple, universal, and complex obstacles. And most of all just vary what the obstacle is: don't give them four fights in a row.

Manage resources: you don't have resources to manage, but you need to manage the overall number of resources at the table. If the players are building up too much, put loss of resources into the risk column. If they're running short, provide more by hitting their passions and hosing a bit, and offer some resources as rewards.

Hit their passions: Look for opportunities to build obstacles that stand in the way of passions. Whenever possible, but two passions into conflict. Got a character with passions for "justice" and "family"? Let their sister commit a murder, and see which wins out. One player has a passion for "fame" and the other has a passion for "honor"? Give the team a chance to gain fame for something dishonorable and see what they do.

Make the story work: veto where needed and be creative to build a good story consistent with what the mechanics are saying. Don't let the whole thing turn into just a dice game.

Author's Notes

Influences

I can't possibly list every game, movie, book, comic, blog, discussion thread, or experience that influenced me. But some obvious ones are

All the stuff on the Forge, at least that I've seen, but especially *In a Wicked Age*, which reminded me of what I had tried to do with approaches before.

Lots of conversations on RPG.net.

The computer game *Fallout* influenced my thinking on what was supposed to be the default setting. So did *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*.

If you're getting past obstacles to recover things, then *Dungeons and Dragons* is in there somewhere. And since at one point I considered calling this game *McGuffin*, I suppose there's some Hitchcock in there too.

Comments

24 hours went by really fast this time. That's partially because I couldn't begin to devote the full 24 hours to this project: I've got too many other things that are more important to me. But it was fun, and it made me feel creative again, which was very valuable.

Still, I'm disappointed to put this out in such a weak state. It's more of an untested toolbox for a game than a playable game as it is. The biggest weakness is a complete lack of playtesting. So probably the numbers are badly off or even fatally flawed.

I've got other things I need to attend to in the immediate future, but I do hope to come back to this before the year is out and test, refine, and expand. I'd like a more complete version to talk about splitting the party and to include important stuff like a complete sample adventure and at least one detailed example that includes getting and spending resources.

If you read this far, thank you. Let me know what you think if you want: azrianni@yahoo.com or PM me on RPGnet.