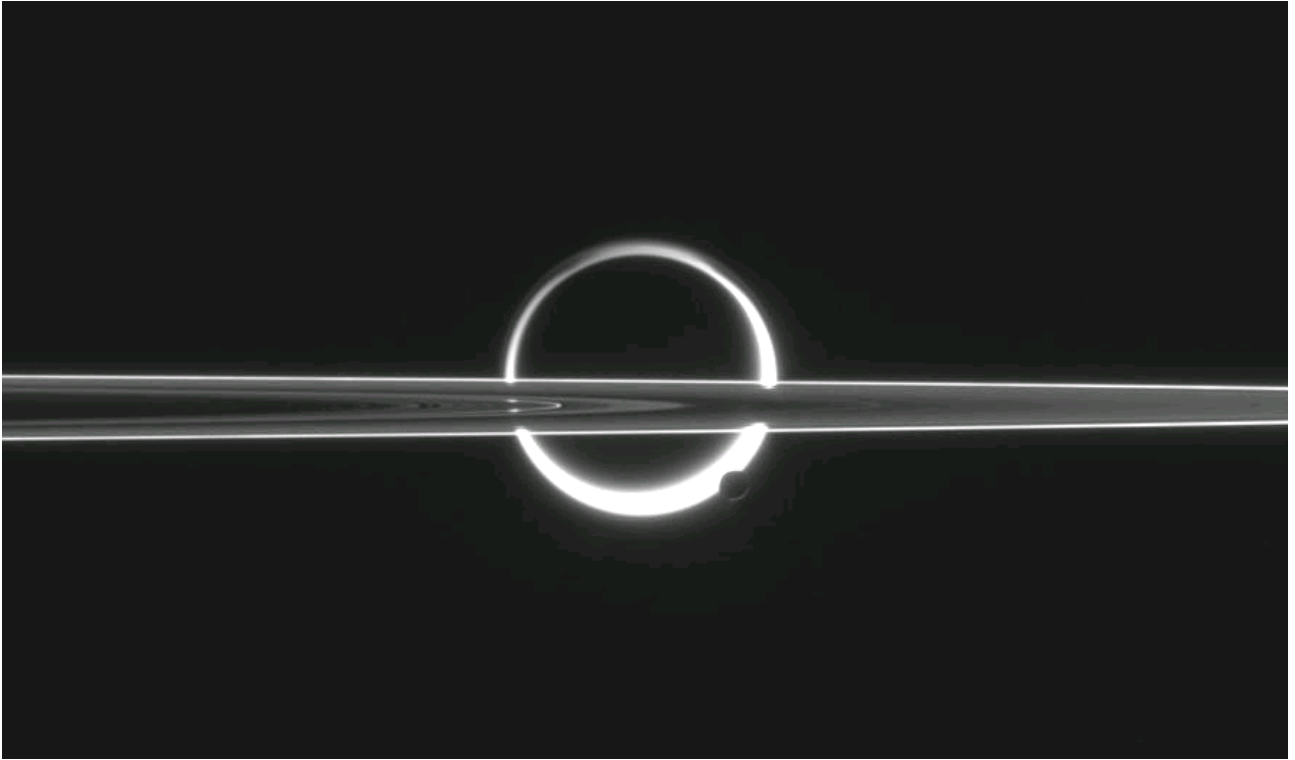


Haven



A 24-hour RPG by Antti Hukkanen

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Dedicated to Markus for putting many of these ideas into my head – and for getting me started on this stuff in the first place.

Thanks to Susan for putting up with my obsessions, and to Kaitsu, Mika, Tommi, Timo and everyone else I’ve ever knocked ideas around with.

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MISSION STATEMENT

My intention is to recreate the sort of effortless and fun science-fiction games we played in the late ‘80s, when I first started roleplaying. Specifically, I will try to emulate the high-adventure science fiction of the ‘70s as exemplified by the *Terran Trade Authority* books.

The Premise

Haven takes place in the star system of Tau, containing many fantastic places and inhabited by several sentient species, and surrounded by an impenetrable barrier field. Several lifetimes worth of adventure await in Tau, but the ultimate mystery is this: who cut out the system from the rest of the galaxy – and why?

Game System

To resolve actions, players flip coins, here called “tosses” and abbreviated “#T”, where # is the number of coins to throw. The number of heads showing is the Success Number (SN), a measure of the success of the attempt. Another factor (an *add*) is often added directly to the SN; if the final SN equals or exceeds the Difficulty Number (DN), the attempt is successful, otherwise it fails. The difference between the SN and DN

indicates exactly how well you did, and is called the margin of success (or failure – although the margin of failure rarely matters).



In most cases, the number of tosses is equal to a character’s attribute value, and the value of the applicable proficiency, if any, is added to the SN. (Other things, especially equipment, can add further bonuses.) The DN is chosen by the GM, or if the action is opposed by another character, the DN is equal to that character’s final SN. In theory, any proficiency may be used with any attribute.

Technically, equipment lowers the DN. But adding to the SN amounts to the same thing, and makes more sense.

If all the tosses in a throw come up heads, this is a *critical success* and one extra point is added to the SN.

Below are some common Difficulty Numbers.

DN	Description	Examples
3	Easy	Driving down an alley, waking up an unconscious person.
5	Average	
7	Difficult	
9	Horrible	

ATTRIBUTES

Characters are described by a fairly traditional triplet of attributes, proficiencies and quirks. There are 8 attributes, grouped into four pairs:

Pair Name	Attribute Name	Description
Physique	Strength	Physical power, size.
	Endurance	Toughness, health, fitness.
Skill	Agility	Quickness, grace, balance.
	Dexterity	Hand-eye coordination, precision.
Affinity	Intuition	Awareness, instinct, empathy.
	Presence	Willpower, charisma, determination.
Intellect	Reason	Logic, deduction, memory.
	Knowledge	Technical and scientific knowledge.

In fact, pairs also provide the GM with a handy shorthand when designing GMCs. But more on that later.

The pairs only come into play at character creation: the scores of a given pair must be within two points of each other; neither can be more than two points higher than the other.

PROFICIENCIES

Proficiencies are fairly broad groupings of things a character knows or can do. A level of 1 indicates basic knowledge; 2 is professional level; 4 or 5 indicates mastery.

Proficiency Name	Description
Animals	Understanding and handling animals both wild and domesticated.
Athletics	Running, jumping, climbing, swimming, throwing.
Close Combat	Armed and unarmed hand-to-hand fighting.
Covert	Sneaking, shadowing, pickpocketing, disguise.
Driving	Operating land-based vehicles, from bicycles to skimmertanks.
Education	Academic knowledge: history, scientific theory, research, etc.
Electronics	Using and understanding computers, sensors, communicators, etc.
Engineering	The inner workings of engines, power plants, robotics, etc.
Focus	Mental concentration, especially defending against psionics.
Gun Combat	Using any kind of firearm held in one or two hands.
Heavy Weapons	Grenades, support weapons, vehicle weapons.
Helm	Piloting water vehicles, both on and under the surface.
Legal	Law, legal and investigative procedures, forensics.
Low Tech	Operation and maintenance of mechanical equipment.
Medical	First aid, surgery, pharmacology, emergency resuscitation.
Merchant	Evaluation, bargaining, logistics, business sense.
Military	Leadership, tactics, strategy, camouflage.
Persuasion	Fast-talk, intimidation, public speaking, seduction.
Piloting	Handling anything that flies, whether in space or in an atmosphere.
Security	Building and overcoming locks, traps and surveillance systems.

Proficiency Name	Description
Sociality	Etiquette and proper behaviour in any social situation.
Survival	Finding food and shelter in hostile environments, tracking, hunting, route-finding.

QUIRKS

A completely optional part of any character, quirks are simply personality traits given game mechanical form. They are nothing more than an incentive for role-playing. By playing a character in accordance with the character's quirks, a player can gain extra experience for a given session, as indicated on the table. Asterisked entries require a focus; examples are given in the description, others are possible.

The rationale behind quirk values is that the more interesting the trait, the higher the value. But all role-playing is worth a reward.

Quirk Name	Value	Description
Angry	4	Hot-headed and quick-tempered, has a short fuse.
Arrogant	4	Overconfident, aloof, and extremely irritating.
Cautious	1	Nervous worry wart, reluctant to take risks of any kind.
Cruel	2	Brutal, enjoys hurting others physically as well as mentally.
Dishonest	2	Prone to lying and deceiving others just for the heck of it.
Fanatic*	4	Highly emotional about own honour, politics, religion, etc.
Generous	4	Charitable, liberal with money and favours, will not haggle for a better price or higher pay.
Hatred*	1	Actively hostile to members of a government, religion, sex, species, etc.
Hedonistic	1	Enjoys and looks for fine food, drink and pleasurable company.
Just	5	Fair, impartial, makes sure everyone gets their just desserts.
Lone Wolf	1	Cocky, self-reliant, distrustful of authority.
Loyalty*	3	Faithful to country, employer, family, friends, an ideal, etc.
Merciful	3	Mindful of the needs and prosperity of those who have it worse.
Methodical	3	Careful to consider all angles before tackling a situation.
Modest	2	Humble and unassuming, not a glory hound.
Obstinate	1	Stubborn, contrary, prone to playing devil's advocate.
Optimistic	2	Takes a positive outlook even to the most difficult situations.
Pessimistic	2	Convinced that things will always get worse.
Phobia*	2	Afraid of the dark, enclosed spaces, heights, insects, open spaces, etc.
Principled	5	Lives by a strict ethical code, very honourable.
Proud	2	Vain, preoccupied with own status and appearance.
Reckless	2	Rash and headstrong, acts before thinking.
Selfish	2	Preoccupied with own needs and problems.
Trusting	4	Ready to give the benefit of the doubt even to those whose untrustworthiness isn't really in any doubt.

A character's quirks should not be contradictory (such as being both Optimistic and Pessimistic); nor should they be simple rephrasings of the same thing.

Character Creation

Creating a character is a process of seven (or eight) easy steps.

Step 0: Concept. Think about what kind of a person you'd like to play, in as precise terms as you prefer. It might be a good idea to come up with a two- or three-word description, to make sure you have a solid idea to guide you through the rest of the process.

Step 1: Species. Aliens of various species populate the Tau system, and each has a different psychology and different minimum and maximum attributes. For now, choose the species you and I are most familiar with – human.

Step 2: Vocation. Choose a vocation, or career. This is a broad indication of what you do (or used to do) for a living. It determines your starting equipment and provides direction to your selection of proficiencies, two steps down. A number of vocations are detailed on the table below.

Vocation Name	Proficiencies	Equipment
Business	Merchant, Sociality	Datapad, Communicator
Espionage	Covert, Security	Hand Laser, Security Kit
Law Enforcement	Law, Persuasion	Sonic Stunner, Communicator
Medical	Medical (duh), Education	Medkit
Military	Gun Combat, Military	Ion Blaster, Flak Jumpsuit
Pilot	Driving <i>or</i> Helm <i>or</i> Piloting, Electronics	ATV or Minisub or Jetcopter (depending on proficiency picked), Bino-goggles
Scout	Survival, Animals	Hunting Laser, Survival Kit
Tech	Electronics, Engineering	Tool Kit

Step 3: Attributes. Distribute 45 points among the eight attributes. Human minimum value in each attribute is 3; the maximum is 8; 5 is average. Make sure that the values in each pair are within two points.

Advanced players may wheedle their GM for permission simply to buy any number of skills with ten total levels. This is just a useful simplification.

Step 4: Proficiencies. Choose either six or ten proficiencies from the list provided. Two of them must be those indicated by your vocation. All of them are now known at level 1; any others are not known at all. If you chose only six proficiencies, you may now distribute four additional levels among them as you see fit, to represent your particular strong points.

Step 5: Quirks. If you wish, choose up to three quirks from the list provided, or make up your own (subject to GM approval). Every session, you can gain the experience indicated by playing your character in a way that both agrees with that quirk and amuses the GM (hopefully the other players as well).

Step 6: Other Values. Your hit points (HP – the amount of damage you can take before dying) is equal to your Endurance doubled, plus your Strength.

Step 7: Equipment. You get the equipment indicated by your vocation, as well as 2,000 Q (plus 200 per level in Merchant) to purchase any other gear you may wish.

That's it. Now name your character, write a description (appearance and perhaps a little personal history), and fill out a character sheet. Then begin playing.

Experience

As characters have adventures, they learn new things and grow better at old things. The standard award for a single session is 3–8 experience points, depending on how well the characters did and how much fun was had by all. More is definitely possible, but under no circumstances should anyone receive more than 15 points for a single session. This is in addition to any experience for entertaining play involving quirks.

Between adventures, a character may increase any proficiency by trading in experience points equal to ten times the new level of the proficiency. For example, raising a level 1 proficiency to level 2 costs 20 experience. With the GM's permission, a character can even gain a completely new proficiency at level 1 for ten points. However, a given proficiency should never increase by more than one level at a time.

Ideally, this should be a proficiency that actually saw use while that experience was being gained, but I find that a looser system makes for more fun and less bookkeeping.

Record total experience used separately from total experience gained. After all, experience is not lost when learning new skills!

Optionally, a GM may allow characters to increase their attributes with experience as well. This costs double the usual amount, that is, 20 points per new level. Species maximums should always apply.

Equipment

The currency used in the Tau system is the Q (derived from “cu”, short for “currency unit”). Q’s are mostly electronic (in the form of personal credit/debit cards with the balance actually stored on a secure chip on the card), though metal coins in small denominations do exist.

WEAPONS

Some firearms list two damage values, one for single shots and the other for burst fire.

Weapon Name	Range	Damage		Cost	Description
		Single	Burst		
<i>Close Combat</i>					
Unarmed	—	½St	—	—	Damage is ½ Strength, round up.
Knife	3	½St+1	—	30	Range applies only when thrown.
Axe	—	½St+2	—	50	
Cutterblade	—	5	—	200	Armour value halved (round up).
<i>Gun Combat</i>					
Scattergun	4	6	—	150	Armour value +1.
Minigun	8	6	13	1500	Initiative and movement –1T.
Sonic Stunner	3	5	—	300	Endurance vs. damage or unconscious.
Hand Laser	4	4	—	500	
Ion Blaster	3	4	—	500	Armour value halved (round up).
Plasma Pistol	3	5	—	600	
Hunting Laser	9	5	—	750	
Autolaser	8	5	11	850	
Ion Carbine	7	5	10	900	Armour value halved (round up).
Plasma Rifle	8	6	12	1200	
Particle Beam Gun	10	8	15	2000	
<i>Heavy Weapons</i>					
Hand Grenade	3	8	—	200	
Rocket Launcher	10	12	—	3000	
Plasma Cannon	12	15	25	5000	

ARMOUR

Only one suit of armour may be worn at a time, but a force field can be added to one, or carried on its own.

Armour Name	Value	Cost	Description
Flight Suit	1	500	Any light, pliable armour.
Flak Jumpsuit	2	800	Ballistic cloth.
Plastic Mesh	3	900	Dexterity –1T.
Polymer Titanium	4	1000	Dexterity and Agility –1T.
Scout Exo	4	1500	Powered exoskeleton.
Infantry Exo	5	2000	Sealed and environment proof.
Assault Exo	6	2500	Sealed, Strength +1T.
Personal Force Field	2	1200	
Heavy Force Field	4	2500	

GEAR

Item Name	Cost	Description
Bino-goggles	300	+1 to Intuition throws for observation.
Communicator	200	
Datapad	200	
Medkit	200	+1 to Medical for healing purposes.
Security Kit	500	+1 to Security.
Survival Kit	250	A set of survival equipment, +1 to Survival.
Tool Kit	750	+1 to Electronics, Engineering and Low Tech.

VEHICLES

Vehicle Name	Speed	Handling	Sensors	Cost	Description
Driving					
Motorbike					
Speeder					
ATV					
Crawler					
Light Skimmer					
Skimmertank					
Piloting					
Air Car					
Jetcopter					
Spaceplane					
Helm					
Speedboat					
Minisub					
Yacht					

Dammit, I'm out of time. This was supposed to resemble the vehicle section of the *BESM* book *Hot Rods & Gun Bunnies*.

ROBOTS

These would get all attributes around 2-4, and about 1-4 proficiencies at high levels (but unable to learn by experience), some built-in gear, and a relatively limited AI (no *Star Wars* droids here).

Combat

In combat situations, *initiative* tells who does what and when. This is determined with an Agility + Military throw (representing reaction speed coupled with tactical sense), which is added to the character's Intuition value (because situational awareness lies at the root of battle survival). Initiative is determined at the beginning of a combat and remains unchanged until the end of the encounter.

POSITION

A crucial concept in combat in *Haven* is *position*. It is an abstraction of cover, control of range, and tactical manoeuvring, all rolled into one. Each combatant has an individual position value. It begins at a value equal to initiative, but unlike initiative, can (and will) go up and down. A low position value means being caught in the open or being outmanoeuvred by enemies; a high position may mean a good defensive position or simply successful use of terrain and movement into an optimal range. Your position goes up when you use an action to move; it goes down when you react to incoming attacks. The suggested maximum position value is 20; the GM may impose a different limit, but generally, it is assumed that environments with more cover restrict mobility more than more open ones. Position can never go below zero.

ACTIONS

Combatants take actions in order of descending initiative: the highest value goes first, the lowest one last. There are three possible actions: move, attack, and other.

Move: Manoeuvre to improve your position. Requires either an Agility + Military or Intuition + Military throw (whichever the player prefers), but a GM may allow an Agility + Athletics throw in open spaces where speed is of the essence. If the result is higher than your current position, it becomes your new position value; if less, your position improves by one.

Alternately, this action can be used to try to escape combat. All enemies may attempt an Agility + Athletics throw at a DN of one-half your position value (round down); this is not an action. If no one makes it (or bothers to try), you successfully escape.

Attack: Use a weapon, or just bare fists, on an opponent. This requires a Dexterity throw with Close Combat, Gun Combat or Heavy Weapons added, depending on the weapon used (or lack thereof). Position affects this in different ways depending on the type of attack. In close combat, you may only attack those whose position is within three points of yours. The opponent defends with Agility + Close Combat. In the case of ranged attacks, only Agility can be used for defence, but if the opponent's position is equal to or greater than your weapon's range, he or she may sacrifice any amount of position value points and add them to the Agility throw.

If your attack succeeds, note the margin and see below for damage.

Do Something Else: Operating an item, using a proficiency (such as Medical to administer first aid), manipulating the environment (like bringing down a pile of bricks on your enemies), etc. is handled with one or more actions. The GM will need to adjudicate these. However, things like pulling out equipment, switching weapons or opening and closing ordinary unlocked doors should never require an action. (Moving through the door, though, would be a Move action, obviously.)

DAMAGE

When an attack hits, it may cause HP damage, depending on the weapon used and the armour worn by the target. Throw tosses equal to the damage value of the weapon and add the margin of the attack throw, against a DN equal to the target's armour value. The resulting margin is the amount of HP lost by the target. If a character's HP falls to zero or less, that character is out of combat and possibly dead, at the GM's whim.

Injury: If the HP damage caused by a single attack equals or exceeds the target's Endurance value, an injury results. Each injury reduces the character's attributes by one.

Healing: First aid may be attempted with the Medicine proficiency, once per combat on a given character. The DN is two times the injuries suffered by the character; a successful throw restores HP equal to the margin.

SPECIAL CASES

Autofire: Some firearms list a separate burst damage value, to be used for autofire on one target. Alternately, several targets could be sprayed: up to one per two points of burst value (for closely-packed targets; if the GM decides the targets are further apart, one per three or four may be appropriate), doing single fire damage to each. Make a single attack throw, and each target makes a separate Agility throw for defence.

If autofire is used, an Intuition + weapon proficiency throw at a DN equal to the burst value is needed or the weapon is out of power or ammunition until an action is used to reload it.

Yes, this is a hack. I'm running out of time!

VEHICLE COMBAT

This uses the same, highly abstract, rules as personal combat. Dexterity + Driving (or Piloting or Helm) or Knowledge + Electronics replaces most Move action throws, Dexterity + Heavy Weapons is used for gunnery, upper limit on position is lifted.

Psionics

Not all characters have psionic powers; in fact, individual GMs may well rule that no player characters may be psionic. But for those who are, here are the rules to use.

Because vocations are not "character classes", there is no special vocation associated with psionics. Anyone can be a psi. In theory.

Each psionic power is treated like a proficiency, and is purchased at character generation (or with experience, if the GM allows) with the same pool of points. Psionics are used with Intuition and resisted with Presence (and the Focus proficiency).

Power Name	Uses and DNs
ESP	
Healing	
Levitation	
Overload	
Precognition	
Psychometry	
Pyrokinesis	
Scan	
Screen	
Static	
Telekinesis	
Telepathy	

The Tau System

Haven is set in the star system known as Tau. This system of several planets – many of which are habitable, and even more are inhabited – is teeming with life, but cut off from the rest of the galaxy by a barrier field that blocks both communications and solid objects.

SPECIES

Various species inhabit the Tau system, and any of them can be used as player characters, if the GM agrees. All of them will definitely be encountered in the course of adventures. The minimum and maximum attribute values for each species are given in the following table, along with basic descriptions.

Species Name	Strength	Endurance	Agility	Dexterity	Intuition	Presence	Reason	Knowledge	Description
Human	3-8	3-8	3-8	3-8	3-8	3-8	3-8	3-8	Head, two arms, two legs.
Aelo	1-6	1-5	2-7	3-9	3-8	4-9	5-10	4-10	Disturbingly human-like, but strangely proportioned. All are psionic.
Geodian	3-8	5-10	1-5	1-6	2-7	4-8	3-8	4-9	Crystalline life forms.
Kotugo	3-8	3-9	3-9	4-9	2-7	3-8	3-9	3-9	Insectoid, four motive and two manipulatory limbs.
Vatha	4-10	3-8	4-9	3-8	1-7	3-9	3-7	2-7	Basically humanoid, with a snakelike motive organ.
Yalara	2-8	2-7	5-10	4-10	4-9	2-7	2-6	3-7	Feline-like humanoids.

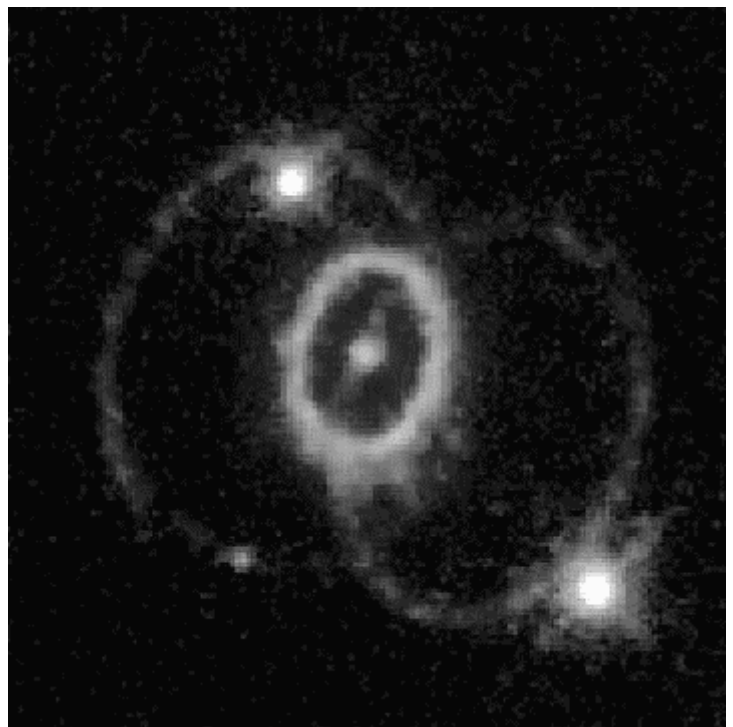
PLANETARY SYSTEM OF ADVENTURE

Hades:

Xariax:

Bekira:

Aurora:



BIG QUESTIONS

This was done incredibly well in the old *Mekton Empire* sourcebook, and I have not seen it in any form since.

Mysteries abound in the Tau system, and *Haven* will not answer any of them; rather, several possible answers to each are provided below. The individual GM can then pick the one that he or she finds most appealing, and use the rest as rumours and red herrings (or not at all). The beauty of this system is that even if the players have read this document (as indeed they should), they will not know what answers hold true in their game.

What are the Aelo really up to?

Why was the barrier field set up?

Why are there so many habitable planets in the Tau system?

Why are there so many sentient species present in Tau?