

Dichotomy

Role Playing Game
by David Olshanski

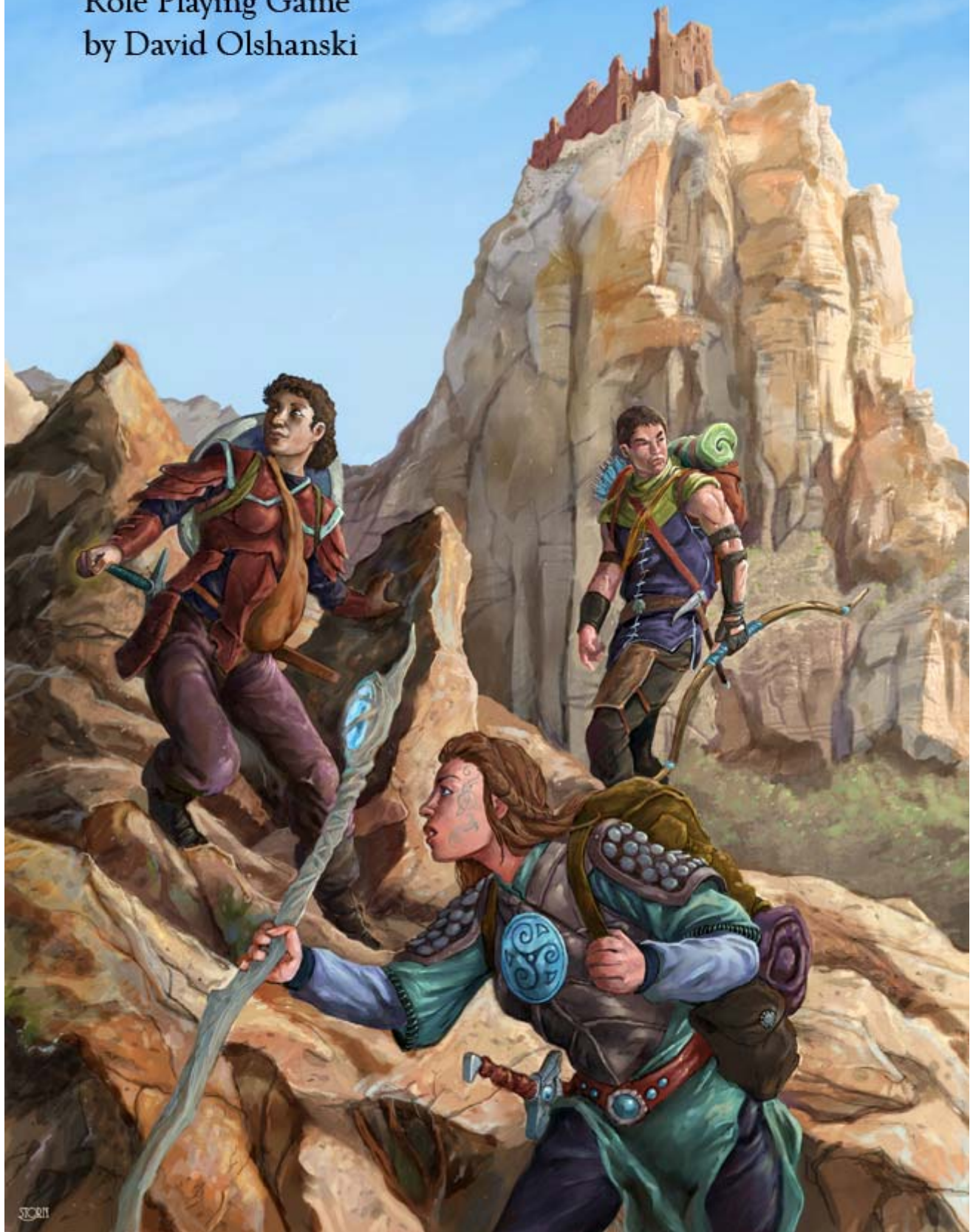


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Thank you for taking a look at this manuscript. All feedback is welcome. Forums are at www.grippingtales.com.

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CHAPTER 1: BASIC CONCEPTS

What this game is about

Dichotomy is a tabletop roleplaying game; if you don't know what a tabletop roleplaying game is, then ask whoever gave you these rules to explain. The rules are designed to be easy to learn, for speed of play (particularly with play-by-post style games), and to focus on character growth rather than looting and killing. The game is written for play in the style of Sword and Sorcery. These adventures focus mainly on personal battles rather than world-endangering matters. The game is geared toward traditional medieval fantasy.



Dichotomy is designed for a group of about 4-6 players. One participant serves as the Game Master or "GM"; the other participants are referred to as "players". The GM has a special role in that the GM is responsible for establishing scenes, acting as a referee, and playing the roles of the minor characters in the game. Each player is responsible for creating a character with a personality and motives. The player decides how their character acts or reacts to various scenes described by the GM. The characters created by the players are called Player Characters (PCs), while the characters or monsters created by the GM are called Non-Player Characters (NPCs).

The game is played with the characters experiencing a series of adventures which may be pre-planned by the GM or arise organically out of the characters' Motives. The GM determines the pacing of adventures, depending on the scope of the game that the GM and players wish to participate in. A game might last for a one-shot session, it could last for 10 sessions over a few weeks, or it could be an ongoing epic lasting a year or more.

Rolling the dice

Dichotomy uses two 10-sided dice rolls for resolving most actions during game play. You'll add a relevant attribute score to each of the two dice, and try to meet or exceed a Target Number (TN) on each of the two rolls. A die roll of "0" counts as 10, which is the best possible roll. Each of the two rolls is compared with their respective TNs. If both of the sums exceed the Target Numbers, it is a **Total Success**. If the sum exceeds the TN for one roll but not the other, it is a **Partial Success**. If neither roll exceeds the TN that is a **Failure**.

Example: David wants his character to pick a lock on a treasure chest. His Finesse attribute is 7 and his Technical attribute is 8. David's first die rolls a 6, added to his Finesse attribute of 7 is a sum of 13. David's second die roll is a 1, added to his Technical attribute of 8 is a sum of 9. Comparing the results of the two dice rolls to TNs of 10, David achieved a partial success. Since it was a partial success, the GM says "You will not be able to open the lock without ruining your lockpick in the process... do you still want to open the chest?"

While the standard TN is 10, there are many cases where the TN is higher or lower, or different for each of the two rolls. An attempt to pick a tricky lock might have a Finesse TN of 10 and a Mechanical TN of 15.

When there is a conflict between a PC and an NPC, the Player always rolls the dice whether they are attacking or defending.

When there is a conflict between two PCs, then the attacker always rolls the dice—the TN is the sum of 5+the defender's attribute.

Option: GM Rolls some Dice

Having the players roll the dice helps keep the players engaged and lets the GM concentrate on running the adventure and playing the NPCs.

If you are playing by post on the internet, or if the GM wants to have a direct hand on the dice for dramatic reasons, it is fine for the GM to make the rolls for the NPCs, using the TNs just as if the player were rolling.

CHAPTER 2: CHARACTER CREATION

Attributes:

There are 3 pairs of attributes, each is ranked on a scale from 1-10. Within each pair of attributes, you must distribute 11 points. Each attribute must fall within the range of 1-10. When you are finished, you will have distributed a total of 33 points. An attribute pair is referred to as a dichotomy.



Finesse vs Power: Perhaps the most important defining dichotomy for your character. A character with a high Finesse is often more observant, precise, and coordinated. A character with a high Finesse attribute is more skilled at attacking from range, and likewise is better able to dodge ranged attacks. Power is a measure of raw physical or spiritual strength and fitness. A character with a high Power attribute excels at defending themselves and dishing out damage in close-up combat.

Martial vs Spiritual: If your character ever finds themselves in a situation that can only be solved by violence, then this pair of attributes comes in play. This dichotomy measures a character's competence with martial weapons, such as swords, axes, and shields, against their spiritual or magical aptitude. Spiritual power is used for wielding magical powers, and for maintaining one's composure when faced with the unexplainable. A character with a 10 Martial /1 Spiritual might be a hulking brute like Conan or a wise martial artist. A character with 1 Martial/10 Spiritual might be a frail old wizard or a young psychic prodigy. A high Spiritual score doesn't necessarily mean that a character is religious, it could just as easily represent a character with psychic or magical powers.

Natural vs Technical: This dichotomy measures a character's affinity for nature against their Technical aptitude. A high Natural attribute is good for wilderness survival and identification of plants and animals. A high Technical attribute is useful for opening locks, disarming traps, knowledge of construction and architecture, and familiarity with the trappings of civilization.

Example: Susan wants to create a character that is highly attuned to nature, slightly better at using a bow and arrow than sword, and more likely to wield a weapon than magic. Susan assigns the following points to her Attributes: Finesse 6/Power 5, Martial 8/Spiritual 3, Natural 10/Technical 1.

Using Attributes:

In most cases, you'll describe what your character does, and the GM will relay the results of your activity. The GM is expected to be a fair and impartial arbiter of the players' actions.

In certain circumstances, the results may be determined by rolling the dice. The GM will determine which two attributes are most applicable to the situation and the player must attempt to beat the TN by rolling the dice and adding the appropriate attribute.

If the player rolls a pair of 10's, then it was a critical success. A critical success is at least as good as a total success, and in addition may give the character some additional bonus; for example, a character disables a trap—a critical success means that the trap was not only disabled, but it could be re-armed afterward, or caused to trigger under different circumstances.

The GM should not require dice rolling for simple tasks—if a PC wants to kick down a door, it should eventually work with no dice rolling required. If the PC wants to kick down a door on their first try, the GM may call for a dice roll. If a PC wishes to bribe a corrupt official, it should work with no dice rolling. If a PC wishes to bribe an honest official, it will fail with no dice rolling required. The GM should only require a dice roll when the actions of the PCs may result in multiple outcomes based on the attributes of the PC. The GM should be careful never to call for a dice roll if the GM is not willing to play with all possible outcomes of the roll. If an essential clue is hidden in a desk drawer, when the players search for clues they should find the clue without rolling the dice.

Resolving a conflict with Attributes?

The GM is the ultimate authority on which attributes resolve a conflict. A good player describes their actions so that their best attributes come into play. The chart below shows some typical attribute combinations for overcoming challenges. Looking at the first two rows in Table 1-1, you can see there are two ways of getting past a locked door—Finesse/Technical or Power/Technical. If your character has a high Finesse, they should try to pick the lock, with a high Power they should try to kick the door down.

Whenever possible the GM should try to adjudicate rolls with Technical/Natural and Finesse/Power, relying on Martial/Spiritual only during combat or when there isn't a better fit with the other four attributes. The GM should never arrange a contest in which both sides of a dichotomy are challenged on the same roll; for example no action should be decided by a Martial and Spiritual roll, or a Natural and Technical roll.

Standard tasks that make a decent challenge for a party of 4 adventurers should usually have TN of 10. A TN of 12 is a very serious challenge, and a TN of 14 is about the highest that a task should be.

Table 1-1 Sample Actions and Attributes

Action	Attributes Rolled	Failure	Partial Success	Total Success
Break down a locked door	Power & Technical	Door cannot be breached	Door is broken down after considerable time, perhaps attracting unwanted attention.	Door is opened quickly
Pick a lock	Finesse & Technical	Lock is jammed	Lock is opened after considerable time and with evident tampering, possibly ruining the lockpick.	Lock is opened quickly and without trace
Notice a trap in a dungeon	Finesse & Technical	Trap is overlooked	Part of trap is discovered, perhaps the trigger, but not the weapon.	The entire trap is discovered including the trigger and weapon.
Decipher a diagram written in unknown language	Finesse & Technical	You draw the wrong conclusions	You gain a partial understanding of the text	You are able to understand the gist of the document
Notice an Ambush outside	Finesse & Natural	Ambush is not noticed	Part of ambush is spotted, ambushers are alerted	Complete ambush is discovered, tables can be turned on the ambushers
Routefinding	Finesse & Natural	You get lost	You eventually find your way, or find a dangerous route	You quickly find the safest route
Climb a cliff	Power & Natural	Fall a long distance, climb cannot be finished	Climb takes a long time with some scrapes, some climbing equipment may be lost	Climb is quick and successful
Fight with a Sword	Power & Martial	Your attack fails to harm the opponent	You inflict 1 hit	You inflict 2 hits
Avoid getting shot by a crossbow	Finesse & Martial	You suffer 2 hits	You suffer 1 hit	You avoid the attack
Avoid the chilling touch of a ghost	Power & Spiritual	You suffer 2 hits	You suffer 1 hit	You avoid the attack
Burn an opponent with pyrokinesis	Finesse & Spiritual	Your attack fails to harm the opponent	You inflict 1 hit	You inflict 2 hits

Social Skills

What if the character tries to sweet-talk someone, or bluff their way out of a sticky situation? In Dichotomy, the GM adjudicates all social interaction by using their judgment to decide how NPCs respond to the Player Characters. This is an aspect of the game where player skill is very important--if the character needs to come up with a clever lie, the player better be on their toes!

SPECIAL ABILITIES

After a player has determined a character's attributes, the next step is to select their Special Abilities. A character usually starts with 3 special abilities, one from each of the three dichotomies, but over time acquires up to a total of 9 special abilities (see Chapter 5, Character Development). A character can have only 1 special ability for every 3 full points in the associated attribute. The application of many of these abilities will make more sense after reading Chapter 4, Combat.

FINESSE ABILITIES:

Covering Fire: You can distract enemies with your Finesse attack. You can designate a single ally to protect—and when that ally is targeted with any opponent's Finesse attack, the ally suffers 1 less hit. Alternately, you can designate an enemy-occupied zone, and all allies targeted with Finesse attacks originating from that zone suffer one less hit of damage from those attacks. You must make an attack with your Finesse attribute to activate this ability, and it only lasts until your next turn.

Deadly Aim: Your character gives up a Finesse attack during this round, (using up the time as if an attack was made), and next round a Finesse attack scores two hits above and beyond whatever is normally rolled.

Double Shot: You are able to attack two opponents at once with your Finesse attack. Roll your attack as normal and apply it to two opponents. Both opponents must be located in the same targeted zone.

Mobility: You can exit or enter a zone containing enemies without incurring extra movement costs.

Point Blank: Your character can use their Finesse attribute instead of Power attribute when attacking someone in the same combat zone. They must still use their Power attribute to defend themselves from an attack in the same combat zone.

Quick Shot: A Finesse attack requires one less action point, thus a Finesse & Martial attack takes only 1 action point and a Finesse & Spiritual attack requires 2 action points.

POWER ABILITIES:

Cleave: You are able to attack two opponents at once with your Power attack. Roll your attack as normal and apply it to any two opponents in your zone. If used with a Spiritual attack, this ability represents the attack radiating out from the character and striking two opponents.

Defender: You are able to provide protection to allies in your immediate vicinity. If any ally in your combat zone is targeted with a Power attack, they suffer one less hit of damage while they remain in your combat zone. You must make an attack with your Power attribute in order to use this ability, and it only lasts until your next turn.

Locked in Mortal Combat: You have two ways of using this ability: One way is to lock a single opponent into combat with you—if you achieve at least a partial success when using this ability during a melee attack, then on your opponent's next turn any attack they make must be directed at you and it must use their Power; if they try to escape, all movement costs 1 extra action point. The second way to use this ability is to slow down a group of foes—all opponents incur an extra +1 movement penalty when leaving your combat zone. You must make a Power attack to use this ability and you must declare which way you are using it when you make your attack.

Short-Range Attack: You can use a Power attack from a short distance. You can make a Power attack into any adjacent combat zone. If you are using a Martial Power attack, this is usually something like throwing an axe, hammer, or javelin at your foe. You can also use Power & Spiritual attacks into an adjacent zone using this ability.

Smite: If your Power attack achieves at least one success, your attack was powerful enough to do an additional hit of damage. For example, a partial success that would normally inflict only 1 hit inflicts 2 hits.

Tough as Nails: The "Recover" action only costs 2 action points instead of 3.





MARTIAL ABILITIES:

Acrobatics: Your character has a talent for keeping their balance, swinging from chandeliers, leaping over tables, landing gently after a fall and similar acrobatic feats.

Climbing: Your character has a combination of strength, determination, and daring that lets them climb nearly anything—including trees, sandstone bluffs, tower walls, glaciers, or limestone caves. With proper equipment, your character can even climb things that would normally be unclimbable, such as frozen waterfalls.

Destructive: Few barriers will prevent your character from reaching their goals. They can kick down doors, smash open chests, and break through barricades. Your character can also perform some feats of strength like moving a heavy boulder, bending metal bars or lifting a gate.

Escape Artist/Contortionist: Your character may be double-jointed, or simply very flexible. Your character can escape from bonds and navigate unusually small crawlspaces.

Stealthy: Your character is able to sneak up on opponents or lie in ambush. You could disappear into shadows in an alley or sneak past a sleeping guard dog.

Swimming: Your character is skilled with swimming, fighting while underwater, holding their breath, and keeping their footing while fording rivers.

SPIRITUAL ABILITIES:

Biokinesis: Your character has the ability to heal wounds through pure spiritual energy. Using this power takes about 10 minutes of close contact with the injured victim. Once every 24 hours, your character can heal a Flesh Wound. Once every week your character can heal a disease or Serious Injury, or remove poison. A non-player character that has been “killed” within the past half hour can be considered to have suffered a Serious Injury if your character wishes to try to save their life. You can also use this ability with your Power attribute to inflict harm on a living opponent in the same combat zone. (See Injury and Death in Chapter 4 for details on injury and healing.)

Bless: Your character can cleanse an area of bad energy. This ability can also be used with your Power or Finesse attributes to banish outsiders—creatures such as skeletons, ghosts or demons. Any Power or Finesse attack against these foul creatures does 1 hit of damage above and beyond whatever you roll. See *Chapter 7: Monsters* for more information about the outsiders.

Clairvoyance: Your character has the ability to see a location, object, or person using extra-sensory powers. This vision is limited by local conditions, so looking inside a safe would show nothing, as it would be completely dark. The distance that clairvoyance works is dependent upon your character's familiarity with the location, object, or person. If your character is unfamiliar with the target, they can only see things a very short distance away, within about 20 meters. If your character is moderately familiar with the target, such as an acquaintance, a possession, or a place visited, your character can see the location up to about 1000 meters away. If the target is intimately familiar, a keepsake, family member, or home, the target is visible at any distance.



Dowsing: Your character has the ability to locate a well known object, person, or substance. If you attempt to locate a general object or person rather than a specific one, then you locate the nearest one of that kind. This power will also guide you on the most direct path to that object or person. This power has a range of 1000 meters. If the target is intimately familiar, a keepsake, family member, or home, the target can be located at any distance.

Psychometry: Your character is able to learn about an objects history simply by touching or handling the object. Typically only the most recent history is uncovered, as well as any particularly significant events. This power can be used on corpses, in order to learn the cause of death.

Pyrokinesis: Your character has the ability to ignite fires with the power of their mind. This power can be used to create a small glowing ball of fire in midair, with illumination as bright as a torch or lantern. This is a versatile power that can be used with Finesse or Power attacks, showering nearby opponents with a jet of flame, or hurling a flaming ball of fire against distant opponents.

Telekinesis: Your character has the ability to move objects with their mind. They can lift, move, and manipulate objects that weigh around 25 pounds or less. It is impossible to do fine or controlled movement, such as forcing dice to fall in a particular direction, or land a roulette ball in a particular slot, but simpler things like opening a door, pulling a rope, or tipping over a bottle are all reasonable. Additionally, your character can release a lot of energy at once in order to shove or harm an opponent with a Finesse attack. When you achieve a partial success when using this ability to make a Finesse attack, you can inflict one hit of damage. With a total success you can inflict one hit of damage and move your opponent into an adjacent zone. This power can be used to knock opponents off cliffs or bridges.

Telepathy: Your character is able to mentally communicate with a willing participant in direct line-of-sight. The target must share a language with your character. This communication is no faster than ordinary conversation, though it is completely non-verbal. If the target also has Telepathy, all of the communication happens instantaneously. This ability can also be used to read the mind of an unwilling target; although the telepath always suffers an injury in the process. Mind-reading always fails if the target is a telepath. Finally, a telepath can shield the minds of allies in the same combat zone using this Ability. Shielding minds is a miscellaneous action that uses 1 action point.



NATURAL ABILITIES

Alertness: You are alert to the sounds, sights, and smells of nature; you notice ambushes by people or animals, it is virtually impossible for anyone to sneak up on your character or eavesdrop without your knowledge. When Turn Order is determined (See Chapter 4, Combat), a character with Alertness goes first even if the party is ambushed.

Orienteering: Your character has a knack for route finding and for avoiding natural hazards. Your character has an eye for finding the best line up a mountain or for the shortest route across a valley. A character skilled at orienteering can often notice potential natural hazards such as avalanche, deadfalls, quicksand, and flash floods. You are unhindered by rough terrain such as dense underbrush or talus fields.

Physik: Your character has an understanding of anatomy and medicinal herbs; you can use this knowledge to identify causes of death, identify diseases, and find and apply medicinal herbs used for treatment of diseases, poisons, and infections. A character with the Physik ability can handle such varied tasks as setting broken bones or assisting in childbirth.

Sense Motives: Your character has a knack for "reading" people. If your character engages an NPC in conversation, they are able to pick up on subtle vibes in order to determine if the NPC wishes them harm or is a friend. If an NPC lies to protect your character, this power would let you know that the NPC is friendly, but you wouldn't know that the NPC is lying.

Speak with Animals: Your character is able to communicate with animals. This ability doesn't make the animals any smarter, though it may make them a bit or friendlier.

Survival: Your character is adept at wilderness survival; they can identify safe food and water, forage for food, and find ways of adapting to extreme environments.

Tracking: Your character is good at noticing things like broken branches, footprints, and other traces that creatures have passed by. Your character can use this talent to track people or animals, or to determine clues about whom or what has passed through an area. This power is also useful in urban environments, with your character relying more on intuition and observing pedestrians rather than looking for broken branches.

TECHNICAL ABILITIES:

Architecture: Your character has a keen eye for architecture and can discern unusual construction such as secret rooms, sliding walls, and unsafe construction.

Disable Device: Your character can disarm traps, open locks, and sabotage devices such as loosening a wagon wheel so that it will come off at a later time, or cause a rope-bridge to unravel.

Find Traps: Your character can notice dangerous traps and security devices such as tripwires, alarms, and booby traps. Your character also can notice magical or mystical dangers such as cursed burial grounds or mummy's treasures.

Investigative: Your character can quickly find and identify important clues. If there is a desk with numerous papers, your character can quickly identify which papers, if any, are relevant to an investigation. If there is a stack of books, your character could quickly find which page is dog-eared, and why that page is important.

Linguistics: Your character has a knack for languages—it isn't that they know every possible language, but they either are lucky enough to understand the languages that they encounter, or they are gifted enough that they can very quickly understand a language after listening to native speakers for a while or after perusing some textbooks. A character with Linguistics can make sense out of hieroglyphics and texts written in dead languages.

Mechanics: Your character is familiar with how things work—particularly technical things. Your character understands how to operate things as varied as sailboats, floodgates, siege weapons, air-exchange mechanisms, and clockwork devices.

Using Special Abilities

If a character is in a non-combat situation where a character Ability comes into play, the GM should in most cases simply assume that the character was successful in the endeavor. If the situation is extremely challenging, the GM can ask the player to roll the dice as normal, but the player may count one success above and beyond whatever was rolled.

A character without a special ability can still attempt most action, such as climbing a cliff, finding a trap, or looking for clues—though they are not guaranteed a success.

Designer's Notes

I had some white-space to fill, and a low art budget, so I'll fill you in on some of my design methodology regarding Special Abilities.

The Power/Finesse abilities all directly influence close or ranged combat. Every character will have some nifty tricks they can do in battle—but no more or less than any other character.

The Spiritual abilities are generally supposed to provide interesting problem-solving opportunities, with the exception of pyrokinesis and bless, which are primarily combat-related.

Martial abilities are meant to overcome obstacles and solve problems. These are all distinctly non-magical abilities. All of these abilities are very grounded, non-magical in style. For example, "Escape Artist" may seem more like a Finesse ability than a Martial ability, but its inclusion with the Martial abilities is more indicative of its non-magical categorization, rather than it being associated with someone who specialized in either ranged or close combat.

The Spiritual/Natural abilities cover a broad range of abilities, generally meant for problem-solving. Every character will get a few of these, regardless of their combat abilities.

Most of the powers are selected primarily for their chance to provide interesting roleplaying opportunities. They are meant to provide shortcuts in an adventure, without short-circuiting the adventure your GM has designed. The abilities were distributed in order to facilitate creating characters in a variety of medieval fantasy archetypes.

Motives

Motives are your character's problems, connections, duties, and loyalties. Your character can recognize similar motives in other characters or NPCs. Recognizing similar motives in NPCs can provide vital clues for how to negotiate with them, seduce them, or anger them. Your character also earns Experience Points by fulfilling or betraying their motives.

Every Player Character starts with 2 Motives. After completing an adventure, your character receives 2 Experience Points for each Motive they've fulfilled during the course of the adventure. A character earns 3 experience points when they betray a Motive. Betraying a Motive represents a turning point in a character's life, and is followed by a latent period when the character must "find themselves" before they can select a new Motive--they cannot select a replacement motive until they have finished another adventure.

One of Sonny's Motives is to act as Guardian to his family. Sonny has a brother that is always getting into trouble. Each time Sonny rescues his brother from a predicament, he receives 2 experience points. Eventually, however, Sonny gets fed up with his brother and refuses to help him. Sonny receives 3 experience points for betraying his motive, but he also loses the Guardian motive. Eventually, Sonny will be able to select a new Motive, or even take the same Motive again, after he has had time to reflect on the consequences of his actions.

Your character has the ability to recognize the similar Motives among other characters. Your character must observe or interact with another character for some period of time in order to recognize similar motives. An intense interview would likely provide enough time to identify someone's Motives, as would a long evening of dinner and conversation, or a few days of casual contact while travelling together on a small ship or carriage.

Jason's Motives are Love and Faith, Carly's Motives are Faith and Greed. They've met each other briefly several times, and know some of the same acquaintances. One evening, at a party, the two of them have a long conversation, at the end of which, they each recognize that they are motivated by Faith. Jason and Carly may believe in completely different faiths, but they recognize similar Motives in each other.

After each adventure, you should let the GM know which Motives you've fulfilled or betrayed. The GM will make the final call about whether your character's behavior was sufficient to be rewarded. It is usually a good idea to consult the GM about your Motives during the adventure. Uses of Experience Points are described in Chapter 5: Character Growth. If you have a motive that you neither fulfilled nor betrayed, you can take the opportunity to select a new replacement Motive.

List of Motives

The following is a list of Motives. You should consult with your GM before you finalize the selection of your character's Motives.

Bloodlust: What is best in life? To crush your enemies and see them driven before you! Your character relishes combat and does not rest when there are foes to be defeated. Your character's bloodlust is rewarded when they continue to fight after being seriously injured. To betray this motive, your character must refuse a fair fight or show mercy to a foe.

Callous: No good deed goes unpunished. The world is an awful place, and you do your part to help those misguided fools realize that only the fittest survive. People should look out for themselves, and expect the same from others. Your character's callous behavior is rewarded when their selfish behavior puts other at risk, when they betray someone who had faith in them, or when they convince someone to use their power for personal gain. To betray this motive, your character must be the recipient of a benevolent and selfless deed, or your character must perform a good deed with no ulterior motive or reward.

Conscience: Your character has a soft spot for those weaker or downtrodden. Your character is rewarded when they fight on behalf of someone who is in danger and cannot save themselves, or when they find someone in a miserable situation and change their life for the better. To betray this motive, your character must ignore a request for help.

Coward: Let's face it; discretion is always the better part of valor. The world is a dangerous place and people are likely to get hurt. Your character is rewarded when they overcome a hostile encounter using other means besides violence, or when they flee a dangerous situation without putting up a fight. To betray this motive, your character must take a reckless risk or leap into combat.

Motives

No character is strictly limited by their motives--there even may come a time when they must betray a motive. Motives indicate what is important to the character.

Betraying a motive provides for quick Experience points in the short term, at the expense of a chance for additional Experience points in the next adventure.

Exploration: Your character wants to go boldly go where nobody has gone before. They'll climb a mountain that's never been climbed, explore a valley that's never been mapped, or enter a dungeon from which nobody has returned alive. Your character is rewarded for going someplace exotic where they've never been before. This could be anyplace that is avoided by common folk, or it could be travel to a foreign country or experiencing a different culture. To betray this motive your character must remain in familiar surroundings for an extended period of time, even when provided the opportunity for travel.



Faith: Your character is devoted to a higher power or personal code of conduct, such as a dietary restriction or daily meditation at sunrise and sunset. Your character is rewarded for converting people to their belief, for destroying institutions of opposed faiths, or for holding fast to their code of conduct even in the face of hardship. To betray this motive your character must break their code or renounce their faith.

Fame: "You must be the worst pirate I've ever heard of." "But you've heard of me!" Your character craves attention and loves the spotlight. Your character is rewarded when they do something noteworthy. Pulling people out of a burning building, saving a town from bandits, or negotiating a peace between rival kingdoms all accomplish this motive. To betray this motive your character must let someone else take credit for an accomplishment.

Freedom: Your character may be fleeing from some form of bondage or slavery; it could be a painful memory or they could be on the run from the law. Your character is rewarded whenever they escape imprisonment or when they are able to free slaves or prisoners. Finding evidence to prove a convicted person innocent fulfills this motive, as does freeing someone from indenture or usury. To betray this motive your character must deliver someone into bondage or into the hands of the law, or they must ignore an imprisoned person or creature when they have the means to set them free.

Greed: Your character is always looking for a quick buck or dreaming of the next big score. Your character is rewarded when they acquire a treasure or a huge payday. To betray this motive your character must donate everything they own to charity except what they can carry lightly.

Guardian: Your character has a ward, someone who depends on them for security and protection. Your character is rewarded when they have to make a decision influenced by their ward, or when they have to rescue the ward from trouble. To betray this motive your character must sever their relationship with the ward or allow the ward freedom and responsibility.

Honor: Your character has a sense of doing what's right and keeping their word, even if it puts them on the wrong side of the

law. Your character may be honor-bound to do whatever is necessary to fulfill their responsibilities. They may even have a duty to uphold the law or to a particular guild that they belong to. They are rewarded for acting responsibly or "doing the right thing" when it involves social risk, hardship or physical danger. To betray this motive, your character must shirk their duty.

Love: Your character will do anything for love, vowing to find a loved one that has gone missing, acting as a matchmaker, or even engaging in seduction or wooing a lover. The relationship between John Brown and Queen Victoria, or the relationship between Sir Walter Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth are examples of characters motivated by Love. Your character is rewarded when they do something romantic, when they unite a couple or family, or when they persuade someone to follow their heart. To betray this motive your character must abandon their love or refuse to help star-crossed lovers.

Mission: Your character has a personal mission. They could be looking for a lost family member, finding the Holy Grail, or freeing a community from unfair taxation. Your character is rewarded every time they complete a major part of the mission. Your character "betrays" this motive by abandoning or completing the mission.

Power (influence): Your character craves power, be it in land, title, or influence. Your character is rewarded when someone is indebted to them or under their control, when they gain a title or deed, or when they ruin a rival. This can sometimes be accomplished altruistically by saving a loyal person's life, but this can also be accomplished through blackmail, usury, or more sinister methods. To betray this motive your character must relinquish their power and position.

Revenge: Your character has been wronged and cannot rest until they get revenge against their enemies. Your character is rewarded for gaining personal revenge on those who wronged them. Your character is also rewarded for meeting out revenge on behalf of someone that is unable to get revenge on their own. To betray this motive your character must forgive their enemy or let them go unharmed.

Truth: Your character is obsessed with knowledge, discovery, and truth. You feel a sense of joy when you unravel a mystery. You want to share what you know with the world. Your character has a strong aversion to lies and deceit. You are rewarded whenever your character uncovers a falsehood, solves a mystery, reveals a secret, or gains some other storehouse of knowledge. To betray this motive your character must pass up an opportunity to gain more knowledge.



Designer's Notes

The primary purpose of the Motives is to provide an extra dimension to social interaction. It is sometimes difficult for a GM to communicate through an NPC without over-acting or descending into caricature. With Motives, a PC may have insights into an NPC with similar motives--the GM can tell a player what motivates the NPC, and that may provide a springboard for roleplaying.

The secondary purpose of the Motives is to provide a minimum of guidance in roleplaying a character, especially for people who are new to roleplaying games. No player is bound to any course of action based on their motives, and in fact characters gain Experience Points for betraying motives. Ideally motives will provide a bit of emotional heft to the decisions that the players make for their characters. Additionally, every NPC should have 1-2 Motives in order to provide a very quick guide for the GM on how NPCs might react when the PCs do something that surprises the GM. There are a few monster-specific motivations like Hunger and Territorial that helps the GM with their roleplaying.

The third purpose of the motives is to earn Experience Points. Experience Points are used to earn connections and to reward players for extended play (See Chapter 5: Character Growth). One of my design goals was to make a game that would help communicate the values I want to pass on to my children. I would prefer my kids aspire to having a family, a home, and a position of respect in the community—rather than amassing a high body-count and a barn filled with gold coins. Even in traditional fantasy roleplaying games I've seen many players that felt a sense of accomplishment when their character built a stronghold or purchased an inn and then retired from a life of adventure. Of course those players eagerly created another player in order to keep playing, but the sense of closure to an adventuring career was very rewarding.

CHAPTER 3: EQUIPMENT AND PROVISIONS

Encumbrance:

Logistics and planning are an integral part of an expedition or adventure. Do you need to bring provisions for a trip across a wasteland? Do you need to bring torches, ropes, and climbing gear to explore deep subterranean caves? Every character is assumed to have clothing, weapons and armor, but additional equipment is limited by a character's **carrying capacity**. A character can carry a minimum of 2 items, plus 1 item for every 3 full points of Power attribute and an additional 2 items for every 3 full points of Martial attribute. A character with Power 4 and Martial 7 can carry 7 items.

Weapons and Armor:

Your character is assumed to be carrying weapons and armor appropriate to their character design. A character with a higher Power ability is probably wearing chainmail armor, and possibly carrying a shield or two-handed sword. A character with a higher Finesse ability probably wears lighter armor such as leather armor and carries a fine bow. For the most part, you can assume that your character is equipped with ranged and melee weapons and armor appropriate for their adventuring lifestyle. Weapons and armor do not count against the number of items a character may carry.

In rare circumstances your character may have lost their equipment because they have been imprisoned, or perhaps they intentionally left their weapons and armor behind, as they would when attending a fancy ball. Typically, a character that has been stripped of weapons and armor suffers a -4 penalty on all Martial attacks and defenses, and they are not likely able to make ranged attacks unless they acquire some improvised weapons to throw. A character with poor quality or improvised equipment suffers only a -2 penalty on Martial attacks and defense rolls.

Adventuring Equipment:

Every character that goes out on an adventure can be assumed to be carrying a backpack, pocketknife, toiletries, and other bare necessities. Your character may want additional equipment depending on the circumstances they are likely to encounter. Although each item listed below may have several components, it counts as one "item" for purposes of determining how much your character can carry. A character can carry more than one of the same item, such as several days worth of rations if the character intends on a long overland journey.

Bedroll: A wool blanket used for sleeping when a bed is unavailable. The underside of the bedroll typically has a heavier cushion to provide a better sleeping surface and thermal insulation. A bedroll is thin enough that it can be easily rolled up and tied to a backpack when traveling.

Block and tackle: When attached to a rope, a block and tackle provides a mechanical advantage for lifting or moving heavy objects. A block and tackle is used in construction and sailing, but it may also be used in rescue situations to lift an unconscious person.

Cold Weather Outfit: This clothing consists of a thick wool pants, shirt, and hat, a heavy cloak, and oiled boots. This outfit is useful for travel in high altitude or arctic terrain.

Fishing Kit: This kit consists of a length of fishing line, several hooks, a knife, and pliers. While it is primarily used for fishing, in an emergency it can be used to create a tripwire, to snag an object some distance away, or in an emergency it can be used for sutures.

Grappling Hook: When attached to a rope, a grappling hook can be thrown and hooked on a tree, ledge, or window. A grappling hook typically has 3-4 prongs and can be thrown about 30 feet.

Journal, quill, inks: This is a small booklet for making notes, writing maps, keeping track of interesting discoveries, and reflections of the days events

Lantern: This is a metal lantern that sheds a decent amount of both light and heat. It has a glass (whatever) and holds a pint of oil. This comes with a pint of oil, spare wicks, and a flint and steel. It takes about a minute to fill and light a Lantern. A pint of oil burns for about 4 hours.

Manacles: These are heavy metal bands for the legs and wrists, connected by a chain, and are excellent for keeping prisoners in check.

Mess kit: This is a pot, cutlery, seasonings, spices, and other culinary tools necessary to make bland food a bit more palatable.

Musical Instrument: This is a small drum, flute, fiddle, or some other musical instrument. It can be used to while away the time and entertain your companions.

Oil: This is 3 pints of kerosene, each in a stoppered vial. Each pint of oil burns vigorously (though not explosively).

Pitons and hammer: These short metal spikes can be pounded into cracks in rocks or masonry in order to provide anchor points for ropes, to provide handholds and footholds, or occasionally to jam a Technical device such as a door.

Pole, 10-foot: This sturdy pole has many uses, such as prodding things you don't want to touch, for propelling a boat across shallow bodies of water, and jumping across dykes

Prybar: This is a heavy bar that can be used to break open doors, locked boxes, and even jail cells.

Rations: These are high-calorie rations such as dried meat, dried fruits, cheese, or flatbread, and can keep a person nourished and healthy for 2 days.

Rope: This is a sturdy, 50-foot long hemp rope. It is sufficient for mountaineering and spelunking.

Shovel: This heavy shovel can be used for digging trenches, latrines, and uncovering buried treasure.

Spyglass/Lenses: This is a hand-held telescope; it can be used for orienteering or navigation, and in a pinch a magnifying lens can be used to start a fire. A spyglass typically comes in a cloth-lined wooden carrying case and includes a mirror.

Tarpaulin: This is a sheet of waterproof cloth that can be used to construct a makeshift shelter from the elements, or draped over objects. A tarpaulin comes with enough rope to make an improvised tent.

Toolkit: This is a collection of basic craftsman's tools including wrench, chisel, and hammer, as well as finer tools for picking locks.

Torch: A torch is a short wooden rod between 1 and 3 feet in length. One end of the torch is tightly wound with a rag soaked in pitch or kerosene. The entire thing weighs about 2-3 lbs and burns for about an hour. In most cases, a torch is not particularly dangerous when used as a weapon, but swarms of insects and other vermin are kept at bay by open flames. Torches are also popular weapons in the hands of angry villagers.

Water skin: This is a bladder or pouch that holds a full day's supply of water. In temperate climates and towns your character should have ample opportunities to refill a water skin at lakes, creeks, springs, fountains, and wells.

Woodsman's Axe: This is a sturdy axe designed for chopping down trees and cutting firewood.

WEALTH LEVEL:

Wealth in Dichotomy is extremely abstracted, it isn't necessary to keep track of exactly how many coins your character is carrying; rather Dichotomy uses a scale that represents a "standard of living". This scale doesn't represent actual wealth, but rather it represents a character's lifestyle. The Wealth Level is determined by the GM for each character, based on the character's activities and the Player's vision of the character. In Dichotomy, Wealth Level is as much about how NPCs perceive your character as it is about your characters purchasing power. Regardless of a character's Wealth Level, they are always able to muster up whatever ordinary supplies they might need to go on an adventure.

Wealth Level is not an indication of absolute wealth; a destitute character may have donated their money to charity, invested it, or have it otherwise tied up in land and business. An affluent character may be living on borrowed funds, or squandering the last remains of a recent windfall. If a player wishes, they may change their character's wealth level in-between adventures.

Destitute: A destitute character is just barely scraping by. Their clothes may be threadbare, they can barely afford accommodations, and they only spend money on absolute necessities. A destitute character typically cannot afford to pay bribes; likewise they cannot buy treasure maps or unusual artifacts. A destitute character is more likely to be sought out by NPCs looking to hire people for dangerous or risky jobs. A destitute character is less likely to be targeted by swindlers or thieves. A destitute character is typically welcomed in seedy taverns while a character with more wealth is viewed with suspicion.

Comfortable: A character with a comfortable level of wealth is able to buy good meals, stay at modest inns, and has enough spending money left over to buy trinkets or information. A character with a comfortable level of wealth can periodically go to a fancy ball if they are accompanied by an Affluent character, and likewise they can sometimes fit in seedier parts of town if they are in the company of destitute companions. A comfortable character is most likely to gain acceptance in an artisan's guild.

Affluent: An affluent character spends money freely. They wear fine clothes and live in ritzy neighborhoods. Affluent characters may find themselves invited to elegant balls, operas, or similar events. An affluent character can typically buy whatever trinkets strike their fancy. Affluent characters are unlikely to receive job offers, but they may be asked to perform charity work. An affluent character is far more likely to be granted an audience with a noble or allowed into a rare-books room at a library. An affluent character is more likely to be targeted by robbers, con-artists, and thieves.

CHAPTER 4: COMBAT

Most of your character's actions are resolved by describing what you'd like to do, but there are times when simple talking and negotiation is not enough and your character may resort to combat. Combat is the negotiation of last resort. This chapter contains the rules for engaging in combat.

Battle Zones

In Dichotomy, the Game Master provides a map with zones to display the positions of all of the combatants, as well as terrain and other features. Combat is a strategic game involving positioning, tactics, and a bit of luck. There are vinyl battlemats made especially for wargames and roleplaying games, or you could use a dry-erase board or simple paper. Tokens, counters, or miniature figures are used to identify the combatants. See below for some sample zones.

The GM may rule that certain zones provide a bonus on attack rolls, defense rolls, or both. For example, a character on a balcony may gain a +1 bonus on all Finesse Attack or Defense rolls. A character taking cover behind a tree may gain +1 on all Finesse Defense rolls. With Power attacks, a zone usually provides an advantage to the defender against anyone entering the zone. For example, a zone bordered by a creek or at the top of a stairway might provide a +2 bonus on Power rolls to attack or defend against anyone who must cross the creek or climb the stairs.



Turn Order (Surprise)

At the beginning of any combat, the GM will determine if anyone was surprised or caught off-guard. In most cases, the Player Characters have a chance to act as a team before any Non-Player characters. If the players are ambushed, then the Non-Player characters often get to act first. On the very rare cases when two Player Characters both try to do something at the same time, they would make an appropriate roll (often Finesse/Martial) to determine who goes first.

Turns

When your turn comes up in initiative, you have 3 **action points** that you can spend. Different actions cost different amounts of points. You cannot take the same action twice during your turn. You can take actions in any order. A turn represents about 20 seconds.

Attack (1-3 action points)

Whether you are swinging a sword, shooting an arrow, or bringing your spiritual powers to bear, the Attack action is the bread-and-butter of combat. A Power/Martial attack costs one action point. A Finesse attack costs one extra point, and a Spiritual attack also costs one additional point. Thus, a Finesse/Martial or Power/Spiritual attack each costs 2 action points, and a Finesse/Spiritual attack costs 3 action points. The Finesse attribute is used when you attack or defend across battle zones. The Power attribute is used for attacking or defending within a battle zone.

Defend (3 action points)

You do nothing but defend yourself; all defensive rolls are made with a +4 bonus.

Move (1 action point per zone)

When you use a Move action, you normally move from one zone to another. It costs 1 action point for each zone you wish to move. Thus, you can move up to 3 zones. If you are moving into or out of an enemy occupied zone, it costs one extra movement point. e.g. moving out of an enemy occupied zone and into another enemy occupied zone costs 3 points.

Recover (3 action points)

If you are **shaken**, this action removes one of your hits (see Injury and Death below). This action cannot be used to recover from Injury.

Miscellaneous (1+ action points)

Some actions during combat do not fit into one of the above actions. Kicking open a door, drinking a potion, and attempting to negotiate all are considered miscellaneous actions. In most cases this takes 1 point, but depending on the circumstances it could take 2 or more points. Talking, negotiating, and similar actions can be done freely without using any action points.

Injury and Death (Three strikes and you're out)

Player Character health is tracked in sets of 3 hits. When a character suffers 1 or 2 hits, they are only considered **shaken**. A character that is shaken could be considered knocked off balance, confused, winded, or having some minor scrape. These hits can be removed using the **recover** action (see below), and these hits are automatically removed when a character has rested for a few minutes (after combat has finished). If a character suffers three or more hits, they are **injured**. This is a real physical or psychological injury that takes a full night's rest to recover.

Once a character is injured, they can take up to 2 more hits and still be considered shaken. Three or more hits results in a **serious injury**. A serious injury takes a full week of rest to recover. Even after a serious injury has healed, a character may walk with a limp, or suffer pain for weeks afterward.

If a character has both an injury and a serious injury, then they can suffer 1 or 2 hits and be shaken. Three or more hits either kills the character outright or permanently ends their adventuring career. If the character is alive, they can no longer take any actions during the combat. A GM may decide that a character lives for a few hours... long enough to express some last wishes, or the GM may decide that the character will eventually recover from their wounds--but they are psychologically unable to continue adventuring.

The hits against a PC are always tallied at the end of a round, so theoretically a PC could suffer 6 or more hits in a single round, but they would only suffer an injury for the first 3 hits, with the remaining hits not counted at all. If they suffered 6 more hits in the next round, the PC would have a serious injury, and the remaining hits would not be counted.

NPCs have may have more or less hits, and when those hits are lost they are out of the combat. NPCs are not typically injured or seriously injured unless the GM includes it as part of a plot development.

Charlotte is in a serious fight. During the first round of combat she suffers 2 hits and is shaken. In the second round of combat she suffers 2 more hits, resulting in an injury (the extra hit doesn't carry over). In the third round of combat she suffers 1 hit, resulting in being shaken. In the fourth round of combat she suffers 5 hits, resulting in a serious injury. In the fifth round of combat she suffers one more hit, is shaken, and decides to takes a dive. With the help of friends she survives the combat. Immediately after combat, she loses the 1 hit and is no longer shaken. In 24 hours the injury will go away but she will still be seriously injured. In one week, the serious injury will also go away.

Taking a Dive

When a character first receives a Serious Injury, or at any time they take damage when they already have a Serious Injury, the player can choose to have the character **take a dive**. When your character takes a dive, they fall unconscious and cannot take any more actions for the remainder of the combat. All opponents assume that your character is dead and they will turn their attention elsewhere. It's possible that a character who takes a dive could avoid getting killed during the combat, but unless they are rescued by their companions they may still end up in a dire situation or even dead.

Alexa and Benny are attacked by a pack of hungry wolves. Benny suffers a serious injury and takes a dive. If Alexa is able to drive away the wolves, Benny will eventually recover from his injuries. If, instead, Alexa is forced to flee and leave the body of Benny behind, then the wolves will probably eat Benny. If, instead of wolves, Alexa and Benny surprised a black bear and her cub, then the bear might actually leave Benny alone if he took a dive and Alexa ran away. If Alexa and Benny encountered bandits, the bandits might strip Benny's body of valuables, but leave him to eventually recover.



Terrain features

Some battle zones may have terrain features that provide a bonus or penalty to any creature occupying the zone. A position of high ground, like a watchtower, usually provides a +2 bonus on Finesse attribute. A narrow passage might impose a penalty of -3 on Martial attribute. A patch of dense fog may impose a penalty of -4 on Finesse attribute.

Some terrain features may inflict only a temporary or conditional penalty. A steep staircase might provide a bonus of +1 to Power attribute when entered from above, and a penalty of -1 to Power attribute when climbing up from below. Entering a zone after climbing up a ladder may impose a penalty of -3 Power and -3 Martial. A temporary penalty typically lasts for only one round.

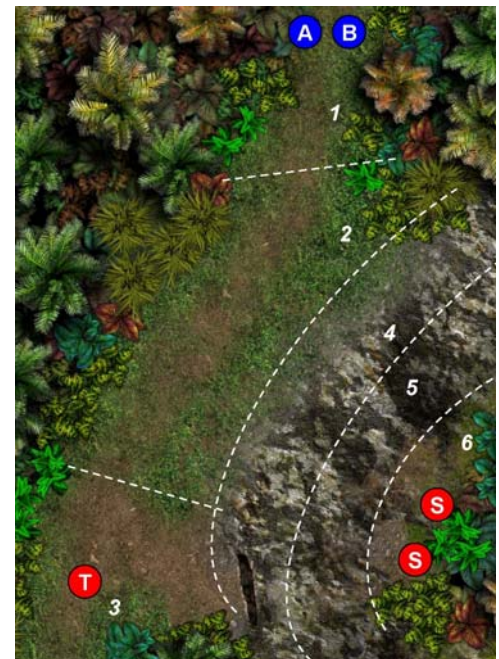
Combat Example

The Player Characters, Alexa and Benny, are walking on a wooded trail through some foothills. As the path skirts a steep outcropping of rock, a thug holding a sword steps out from a small cave and demands "*This is our road, you'll pay us your money or your life.*" Two bandit snipers are standing at the top of the bluff, their loaded crossbows pointed at Alexa and Benny.

The GM quickly sketches the situation, indicating the positions of Alexa, Benny, the thug, and the two snipers. The GM jots in the various battle zones, 1-6, and indicates that zone 6 has an advantage for high ground, giving the bandits a +2 bonus on Finesse rolls, and a +2 bonus on Power attacks against anyone climbing up from Zone 5.

	Alexa	Benny	Thug	Sniper
Finesse	+3	+7	10	10 (12*)
Power	+8	+4	12	9 (11*)
Martial	+9	+3	12	10
Spiritual	+2	+8	8	8
Notes	Smite	Pyrokinesis	3 hits	3 hits *terrain

Note that Alexa and Benny's attributes are expressed as modifiers to dice rolls, while the Thug and Sniper's attributes are expressed as Target Numbers.



Round 1

On the first round of combat, Alexa uses 3 action points to move to Zone 3 (1 point to move to zone 2, and 2 more points to enter the enemy-occupied zone 3). *Alexa charges down the trail, saying "I don't negotiate with bandit scum".*

Benny uses 3 action points to make a Finesse/Spiritual attack against a sniper using his Pyrokinesis ability. Benny rolls a 7 for Finesse plus his attribute 7 for a total of 14 against the sniper's Finesse TN 12. Next, Benny rolls a 2 for Spiritual plus his attribute 8 for a total of 10 against the sniper's Spiritual TN 8. Benny equaled or exceeded both of the sniper's TNs, resulting in **total success**. The sniper suffers 2 hits. (The snipers normally have a Finesse TN 10, but the high ground advantage in Zone 6 increases the sniper's Finesse TN to 12.). *Benny furrows his brows in concentration --the air bursts into flame around one of the snipers, burning the bandit.*

The thug attacks Alexa with a sword, so Alexa needs to defend herself from a Power/Martial attack. Alexa rolls a 2 for Power plus her attribute 8 for a total of 10 against the thug's Power TN 12. Next, Alexa rolls a 6 for Martial plus her attribute 9 for a total of 15 against the thug's Martial TN 12. Alexa beat one of the Thug's TNs resulting in a **partial success**. Alexa is takes one hit of damage. *The thug lunges at Alexa and she narrowly deflects his sword with her shield.*

One sniper attacks Alexa with a crossbow. Alexa must defend herself against a Finesse /Martial attack. Alexa rolls an 8 for Finesse plus her attribute 3 for a total of 11 against the sniper's Finesse TN 12. Next, Alexa rolls a 5 for Martial plus her attribute 8 for a total of 13 against the sniper's Martial TN 10. Alexa beat one of the sniper's TNs resulting in a **partial success**, so Alexa suffers 1 more hit of damage bringing her to a total of 2 hits. (If the sniper did not have the high ground advantage for occupying zone 6, Alexa's Finesse roll would have been a success against a TN 10). *The sniper's crossbow bolt grazes Alexa's calf, forcing her to split her attention between the thug and the sniper.*

The wounded sniper shoots a crossbow at Benny. Benny must defend himself against a Finesse/Martial attack. Benny rolls an 6 for Finesse plus his attribute 7 for a total of 13 against the sniper's Finesse 12. Next Benny rolls a 3 for Martial plus his attribute 3 for a total of 6 against the sniper's Martial TN 10. Benny beat only one of the sniper's TNs resulting in a **partial success**, so Benny suffers 1 hit of damage. *The second sniper shoots a crossbow bolt at Benny, who barely dodges aside and is visibly shaken by the near-miss.*

Round 2

On the second round of combat, Alexa swings her axe at the thug using her Smite ability. Alexa rolls 9 for Power, plus her attribute 8 for a total of 17 Power against the thug's Power TN 12. Next, Alexa rolls a 4 for Martial, plus her attribute 9 for a total of 13 against the thug's Martial TN 12. She beat both TNs resulting in a **total success**. Since she used her Smite Ability, that is 3 hits and the mighty blow knocks the thug out of combat. With her remaining 2 action point she climbs the slope to Zone 5. *The thug crashes to the ground under the mighty blow of Alexa's battle axe. Alexa turns her attention to the snipers and begins scrambling up the steep slope.*

Continuing the second round of combat, Benny tries to burn the injured sniper again with Pyrokinesis. Benny rolls 3 for Finesse, plus his attribute 7 for a total of 11 against the sniper's Finesse TN 12. Next, Benny rolls a 7 for Spiritual, plus his attribute 8 for a total of 15 against the sniper's Spiritual TN 8. Benny beat one TN resulting in a **partial success**. The wounded sniper had already suffered 2 hits, and one more hit is just enough damage to drop the injured sniper. *The air crackles with fire and a sniper falls to the ground, his charred armor still smouldering.*

The remaining sniper is on the verge of panic, but he fires another crossbow bolt against Alexa. Alexa defends against a Finesse 12/Martial 10 attack. Alexa rolls a 5 for Finesse plus her attribute 3 for a total of 8 against Finesse TN 12. Alex

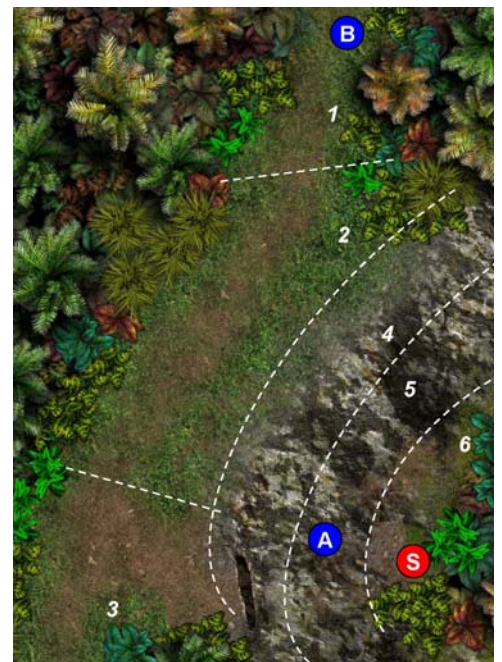
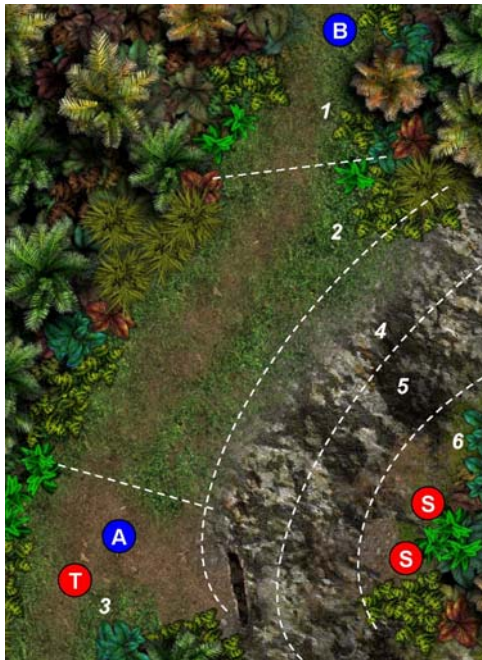
rolls a 1 for Martial plus her attribute 8 results in a 9 against Martial TN 10. Alexa's did not meet or beat either TN, resulting in a **failure**--Alexa suffers 2 more hits of damage. Since Alexa was already shaken from 2 previous hits, this sniper's arrow inflicts an **injury**. Alexa has taken 4 hits so far, but the extra hit is not carried over. (Actually, even a partial success would have resulted in an injury; the extra "hit" is overflow that is not counted.) *Alexa is unable to raise her shield in time and the sniper's crossbow bolt sinks into her shoulder.*

Round 3

On the third round of combat, Alexa uses 2 action points to move into zone 6 and her third action point to make a Power/Martial attack against the sniper with her Smite Ability. Alexa rolls a 2 for Power, plus her Attribute 8, resulting in 10 against the sniper's Power TN 11. (the sniper's Power TN is +2 higher temporarily due to Alexa having to climb up from Zone 5). Alexa rolls a 9 for Martial, plus her attribute 9 for a total of 18 against the sniper's Martial TN 10. Alexa achieved a **partial success**, which due to her Powerful Attack ability results 2 hits of damage to the sniper. The sniper still has 1 hit remaining. *The sniper blocks Alexa's blade with his crossbow, but he is staggered by the blow.*

Benny concentrates and uses 3 action points to make another Spiritual/Finesse attack against the last sniper with his Pyrokinesis ability. Benny rolls a 2 for Finesse plus his attribute 7 for a total of 9 against the sniper's Finesse TN 12. Next, Benny rolls a 5 for Spiritual plus his attribute 8 for a total of 13 against the sniper's Spiritual TN 8. Benny beat one TN resulting in a partial success. The sniper takes 1 more hit and that is just enough to drop the last remaining opponent. *The last sniper staggers forward and tumbles down the steep slope, his body finally coming to a rest near the path.*

At the end of the battle, Benny's 1 hit of damage immediately goes away, but Alexa's injury will last for 24 hours. If Alexa and Benny get into another fight within that time, Alexa would be seriously injured if she sustains 3 more hits.



CHAPTER 5: CHARACTER GROWTH

Character growth and development depends on the scope of the game. The scope of the game is typically proposed by the GM, for the GM will need to develop intrigues and NPCs. A game might be designed to be played in a single session on a weekend, or it could be designed to be played a series weekly sessions over a few weeks, or it could be a long campaign designed to be played over the course of many months.

Dichotomy is designed for characters to have between 1 and 9 special abilities. At most a character can have 1 ability for every 3 full points of an attribute. Abilities should be distributed fairly evenly between the 3 dichotomies—if a character has 2 abilities from the Martial/Spiritual axis, and 1 ability from the Power/Finesse axis, they must select at least one more power from the Power/Finesse axis before they select a 3rd power on the Martial/Spiritual axis. Players can select abilities in any order, as long as they take no more than one power for every 3 points in the associated attribute, and as long as no other dichotomy has fewer abilities.

Monster Slayers

To reflect the veteran's skill and expertise, once your character has 6 or more Abilities, they gain a permanent bonus on any roll to beat a TN when attacking or defending. A character gets +1 bonus on all attack and defense rolls once they have 6 Abilities, and another +1 with each additional Ability to a total of +4 when they have 9 Abilities.

SCOPE

Three sample game scopes are described below. The GM is encouraged to choose one of these or design a scope tailored to the desires of the gaming group. Regardless of how the scope is determined, the GM should communicate the scope of the game before the players begin creating characters.

The Trilogy

In a Trilogy, the GM has a plot designed to unfold in 3 acts, and the players are encouraged to create characters that undergo a change during those 3 acts. The Players are encouraged to plan to betray at least one motive at some point during the Trilogy. The GM and players should work together to figure out which motives are appropriate to the plot. For example, a character may start out as coward, but during the second act of the Trilogy they betray their cowardice and begin acting Bravery. Another character may start out with a conscience, but during the first act they suffer a crisis and leave someone in a miserable situation, later, during the third act, the character finds their conscience again and redeems the wrong they allowed during the first act. The Trilogy is a shorter game, and the GM may perhaps let the characters start with more than 3 abilities, and possibly only earn 2-3 more during the course of the game.

The Adventure Path

In an Adventure Path, the GM has a plot designed to unfold in up to 9 parts. The players typically create a character with only 1 ability, and they add a new ability as each “chapter” is completed.

The Sandbox

In a Sandbox game, the direction of the game should be determined by the Character's Motives. The GM is encouraged to look at the character's Motives closely when planning events, intrigues, and adventures. The GM may have a grand plot in mind, and they may have several smaller plots or intrigues, but in general, it is best to let the Players decide what is important to their characters. A good GM may have several plots available, and give the characters a chance to pursue the ones they find most appealing.

A Sandbox game is similar to an Adventure Path, with characters gaining a new power at the conclusion of each chapter, but once a Character has adventured for a time with all 9 abilities, the characters begin to lose abilities as age and experience take their toll. Players are encouraged to develop additional characters such as cohorts or children that could take up the mantle as the original character grows closer to retirement. A Sandbox game may or may not have a specific ending point. A sandbox game might end with the birth or collapse of an empire, the salvation or destruction of the world, or the players may wish to continue to play with the dynasties created by their Characters.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

There is more to life than adventuring, and Experience Points are a way to round out your character. It is often rewarding for players to know that their characters are connecting with their communities, such as earning respect or fame, owning a business, and starting a family. It is usually not very exciting to roleplay these events, and can sometimes even be awkward, so Experience Points are a mechanism for players to reward their characters with connections, without getting in the way of

the action. Players are encouraged to discuss these connections with the GM, so that the GM can work the connections into the game world if appropriate. The list below indicates some connections that can be purchased with Experience Points. At the GMs discretion, you can also “buy up” an existing connection with additional Experience Points, using common sense as a guide to what’s appropriate in the game world.

When a player uses Experience points to purchase a connection for their character, it isn’t like going to a supermarket to acquire a mate or a house—using Experience points represents community involvement or family activities that normally take place off-stage in a heroic adventure. You don’t need to roleplay your character changing diapers, painting fences, and raising barns.

Table 5-1 Experience Point cost for Connections

Connection	XP	Description
Cottage	5	A small place to live, a country cottage or a city apartment. It is cozy, but just barely big enough for a small family.
House	10	A larger domicile, with enough space to entertain occasional guests, it has some private area such as a study or den..
Manor	25	A grand estate, with one or two outbuildings. A manor includes servants such as a butler, maid, cook, and groundskeeper.
Tower	40	A fortified structure, including a small number of guards in addition to the staff of a manor. A Tower likely includes an armory and possibly even a dungeon.
Farm	10	This is a small farm, sufficient to keep one’s family provided for upon retirement. A small pawnshop or antiques store could also be purchased at this level.
Shop	20	This is a shop, such as a pub, smithy, brewery, bookstore or market. It likely has a few employees that can run the business if the Character is busy on an adventure.
Business	30	This is a larger establishment, such as an inn, a winery, or theater. The business may have a dozen or more employees.
Minion	5	A squire or other hireling that handles common tasks.
Cohort	10	This is a highly skilled person that can handle a great deal of responsibility. A cohort is a trusted companion that can also take up the reins of adventure if the Player Character needs a break or decides to retire from adventuring. A cohort usually doesn’t take an active role in an adventure, so a player isn’t running 2 characters at once, but a cohort is often available if something tragic happen to the PC.
Followers	15	This is a group of minions that, depending on the Player Character, can act as bodyguards, advisors, entourage, gossips, and otherwise act as toadies to the Player Character.
Notoriety	5	The character is famous (or infamous) in a neighborhood or small village.
Famous	10	The character is famous (or infamous) within a county or city. They might be a council member, or otherwise hold a position of prestige or respect.
Renown	20	The character has considerable renown in a region. They may be a city mayor, advisor to a ruler, head of a guild, a sought-after guru, or similar respected position. The character may be the subject of works of art such as song, paintings, or sculpture.
Legendary	40	The character is possibly a regional leader, such as a lord or lady. They might be a confidant of an emperor or king. They are probably well known in their usual haunts, but anywhere the character travels they are likely to run into people who have heard of them or legends of them... of course the further away the Character travels the more likely the legends are exaggerated. A legendary character may find themselves challenged by upstarts trying to prove themselves, or sought after by scholars or petitioners.
Companion	5	A companion is an NPC that doesn’t travel with the Player Character, but provides intimate companionship and advice. A companion could be a bartender, librarian, or some other person that the Player Character has established a relationship with. For a famous companion, double the XP cost.
Spouse	10	A marriage partner is like a companion above, but this time it’s official. For a famous spouse, double the XP cost.
Dependant	5	A dependant is typically a child, progeny or adopted, or some other person that depends on and likely admires the Player Character.

CHAPTER 6: SUPPLEMENTAL RULES

The rules assume that player characters are human. Many fantasy games support demi-humans, such as dwarves and elves. These supplemental rules can be used to cover those races. Demi-human characters are restricted to a degree in their attribute designations. Demi-humans are required to select at least 1 racial-specific ability from the appropriate dichotomy as one of their first 3 ability choices. A demi-human is free to select more than one of their racial-specific abilities if they so desire.

Dwarves

Dwarf characters must take a minimum of 4 in Power, Martial, and Technical attributes. Dwarf characters speak their own language Dwarven, as well as Common. Dwarves can see in absolute darkness just as well as daylight. Dwarves are slow and stocky, and cannot move more than 2 zones in a single combat round. Dwarf characters are required to take the following abilities when they choose their first abilities from the Martial/Spiritual dichotomy and the Natural/Technical dichotomy.

Power Ability

Dwarven Fortitude: Your character's great fortitude lets them shrug off minor annoyances. It takes 4 hits to cause an injury. If they are already injured, it still only takes 3 more hits to become seriously injured. If you are seriously injured, it still takes only 3 more hits to kill your character or end their adventuring career..

Martial Ability

Stone Shape: When using your bare hands, your character has the ability to shape stone as if it were wet clay. It takes concentration to activate the power, and physical effort to do the sculpting. Skilled dwarven craftsmen can create works of art using stone shape, but even an unskilled dwarf can dig a hole through a 1-foot-thick stone wall in about 10 minutes. Using stone shape, a dwarf can push handholds into a stone wall, gaining all the advantages of the Climbing ability, although only when climbing stone.

Technical Ability

Stonecunning: Your character has a keen eye for stonework and can discern unusual construction such as secret rooms, sliding walls, covered pits, and unsafe tunnels. You can also tell, from touching worked stone, approximately how old the construction is, as well as unusual properties or composition of the stonework. You can tell if stone is likely to contain valuable ores, gemstones, fossils, or other foreign matter. You can tell if a statue was created by a sculptor or through magical means such as by the gaze of a medusa.

Elves

Elf characters must take a minimum of 4 in Finesse, Spiritual, and Natural attributes. Elf characters speak their own language, Sylvan, as well as Common. Elves can see in twilight just as well as daylight. Elf characters are required to take the following abilities when they choose their first abilities from the Martial/Spiritual dichotomy and the Natural/Technical dichotomy.

Finesse Ability

Tree Stride: You can step into a living tree and out of any other living tree within 100 yards and direct line of sight. Both the origination tree and destination tree must be alive and sufficiently large, (at least 4 feet high and 3 feet in diameter). Any reasonably bulky foliage can be used if a tree is not available. You can step directly into an enemy occupied zone with no additional action point cost. If you are leaving an enemy occupied zone, you still incur an additional 1-action point cost.

Spiritual Ability

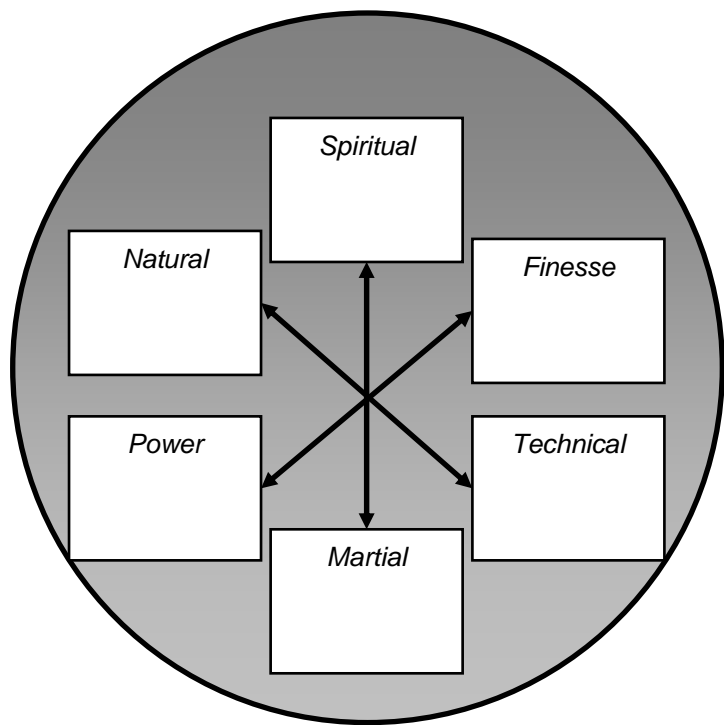
Shape Plants: Your character can reshape living plants without harming them. Living plant matter bends to your will at a touch. With time and effort you can create a spiral stairway out of a tree's branches, leading to the tree's upper reaches. You are limited by mass and inertia; it is much easier to create an archway through the slender branches of a thorny bramble, than to create a tunnel through a giant redwood. This ability can also be used to pass through vegetation without hindrance or leaving a trace. In most cases, the plants quickly revert to normal after your passing, but if you take your time and concentrate, you can make the changes stick—at least until the plant's natural growth slowly changes your creation.

Natural Ability

Commune with Nature: Your character can enter a trance-like state and commune with plants such as trees and grasses. You can tell about large disturbances in the natural order, such as armies on the march, geothermal activity, dammed rivers, introduction of exotic species, and environmental toxins. This ability doesn't allow for finely detailed information such as the passing of a handful of people, or the location of a single shallow grave.

Dichotomy Roleplaying Game Character Sheet

Player Name	Character Name	Character Age/Gender
Character description, history, and connections		Experience points



shaken

shaken

injured

seriously injured

Motivations

Wealth Level

Special Abilities

Equipment	carrying capacity
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