



DIE

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

KIERON GILLEN

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DIE™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

KIERON GILLEN • STEPHANIE HANS





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DIE

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

In 2016 I had an idea for a comic.

A group of teenagers in the 1990s get dragged into a home-brew RPG. Two years later, traumatized, they find their way out. Now, twenty years later, they're pulled back in, and we compare their teenage fantasies with their adult realities. It'd be a melancholic love song to a form I adored, asking: why do people long to spend their time in imaginary worlds?

Stephanie Hans and I had been looking for a chance to create something together for years, and I knew this was the one. We started work. In 2018, the first issue was released. In 2021, we concluded the series.

However, it wasn't just an idea for a comic. It was also an idea for an RPG. It had to be both, and I had to work on them simultaneously, trying to make a game that lets you create your own DIE stories at home, to answer the same question: why do we play games?

For a long time, I was unsure which was the tail and which was the dog—whether it was a comic with a tie-in RPG, or an RPG with a tie-in comic. Eventually I stopped worrying. The dog ate its tail, and became an ouroboros. RPG? Comic? It doesn't matter. It's all just ways of experiencing DIE.

I released the beta alongside the first collection. Since then it's been played, tweaked, expanded and iterated until it ballooned to an enormous and unwieldy size. My friends at Rowan, Rook & Decard took it, distilled it and together we created the concentrated volume you hold in your hands.

We took it to Kickstarter. It went well. And here we are.

Thank you. Have fun and/or shuddering emotional catharsis.

Kieron Gillen
London
15.8.2022

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE SCHOOL REUNION.

I'd better not have the shittiest car.

I owned this place, metaphorically.

Hell, Daddy could have *literally* bought it before everything went down.

Turning up in a 2009 Fiesta wasn't my homecoming fantasy...

Crap car, Alistair.

Her Facebook updates didn't lie. Morgan hasn't changed their colour palette *or* demeanour.

I open my mouth...

...and it turns out I haven't either.

I thought you said you'd never come back once you got out?

Germany not everything you'd hoped it was? Or have you burned your friends there too?

Both. Turns out, there's shitholes and shitheads everywhere.

You'd have fitted right in.

Oh God. We're being horrible to each other. The bad kids, being bad.

We really *are* back.

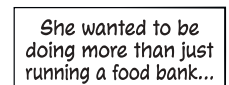
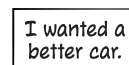
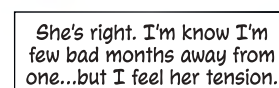
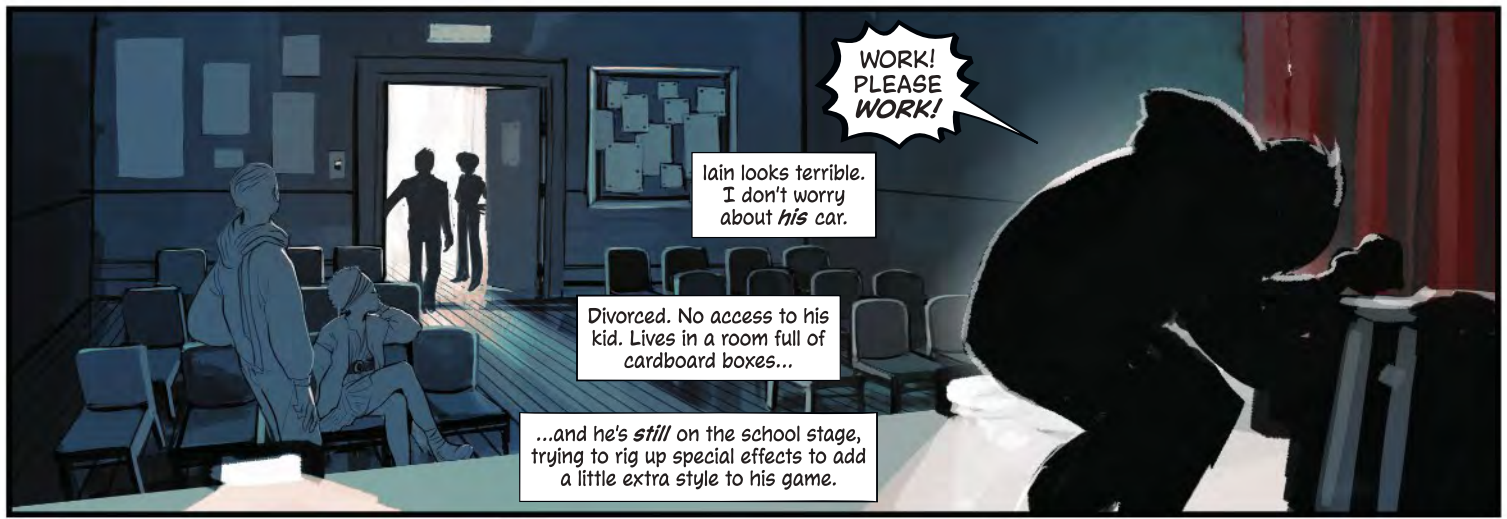
Honestly, I'm surprised you came. A reunion isn't your style.

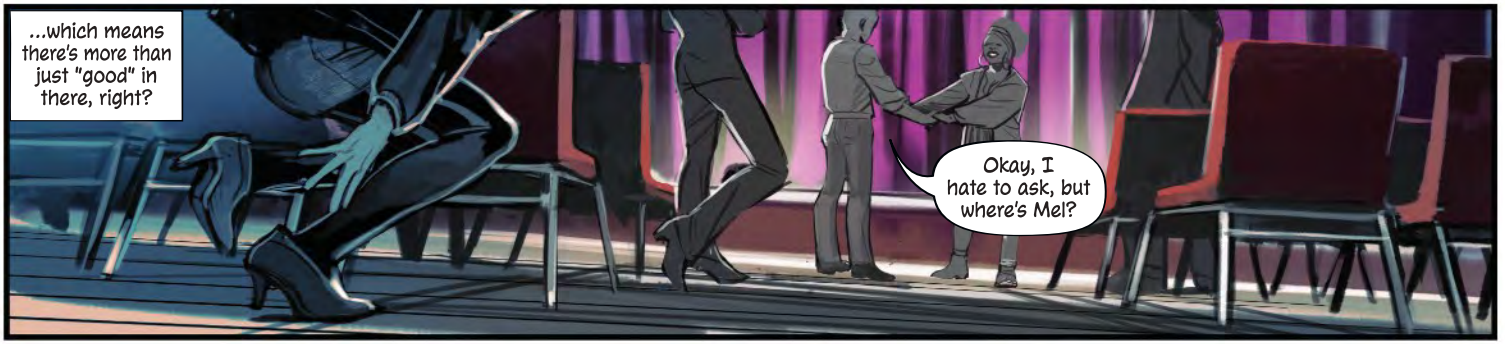
Walking out is your style.

Heh. It is...but the timing worked. I'm leaving Germany.

You walk out of one place, and you have to walk into another...

...and besides, Iain was promising something *special*...





...which means there's more than just "good" in there, right?

Okay, I hate to ask, but where's Mel?



FLANKING MANOEUVRE!



Got you! One-nil to the Mel-star.

I'm reminded why I was glad when she broke her legs and blew her Olympic chances.

And *that* reminds me how fucking petty I was. *Was* or *am*?

We'll find out, I guess.



Hey! Look what I grabbed from the hotel bar! Who's drinking?

She brought single malt.

How long has it been since I had a good single malt?



I take it all back.

I may love her.

Please, no. Stop!



Can we not get drunk before I explain the rules?

We spent so many hours up there, an after-school secret society of drama kids in a sports school...

...I swore everyone to secrecy. I didn't want anyone else to know.

Yet now I'm here, and I think, "When was the last time I sat around a table with friends?"

Okay...
I couldn't get the smoke machine working, but hopefully we don't need it.

I've got something a little unusual.

Do I have to read the rules?

I'm not reading rules.

And I'm *not* not drinking.

Please!
Just...*listen*. This has been a lot of work to put together...

Please.

We heard the desperation. Iain clearly needs this evening to go well...

The chatter stops. It seems we *are* still friends.

In the nineties, six kids disappeared when playing a home-brew roleplaying game.

They only reappeared a few years later, with *no* explanation.

Sadly, friendship only seems to buy 10 seconds of exposition.

Wait...wasn't that in America? I read it somewhere.

No, that was a shitty Tom Hanks Movie!

Please, just pay attention!

For once!

I found this while nosing around online.

It claims to be a copy of the game they were playing that night.

Now, I dunno if I believe it or not, but it's really interesting...

...I mean, the props are neat.

Friendship
couldn't
shut us up.

The dice
did.

Iain solemnly
handed them
out.

It was a done
deal. We were all
going to play...

...though some
of us were good
enough to at
least make polite
protestation.

Is playing this really in
the best taste?

It really
isn't.

I love
it.

Single malt
and a fancy dice
has made me pliant.
Let's do this
thing.

Has this
spooky mystery
game got a
name?

Sure.

It's
called--





DIE™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME



1. **INTRODUCTION**

WHAT IS DIE?

DIE is a comic book series by Kieron Gillen and Stephanie Hans, where a group of real-world, deeply-flawed adults are transported to a fantasy world via a predatory, sinister role-playing game. There, they're transformed into Paragons, each of whom is a warped take on the core fantasy role-playing classes. In this world, they get to confront how their lives have diverted from their youthful fantasies, to confront their darker sides and buried secrets. They generally cause trouble.

It's been jokingly described as "Goth Jumanji." It is a portal fantasy for adults and is available from all good book shops.

WHAT DOES DIE RPG LET YOU DO?

In this game, you make your own entirely bespoke version of the *DIE* story.

You make your own social group of messed up, real-world humans. They're dragged to a world which echoes your own strengths and weaknesses, failures, losses and successes back at you. It is your fantasy world, personal and horrifically yours...

Each of these visitors is transformed into their own unique versions of the iconic paragons of the series:

- **Dictators** break hearts with words, in a blood-fountaining-out-of-people's-mouths way.
- **Fools** rushing in with a smile on their face, knowing if it slips, they'll be torn apart.
- **Emotion Knights** know if they feel their passion strong enough—fear, hate, loathing, whatever they choose—they can decapitate gods.
- **Godbinders** haggling with and bullying the divine to get their miracles done, cheap.
- A **Neo** sneaking into a Prussian dragon's lair to steal enough Fair Gold to power up their techno-weaponry enough to kill the bastard thing.
- Even **Masters**, shuffling reality, knowing if their cheating gets caught they'll have to suffer torment for breaking the rules...

In the end, a decision: do the visitors go back to their real lives? And if they disagree, how will they come to an agreement? Can they settle things like grown-ups, or are swords and spells going to settle this? Because everyone knows, the dead don't get a vote...

Will the game continue, or will the game end? You and your friends decide.



In DIE, the characters are meant to argue, but the players aren't. You're all in this together to tell the best dramatic story you can. Play nice with each other and use the extensive safety tools provided later in this book.

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

Google “Actual play RPG”. Watch a video for a few minutes.

That. That's a role-playing game.

For the vast majority of its playtime, *DIE* is a conversation between everyone at the table. Players describe what they want their characters to do. The gamemaster (GM) generally says what happens. For actions which are uncertain, the rules of the game are used to ascertain what happens. Fun is had.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

Finish off this chapter. Then read Chapter 2: Rules to find out how the game's mechanics work. This is all you need to know for play.

If you fancy finding out about the heroes of *DIE*, read Chapter 3: Paragons. If you aren't a GM, you probably shouldn't read anything else.

If you're the GM, all you need to know is in Chapter 4: Rituals. This is everything you need to play the game. Everything else in this book is additional, introducing new tools, advice and other ways to play:

- Chapter 6: Running *DIE*, contains more advice on running the game.
- Chapter 7: Building *DIE*, contains ideas and tools on how to create your personal Die.
- Chapter 8: Bestiary, contains people, adversaries and monsters that can appear in your game.
- Chapter 9: Campaign, contains advice and procedures for lengthening *DIE* from a 2-3 session game into a longer campaign.
- Chapter 10: Scenarios & Social Groups, contains some short campaign prompts for one shot or quick start games of *DIE*.

A NOTE ON TONE

In *DIE*, you create a bunch of real-world people and then drop them into a fantasy world where the recesses of their inner lives are externalised and confronted—or succumbed too. Old school bullies as literal ogres. Distant disapproving parent figures as distant disapproving archmage mentors. That lost love as the elf regent, promising you happiness as long as you abandon reality and stay in this fantasy realm.

This can be a serious game of personal trauma and loss, akin to the darker recesses of *DIE* the comic. It can also be lighter, about real-world people dealing with the ludicrousness of a fantasy world. *DIE* can be a game about an adult finally coming to terms with their identity, and it can be about the nerdy teenager absolutely delighted by being able to throw fireballs.

It can be all of the above. If I'm running it, I move freely between all poles. Your group decides what your game looks like. Make it yours.

TERMINOLOGY

DIE has a lot of terminology, some borrowed from other RPGs and some unique to the game:

Antagonist: The Persona played by the gamemaster, usually The Master.

Character: Anyone in the world of Die. Each of the player's Persona, when they are in the world, is a character.

Class Dice: The specific sort of dice connected to each players' Paragon. So, for the Dictator the class dice is a D4, for a Fool it's a D6 and so on.

D4, D6, D8, D10, D12, D20: A 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 20-sided dice, respectively. Note—if the game does not specify otherwise, it means a D6.

Defence: A measure of how hard it is to hit a character. It acts as the Difficulty when rolling to attack the character.

Dice: We use dice to mean both the singular and plural of dice. As the game's called *DIE*, it's going to get confusing otherwise. Also, "dice" can be used as both plural and singular now. Dictionaries have changed since the 1980s.

Dictator: A Paragon class who can manipulate other characters' emotions with their magical voice. Their class dice is a D4.

DIE: The game you're holding. Written in all capitals. Separate from...

Die: The planet where all the games are set. Or rather, the planet where the pocket dimensions where the games are set. See page 4 and 196-197.

Difficulty: When rolling to succeed in a task, a difficulty may be set. This is the number of successes rolled in a dice pool that are removed before whether success or failure is determined.

Emotion Knight: A Paragon class whose special ability is powered by a single emotion. Their class dice is a D8.

Encounter: Whatever is happening in a game right now. When the characters stop doing what they're doing and start doing something different? The encounter is over, and the next encounter has begun.

Fair, The: Techno-magical elves who provide the Neo with their gifts and act as multiversal judges of all Die's dimension.

Fair Gold: Magical coins used by the Neo to power their gifts. They disappear every dawn.

Fallen, The: Techno-monstrous creatures common to all realms of Die, taking multiple forms. They have a dark secret. See page 188.

Fool: A Paragon class who has superhuman luck as long as they act in a carefree or careless fashion. Their class dice is a D6.

Gamemaster (GM): The name for the player who is facilitating the game.

Godbinder: A Paragon class who barter with gods to create miracles. Their class dice is a D12.

Guard: A measure of a character's ability to avoid damage. It starts equal to a character's Dexterity and is depleted when hit.

Health: A measure of a character's ability to withstand damage. It starts equal to a character's Constitution and reduced when hit. When it reaches zero, life becomes difficult.

Hit: When attacking, each success causes a hit. A hit is taken from Guard until it's depleted, and then Health.

Master: A Paragon class who manipulates and breaks the rules of the game to create magical effects. Their class dice is a D20.

Neo: A Paragon class who has techno-magical gifts which require activation with Fair Gold every day to work. Their class dice is a D10.

Paragon: The six types of adventurers a Persona can be transformed to when they are transported to Die, each who is identified with one of the six classical RPG dice.

Persona: The real-world person that each player—including the GM—plays.

Success: A success is a result of 4 or higher on any dice.

Special: An ability which is activated by rolling a 6 or higher on any dice.

Statistic (Stat): A numeric ability which defines a character's capabilities in the world of Die. 2 is average. Anything more is great. There are six:

STATISTICS

Strength: Measures a character's physical prowess and brute force.

Dexterity: Measures a character's nimbleness, skill and avoiding being hit.

Constitution: Measures a character's ability to not just keel over and die.

Wisdom: Measures a character's understanding of the world.

Intelligence: Measures a character's knowledge and technical skill.

Charisma: Measures a character's personal skills.

Willpower: A measure of a character's ability to resist emotional manipulation. It starts equal to a character's Wisdom plus their Intelligence.

Wound: A hit which reduces Health is called a Wound.

SPOILERS
(FOR THE *DIE* COMIC,
AND FOR PLAYERS)

THE SETTING

ADJACENT TO OUR WORLD IS ANOTHER. IT'S A SENTIENT WORLD, A WORLD FULL OF WORLDS, AN IMAGINATION PARASITE, AN AMORAL GOD AT THE END OF TIME.

It's called Die.

It's a planet-sized, 20-sided polyhedron consisting of 20 equal-sized triangular planes. It tumbles randomly, though does not move. Despite this, gravity appears to operate as it would on Earth. It is fun to be a physicist in the world of Die.

Each of its twenty realms is shaped by a **Master**, each a warped mirror of an element which was consumed by role-playing games. From Eternal Prussia to Little England to the Confederation of Angria, wars are waged and peaces endured between these parties. Above all, watching and judging, are **the Fair**, multidimensional judges who can be thought of as Elves as designed by William Gibson. Emerging from the ground are **the Fallen**, lurching machine-monsters, like orcs auditioning to play a part in *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*.

The Fallen have a secret.

Beneath the nightmare Realm of Thirteen, there are endless caverns filled to the brim with translucent eggs. Inside each of these eggs is another world. There's an egg for every single game of *DIE* that'll ever be played, created when those people sat down together and dreamed up a set of other lives.

All games of *DIE* happen inside these eggs. Yours will too.

Every time a character dies in one of these worlds, Die feeds on them. They can be resurrected inside those little worlds, it's true, but from each death a shade-carcass emerges as a Fallen. Every Fallen you meet in Die is someone who died in a game of *DIE*. They haunt the multiverse, trying to predate who's been dragged into the game. They're ghosts of the gamers' dreams left behind, longing, desperate and brainless...

This is why Die leads us to these fantasy worlds. It does it to feed.

But still: Die is an **amoral** god, not an **immoral** one.

We're lucky in some ways. It doesn't simply wish to murder us. It's more complicated. To feed, it must truly know us. The challenges that Die's worlds give its visitors are to determine who they are. It makes you an offer, and asks you "Is this what you want?" And then "What are you willing to do to get it?" Die does what it does, and sees what we do in response.

The visitors don't know this. Why would they? They have their own drama going on.

They're dragged to the game, likely by the player who will become the **Master** in their group. The soon-to-be Master believes the world will fulfil the fantasies that they never achieved in reality. A copy of the game fell into their hands, one way or another, and they gathered the group together, likely not even dreaming it would do anything other than pass an evening. The rules told them the people the game requires, or the selection criteria it demanded. Perhaps people you love. Perhaps people you hate. Perhaps some weird formula, mixing the general and the specific.

It's the people who Die thinks most interesting to play together.

They gather. They play. The game is a game, and all games are ritual.

The group closes their eyes. When they open them, they're in one of Die's little-worlds, soon transformed into one of the six dice-wielding **Paragons**. They have great power. There's a saying about great power. No, not the Spider-Man one. The corruption one.

The group can go home... if they all agree. Or stay... if they all agree.

What do they do?

And all the while, Die is watching, prodding, as if the laws of physics had a perverse sense of humour. Einstein was right—god doesn't play dice with the universe. Unfortunately, Die plays god with the universe.

All Die's games are set in these little egg worlds. You have complete freedom to define the world every single time you play *DIE*, in any way you choose. There's no limits to fantasy. Each one is its own hermetically-sealed world. Frankly, that's usually how many Masters prefer it. It's their little dream home, and they may not even notice as their dream home slides into a haunted house.


A FINAL THOUGHT

From your perspective, the games are all canon.

From Die's perspective, the games are all prey.



2. RULES



In *DIE*, players play characters on their version of Earth, known as Personas. Eventually, the Paragons enter Die and transform into their Paragons.

When the game is on Earth, there aren't really any rules. Things are handled with roleplaying and open conversation.

When the game enters the fantasy world, the following rules are used to determine what happens when any **character** tries to do something. A **character** is anyone inside the fantasy world, including the players' **Paragons**.

All characters have six main statistics (called *stats*), measuring how capable they are within a broad body of activity:

MAIN STATISTICS

Strength	Physical prowess. Overpowering people. Most melee activity.
Dexterity	Nimbleness and skill. Shooting, sneaking, delicate weapons.
Constitution	Your general health, fitness and ability to not keel over when impaled by a weapon.
Wisdom	Your understanding of the world. Your spirituality. Most things involving gods.
Intelligence	Specific knowledge. Wizardly activity and things involving computers.
Charisma	Persuasion, charm, and human-interactions. Most things involving yapping.

Stats are represented by a number between 0 and 4. The average person's stats score is 2. A stat of 3 is on par with the most competent people on Earth in this area. A stat of 4 is significantly better than **anyone** on Earth. Someone with Dexterity 4 can perform gymnastics at the level of an Olympian without any training whatsoever. A stat of 5 is beyond a human.



Characters also have four defensive stats used to determine a character's survival in hostile situations. They are derived from the main stats and modified by equipment.

DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

Guard	A measure of a character's ability to avoid damage. It starts equal to a character's Dexterity and is depleted when hit.
Health	A measure of a character's ability to withstand damage. It starts equal to a character's Constitution and is reduced when hit. When your Health reaches zero, you fall unconscious and die.
Willpower	A measure of a character's ability to resist emotional manipulation. It starts equal to a character's Wisdom plus their Intelligence.
Defence	is how difficult it is to hit a character. It is not derived from the other stats, and is defined separately. It is equal to "0" unless stated otherwise.

WHEN A CHARACTER DOES SOMETHING...

Check if any of these things apply.

1. If there's no significant chance of it not happening, it happens. This covers the vast majority of things.

| *For example, a character walks across the room. Climbs a ladder. Drinks a drink.*

2. If the action is absolutely impossible in the established fiction, it doesn't happen.

| *For example, a character cannot eat the door to their prison cell in a single mouthful and escape.*

3. If a skilled individual brings those skills to bear on a task in a situation with little immediate pressure and little interest in failure, it happens.

| *For example, a Neo is trying to hack open an electronic door. There is no need to roll. If they were trying to get the door open as Fallen rush towards them may be different...*

4. If it is a Paragon's ability which uses its own set of rules, follow the instructions on the Paragon's sheet.

| *For example, a Neo is overcharging their teleporter to try and teleport to the moon. This uses the Neo's rules for overcharge.*

If none of the above apply, you turn to the **Core Mechanic**. It works like so...

This is the core mechanic as its most basic, which can be made more sophisticated in a bunch of ways. Determining the level of success, failing forward, specific rewards for each success and lots more. Take a look at Extra Mechanics For The Dice Rolls on page 15 for things you can do. Some of these—like critical fail—are used in some class abilities.

THE CORE MECHANIC

IN SHORT

- Collect a number of dice equal to the statistic most relevant to the task at hand.
- Any advantages? Add a dice for each. Any disadvantages? Remove a dice for each.
- Roll. Each dice showing a 4 or higher is a success.
- If the GM has set a difficulty for the task, remove that number of successes.
- If any successes remain, you succeed.
- If any remaining dice is a 6+, each can also be used to activate any relevant **Special** ability.

IN DETAIL



1. **Determine Difficulty:** The gamemaster (GM) determines and announces difficulty. Most tasks are difficulty 0. Tasks that would stretch the limit of mundane human capabilities are difficulty 1. Tasks that exceed the limit of mundane human capabilities but are just possible are difficulty 2.
2. **Gather Dice:** The player gathers D6 equal to their most relevant stat, creating a dice pool. For example, a player with a Dexterity score of 2 would gather two six-sided dice. Some class abilities allow players to add their class dice to the pool as well.
3. **Advantages:** GM decides if any advantages are present in the situation, like tactical positioning, good equipment or an apt witticism. Each advantage adds one dice to the pool.
4. **Disadvantages:** GM decides if any disadvantages are present in the situation, like being outnumbered, poor light conditions, or thinking about your loved ones missing you at home. Each disadvantage subtracts one dice from the pool. If the resulting dice pool would include no dice, roll two dice and pick the lowest. If the character is able to add a class dice to a pool, they may include their class dice instead of one of the two dice.
5. **Roll:** The player rolls the dice pool. Each dice that show a 4 or more are successes.
6. **Apply Difficulty:** The player cancels successes of their choice from the rolled dice pool equal to the task's difficulty.
7. **Determine Results:** If any successes remain, the player is successful. Any remaining dice that show 6 or more each can also activate an additional effect, called a **Special**.



SPECIALS

As well as counting as a success, each 6+ in a dice pool can also be used to activate any relevant **Special**. In any given roll, each individual Special can only be activated once on the same target. Specials are most commonly granted by a character's class and weapon choices.

A Special takes the following form...

Special: you gain one Guard.

In this case, if the Special is activated with a 6+ whoever rolled the dice pool gains one Guard. If they rolled two 6+, they'd still only gain one Guard, as a Special can only be used once on the same target.

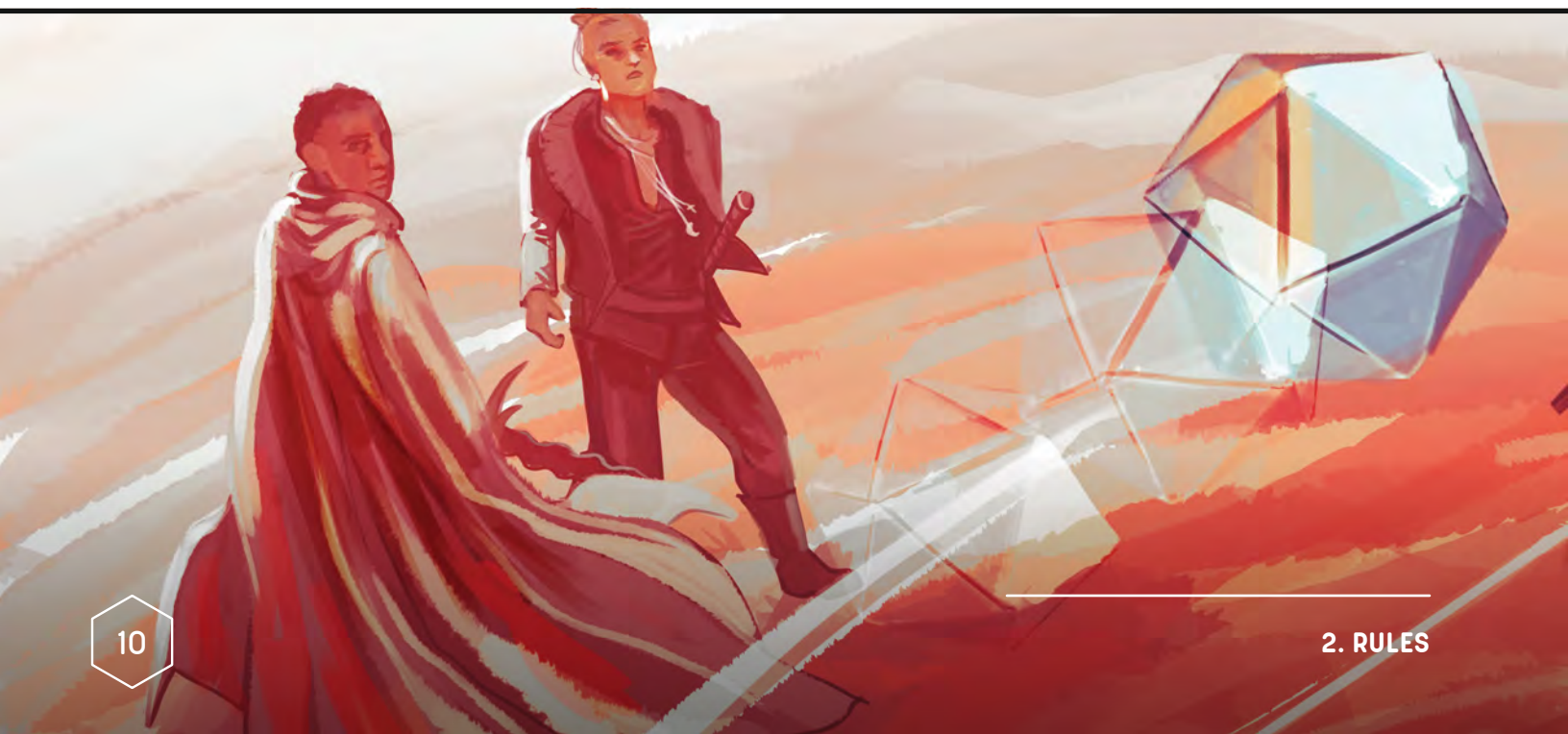
Some Specials require two, three, or four rolls of 6 or more to activate. These are called Double, Triple and Quad Specials, respectively. A 20-Special only appears on the Master, and is only triggered by rolling a 20 on their D20.

Some Specials are described as **mandatory**. This means if you roll enough 6+ to activate the Mandatory Special, you must pick it before picking anything else. If you have multiple Mandatory Specials, the GM chooses the order they activate.

REAL-WORLD FLASHBACKS

A real-world flashback is when a player recalls an event in the real world to provide insight or motivation into a current problem. Flashbacks are part of the fiction and reveal something new about the Persona.

Each player can use a flashback once per session to get an advantage on any task.



GUARD AND HEALTH

Characters have two defensive stats which are depleted as they take damage:

- **Guard** represents your footing, awareness, and ability to stay out of the way of damage. Characters start the game with Guard equal to their Dexterity score. Guard is reset to this score at the start of every combat. Guard is only used in combat, when fighting an opponent.
- **Health** is your ability to suffer physical harm, stay in the fight and not keel over and stop breathing. Characters start the game with Health equal to their Constitution score. If your Constitution increases or decreases at any point in the game, your Health changes alongside it.

Neither Health nor Guard can go beneath zero, or above its starting value. If Health ever reaches zero, a character passes out. If they are not healed or otherwise stabilised by the end of the combat, they die. If a character ever has negative Health, they die.

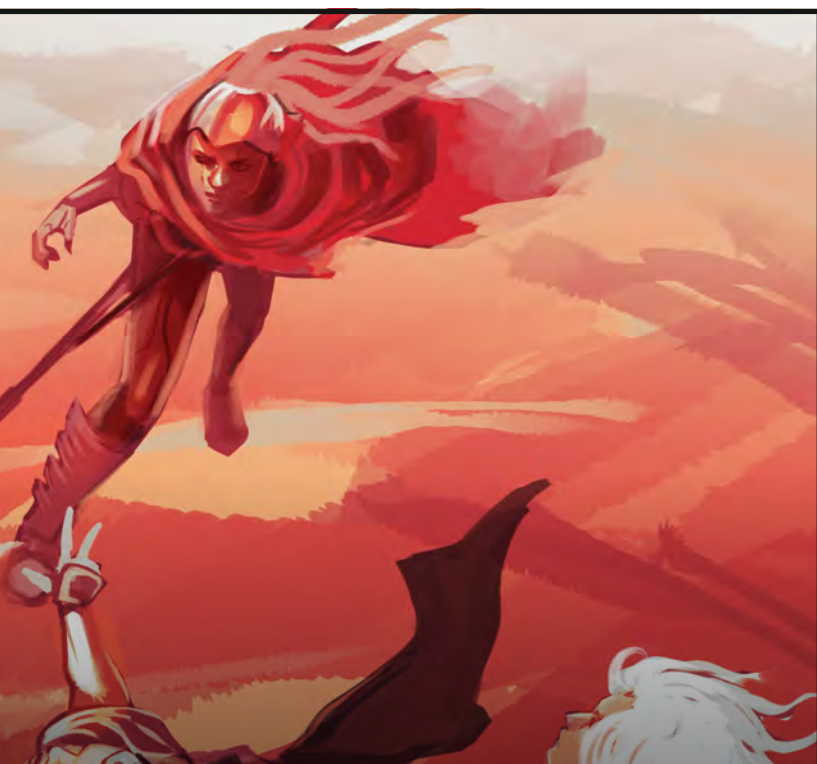
Death for a Persona is not the end of the game, as a player will find out.

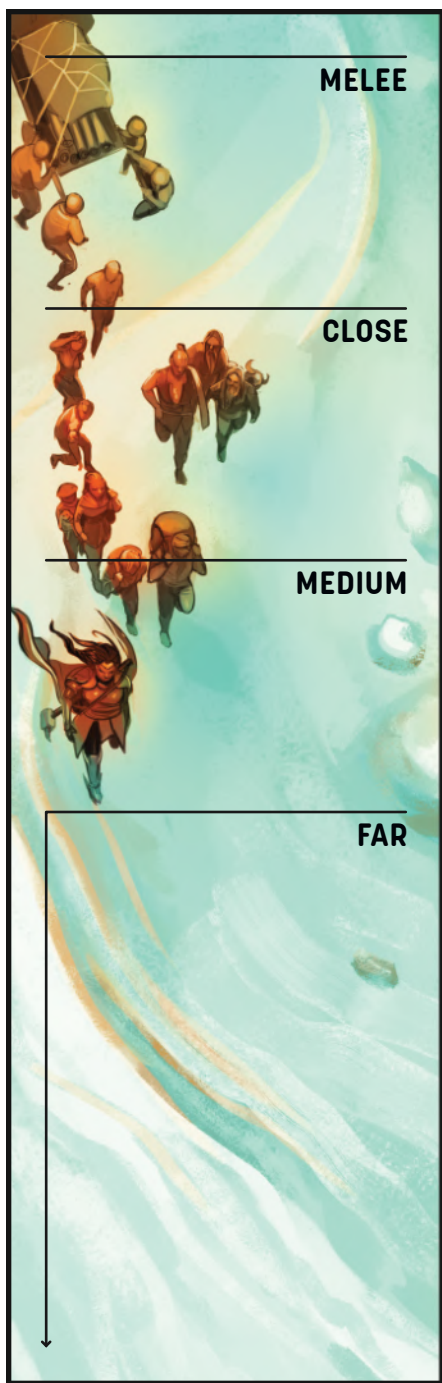
There are more rules on this on page 120.

COMBAT

When combat begins...

1. Reset Guard for all characters.
2. Characters begin taking turns, going from highest to lowest Dexterity.
3. If characters have the same Dexterity, alternate between Persona and GM-controlled characters who have yet to act, in an order chosen by the GM. See the sidebar for specific guidance on this.
4. Once all characters have taken a turn, start again.
5. Combat is over when all relevant players agree it's over. If someone is still swinging and wants to be swinging, it's not over.





HOW DO YOU CHOOSE WHO GOES NEXT?

Here's a checklist:

1. Who is the player who is most immediately linked to the narrative situation? They act now. While the GM has final call, the GM may seek the player's input on this.
2. Who is the GM-controlled character who is most immediately linked to the narrative situation? They act now.
3. If there's no more players or GM-controlled characters in the group, just skip back to the other side.
4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until there's no more characters who share the same Dexterity, then progress to the next group.

YOUR TURN

During a character's turn, they can move and make an action.

MOVEMENT

A move can be before, after or during the action. *DIE* uses broad, relative systems to describe how close people are on. A move lets you move between one range band and the next. Here's the range categories...

MELEE	You're adjacent to one another, close enough to attack with hand-held weapons.
CLOSE	You can throw a weapon to hit someone at this range. You could move and then attack them.
MEDIUM	You'd have to use a weapon of some kind to shoot this far. You'd have to use your whole action and move to close range.
FAR	You couldn't shoot accurately at this range, unless you were some kind of sniper. You'll have to spend at least one turn to move to medium range.

If a player wants to go further, they can spend their action to move again.

One can choose to delay their action or movement until later in the turn, or if someone else does a specific event ("I'll guard this door and attack anyone who comes through")



ACTION

An action is anything you can do under pressure in combat like climbing a wall, picking a lock, casting a spell and more. One common action is an attack.

ATTACK

Attacks use the core mechanic: determine difficulty, assemble a dice pool and count successes.

◆ Determine Difficulty

Difficulty is equal to the target's Defence.

◆ Assemble Dice Pool

- ◆ For melee attacks, use Strength to build your dice pool.
- ◆ For ranged attacks, Dexterity.
- ◆ Spellcasting will be Intelligence, Wisdom or rarely Charisma, depending on the character. Wisdom is for Godbinders, Intelligence for Masters, Charisma for Fools.

◆ Count Successes and Hits

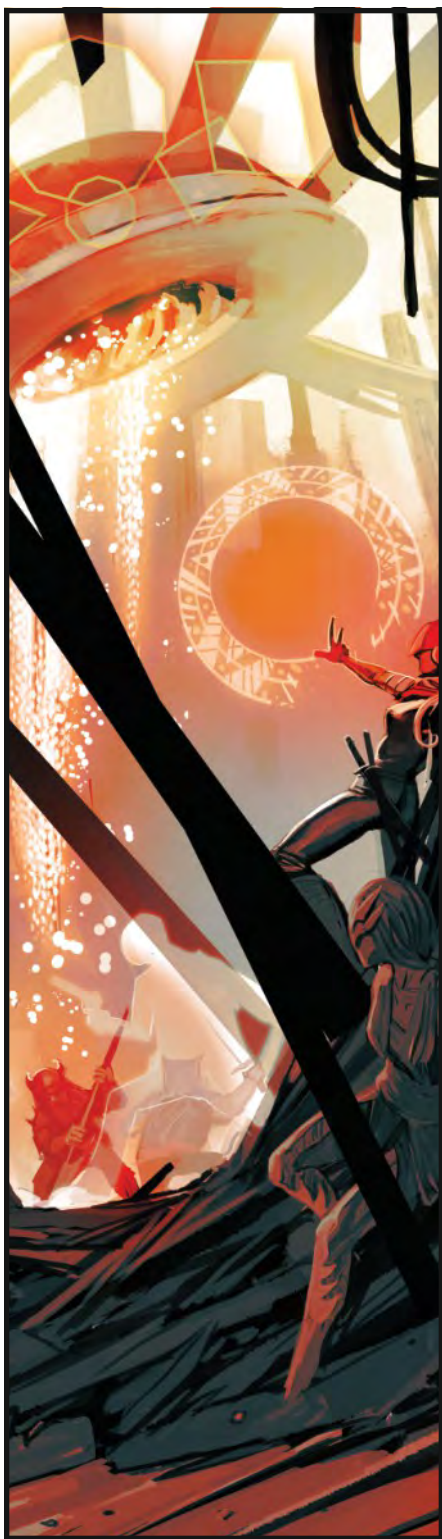
Each dice that's a four or higher is a success. Subtract the difficulty from the successes to get the number of hits.

If a character rolls zero successes when attacking someone, and someone could possibly attack them, the attacking character suffers a hit.

If a character has no successes after difficulty cancelled them, the next attack on that target gains an advantage, due to having to concentrate on fending off the last attack. The GM can alternatively decide it provides another small, in-fiction boon.

◆ Dealing Damage

If the target has any Guard, each hit removes one Guard. If the target has no Guard, it removes one Health. Any hit which removes Health is called a Wound.



UNUSUAL CASES

◆ Multiple Targets

If an attack affects all individuals in an area, roll a single dice pool and apply the number successes rolled to each target in the area individually. Each individual subtracts their own Defence to the total to discover the number of hits they suffer. However, each Special rolled in the original dice pool can only be used to activate a Special once to anyone in an area. For example, if you roll one 6+ and your attack would hit three people, you only get to activate a Special on one of them, not all three.

◆ Spell Attacks

For spell attacks, its dice pool serves double duty. First, you check if the spell is cast by comparing the number of successes against the spell's difficulty. Secondly, you take the dice pool's results, and apply them to its target as per any normal attack.

UNUSUAL ATTACKS

◆ Team Attacks

Characters can merge their attacks to perform a single team attack. Only characters that have not attacked this turn can participate. The team attack dice pool is equal to the highest stat in the group, with an advantage for every extra individual.

◆ Non-Lethal Attacks

To subdue or disarm a target without harming them, add a disadvantage to the dice pool. When a target's Health reaches zero, they're knocked out or otherwise incapacitated.

◆ Overflow Damage

If a player rolls excess successes after subduing a target, they may choose to move those successes onto another viable target. Before doing so, reduce the remaining successes by one, and then reduce any remaining successes by the Defence of the target and inflict damage.

◆ Attacking Multiple Opponents

To deliberately attack multiple opponents, add a disadvantage to the roll and then you can freely distribute the successes between their targets.

EXTRA MECHANICS

EXTRA MECHANICS FOR THE DICE POOL

If you want some additional approaches to interpreting the dice pool, consider the following options, especially if it speaks to the style of your group.

CRITICAL FAIL

If a dice pool has no successes and at least one of those dice is a 1, they critically fail—something has gone terribly amiss. The GM decides what the narrative demands. Contextual disadvantages, suffering damage or narrative mishaps are typical.

The Godbinder tries to join the dancefloor in the Rivendell-vs-Bridgerton world they find themselves. She rolls a critical fail. The scene is shocked by how clod-footed the Godbinder is. She suffers a disadvantage on all social rolls while at the party.

EXTRA SUCCESSES

If there are more than one successes remaining, they could be especially impactful, flamboyant or spectacular.

The Fool's decides to get on the dancefloor too. They roll a massive four successes. Everyone is so impressed by the Fool's moves that they start a hot new dance craze... and the Fool has attracted the Elf-Queen's attention.

FAILING FORWARD

If successes were rolled before being removed due to difficulty, the GM can rule it to be a success with a cost, a partial success, or success with a complication. This is a way to “fail forward”—an approach in RPGs that rather than stopping progress on an unsuccessful roll, it instead is used as a way to move the narrative forward in another way.

A **success with a cost** gives you the option of success, but with a cost. A **partial success** takes you partially there, meaning the task is easier next time. A **complication** is letting the player achieve their goal... but then having a new problem to deal with.

The Neo is trying to pick a lock. They roll a success, but the difficulty of the task is one, leaving no successes. The GM decides whether to give a cost a partial success or a complication...

A cost: The Neo can get the lock open... but it'll break their lockpick. They won't be able to pick any more locks for the adventure.

A partial success: The Neo has made progress on the job. If they try again, the difficulty of the task will be reduced by one.

A complication: The door opens... but the Neo makes a noise. They hear a guard coming to investigate...

If you use high difficulties, it's good practise to make near-misses less costly than near-fails. You can even use the fail forward rules if someone roll zero successes. Just make it a little more punishing, and keep the game moving.

MULTIPLE SUCCESS TARGETS

Rather than setting higher difficulties, the GM can instead set multiple thresholds of successes, with each getting a certain level of effect. A standard goal would be one success, a hard one two and a nearly impossible one three.

To talk the guard into letting the Fool through, she'll need three successes. If she gets one success or more, and the guard will let her in at a cost (a bribe, a favour, a dare)

SUCCESS REWARDS

You can specify effects which you gain for each success in the dice pool for a mechanical or narrative reward. The most common version of this is in combat, where each success equals a hit, but it can be used for a lot of other things...

When searching for clues, you can ask one question for each success you roll.

If you try to recover your footing in combat, roll your Dexterity pool. For each success, regain one Guard.

Effects don't have to be rewards, of course:

If you roll two successes, you avoid the fire trap. For every success short of that, you suffer a Wound.

ABSTRACTION

The core mechanic determines success or failure in a single roll. For some tasks, you may wish to assign a number of successes required, and allow multiple attempts (possibly by multiple characters). When the number is matched, the task is completed.

The Augean Stables are full of an enormous amount of dung. The GM sets a target of 8 successes to move the Herculean amount of poop. However each player does it, their resultant successes are removed from that total.

While you can play moment-to-moment, it's often worthwhile to zoom all the way out. Set a success total, ask each player how they're approaching the task, rolling their dice pool, then subtracting the number of the successes from the total.

For example, rather than navigating a dungeon, the GM sets a success total of six, then asks each player how they're trying to navigate it. When they reach six or more successes, they've reached their destination.

This can work well to simulate competition too.

The players have split into two sides and are leading armies. Each player describes their efforts and rolls dice. The success totals are compared to see who is victorious.

*This approach is very much informed by both clocks from games like **Blades in the Dark** by John Harper and the **Resistance System** by Rowan, Rook & Decard.*

SITUATIONAL SPECIALS

While most Specials are linked to a character's specific abilities, they don't have to be. Adding Specials in a specific situation as part of an adventure can add a lot of flavour, with them being activated by a 6+ success in any relevant dice pool.

When fighting on the narrow clifftop road, all attacks gain the **Special**: if this hit Wounds, the target is sent falling off the edge.

That's practical. They can also be tools for atmosphere.

When fighting in the Arena, all rolls gain **Special**: the crowd cheers appreciatively at your display of skill and **Double-Special**: a member of the crowd becomes a devoted fan of the character.

GETTING FANCY

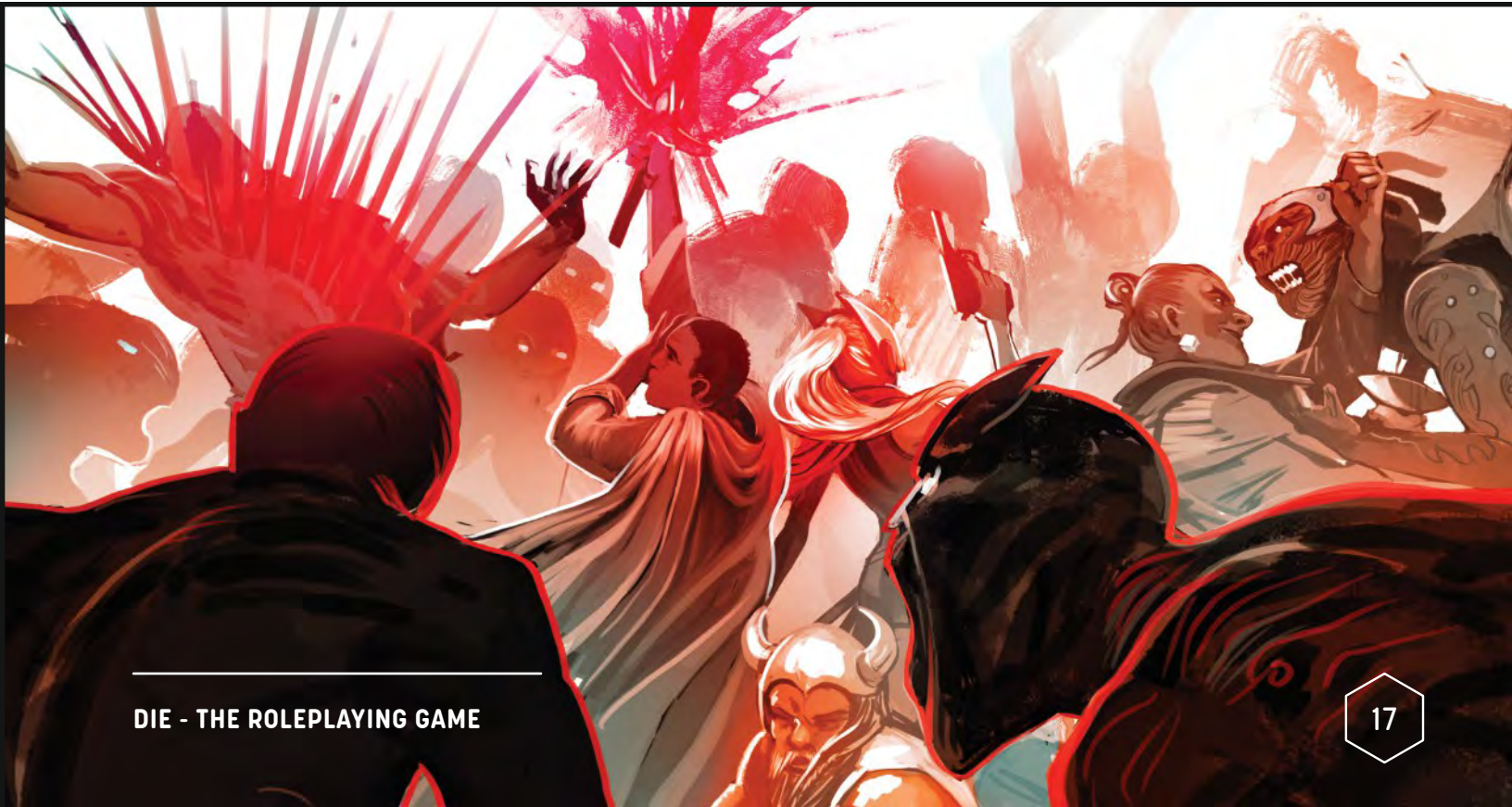
You can mash any or all techniques together and create something particularly ornate, and even codify it. Depending on the nature of your game, you may think something like the following could be useful:

When a Neo wants to hunt for Fair Gold at the start of the day, roll Intelligence:

- If you roll 1 success, you find a Fair Gold.
- For every further 2 successes, you find another Fair Gold.
- If you roll 0 successes, you find one Fair Gold, and suffer a Wound.
- If you roll a critical fail, you gain a Fair Gold, but also lead something nasty back to the group.

This roll has the **Special**: you find an extra gold.

For combining them, there's a lot more about this kind of stuff in DIE Campaign on page 253. This is very much inspired by the systems in Powered by the Apocalypse Games—first seen in Apocalypse World by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker.





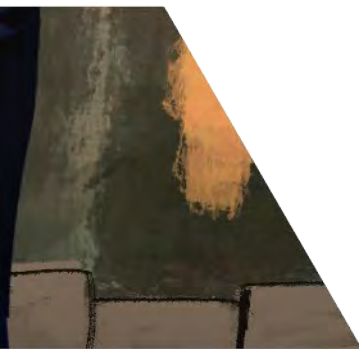
3.

PARAGONS



Shush! There's a player-version of the Master in the Appendix on page 351. Don't tell the judges of all reality.

When I run DIE, I let folks swap their abilities after the first session or two if they don't like them. This gives a chance to experiment, and gives them time to read the section before the next game and see what else is available. This could be explained at the table, or inside the fiction. Better to bend the story a little than leave a player wearing a pair of shoes that don't quite fit. Metaphorically.



The next five chapters each spotlight a different Paragon:

- **Dictators** are artistic diplomats who manipulate emotions with horrific magical words.
- **Fools** are swashbucklers, rushing into danger and relying on their supernatural luck to survive.
- **Emotion Knights** are warriors who feed one sacred emotion into their arcane, sentient weapons to devastating effect.
- **Neos** are techno-magical rogues, stealing the elusive Fair Gold to power their cybernetic gifts.
- **Godbinders** are clerics who prefer to make deals with their gods to get miracles.

The sixth Paragon, the reality-controlling game-magician **Master** is reserved for the GM.

Each consists of the following...

A PARAGON'S CORE ABILITIES

- The Paragon's name.
- The Paragon's class dice.
- A brief piece of text which describes the Paragon's core nature. It's designed to be read aloud to introduce the archetype to the group during character generation.
- Reasons why someone would want to play each Paragon.
- How to define their starting statistics, and which statistics are key to each class.
- Their equipment. Depending on the Paragon, it's a mixture of specific items and choices from lists. It will define their basic Defence score.
- Suggested looks for them—though each player gets to define their appearance in any way they wish.
- A description of the core abilities of each class, including their specific rules. Each Paragon has significant bespoke rules for their own unique nature.

A PARAGON'S ADVANCEMENT OPTIONS

We show many options of characters, many of which can be selected as they advance levels. It also includes an Advancement Map to tell you which order you can pick these abilities.

QUICK ADVANCEMENT

It's a classical convention in RPGs that characters get more powerful the longer they're in the game. *DIE* is written to work entirely well without any character advancement at all. For a one-off scenario, characters have plenty of toys to have fun with.

DIE, as presented in Chapter 4: Rituals, runs in 2-4 sessions, and isn't really suited for the full *DIE* Campaign advancement. If players are hungry for more abilities, you can add advancement to a short-form game of *DIE* like so:

When your players have achieved a major goal, the Paragon's dice burst into life and they gain new abilities. As the Paragons are overcoming their struggles, their dice are attuning themselves to their owners, and vice versa. This is a levelling-up moment.

Each player gets to make a new choice on their sheet:

CLASS ADVANCEMENTS

DICTATOR	Choose an additional emotion.
FOOL	Choose an ability from the Trip To Clown School list.
EMOTION KNIGHT	Choose an additional venting ability or stance.
NEO	Choose an additional gift.
GODBINDER	Choose an additional god.
PLAYSER MASTER	Choose an additional rule.

Unless you're playing more than 2-4 sessions, one advancement will likely satisfy players' urge to have another toy.

FULL ADVANCEMENT

The more a character explores a realm of *Die*, the greater they attune with their dice and the greater the abilities they gain. They grow from the lowly ranks of mighty heroes to the exalted state of absolutely petrifying titans that bstride the planet.

Characters start at level 1 and max out at level 20. In reality, even in a long campaign, it's unlikely you'll ever hit level 20. *DIE*'s advancement system is about choices rather than *Pokémon*-esque collecting-them-all. The abilities you don't pick are as important as the ones you do. The characters in *DIE* the comic are around level 10-14. That's about as long as any *DIE* campaign should last.

This raises a fundamental question for any individual game of *DIE*.

When do you advance?

DIE CAMPAIGN ADVANCEMENT

In the DIE Campaign structure (as described in Chapter 9), the world has 20 regions. Everyone advances and levels up when they master one of these region. Mastering a region can mean several things, but is most likely completing a major adventure in it. Early on, you can advance relatively quickly as you explore the map, but the further you go in, the less new regions you explore, and advancement slows.

DIE Campaign advancement is in full explained in Chapter 9: DIE Campaign.



PLAYING IN A WORLD WITHOUT 20 REGIONS

Ask the group these questions at the end of the session.

- Did you defeat, neutralise or befriend a major foe?
- Did you complete a major adventure in a new locale?
- Did any of the group reach a major emotional moment of truth and understanding of their Persona?
- Did the group uncover something they have been striving to know?

If all the group—including the GM—agree that any of these questions are true, **all** the Paragons advance, including the Antagonist. The dice tie everyone together.

ADVANCING A LEVEL

When a Paragon levels up, the following happens...

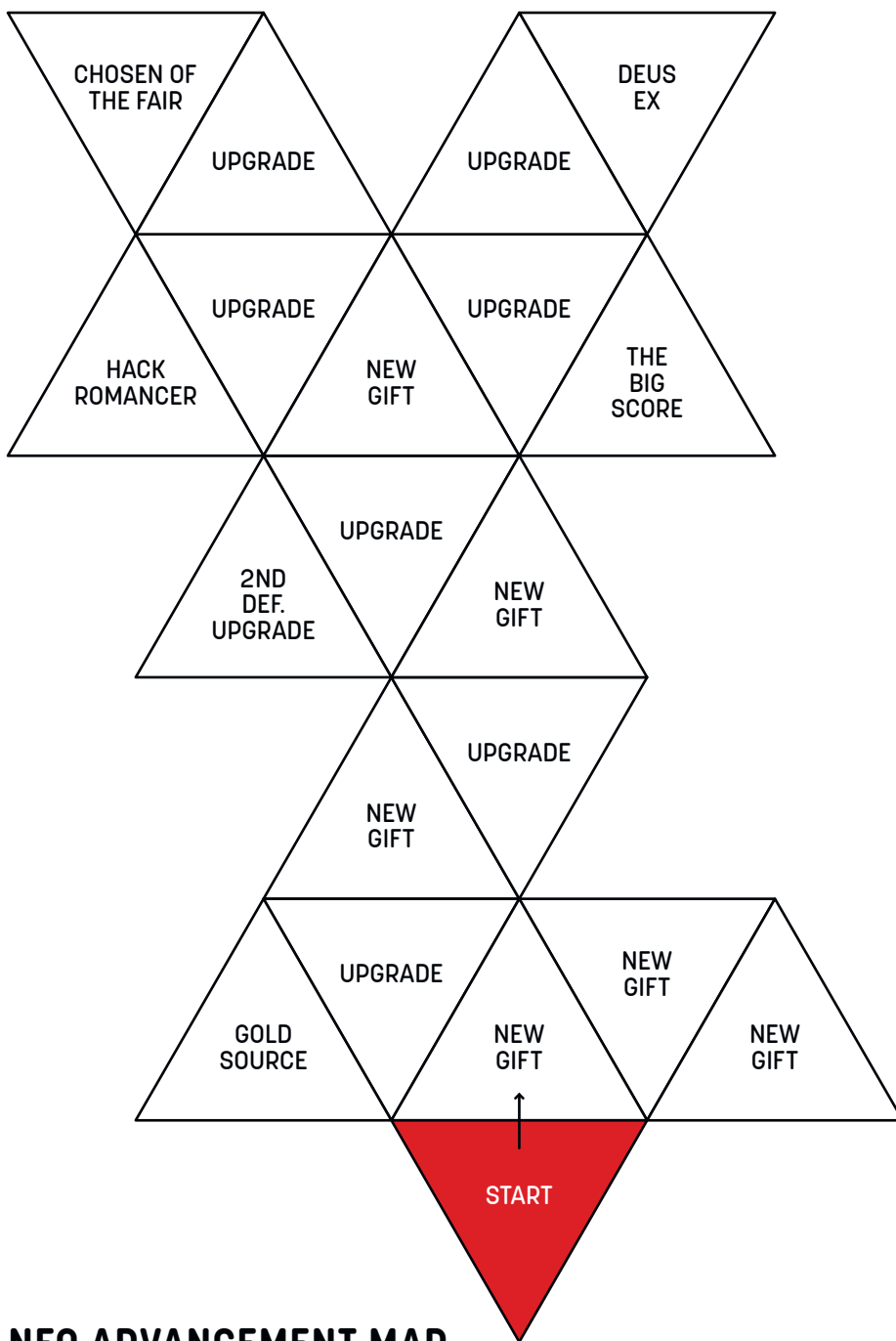
1. Pick an option from your advancement map.
2. On level 3, 6, 9 and 12, add a point to any stat. You can't advance a stat past 4.
3. When you reach a level equal to the number of sides of your class dice, you get a special additional advance. This is the class dice advance.

ADVANCEMENT MAP

Each Paragon has an advancement map. In each Paragon's chapter, you will find an advancement map. This is a diagram which shows all the abilities which a Paragon can select as they increase in power, and shows the order one can pick them in. It takes the shape of an unfolded map of a D20.

An advancement map would look like this (see the following page)...





NEO ADVANCEMENT MAP

Gain one level in a stat (max 4) on each of the following:

Level 3

Level 6

Level 9

Level 12

At Level 10: An Interesting Decision

Everyone starts with the bottommost triangle filled in. Every time you advance, pick a region that shares a side with an already-filled-in region. Claim the reward and fill in the region. Rewards are detailed in each Paragon's chapter.

For example, these are both valid paths for a level 8 character. In the first diagram (Fig. 1), we see all the bottom triangles are filled in, all of which are adjacent to another region. The second diagram (Fig. 2) snakes up the map, but every triangle has an adjacent side to at least one triangle that's been filled in.

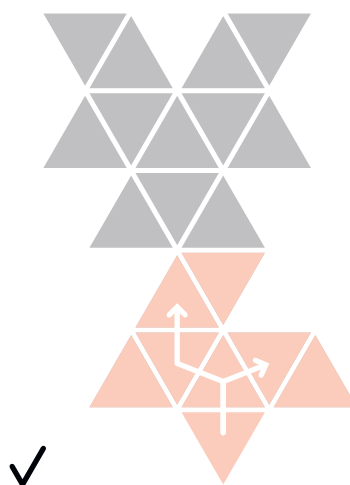


Fig. 1

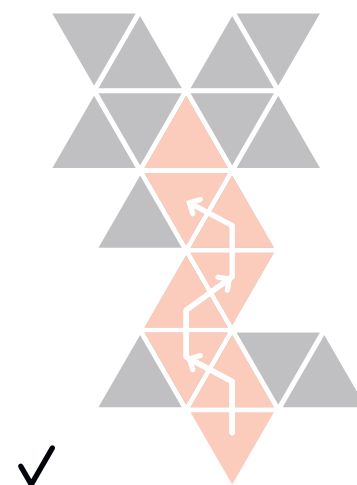


Fig. 2

However, this would not be. While some triangles are adjacent on a side, some triangles only share a tip (Fig. 3).

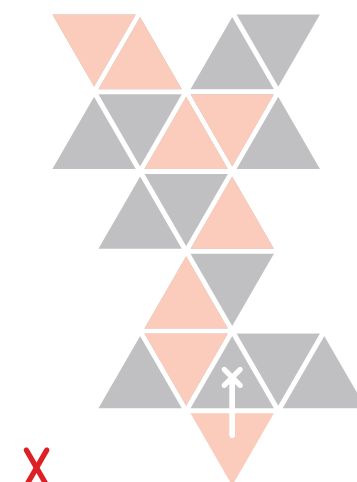


Fig. 3

If you're running a shorter campaign or decide to push to a big climax sooner, try using accelerated advancement. Rather than options from the advancement map that have sides touching, instead allow any options which are touching at any point—even the tips. If you want a really sudden climax, allow a free-choice of any triangle from the advancement map.



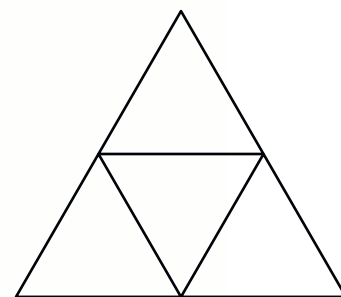
PLANNING YOUR ADVANCEMENT CHOICES

Don't be secretive about the advancements you're planning to take. Many advancements involve interacting with the group and adding to the fiction in major ways. If a player tells the group the direction they're heading, this can be more easily integrated as an element. If your ability is going to let you take over a kingdom in a couple levels, don't be shy about it. That would make a great climax to an adventure!

Advancement is both a reward and a narrative goal. It tells the group what sort of things you want to see in the world.



DICTATOR



You read a sad story. You cry. Do you think that's sinister, as if someone has artificially taken over your emotions? Of course not. That's just what art is.

Anyone who's ever met a Dictator would disagree.

By performing, they alter other people's emotional states. Dictators play people like a musician plays a harp. They can pluck the strings. They can snap them.

They're like bards, if everyone was fucking petrified of bards.

PLAY A DICTATOR IF YOU WANT TO...

- Be an artist whose performances warp others' emotions, and even create magical effects.
- Use your imagination and creativity to work out exactly what your awful gift can do.
- Be hated and feared for very good reasons.

THE DICTATOR AND CONSENT

The Dictator's voice must never be used to take consent away from players. Every DIE game starts with Preparing The Magic Circle (page 110) which includes a stage where the group delineates what the Dictator can or can't do, and whether Dictators will even be in the game. No matter what's decided, Dictators should use the safety tools (page 142), get consent from all players and check in frequently throughout play.

Who are the Dictators? They're people who get by with their mouths and wits. They're all artists, or at least consider themselves artists—but there are many kinds of artists. As well as bards and storytellers, they can be officers and spies, diplomats and courtesans, social butterflies and assassins. You can find inspiration for your Dictator from everyone from Grima Wormtongue whispering in the ear of Theodon, Scheherazade whispering in the ear of Sultan Shahryar to Talleyrand whispering in the ears of any monarch with an ear in Europe.

Dictator can be played like a hammer, creating obedient servants, but that's only part of them. They are artists. This is tricky. Other classes have abilities which firmly state what they can do. Dictators have to work out their limits. There's a different version of this manual where there's specific abilities to make someone so afraid of reality they create a portal to another world, or their body is so disgusted at injuries it heals instantly in response. Instead, the game gives you this open-ended toolset of emotions and ideas. The dictator is about being an artist. Following a checklist is the opposite of being an artist. Don't worry—you'll kill it. Also, people, but you can't have everything.

DICTATOR CREATION

STATS

All stats start at 2. You have 2 points to increase any stat(s) you wish. Dictators benefit from a high Charisma score.

EQUIPMENT

Choose one of the following options:

- ◆ A rapier (Use Dexterity instead of Strength for its dice pool. **Special:** recover one Guard.)
- ◆ A dagger and a ranged weapon (bow, pistol or something else)
- ◆ Magical death touch (May use Dexterity instead of Strength for its dice pool. This weapon is concealed and cannot be taken from you.)

YOUR LOOK

You are wearing (Defence 0):

- ◆ Austere, severe angular outfits
- ◆ Flamboyant, straight out of a stage show
- ◆ Spectacular eveningwear
- ◆ Something else

SELECT YOUR EMOTIONAL PALETTE

Every artist has their favourite themes. As a Dictator, you play with emotions and wrap them to your will. Choose a spoke from the Emotion Wheel (page opposite) to be your focus: these are the emotions you manipulate.

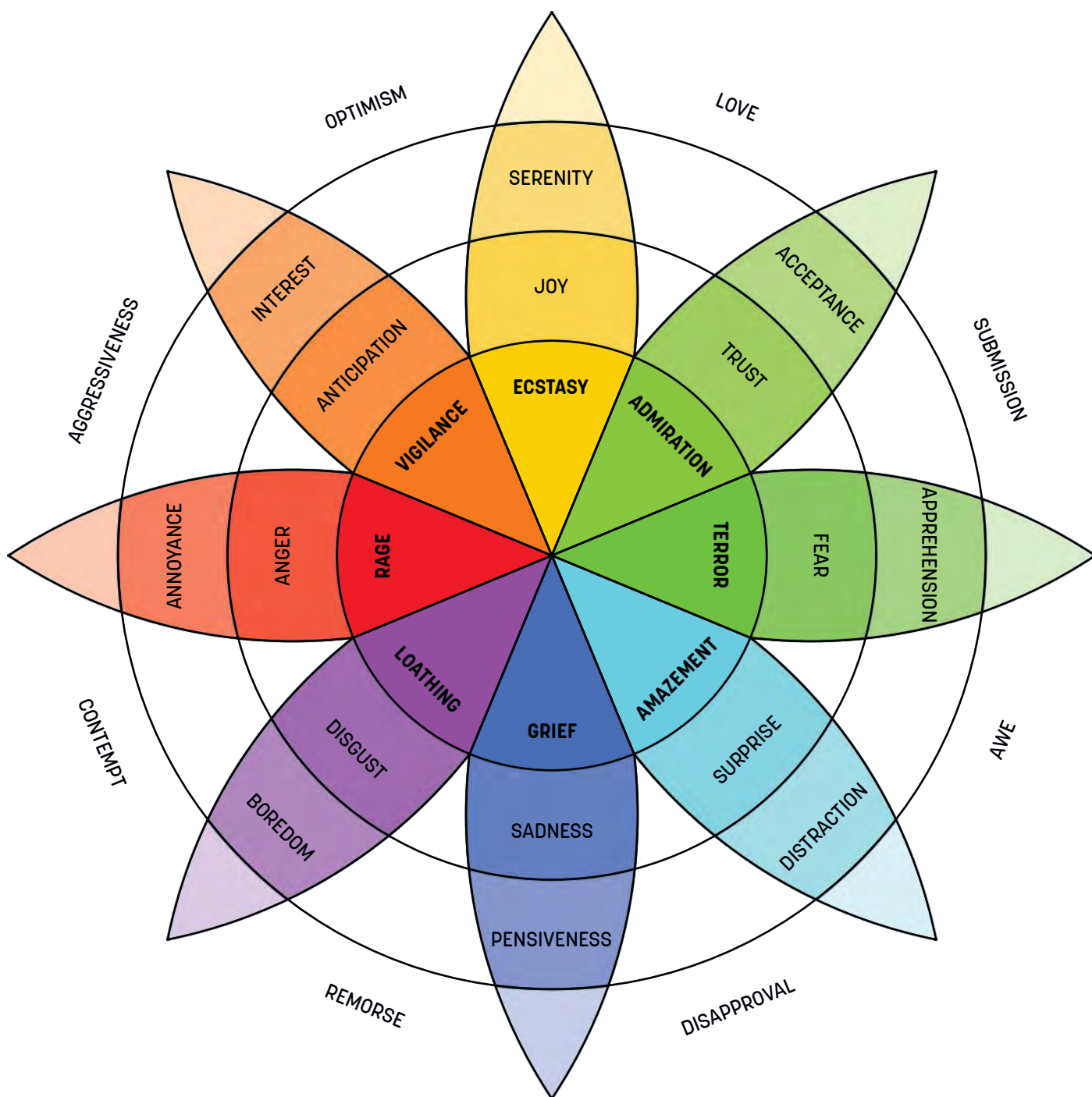
The *DIE*'s emotion wheel is based on Robert Plutchik's theory of emotion, which theorised there were eight primary emotions and all other emotions were formed by increasing or decreasing their intensity, or mixing them.

THE VOICE

✓The Voice is the Dictator's gift and it lets you issue commands with magical force. Emotions are tweaked, even to supernatural extremes. The Voice can easily make people cry with joy. It can make people cry so hard their face slowly melts away in impossible ecstasy.

When you control emotions, you merely speak commands aloud. This is your performance, your art. But something gives you away and people will realise you're a Dictator. What is it?

- ◆ Strange facial scars appear (possible to whisper, visibly obvious)
- ◆ Demonic, loud voice (impossible to whisper, not visibly obvious)
- ◆ Strange smells emerge from your mouth (not visible, scent lingers)
- ◆ Something else



PERFORMANCE

When hearing the Voice, the target knows what is happening. It just doesn't matter. Just because you know an emotion has been created doesn't mean it's any less of a real emotion—it's likely an emotion more powerful than the target has ever felt.

There are two main ways the Dictator can use the voice:

- ◆ **To control:** the voice is used to make characters perform actions, remove their agency and generally stop them making their own decisions.
- ◆ **To attack:** the voice is used to actively hurt someone—or to stop them hurting someone else.

You will decide in the Magic Circle Ritual (page 110) at the start of the game what will be possible, and who you'll be able to try to control or attack. The standard way to play *DIE* is that you can't use the voice to influence Personas but you can use the voice to attack them.

If you can use the voice to control your fellow Personas, you should still consult one another as players. In DIE, even if the Personas are fighting, the players are collaborating.

How do people respond when the Voice is removed and their normal emotion state returns? Broadly speaking: badly.

"Fear" and "me" could lead to someone running away from you. Or it could lead to their heart exploding in sheer terror. See the emotion scale later. But you're an artist, Dictator. You can be more imaginative. What could "fear" and "failure" do to someone? Only one way to find out.

Either way, to use the voice on another character, pick the emotion(s), say what you're saying and roll a Charisma dice pool including the D4. However, it is not calculated like normal. The number on the D4 indicates the number of successes. Each other success you roll in the dice pool allows you to modify that, with each success may be used to increase or decrease by one. The final number of successes is the intensity of the emotion, and used to determine the effect on the *Audience*.

Pass the D4 to a player whose character is being influenced by the Voice. If you want to use your powers on someone else, you must first reclaim the D4. You can do this instantly, and doing so ends that previous compulsion.

When trying to control, the Dictator is left to think of clever uses of their emotions—the useful formula is choosing an emotion and a target. Be aware that while the effect may be negative, it need not be.

When trying to attack, the Dictator merely has to say what emotion they're using and whether they're trying to kill or merely incapacitate.

CRITICAL FAILURE

If you roll a critical failure, you're unable to remove the emotional state. It's permanent. You've broken someone. Ignore the D4 when calculating whether something is a critical fail or not.

PERFORMING FOR MULTIPLE PEOPLE

If you're trying to perform for more than one person at once, remove a success from the pool for each extra person.

This scale of emotions is also used by the Emotion Knight. While both classes create different effects, they're dealing in the same fuel.

What does an attack look like? It depends on the emotion. If you were using Fear to attack to incapacitate, the target could pass out or fall to the floor, petrified and twitching. If you were using it to kill, a heart attack is possible or (if it's allowed in your lines and veils) even suicide.

Some characters have very high Willpower. This means they're extremely hard to take complete control of. However, in the narrative, they're still feeling the emotion, and also suffer the other penalties. A Willpower 8 character, suffering a level 7 emotion has 7 disadvantages and is resisting Difficulty 3 compulsions. That's not easy.

THE AUDIENCE

The target of the Voice is known as the Audience. The number of successes the Dictator rolls is how powerful the audience feels the emotion, as described below:

1	They feel it enough to influence them.
2	They feel it intensely. It's hard to do anything not related to it.
3	They feel it as intensely as most people ever feel it.
4	If we're talking love, more than you've ever loved your partner.
5	All-consuming obsession. Often the further reaches of madness.
6+	Supernaturally intense emotions beyond anything in reality. Will likely have miraculous effects.

If using the Voice to control, each level of effect will give a disadvantage on doing something against the compulsion. If the effect would help a task, they gain a single advantage for any number of levels. If the dictator was using their voice to attack the audience, the audience suffers this number of disadvantages when trying to attack anyone.

If you were using the voice to control, and the target's Willpower is not matched or exceeded, they will still act in accordance with your compulsion unless they resist with a Wisdom roll. The difficulty is the level of effect, halved and rounded down.

If the level exceeds a target's Willpower, they are absolutely overwhelmed. If your aim was to control them, they submit entirely to your compulsion. If you were attacking them, they are either killed or incapacitated, according to your wishes. Most characters have a Willpower of 4.

In terms of effect, anything 6+ is too much. Expect magical fireworks, and for your audience to die, whether that was your aim or not. Like all creators, while you can aim to have a certain effect on an audience, the audience will respond in their own way.

DUEL OF WORDS

If a Dictator is attacked by another Dictator, and is in a position to use the voice, they may instantly activate their voice in retaliation. Whoever creates the most powerful effect takes priority. If you generate the same number of successes, both results happen.

AN EMOTIONAL NUDGE

If a Dictator has possession of their D4, and is in a situation where any subtle emotional manipulation may give them an edge, they may roll the D4 as part of their dice pool. The D4, rather than counting as a dice, can be used to increase any one dice in the dice pool by the amount the D4 rolls. It's cute to put the D4 on top of the Dice you're boosting, like a little hat.

There's not much cute about your character, so enjoy it while it lasts.



DICTATOR ADVANCEMENT

AN ARTIST'S PROGRESS

This is the backbone for any Dictator, a slow growing mastery of their art.

Choose a new spoke from the Emotion Wheel; you can now use this emotion in your performances. You can even mix the emotions together to create more complicated effects. Also choose one of the following abilities.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

With experience, an artist gets to know what really works for a demographic. You may choose a group of which you are particularly good at manipulating with one of your emotions. With them, you can choose to re-roll your D4 after rolling. The group should be no more than 25% of the people you could meet. If the GM judges the group is small enough, you also gain an advantage when targeting them.

For example, a Dictator couldn't select "Men" as a group, at least in any world which had the gender diversity of Earth. They could select "Fallen" as a group. If they selected "Four-armed Fallen" that could be picked, and they'd gain an advantage for it too.

YOU, CHOIR

A Dictator's voice is a tool designed to speak to one person alone. With practise, some Dictators are better at raising their voice. Normally, a Dictator removes one success from their pool for every extra person they're trying to influence simultaneously. Now, you remove one less from your pool. At level 1 of this ability, 2 people can be targeted without increasing difficulty.

WE, CHOIR (PICK ONCE)

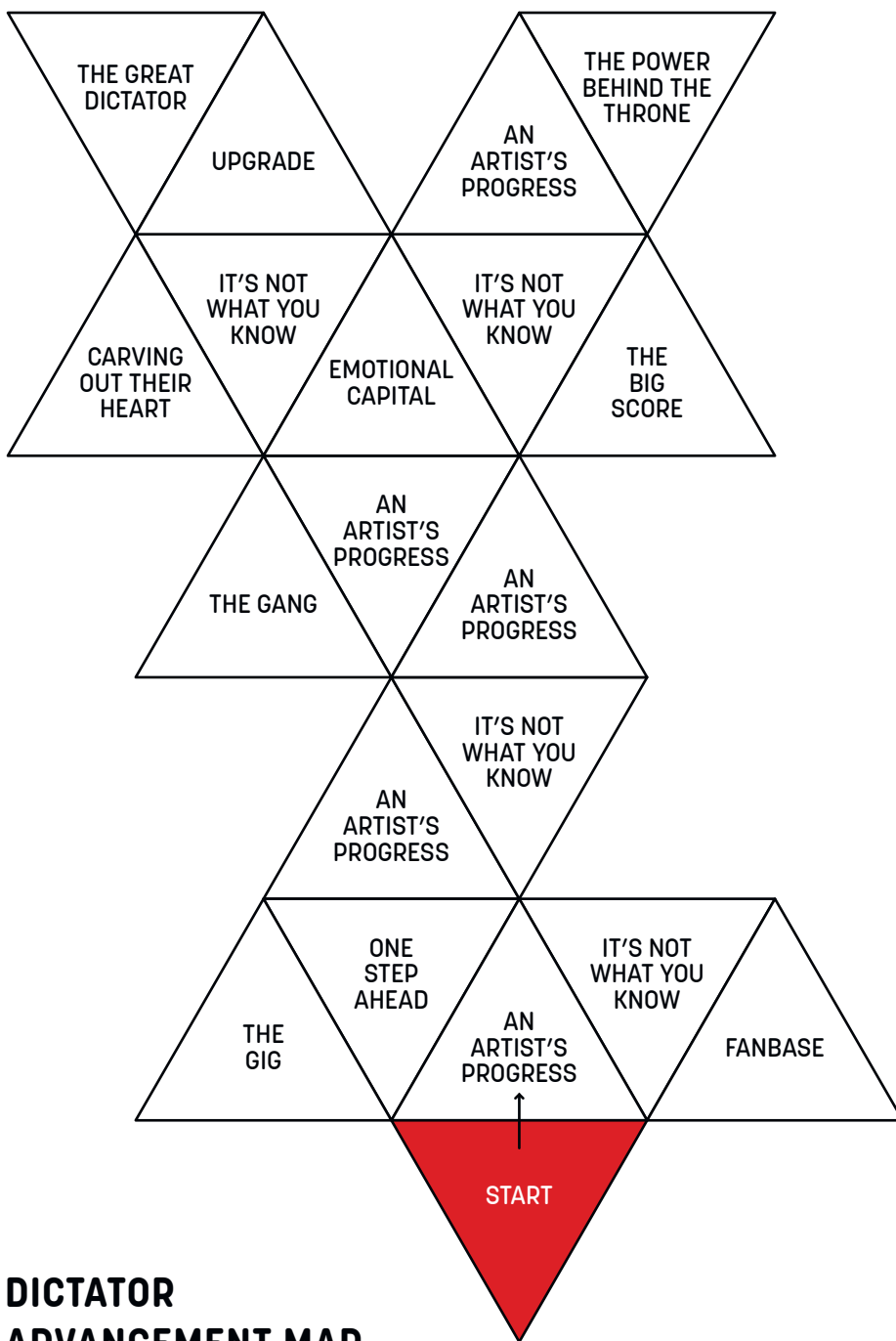
You've learned that it's always easier if an audience wants to go along with you. A Dictator can use their ability on any number of willing people. They still give up their dice as though they were using the Voice normally.

TELL, DON'T SHOW

The Dictator's tell is how their nature is revealed in the world. Bad news for the world: you've discovered a way to conceal it. Under certain circumstances, the Dictator's tell doesn't show. What are those circumstances? How did the Dictator realise there's a situation where they can use their ability with secrecy?

SIGNATURE PIECE

The Voice is magical, and creative... but there is a strength in the predictability of learning something by rote. You have a set performance that you can perform to speak a magical effect into existence. Choose a spell from the Starter Grimoire (370) with no more than 15 risk. Describe how you're able to use your selected emotions to make this magical effect. When you cast your spell, you roll your Charisma pool, and get to include your D4 as per An Emotional Nudge. You can't perform a signature piece unless you're in possession of your D4.



DICTATOR ADVANCEMENT MAP

Gain one level in a stat (max 4) on each of the following:

Level 3

Level 6

Level 9

Level 12

At Level 4: Tonight At The Witch Trials



IT'S NOT WHAT YOU KNOW

The Dictator is a contradiction—they are often loathed by society, but they are most powerful in society. The longer they operate, the more they're likely to create bonds born not just of their power—but their relationships.

You choose one of these abilities. Some can be picked multiple times, others once.

A WORKING ARTIST (PICK ONCE)

Dictators are useful to have around. Between adventures, the Dictator works to justify their existence, as defined in the Live at The Witch Trials ability. While you gain duties, you also gain favours.

Once per adventure, you can define who owes you a favour and what you did to earn it.

HENCHPERSON (PICK ONCE)

You have acquired someone as a loyal, highly skilled henchperson.

Choose one:

- ◆ They are bound to you via a critical fail emotion
- ◆ They are bound to you via a promise
- ◆ They are bound to you via a need you fulfill for them

Choose one:

- ◆ They resent their condition
- ◆ Their friends resent the henchperson's condition

Design them via the Secondary Characters rules (page 280, in DIE Campaign).

Henchpeople are less competent than the characters, so have one less character point.

If there's a suitable character you've met, they can fill this role.

If the henchperson is killed or otherwise lost, you can replace them between missions.

IMPROVE HENCHPERSON

If you have a Henchperson, choose:

- ◆ If they have less character points than the group, they add a character point
- ◆ Choose a new ability or skillset for the Henchperson from the Secondary Character Rules

AGENT

You have someone who gives your special information. Who are they? What sort of information can they provide? Once a session, you can use your agent to give you information about a situation.

Some classes have a one-a-session ability as a hard rule, like the Dictators, One Step Ahead. The once-a-session limitation here is more a rule of thumb. If there's a long break mid-session, ask the GM if this ability can be recharged.

How can the voice come into play? "I met the person, used the voice to make them tell me blackmail information, then freed them and used the blackmail information to make the plan work" is a pretty robust one.

To create supernatural effects on a performance, you need at least six successes. As such, the Gig ability is the best way to ensure you get the necessary kick to create something otherwise impossible.

ONE STEP AHEAD

Dictators are players, schemers and manipulators. Once a session, a Dictator can use this ability to explain when a pre-existing plan is going to come into effect, defined in a flashback scene.

The plan must be simple, with a single moving part: someone turns up to give aid, an escape route is prepared, a piece of important equipment secretly secured. Incorporate details from the world in your plan, or ask the GM for inspiration. Usually, the Voice comes into play at some point during the proceedings.

For example, Alistair's plan to escape from the hellish toybox has gone awry. The party are trapped on its roof, the clockwork killers inching closer. He uses his One Step Ahead ability, saying that when he was back in town, he used his Voice of joy to give the merchant a huge hit of pleasure... on the condition the merchant loaned him the whistle to summon the flock of flying horses. Alistair blows the whistle, and the cavalry swoops in...

Once the plan has been stated, roll your D4. If you roll a 1, the GM gets to add an extra cost to the plan. If you roll a 4, the GM gets to add a complication as things are too successful. No matter what, these events are now part of the fiction, and its consequences will have to be dealt with.

For example, if Alistair rolled a 1 above, Alistair had to agree to perform a future favour to the merchant as well. However, if they rolled a 4, the merchant could be so blown away by the experience of joy, he needs it again. Alistair has created a pleasure addict. Either way, our heroes are flying on Pegasi. Can they escape and return the horses?

THE GIG

If you have a captive target and sufficient time to prepare and perform a dramatic ritual as you go, change your D4 to a 4 on your performance roll.

Any time you use this ability, answer the following questions: what does it look like? Why is it creepy?

THE GANG

You have gathered a small group of acolytes who work to fulfill your plans. They can be anything from scribes to street urchins. They're not heroes, or awesome warriors, and no-one will have any stat above "normal" (in *DIE*, 2 is average) but they're still useful. Whoever they are, they hang on your every word even when you're not using the Voice.

Answer the following questions about your gang: who are they? Why do they serve you? What resources do they have?

FANBASE

Usually after a Dictator's voice is removed, the victim feels utterly aggrieved. With the Fanbase ability, your victims instead feel euphoric and grateful for the experience until they next sleep. After that, they start to long for you to use the voice on them again. Never forget: fan is derived from fanatic.



EMOTIONAL CAPITAL

Thanks to a complex web of contacts, the Dictator has enough influence in a major settlement where they can leverage almost complete control.

Any time you want the city to do something, describe which contact you use to achieve it, and the GM will tell you what you'll have to owe them. If you agree, the city acts like you choose. If a suitable contact already owes the Dictator, the GM can choose this to settle the score.

Alistair has been in the elven capital of Casablanca so long he's made it his Emotional Capital. There's a dream candy gang operating down at the sludge-docks, and Alistair wants to arrange for a police raid, and he calls on the police chief to do so. The police chief will want Alistair to help him win in gambling dens. Alistair is shocked, shocked he says, but agrees. The gang is raided.

In the Great Game, this can act as one faction (see page 282).

THE GREAT DICTATOR

The Dictator's ability is best at individuals. A rare dictator learns to handle a handful. Some learn to play to willing crowds. And then there's you, who've discovered something distinctly more sinister...

You can target any number of beings with Willpower 4 or less with their performance. The only limits now are the physical mechanics of your performance: are they within hearing range? The number of targets no longer affects the difficulty.

The second this ability becomes known to those in power, the Dictator loses the protection gained from the Live at The Witch Trials ability.

THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

You've played the political game long enough to become one of its supreme players.

You have complete control of a major part of one of the Great Powers. Describe how you've compromised it.

If there is not a suitable pre-existing power, a new power emerges—collaborate with the GM to define it.

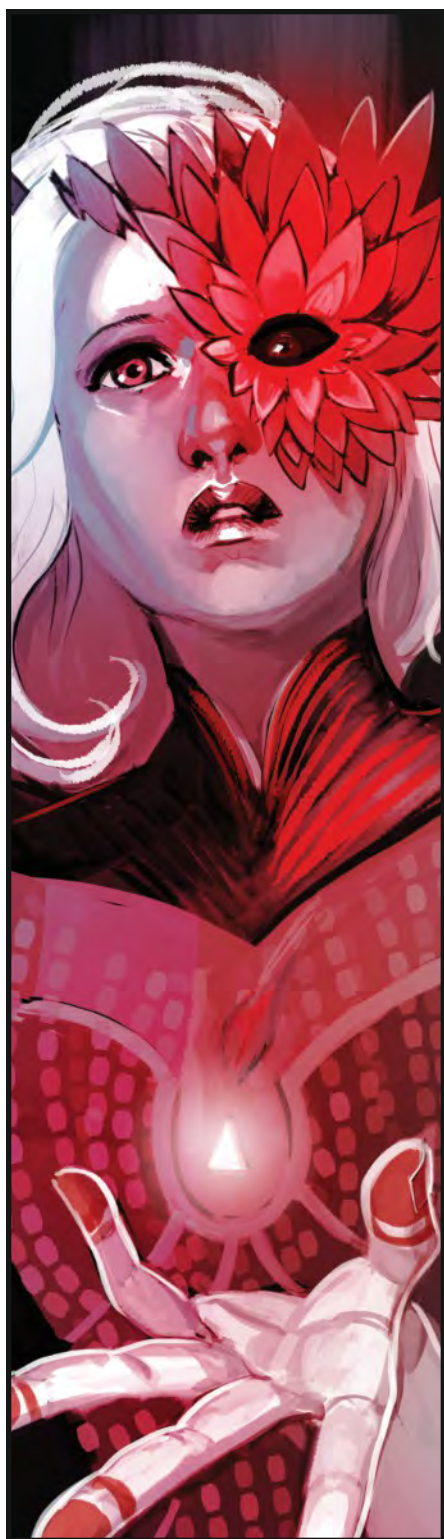
CARVING OUT THEIR HEART

The danger for any Dictator is losing control of their powers and permanently damaging their Audience. It would take a monster to learn how to do that deliberately. You're now that monster.

Any time you roll a success when using your voice, you can choose to also have the effect of a critical fail, making your voice's effect permanent, unremovable even by you. This ability must be declared before you roll, so you won't know what level of effect the target will be stuck at.

This ability only works on people who are native of Die; it does not work on any of the Personas. The moment this ability becomes known in the world, the Dictator loses any protection gained from the Live at The Witch Trials ability.

This is for a Dictator who is fine with leaving a trail of broken people behind them. The move is deeply, hugely unethical, but if someone wants to play Dracula and leave Renfield's scattered across the world, this is how. It is primarily an advance for antagonists.



PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A MONSTER

The world sees you as a monster. Sometimes you agree. Maybe you are a monster. With this ability, you can grow the claws to back up the personality.

Think of this as your personal werewolf, your vampire form, your inner monster turned outer—a hideous self-portrait, as if Dorian Gray was more interested in the portrait than the pretty perfection. This isn't some alternate personality, it's the worst things about yourself made manifest and violent. When you choose to unleash it, it's free and never wants to go back in the bottle. This is a key theme here. Why do you see yourself like this? How true is it?

When you take this advantage, define the monstrous form lurking inside you by answering the following questions:

- What negative but powerful parts of your Persona are you expressing?
- Which emotions you control are part of this?
- What do you look like when you take this form?
- What does this form want to do that you're scared of?

When you activate this ability, answer the question:

- What is the awful thing that the monster wants to do?

You remain in this form until you are knocked unconscious or fulfill the awful thing.

Take your statistics and re-arrange them into a more suitable order to represent the monster's abilities.

Your Defence while in this form is 1.

You can include your D4 in any dice pool as per **A Little Emotional Nudge**.

Choose four gifts your monstrous form has:

- It's invulnerable to one common form of harm. Define which.
- It's massive (Health is 2 x Constitution).
- It has enormous murderous physical potential. (Attacks have **Special**: this hit causes 2 Wounds.) Define how.
- You can use your performance ability silently, with a glance, at people who meet eye contact.
- It's invulnerable to emotional control.
- It can fly.
- It can attack people at range.
- It can move through objects.
- It can disguise its monstrous nature.

To leave this form, you must take a full action to talk yourself out of it and succeed on a Difficulty 2 Wisdom roll.

You can redefine your monster at any point where your self image of what your "monster" is changes.

The background of the page is a dark, atmospheric illustration. In the upper right, a figure, presumably a Dictator, is shown from the waist up, engulfed in bright orange and yellow flames. The figure wears a dark, hooded cloak and has a determined expression. A chain is visible around their neck. In the lower left, a woman with long, wavy blonde hair and a dark, high-collared dress looks upwards with a serious expression. The overall color palette is dominated by dark reds, oranges, and blacks, creating a sense of danger and mystery.

LIVE AT THE WITCH TRIALS

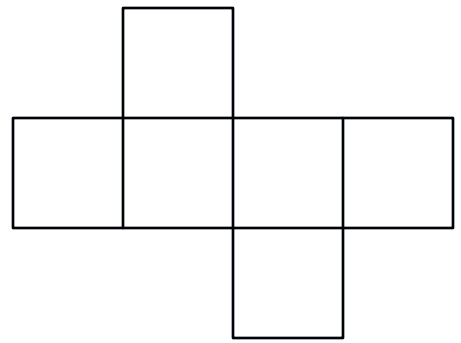
At level 4, you are a notable enough Dictator that your name will have attracted hunters and a general bounty.

Answer the following questions:

- ◆ What have you done which most frightens people? Note: the simple fact you're a Dictator is good enough.
- ◆ Why aren't you dead? Pick one and discuss answers to the question with GM.
 - ◆ You have a powerful patron. Who is it? Why are they protecting you?
 - ◆ You've joined a licensed organisation. What are your duties? What limits does it place on you?
 - ◆ The Hunters have chosen to ignore you for some reason. Why?
 - ◆ Something else



FOOL



Always look on the bright side of life, as the song goes. It's true.

If a Fool's laughing, you'll get out of this hell alive. If you get a laugh, your enemies won't be laughing for much longer. Don't take things too seriously, and it won't get too serious. At least, for the Fool.

The Fool's the swashbuckler, a romantic rogue, the life and soul of the adventuring party. The rest think they're irresponsible, but the Fool's abilities mean the only responsible thing to do is be irresponsible so, screw everyone else if they can't take a joke.

Fools rush in... and their friends have to deal with the consequences.

PLAY A FOOL IF YOU WANT TO...

- Bound into action with a grin, knowing your luck will protect you.
- Get out of any situation by the skin of your teeth, even if it means making a few sacrifices.
- Deal with the chaos when pushing your powers too far inevitably bites everyone on the ass.

FOOL CREATION

STATS

All stats start at 2. You have 2 points to increase any stat(s) you wish. Fools benefit from high Dexterity and Charisma stats.

EQUIPMENT

Choose two of the following options:

- ◆ A fine and noble longsword (You get an advantage when talking with regal sorts and those impressed by regal sorts.)
- ◆ A rapier (Use Dexterity instead of Strength for its dice pool. **Special:** recover one Guard.)
- ◆ A cutlass (You get an advantage when talking to underworld sorts and impressionable romantic sorts.)
- ◆ Martial arts (May use Dexterity instead of Strength for its dice pool while fighting with no weapons.)
- ◆ A pistol or other ranged weapon
- ◆ Concealed throwing weapons (knives, throwing stars)

YOUR LOOK

You may want to pick your trade before deciding on this.

You are wearing (Defence 1):

- ◆ Light fabrics, exposed skin, a big grin
- ◆ Black leather, a deck of cards and fast fingers
- ◆ A long cloak balanced between elegantly-wasted and scruffy
- ◆ Something else

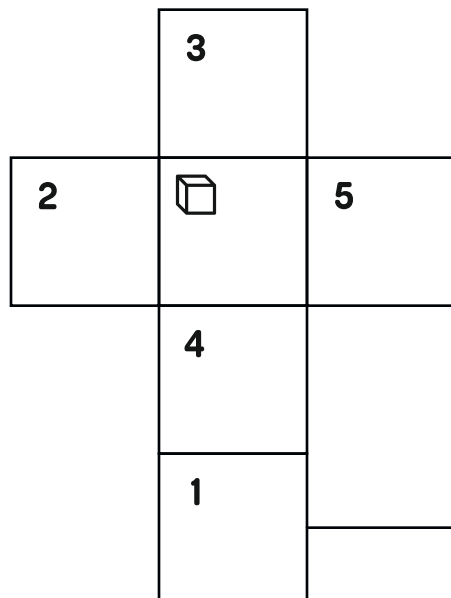
THE FOOL'S DICE

*The key word in this rule is **acting** in a foolish, daring or cavalier fashion. It doesn't matter how a Fool feels. Slap on the grin and save the day, for as long as you can. "But Doctor, I am Pagliacci."*

Your dice is the D6. You can add it to your dice pool any time you're acting in a foolish, daring or cavalier fashion. In any dice pool which includes the Fool's D6, you gain access to the following Special:

Special: roll another D6 and add it to the present dice pool.





When your D6 is returned to you by a GM, passing the D6 back to instantly get out of trouble the GM has put you in is called Taking The Piss. The GM has free rein to mess you up good and proper when they return it. Don't take the piss.

The art of a skillful fool is deliberately causing a disaster is that you can choose when things go wrong and do it to create a smaller problem than you saved the group from by giving away the dice.

FLUKES

Choose one face of your D6. Draw a circle on it, in a non-permanent marker. If you roll the circle, as well as the usual effects of the number underneath, some fluke of luck will happen to your benefit. Example flukes: a foe is buried beneath a pile of something unfortunate. Somebody reveals something they really shouldn't. An unlikely event causes a welcome distraction.

The GM then can choose to modify it. The more advantageous you make it, the more a GM will likely tweak it. Burying a foe beneath something unfortunate is likely fine. Burying all your enemies beneath something unfortunate is begging for the GM to bury literally everyone in the something unfortunate slide.

If you rolled your Fool's D6 and didn't roll a fluke, add a circle to a different face. If you did roll a fluke, erase all the circles except for one, and add a cross to a different face.

If you roll a cross, something unfortunate happens to you or (more likely) the people around you. After rolling a cross, erase all crosses.

If your D6 is not good for drawing on, you can use a diagram to record which sides have symbols on, like so.

WHEN ADDING SYMBOLS

If you are instructed to add a circle to the dice, and there's no blank sides, don't add a circle. If you are instructed to add a cross to the dice, and there's no blank sides, erase a circle and replace it with a cross. In the unlikely event all sides are filled with crosses, don't add anything.

IF ALL ELSE FAILS

What goes around, comes around. In a truly dire situation, a Fool may give up all their temporary luck to just get out of a situation alive, while knowing that sooner or later they'll have to balance the scales.

If you're in a dire situation you wish to escape, hand your GM your D6. The GM will create the circumstance by which you (and possibly your friends) will get out of the situation via a piece of unfeasibly good luck.

Mel is plummeting towards the ocean at terminal velocity. It's time for All Else Fails. She passes the GM her dice. The GM says that the water opens up and funnels them in to land in a mysterious underwater kingdom. How lucky!

The GM may return your D6 at any point, to create an entirely unfair event on a similar or lower scale of awfulness to your previous use.

Before Mel has had a chance to make herself at home, the GM hands Mel her dice back and describes the Lovecraftian-inhabitants of the city creeping towards her. How unlucky!

If at any point before then you deliberately cause a disaster in a spectacular or amusing fashion, retrieve the D6 from the GM.

Later, Mel has given up her dice again, then finds herself in a high society meal. All is going well, until Mel casually mentions they're planning to steal the silver cutlery. Silence around the room. The GM passes Mel her dice back.

You may pitch a different trade idea to the GM. The worst they can say is no, right?

YOUR TRADE

Fools are, above all things, fools—charming or otherwise. What style of fool are you? Pick one.

Swashbuckler	<i>Example archetype: Robin Hood, Belit from Conan, Wesley from the Princess Bride</i> Choose another option from your equipment list and gain any trinkets you think you need to look the part.
A Trickster Wizard	<i>Example archetype: Rincewind, John Constantine</i> Can cast minor magical spells (max difficulty of 0). See what you can talk your GM into and use Charisma as your dice pool. Check out the Appendix 2 (page 370) for some magic spells.
A Rogue	<i>Example archetype: Grey Mouser, Lara Croft, Garret from Thief</i> Add the concealed throwing weapons and thieves tools to your equipment.
A Bard	<i>Example archetype: Scheherazade, Jaskier from The Witcher</i> Add a musical instrument of your choice and a book of fine folk songs to your equipment.
A Con Artist	<i>Example archetype: Danny Ocean from Ocean's 11, Irene Adler from Sherlock Holmes</i> You have access to fake dice, marked cards or similar con-artist equipment.
A Hustler	<i>Example archetype: Cut-Me-Own-Throat Dibbler from Discworld, The Wife of Bath from Canterbury Tales, Del Boy from Only Fools & Horses</i> Add a bag of assorted trading wares of questionable origins and variable value to your equipment.

MAKE THEM LAUGH

If you or your Persona do something the that entertains the group or is particularly foolish, the GM may reward you and allow you to add an additional circle on your dice. Clearly, as this is based upon the GM, you are best to use your judgment.

Hint: being annoying isn't entertaining.



FOOL ADVANCEMENT

CLOWN SCHOOL

Your Fool has picked up a few more tricks. Choose a single ability from the Clown School section.

KNACK OR SPELL

Choose either a Knack or a Spell.

A KNACK

Choose one thing the Fool's good at. Whenever you do this thing, you get an advantage. This can be anything you and the GM agree on, but should be limiting enough to likely only be used once a session—or used many times in a session, but unlikely to be used again for several sessions after that. The less immediately useful a knack is, the more general it can be.

Here's a list of example knacks:

- ◆ Performing in a band
- ◆ Needlework
- ◆ Juggling
- ◆ Be especially charming to old ladies
- ◆ Fighting while standing on a wooden table
- ◆ Knowledge of the underclasses of the dwarfs
- ◆ Acrobatics aboard a ship's rigging
- ◆ Pub-crawl expertise

A SPELL

Choose any spell from the Starter Grimoire (page 370) which has no more than 15 risk. You roll using Charisma to cast. Decide how you learned this spell: how did you pick this up?

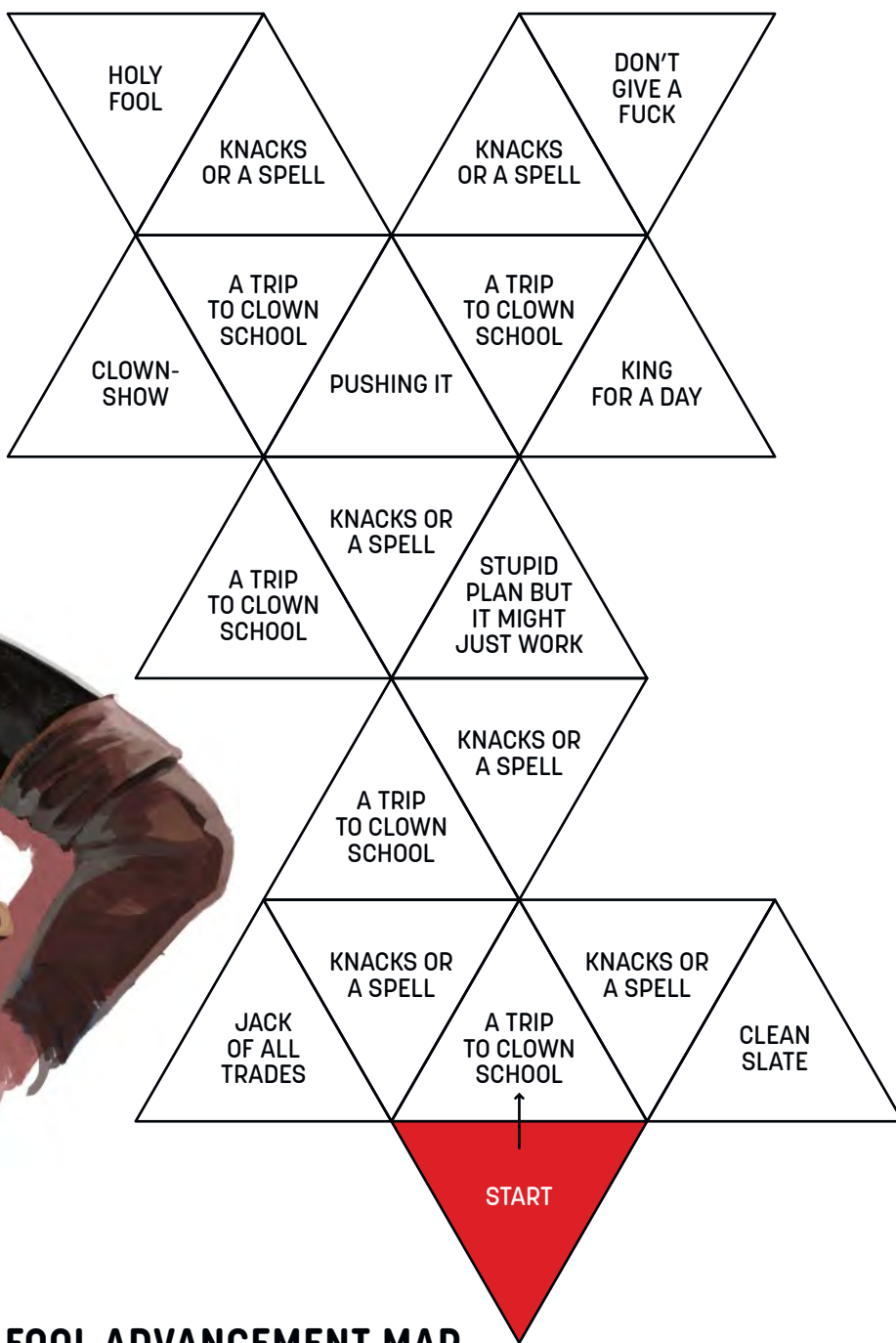
JACK OF ALL TRADES

Select a second trade, and gain all the bonuses/equipment from it.

CLEAN SLATE

Between scenarios you may delete all circles and crosses from the dice, and add a single circle. When you do so, describe what your Fool does to blow off steam.





FOOL ADVANCEMENT MAP

Gain one level in a stat (max 4) on each of the following:

Level 3

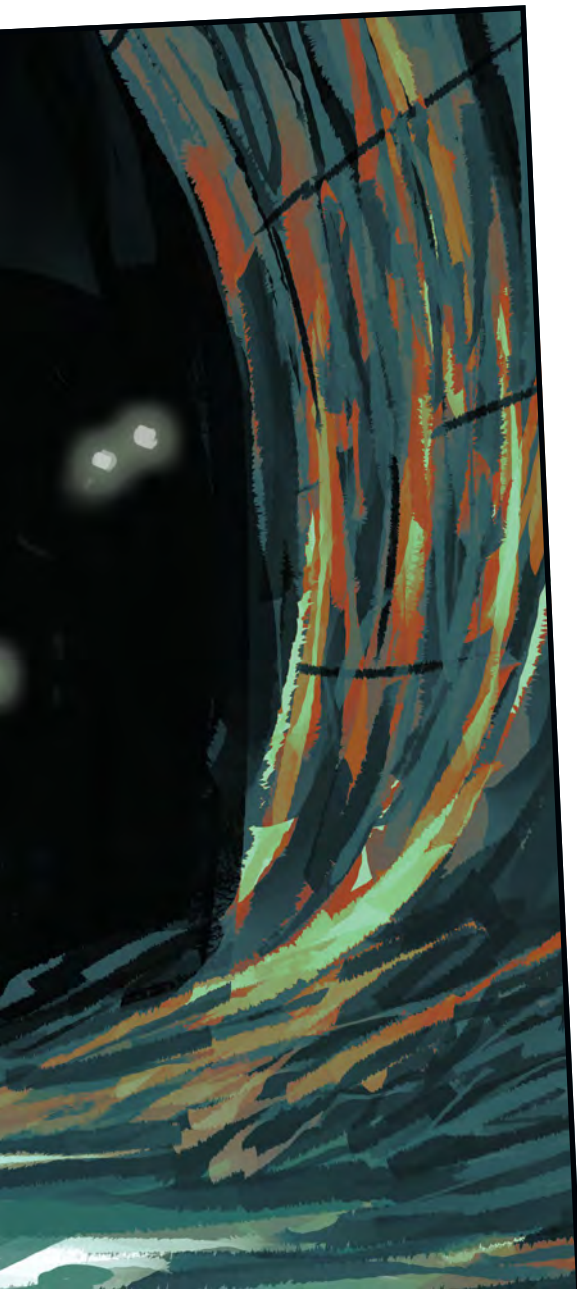
Level 6

Level 9

Level 12

At Level 6: You Get A Lucky Break





IT'S A STUPID PLAN... BUT IT MAY JUST WORK

You can force a dice roll to succeed... if it follows your specific, stupid plan.

Once per session, add a cross to the Fool's dice to automatically succeed on a single dice pool roll. This ability gives you the minimum number of successes required, and no more. The plan has to be highly unlikely and maybe even foolish. If it doesn't make the table think "That'll never work," it isn't foolish enough.

PUSHING IT

Pulling off a stupid plan once a session may not be enough. In which case, you'll need Pushing It, the dangerous sibling ability to It's A Stupid Plan... But It Just Might Work.

As in It's A Stupid Plan... But It Just Might Work, you must describe and then follow a foolish and unlikely plan. You then add a cross to the Fool's dice.

However, instead of automatically succeeding, you roll your Fool's dice. If you don't roll a cross, the plan succeeds (with the minimum number of successes required).

If you roll a cross, the plan goes desperately wrong. The GM will describe how. It could include serious loss of resources or the incapacitation (or even death) of friendly characters.

HOLY FOOL

Rather than just adding the Fool's dice to a dice pool when you act in a foolish, daring or cavalier fashion, you also get to add it when you act with kindness and altruism.

If you ever take Don't Give A Fuck, you lose this ability.

DON'T GIVE A FUCK

You're never directly affected negatively by any unfortunate fallout of your abilities, such as Flukes, If All Else Fails or Pushing It. Any bad luck will only ever hurt people around you. You will not end up falling in the heap of dung/deathtrap/maw of a dragon. Only your friends. Never you.

If you take Holy Fool, you instantly lose this ability.

KING FOR A DAY

You can take over a whole Great Power in the world, like an Empire, a kingdom, a guild or similar. Describe how you managed to take power momentarily, and describe what endeavour the Great Power will undertake. They invade their neighbour. They release all prisoners. They decide to make a horse the pope. This dominion lasts for the current adventure.

After the first time you use King For A Day, if you ever want to use this ability again, you must first add a permanent cross to your dice. This cross cannot be erased.

CLOWNSHOW

Once per session, you can say “This is turning into a total clownshow.”

For the rest of the encounter, any time anyone fails a roll, it has the same effects as if a Fool had rolled a cross. As in, an unfortunate event happens to them (or those near them). Friends, enemies, everyone. It should be stressed: the Fool is not immune to this.

CLOWN SCHOOL

Along the way, a Fool picks up a few specialised tricks in how to use (and abuse) their luck.

LOVE FOOL

Once per session, a Fool may succeed any roll, as long as they do it for love. Ideally for someone you love. Your actions should involve a protestation of adoration. You gain the minimum number of successes required for a task.

A Fool does not have to be in love until this point. You man, in this moment decide that you’re in love, and act on it. Once you’ve fallen in love, roleplay this until the narrative leads you to get over it.

FOOLS RUSH IN

At the start of any combat where the Fool is not ambushed, you can take a single action before anyone else, at the cost of starting the combat with zero Guard.

FOOL’S PREP

Once per session, declare an item you need. If you add a cross to the Fool’s dice, you get it immediately.

OH, IGNORE THAT FOOL

Add a cross to your dice to make someone drastically underestimate or ignore the Fool in a situation when they really shouldn’t.

FOOL’S GOLD

Add a cross to your dice to know what dumb, surprising thing that someone you’re talking to really wants.

NEVER TELL ME THE ODDS

In any normal game of chance, you never lose. If it isn’t a normal game of chance, and your opponents are cheating (magical or otherwise), add a cross to the Fool’s dice to win anyway.

FOOL'S CHARM

Add a cross to your dice to either:

- Make someone take trust in you for a moment. Just for a moment, but long enough.
- Have everyone laugh off a social faux pas you've just made.

LUCKY RABBIT'S FOOT

There's something foolhardy you can do to increase your luck. Once per encounter, choose one of the following actions and add a circle to your Fool's dice:

- Take a drink at a dramatic moment.
- Joke at someone who seems more powerful than you.
- Break into a rousing song.
- Say a catchphrase at the exact right moment.
- Collaborate with GM to create your own.

CLASS DICE ADVANCE: LUCKY BREAK

The Fool gets a lucky break!

The GM offers you something you really want or need. The location of an enemy, a secret route to a difficult destination, Nirvana's fourth album from a dimension where Cobain lived...

The GM then describes the likely consequence if you take this offer. Your enemies will know where you are, a friendly stronghold will become under peril, you will have angered the vengeful god of Grunge.

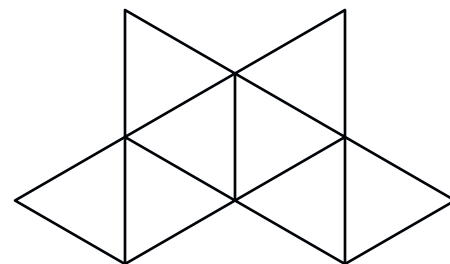
If you take the risk, roll the Fool dice:

- If you roll the circle, you get it for free.
- You roll the cross, you don't get it, and get the consequence.
- If you roll anything else, you get both what you want and the consequence.





**EMOTION
KNIGHT**



These orders of knights are the world's greatest warriors, each devoted to one of the eight sacred emotions. Whether it be joy, hate, or fear: if they feel it, they can use it to fuel the power of their sentient, arcane weapons.

When consumed by their sacred sensation, they're incomparable warriors, capable of miraculous feats. Nothing can stand against their blades—armies, mountains, not even ideas. They can defeat anything.

Except the passion which drives them.

PLAY AN EMOTION KNIGHT IF YOU WANT TO...

- Be the most powerful fighter in the land, capable of fighting armies single-handedly.
- Develop a bond with a signature weapon born of your psyche.
- Process your tumultuous emotions by using them as incendiary fuel for your powers.

EMOTION KNIGHT CREATION

STATS

All stats start at 2. You have 2 points to increase any stat(s) you wish. Emotion Knights benefit from a high Strength and Constitution score.

EQUIPMENT

All you really need is your Arcane Weapon. However, you also have a striking resilience to harm. Why? Choose one of the following options:

- You've got an uncanny danger sense
- Your scarred flesh is incredibly resistant to pain
- You have the finest armour, and keep it in good condition
- Something else

YOUR LOOK

You are wearing (Defence 1):

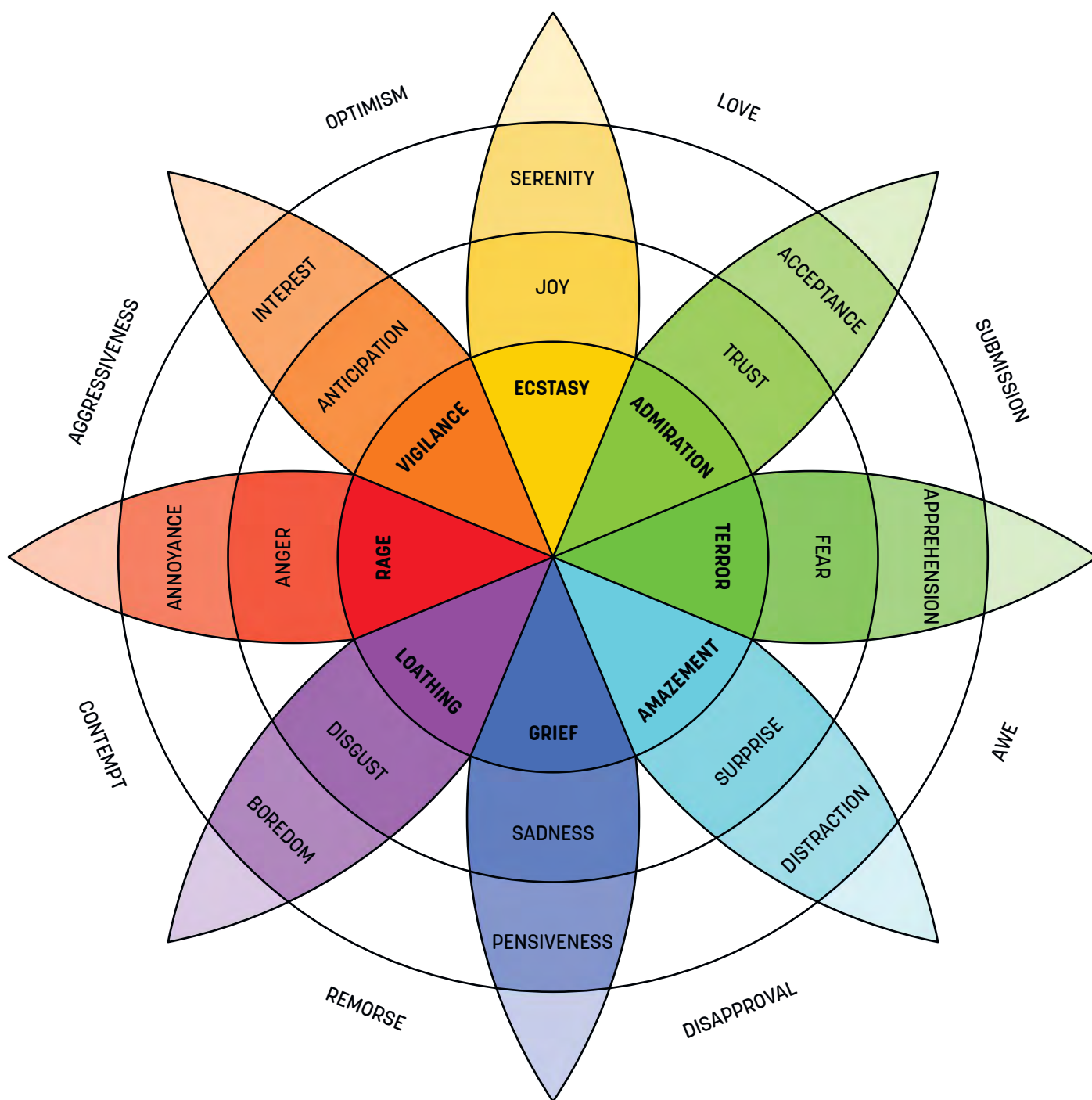
- Worn leather, a long cloak and a scowl
- Gladiator gear, all skin, spikes and black leather
- Covered head to foot, with a full helm showing only your eyes
- Something else

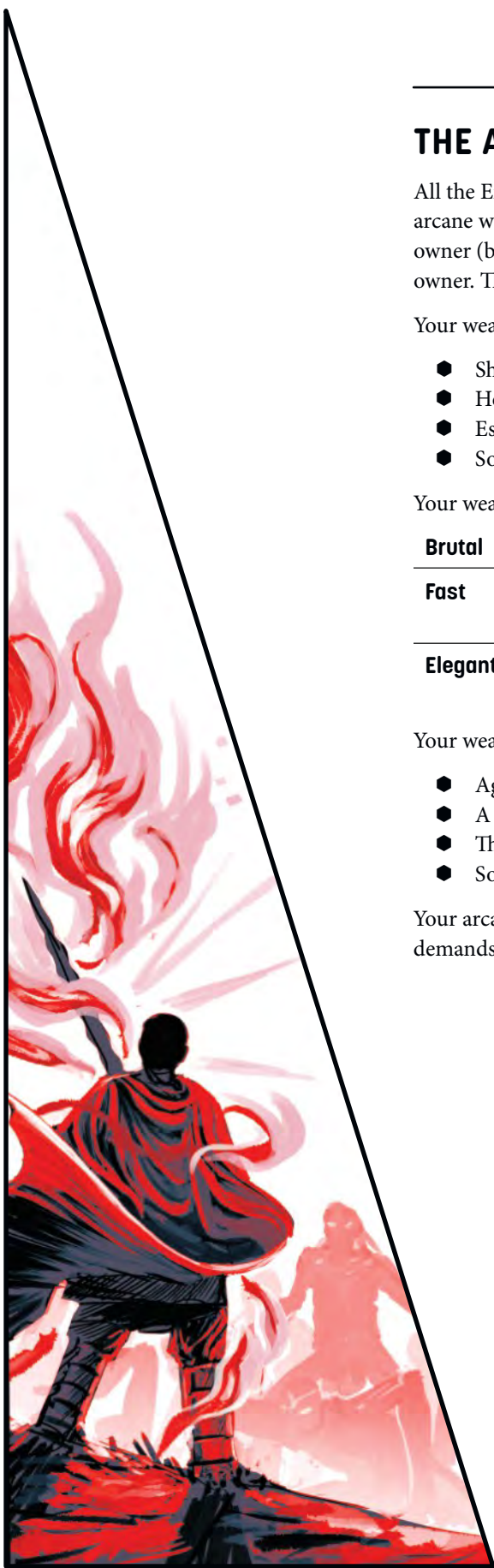
YOUR SACRED EMOTION

As an Emotion Knight, your powers are driven by you feeling a specific and Sacred Emotion. Choose a word from the Emotion Wheel (page opposite) that best fits that emotion. Write that emotion into the blank space at the top of your character sheet to denote what the type of knight you will be. All three of the words on your spoke are aspects of your Sacred Emotion. You feed off them all.

Your Sacred Emotion can be the one most related to your Persona's conflicts or the one you think is most interesting to explore. If you are unsure what emotion to pick, "Rage" is a simple one to play.







THE ARCANE WEAPON

All the Emotion Knight's special abilities are channeled via their arcane weapon. All arcane weapons, whatever their form, are sentient and can communicate with its owner (both audibly or with short-range telepathy) and share a bond with their owner. They can sense strong sources of its emotion in their vicinity.

Your weapon is (choose one):

- ◆ Sharp (sword, machete, rapier)
- ◆ Heavy (greataxe, hammer, gauntlet)
- ◆ Esoteric (chain, trident, whip)
- ◆ Something else

Your weapon's main trait is (choose one):

Brutal	Special: if this hit Wounds, it deals two Wounds instead.
Fast	Special: if this hit removes a Guard from your opponent, remove two Guard instead of one.
Elegant	Uses Dexterity instead of Strength for its dice pool. Special: recover two Guard.

Your weapon's personality is (choose one):

- ◆ Aggressively determined in pursuit of its Sacred Emotion
- ◆ A critical voice, doubting the knight's worthiness
- ◆ The adorable opposite you'd expect from a weapon
- ◆ Something else

Your arcane weapon can change form during play, if you'd like, and if the fiction demands it.



Emotion is generated from events in the fiction. Expect the GM to lead you in this. “Hey—that monster has just lurched out beside you. How do you feel?” “How do you think I feel? It’s got teeth the size of my legs. I’m petrified.” “Move your emotion scale.”

YOUR EMOTIONAL SCALE

Emotion Knights keep track of their Sacred Emotion on the emotional scale. Use your Emotion Knight dice as a counter to track it. Depending how intensely your character is feeling this emotion in the fiction, move the counter or down the scale. Discuss with your GM if you feel it would have changed. Your GM will also prompt you.

EMOTIONAL SCALE

Level 0	Nothing
Level 1: Strong	Emotionally Engaged. Add a D8 to attacks. Stances active. Can use venting abilities.
Level 2: Intense	With Creative Violence you could defeat: a mob, a blockage, a village, a strength.
Level 3: Overwhelming	With Creative Violence, you could defeat: an army, a mountain range, a town, a weakness.
Level 4: Lost	With Creative Violence you can defeat: a city, despair, someone you truly love.
Level 5: Consumed	With Creative Violence, you can defeat: a country, a religion.
Level 6+: Inhuman	With Creative Violence you can defeat: a god, hope, yourself.

Level 1 is feeling an emotion strongly. Level 2 is feeling it intensely. Level 3 is likely as strong as any individual has ever felt that emotion in their life. You will be unable to act on anything but the emotion if it is equal to or exceeds your Willpower score. Most humans pass out at Level 4. Levels 6 and higher are literal supernatural emotions. You could be so angry fire literally emerges from your eyes.

In terms of mechanical effects, each level of effect will give a disadvantage on doing something against the emotion. If the effect could help a task, you gain a single advantage. It is possible that a GM will suggest compulsions of things you want to do. It can be resisted with a Wisdom roll. The difficulty is the level of emotion, halved and rounded down.

CREATIVE VIOLENCE

Emotion Knights are the greatest warriors in the land, capable of truly legendary and even mystical feats. Knights can defeat an army... but others have been known to cut fear itself from the heart of their friends.

If an Emotion Knight has two or more levels of an emotion, they can expend it all to achieve such a feat.

To begin with, the maximum level of emotion an Emotion Knight can use in Creative Violence is 3.

You can defeat anything which fits one of the nouns on your current emotion scale level, or below. For example, if you are level 3 you can defeat an army. Interpret “defeat” poetically.

To use Creative Violence, pick up your D8 from the emotional scale and roll:

- If the result is equal to or less than your emotional level, you achieve your goal, but you or someone else suffers Wounds equal to the result. The GM adds complications to your success.
- If the result is higher than your emotional level, you succeed outright.

Either way, reset the emotional scale to level 0.

EMOTIONALLY ENGAGED

When you're feeling your sacred emotion, your Arcane Weapon's powers flicker into life. When you're above zero on the emotional scale, you can add your D8 to any attack you make with your Arcane Weapon. Your Stance is also activated.

Stances are passive abilities, born of your abilities as a knight. Some are combat stances, used in a melee. Others are social stances, with abilities mainly used outside of combat. There's also emotional stances, which are abilities only able to be picked by specific sorts of Emotion Knights.

Choose one stance from pages 60-63. If you have more than one stance, you can change them with an action in combat or at-will outside of combat.

VENTING

Emotion Knights are able to vent a little of their power to fuel a specific, powerful ability. Pick one venting ability from the following list. If you are emotionally engaged, you can vent. This reduces your emotional scale by one and triggers the vent ability.



STANCES & VENTING ABILITIES

VENTING ABILITIES

Decapitation Strike:	Target and attack a single individual and ignore Guard.
Combat Frenzy:	Apply the results of this attack to all enemies within melee range of the knight's position.
Duel:	Target a single individual. They cannot attack anyone else until you say so, or until you're no longer a combatant.
Personal Attacks:	Discover how your Sacred Emotion could be used to hurt the target—whatever that means.
Personal Knowledge:	Gain knowledge of who or what a target feels your emotion most strongly towards. For example, a Terror Knight could vent to discover a target's worst fear.
Distance Strike:	You can attack anything, at any distance, as long as you know exactly where they are.
Emotional Reserve:	When hit, an Emotion Knight may reduce their Emotion Level instead of losing Health on a 1-for-1 basis.
Hardcase:	Vent to make anyone human-sized think that if you fought, you would win.



COMBAT STANCES

Bodyguard:	Choose someone within arm's reach. If they are attacked, you can choose to be attacked instead.
Ranged Attack:	You can attack with your Arcane Weapon at a medium range.
Riposte:	When an opponent's attack fails to hit you, make an immediate attack in response as an extra action.
Parry:	All attacks on attacks on you suffer one disadvantage.
Quick on the Draw:	If someone attacks you before your turn in the initiative order, give up your move action to attack them before they attack you.
I'll Die When I'm Dead:	You can act normally when you've taken so much damage that you should be unconscious. You continue to fight until you literally die.
Slashing Blade:	You can split your successes in an attack between multiple targets without suffering a disadvantage to do so.
Pacifier:	You can attack and inflict non-fatal injuries without suffering a disadvantage.
Show-Off:	Your fighting style is undeniably more beautiful than anyone else's. Your attacks have the Special: choose an opponent to be startled by your grace. The next attack on them gains an advantage.

SOCIAL STANCES

Intimidating Gaze:	You can be a scary fucker. You radiate murderous contempt. If there's a question of "who's the most murderous person in the room?" The answer is "You."
Common Touch:	The "Common Folk" of the kingdom automatically think you're one of them. What does "Common Folk" mean? You tell us.
The Look Of Eagles:	If someone is looking for a leader, they look to you. Everyone will assume you're in charge due to your natural authority.
Who The Hell Are They:	In any room, you instantly attract everyone's attention.
Infectious Charm:	All of your jokes land with at least one person present in the situation.

Gaining advantages or disadvantages due relevant elements of the fiction is a key part of the core mechanic. Most of the social stances are a good source of these.

EMOTION STANCES

ECSTASY/JOY/SERENITY

Painfree:	You no longer suffer any physical pain.
Life and Soul of the Party:	Your infectious enthusiasm makes others want to spend time with you.

ADMIRATION/TRUST/ACCEPTANCE

Hero-Worship:	Choose one person to idealise. When supporting them in an action, you give two advantages instead of one.
Trusting Face:	You radiate such simple good-heartedness that people will give you the benefit of the doubt unless there's a strong reason to do otherwise.

TERROR/FEAR/APPREHENSION

Flight:	When fleeing, you'll always escape any pursuer who doesn't have some supernatural ability to hunt you down.
Reading the Danger Room:	When in this stance, at any time, you can ask the GM "What should I be most frightened of here?" and they must answer honestly.

AMAZEMENT/SURPRISE/DISTRACTION

Eek!:	When surprised, you jump out of your skin. You instantly teleport a short distance.
Innocent:	People cannot read you in any way other than a wide-eyed adorable innocent.

GRIEF/SADNESS/PENSIVENESS

Catharsis:	When Emotion Draining (page 64), you also heal a Wound from your target for each level of emotion drained.
Pity Me:	People pity you as they would a whimpering puppy.

LOATHING/DISGUST/BOREDOM

I Know You Hate Me:	Declare that anyone who can see you hates you; they behave appropriately.
My Mind Is A Fortress:	You are so wrapped up in hatred (of self and others) the difficulty of any emotional manipulation is increased by 2.



RAGE/ANGER/ANNOYANCE

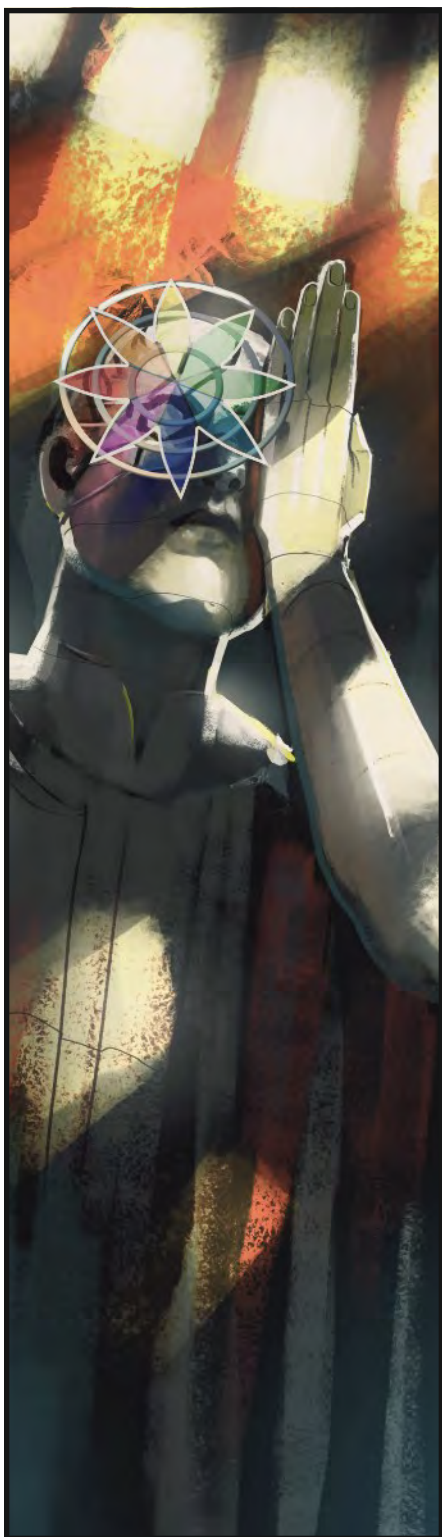
Warface: Anyone foolish enough to meet your gaze regrets it. All your attacks gain the **Special:** they metaphorically shit themselves and lose a Guard.

Berserk: As long as you are in this stance, your Health is increased by your Wisdom.

VIGILANCE/ANTICIPATION/INTEREST

You Watch The Watchmen: You know at any time you've been spotted or are about to be ambushed.

Guardian: You can declare one person under your protection. You know whenever they are threatened, and gain an advantage when acting on it.



EMOTION KNIGHT ADVANCES

EMOTION DRAINING

You learn to channel your Arcane Weapon's hunger to siphon their Sacred Emotion from a target character. The GM ascertains how strong an emotion the target was feeling. This is the maximum level of emotion that can be siphoned.

If the target doesn't resist, the Emotion Knight gains that level of emotion and the target is now not feeling that emotion.

If the character resists, this requires a Charisma roll with a difficulty of 0:

- For a success, and each success above it, a level of emotion is transferred from the target to the Emotion Knight. The target's behaviour changes proportionally.
- A failure means the target's emotion stays the same and the Emotion Knight gains no levels of emotion.
- A critical failure means the target can never feel emotion towards that source ever again. However, the Knight gets all the emotion the target presently feels.

For example, a peasant is petrified of a dragon. A Fear Knight tries to drain the peasant's fear, but critically fails. The peasant will never be scared of dragons again.

If a target is not experiencing that emotion, an Emotion Knight cannot siphon it.

ADVANCE CREATIVE VIOLENCE

For each time you select this ability, increase your maximum level of Creative Violence by 1.

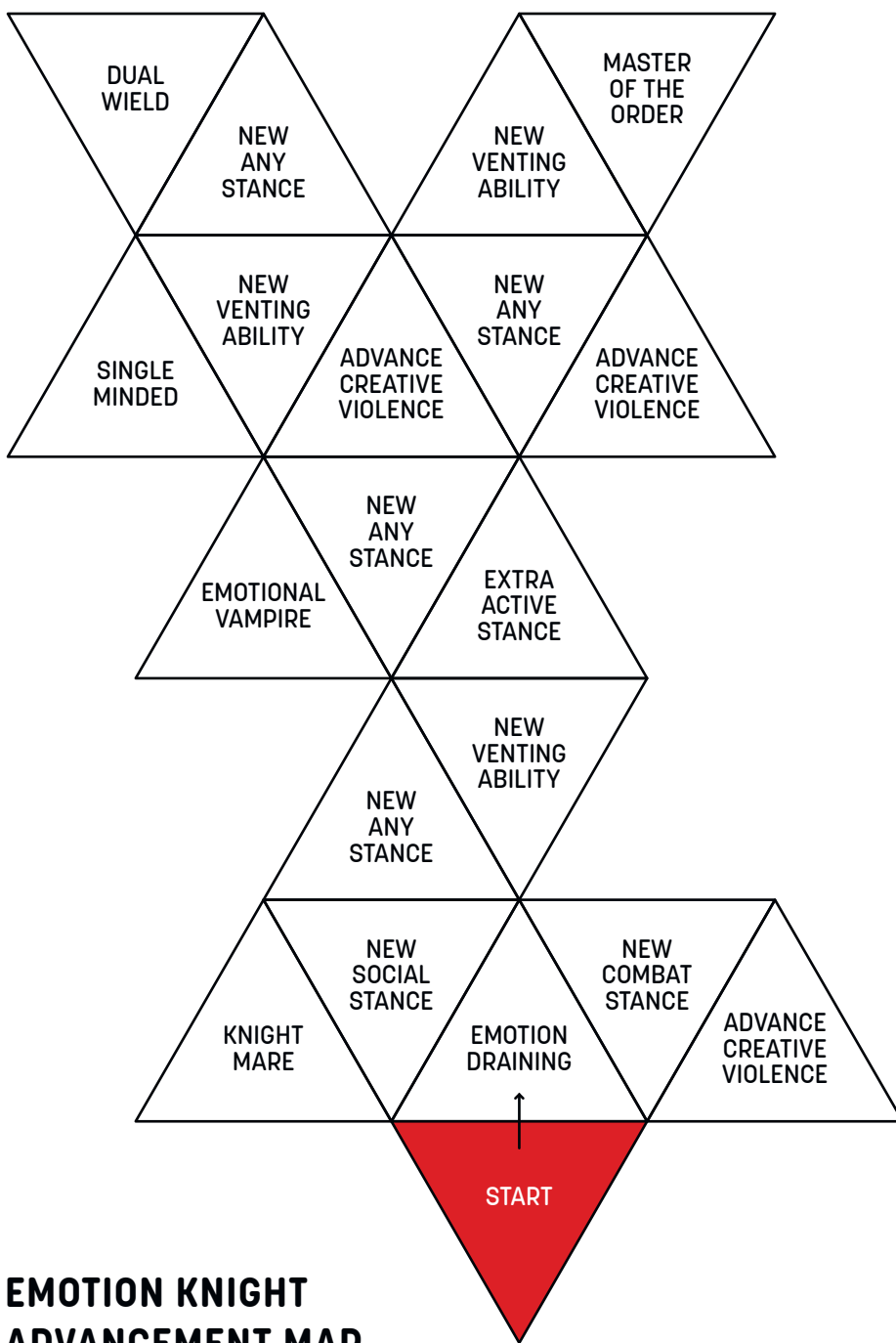
Also, normally a character is overwhelmed if they are experiencing emotion on the same level as their Willpower. When experiencing your Sacred Emotion, you can add the number of times you've picked this ability to your Willpower for the purpose of not being overwhelmed.

Creative Violence can be used literally...

Alex is cornered in the depths of the headmaster lich's dungeons, with dozens of undead students marching towards him. The GM describes this mob of horror approaching. Alex notices the word "mob." He's experiencing intense (level 2) emotion, he activates his Creative Violence. No more mob, lots of body parts.

...Or more poetically...

Alex faces off against his headmaster lich lord, who's so afraid of death that he's sacrificing his students to maintain his immortality. Alex is experiencing overwhelming (level 3) emotions, and realises that the lich's fear of death could be a "weakness." The GM agrees. Alex activates his Creative Violence and cuts the fear of mortality from the creature's soul.



EMOTION KNIGHT ADVANCEMENT MAP

Gain one level in a stat (max 4) on each of the following:

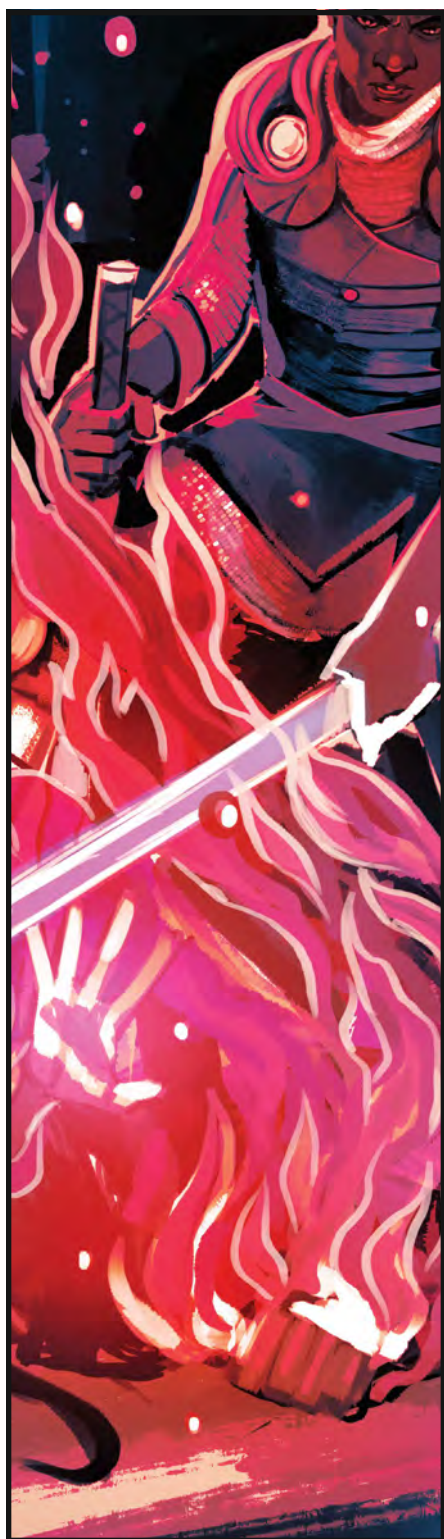
Level 3

Level 6

Level 9

Level 12

At Level 8: A Knight's Confirmation



SECOND ACTIVE STANCE

Stances are common among many martial arts, and a warrior chooses which stance to position themselves carefully. One stance at any time. That's how it works. However, Emotion Knights are the greatest warriors in the land. At this point, they're capable of being in two stances at once. When this advance is chosen, the Emotion Knight may have another stance active simultaneously. Each stance can be changed exactly like normal.

NEW _____ ABILITIES

New Combat Stance	Pick a new combat stance.
New Social Stance	Pick a new social stance.
New Emotion Stance	Pick a new emotion stance of your Sacred Emotion.
New Any Stance	Pick a new stance—either social, combat or emotion.
New Venting Ability	Pick a new venting ability.

KNIGHTMARE

If you're willing to suffer a bad (k)night's sleep with a dream born of your Sacred Emotion, you will wake to find a magical steed beside you.

What does it look like?

- ◆ A towering warhorse with burning eyes
- ◆ A three-humped camel with a knowing expression
- ◆ A cowardly cat who really doesn't want to be here
- ◆ Something else

As long as you are emotionally engaged, what gift does your steed have? Pick one:

- ◆ It can fly
- ◆ It is faster than any horse.
- ◆ It can move through walls like a ghost.
- ◆ Something else

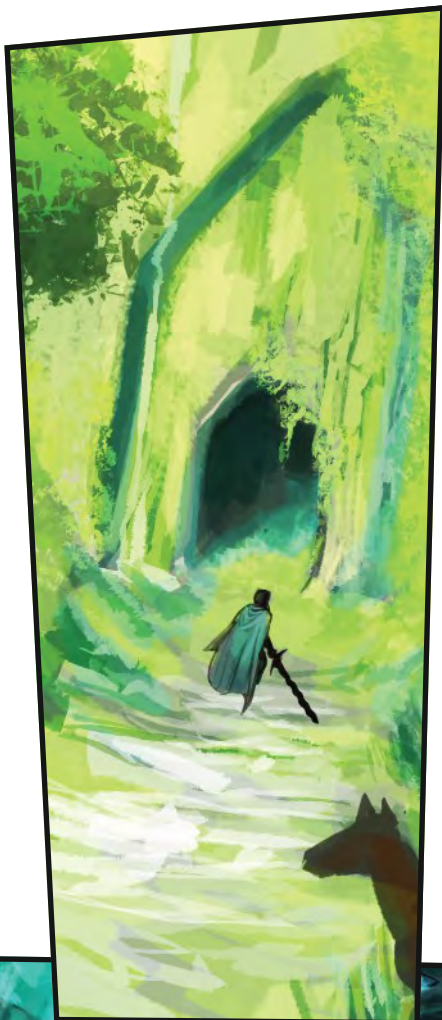
Every time you have a bad (k)night's sleep, say what you dreamed about. Some dreams have been known to be prophetic.

EMOTION VAMPIRE

The Arcane Weapons hunger can get out of control, and some Emotion Knights choose to chase that. When you use Emotion Draining on a being who has either submitted or is incapable of resisting, an Emotion Knight can choose to feed on the target's potential to feel that emotion. Gain a single level of the emotion while removing the victim's ability to ever feel this emotion again.

If the victim is currently feeling this emotion, gain an additional level of the emotion alongside those you would normally drain.

This is primarily an ability for antagonists and villains. Characters who see this power in use will fear and hate its user in the same way they would a Dictator.



SINGLE-MINDED

When your emotion has you, you're very difficult to divert. Increase the difficulty to mentally dominate you by your present emotional level. This includes a Dictator's abilities.

MASTER OF THE ORDER

The Emotion Knight is accepted as the Master of Order of Knights of your Sacred Emotion in the world. If you're using the Great Game rules (see Chapter 9), they count as at least one faction, and perhaps more.

If you select Dual Wield and you are the Master of the Order, you immediately forfeit this advance.

DUAL WIELD

Choose a second emotion and gain a second weapon with its own personality. You now track this emotional scale separately. If you have an Emotional Stance from this new emotion, you can only activate that stance if its emotion is above zero.

If you have two emotion stances, you may change one to an emotion stance from your new emotion. You can **never** select the advance Master Of The Order.

CLASS DICE ADVANCE: A KNIGHT'S CONFIRMATION

At level 8, an Emotion Knight is called to confirm their choice and be welcomed to the order.

Your weapon is taken from you. You are taken to a ceremonial place—a dungeon, a labyrinth, a cave system—and you find their way through it. In the centre, your weapon... and one for each of the other seven emotions.

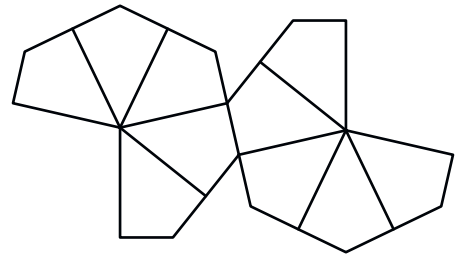
Gain the following:

- Retrieve your weapon... or pick one of the other seven.
- Pick a new stance or venting ability. Swap any abilities related to a given emotion.
- You're now a member of this league of knights.

If there is one in the fiction already, use it. If there isn't, create one in collaboration with the GM. This order may call upon you to perform tasks. You may be able to ask them for help. This is a reciprocal relationship.



NEO



Adventurers love gold. With their propensity for taking anything that isn't nailed down makes them all thieves... which makes the classical fantasy prejudice against rogues a little odd. They all at it. Why do rogues get the glances?

But anyone who's ever met one knows why people are suspicious about the Neo...

There's a special kind of gold, and the Neo's magical technology needs to be activated by this every day. If they can't find enough then all their gifts mean nothing. They can't skip between shadows, dance through the sky or punch a hole through a Fallen's head from half a mile away.

Adventurers all want gold but no-one needs it like a Neo.

PLAY A NEO IF YOU WANT TO....

- Be the chromed-up cyberpunk rogue in the fantasy adventuring party.
- Select from an armoury of magic-cybernetic gifts you can personalise to your heart's content.
- Hunt desperately for the next score to fuel your powers.



NEO CREATION

STATS

All stats start at 2. You have 2 points to increase any stat(s) you wish. Neos benefit from a high Dexterity and Intelligence score.

EQUIPMENT

You start with all the following:

- A dagger (or any pointy thing which stabs)
- Another close weapon (short sword, a second dagger, or something else)
- A ranged weapon (pistol, a rifle, or something else)

YOUR LOOK

You are wearing (Defence 0):

- Black leather, studs and chrome, white leather, bleach and catsuits
- Billowing black cloak and sinister scarlet eyes
- Exposed metallic exoskeleton and vat-grown muscle
- Something else

FAIR GOLD

Fair Gold is the techno-magical fuel which powers your gifts. It takes the form of small coins, which you will find yourself drawn to with an intensity that will likely frighten you.

Fair Gold is most commonly found in the corpses of Fallen, a techno-magical creature that haunts Die, but you will find other sources. Your AI will be able to tell you if there's any Fair Gold in the locale.

A single piece of Fair Gold is required to activate one of the Neo's gifts until the following dawn, including any of its upgrades. Each Neo has a slot on their body where they can insert the coin. Most find it on the back of the neck, but you may be different.

Keep track of how many Fair Gold you possess. They'll disappear at dawn.

NEOTECH

You always have an AI system and basic ability to access the Fair Field—an invisible data network fuelled by technology sufficiently advanced enough to pass as magic.

Your AI system is capable of talking with you and performing basic tasks relating to your gifts and upgrades. Accessing the Fair Field allows you to hack Fallen, computers, automated systems and anything technological, subverting them to your control or shutting them down.

To use your Neotech to overcome an immediate problem, roll a dice pool based on your Intelligence. A success lets you bypass the problem—with a success for each problem, if there's multiple ones. The dice pool has a **Special**: actively subvert the system to perform one action.

If you're hacking the monstrous Fallen, successes let you lock them down, while rolling a Special lets you take control briefly. Have a look at Full AI Enhancement (see page 77) for those who want to explore this kind of behaviour further.

Morgan the Neo is cornered by a group of four Fallen, lurching towards them. They try to hack the Fallen and roll three successes, one of which is a Special. Three Fallen freeze, with one left unaffected. Morgan uses the Special to make one of the affected Fallen grab hold of the remaining one, as Morgan slips away.





“How much Fair Gold is required to perform powerful overcharge feats?” is very much a key bit of each DIE game’s own style. If Fair Gold is plentiful, the numbers tend to be higher. If it’s scarce, a GM is likely more lenient in costs.

GIFTS OF THE FAIR

The Neo has access to otherworldly cyberpunk technology—robotic limbs, loyal automatons, smart weapons, and more—known as **gifts**. When creating your Neo, select one technomagical gift from the following section and one of its upgrades.

When rolling a dice pool which is assisted by any gift, the Neo can include their D10.

Each gift is a tool which allows you to do anything that the gift would logically let you do. Gifts must be activated with Fair Gold before its abilities can be used. Unless specified otherwise, gifts remain active for 24 hours after you spend the Fair Gold to activate them.

Gifts all have narrative effects in addition to mechanical ones; they allow you to perform suitable associated tasks. A jetpack lets you fly. A teleporter lets you teleport.

An upgrade is an additional, specific effect added to any given gift by taking an advancement. The upgrade activates along with the gift.

You can only take a single upgrade marked Defensive until you unlock the ability to have a second by an advancement—see page 78 for more details on Advancements. If not stated otherwise, upgrades can be picked multiple times.

Overcharge (as described below) can simulate some of these upgrades in a one-off fashion.

OVERCHARGE

The Neo can extract higher performance from any gift if fueled with extra Fair Gold. This is called overcharging. A gift must be activated before it can be overcharged.

To overcharge a gift, describe your desired effect. The GM sets a cost (in Fair Gold) to achieve this effect. Spend the Fair Gold, roll your D10:

- If the result is odd, it works perfectly.
- If it’s even, it mostly works but something goes amiss.

On average, a single Fair Gold is enough to remove limitations of a Gift, extend its capacities or temporarily ape an Upgrade. Two Fair Gold would be enough to improve the gift in several ways. Three or more Fair Gold are used for truly spectacular feats.

Morgan has a trusty Blink teleporter. Without upgrades, it’s only able to teleport themselves a short distance. If Morgan wanted to teleport with someone else or teleport a longer distance, it could cost a Fair Gold to overcharge it. To teleport the whole group could cost two. To teleport the whole group to the moon could cost three.



THE GIFTS

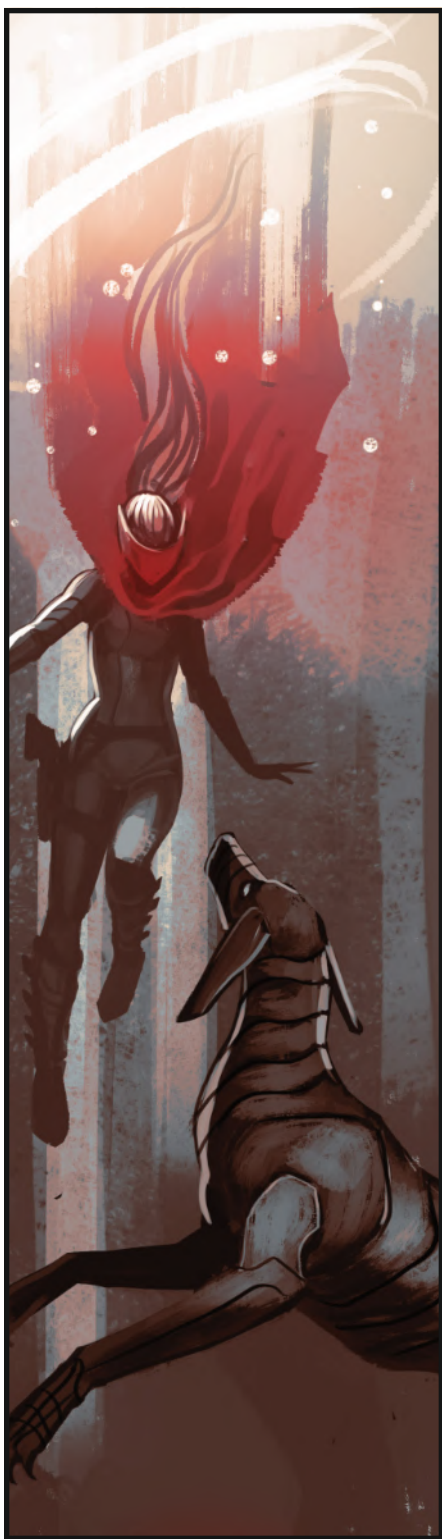
GUN

Can be fired as a normal ranged weapon without being activated.

You are in possession of an arcane gun, gifted to you from the Fair.

UPGRADES:

Explosive	Your ranged attacks gain Special: apply an extra individual hit to another target in the vicinity.
Homing	Your ranged attacks gain Special: this individual hit—not the whole attack—bypasses Guard.
AI-Assisted Targeting	Never has any disadvantages on an attack roll.
Phasers to Stun	Non-lethal attacks with this weapon have no disadvantages.
Trick Shooting	Gun can fire precisely enough to act as a form of telekinesis, so you can use it to knock-on-windows, ring doorbells, open doors and perform other feats of accuracy.
Tracking	Your ranged attacks gain Special: the target can be reliably traced for 24 hours.
Sniper	You can shoot as far as you can see.
Sentry Gun	The gun can be left behind to guard a stationary position, and obey a simple set of orders. When the gun is next activated, it instantly appears in the Neo's hands.



ENERGY WEAPON

Can be used as a normal blade without being activated.

You have a searing energy weapon. If you wish, you may use Dexterity for its dice pool instead of Strength.

UPGRADES:

Phantom	Your close combat attacks gain Special: this individual hit—not the whole attack—bypasses Guard.
Searing	Your close combat attacks gain Special: ignite opponent, doing 1 Hit per round until extinguished.
Neurosleep	Your close combat attacks gain Special: target is hit by a sedative. If they are hit by a sedative a number of times equal to their Constitution score, they fall unconscious.
Returning	When thrown, the weapon returns to the Neo.
Cleave	Your close combat attacks gain Double-Special: apply this whole attack to another target within range.
Fatality!	Your close combat attacks gain Special: if this attack kills an opponent, describe a particularly horrific death sequence. All opponents capable of being horrified in the area suffer a disadvantage when fighting you for the rest of the encounter.

LIGHT FIELD PROJECTOR

You can generate an utterly convincing visual illusion nearby or make yourself practically invisible.

UPGRADES:

Reactive Combat Invisibility	Gain +1 Defence. Defensive
Invisibility Field	You can also make one other human-sized creature invisible.
Enhanced Invisibility	In addition to sight, your sound, smell, psychic aura and trace magical energy are also concealed.
Distance Projection	Your illusion continues when you leave an area.
Active Update	You can project an illusion onto yourself in real-time as a disguise.
Immersion Enhancement	Your illusion can create sounds, smells and physical feedback akin to a 4D cinema experience.



BLINK TELEPORTER

You can chain together short-distance teleport jumps—about as far as you could jump with a run up.

UPGRADES:

Combat Shift Protocol	Gain +1 Defence. Defensive
Optic Triangulation	You can teleport yourself to any point you can see.
Duo Port	You can teleport one other person with you.
Telefrag	You can use your teleportation offensively by teleporting something inside your target. Your melee attacks gain Special: target suffers one Wound.
Shift-TK	You can teleport small nearby objects.
Retrieve Protocol	Once a day, you can attune to any object you can lift. This can then be teleported to you, from any distance.

PET

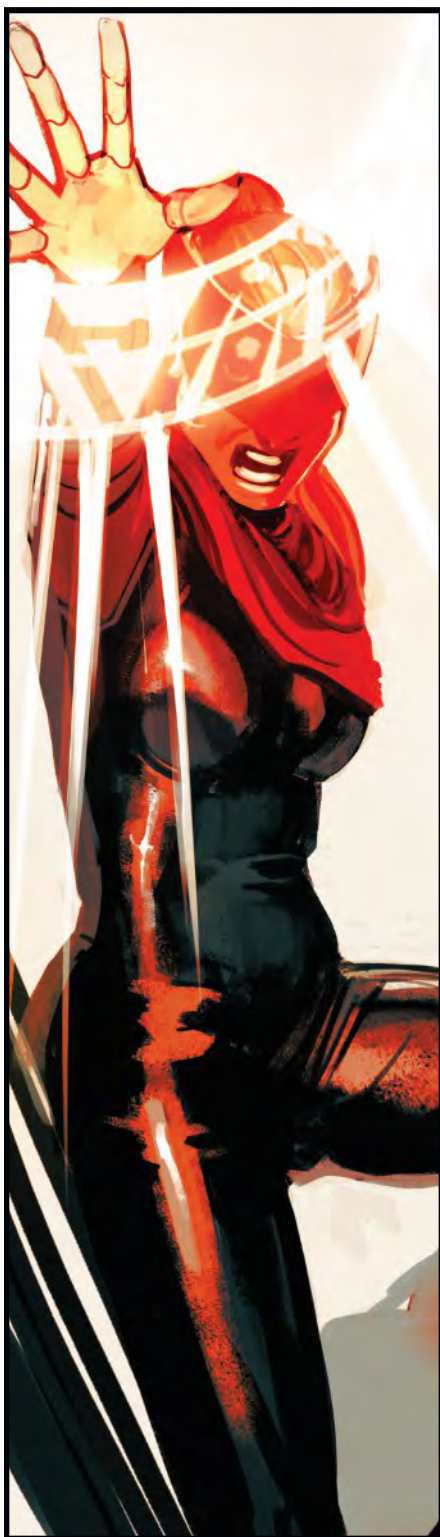
You have an awesome cybernetic pet. What is it?

- ☐ Dog
 ☐ Horse
- ☐ Cat
 ☐ Something else

When summoned, it's also autonomous and capable of following instructions. Its Defence value is the same as yours. Any Wound inflicted on your pet is transferred to you. When Wounded, it dematerialises and reappears beside you. It can assist you in appropriate tasks, so allowing you to include the Neo's D10 in the pool.

UPGRADES:

Distracting	If your pet assists you in an attack, the attack gains Special: remove 2 Guard.
Tracker	If given a sample of a target, the pet can lead you to it.
Alert	Pet alerts you to any ambush before it happens, and so you never start a combat with less than full Guard.
Gold Hunter	Can be sent away to try and find a Fair Gold. Roll your Intelligence pool. Any successes will result in them finding a Fair Gold, and the roll has Special: gain an extra Fair Gold. It will be absent for the next encounter, or period determined by GM, and then return with the Fair Gold.
Protective	If an attack would kill the Neo and the pet is present, the pet is able to sacrifice itself, negating the attack but then disappearing in a shower of light. The pet gift's charge runs out, and will need to be reactivated to bring it back.



CYBERNETIC ENHANCEMENT

A powered exoskeleton grows over and through your body, rendering you an armoured fighting machine capable of feats of supernatural strength and resilience. What does this look like?

UPGRADE:

Hardcase	Gain +1 Defence. Defensive.
Energy Gun	You have a built-in gun. Pick one upgrade from the gun upgrade list. You cannot add further upgrades to this gun.
Energy Weapon	You have a built in energy weapon. Pick one upgrade from the energy weapon list. You cannot add further upgrades to this energy weapon.
Sensory Array	Your senses expand into a generalised radar in the locale, and you can see through obstacles.
Reactor	You have a reactor in your exoskeleton. When activated, it gains three charges used in the place of Fair Gold for the sole purpose of overcharging your other gifts.
Sealed	You can survive in hard vacuum and other outlandish environments. You no longer need to eat. If you do ingest poison somehow, it doesn't affect you.
Jetpack	You can fly at the speed of the fastest airborne creature in the world. Every time you take this, your speed doubles.

FORCE FIELD

You're able to create and reshape an energy field around you. This force field has Health equal to your Intelligence score. What does it look like?

UPGRADE:

Active Defence Protocol	Your Guard is now equal to your Intelligence plus your Dexterity. Defensive
Autonomous Field	You can create a force field in your vicinity which will remain after you leave the area. It can take damage equal to your Intelligence before collapsing. Attacking and damaging this force field has a difficulty of 1.
Kinetic Redirection	All attacks on anything protected by your force field gain the Mandatory Special: restore 1 Guard to the active force field.
Buddy-Help™ Protocol	The rest of the party are protected with a supplementary micro-force field. They gain one extra Guard.



WETWORK

Your body and blood have been upgraded with uncanny technology. You heal quicker, get tired slower, are capable of feats of physical strength and endurance, and have active control of elements of your body that no-one else would. What does this look like?

UPGRADES:

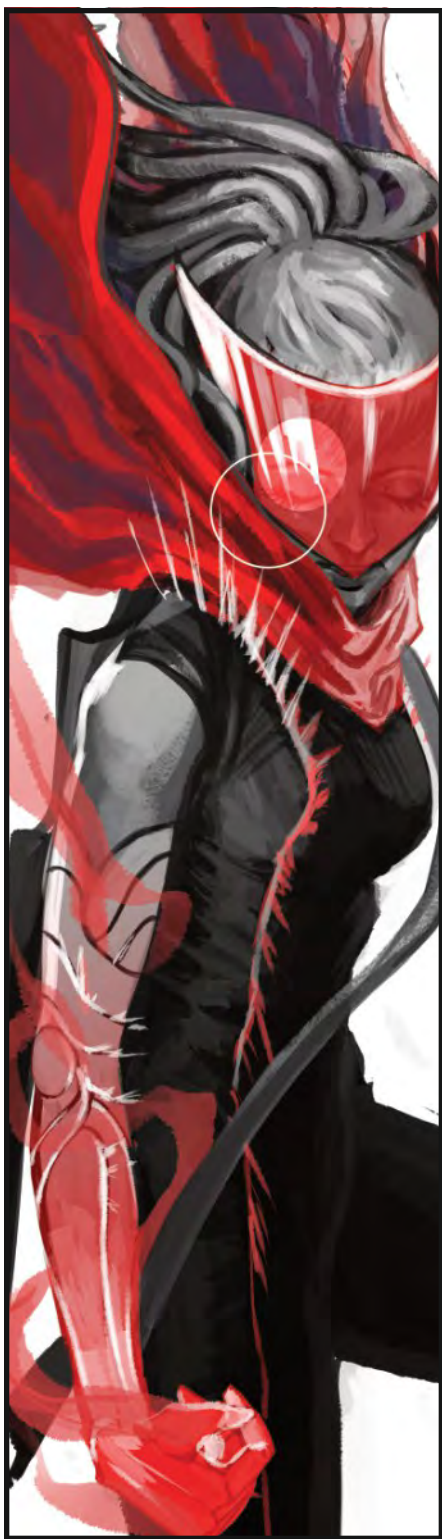
Reflex Boost	Always act first in any initiative order.
Speed Boost	All your actions gain Special: take an extra move. You can't be attacked during this move.
Instant Reflexes	+1 Defence. Defensive.
Horsepower	You can move twice as far as normal.
Regeneration	Heal one Health per round. Fully heal between combats. Defensive.
Resurrection Protocol	If you die, roll a Constitution dice pool at the end of the combat. It has the Special: returns to life.

FULL AI ENHANCEMENT

You augment your AI to access the full potential of the gift. Congratulations! You've upgraded from the free-to-use app into the subscription model. When you're hacking, include your D10 in the roll.

UPGRADES:

Information Database	Choose a specialist subject it has knowledge on. The smaller the area, the more complete the knowledge.
Hacking Protocol Interface	If you manually interface with a system, you're immune to any physical feedback from a failed hack.
Subpersonality	It has a simulation of a known person in it, living or dead, which can be interrogated and questioned.
BioHacking Extension	Choose one group of creatures who you can hack, just like you hack Fallen.
Fallen Leash	Once you hack a Fallen, you can continue controlling it indefinitely, as if you've rolled a Special every round. You can only control one Fallen at one time for each time you've selected this upgrade.



NEO ADVANCEMENT

NEW GIFT

You acquire another gift of the Fair. How did you get it?

Choose one:

- ◆ Pick another gift
- ◆ Upgrade for a previously picked gift

UPGRADE

You're getting better at harnessing your gifts. Pick an extra upgrade on one of them.

GOLD SOURCE

At the start of each day, you receive one Fair Gold via a reasonably safe method. What is it?

SICK-ASS RIDE

You can create, summon or otherwise generate a vehicle that can transport the rest of the party, and a couple of friends. When in this form, you travel as fast as a horse.

What does this ride look like?

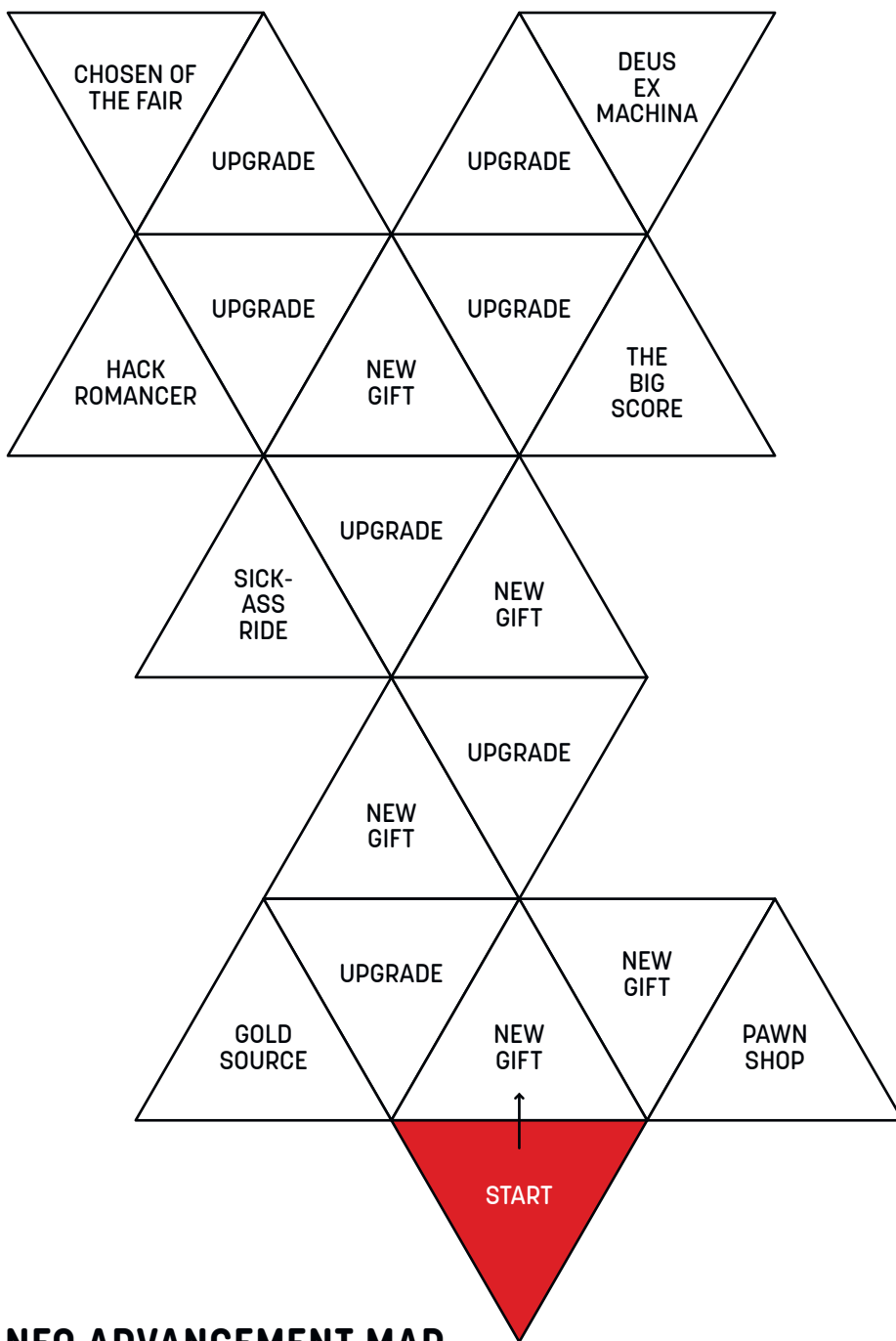
- ◆ 1950s sci-fi, all chrome
- ◆ 2010s heavy-duty serious tech
- ◆ 2070s bleeding-edge cyberpunk
- ◆ Something else

Where does it come from?

- ◆ You summon it
- ◆ It emerges from your body
- ◆ You transform into it
- ◆ Something else

When you pick this ability, you can choose one upgrade. Any time you choose an upgrade from now on, you can upgrade your sick-ass ride instead.

- ◆ It can travel underwater
- ◆ It can travel in a vacuum
- ◆ It can carry another party's worth of people
- ◆ The engine is silent
- ◆ It can fly at the speed of the fastest airborne creature in the world. Every time you take this, double your speed
- ◆ It can reach orbit



NEO ADVANCEMENT MAP

Gain one level in a stat (max 4) on each of the following:

Level 3

Level 6

Level 9

Level 12

At Level 10: An Interesting Decision



PAWN SHOP

The Neo has an extradimensional contact who has an interest in certain objects. They've agreed to buy them in exchange for Fair Gold; a fair price for services rendered.

Who is this contact?

- ◆ A Single Fair, turned eccentric from the loss of their other half
- ◆ A Demon Prince with a crooked halo
- ◆ A time-traveller in some manner of public convenience
- ◆ Something else

What do they want?

- ◆ An exquisite meal they've never ate before
- ◆ A secret that would ruin someone's life
- ◆ Skulls of unusual species, but only once for any individual species
- ◆ Something else

HACKROMANCER

The Neo gains the ability to create a beacon that gathers Fallen. When the beacon is activated with a piece of Fair Gold, it is as if the heavens opened and a biblical flood of Fallen fell upon the land. You do not control these Fallen.

THE BIG SCORE

You have become aware of how to rip off an entity for Fair Gold. You gain 2 Fair Gold every morning as long as you keep up the con or racket. Once a session, the GM can tweak the plot to show the difficulties of maintaining the enterprise.

What's the con?

- ◆ You've skimming Fair Gold from the local Neo Guild
- ◆ You've convinced a cult that their god wants them to offer up Fair Gold
- ◆ You've found the back door to a Reality Mine
- ◆ You're running a fake protection scheme, where people think they're paying off a Mayfly Dragon
- ◆ You're running a pyramid scheme where people think they're buying their very own eternal-life-guaranteed pyramid
- ◆ Something else

If your Big Score is discovered, you lose the Fair Gold income until you can re-establish the scheme—or start a new one.

DEUS EX MACHINA

You have gained access to what is essentially a god-machine, capable of miraculous feats. It can do one impossible thing, but not before it's been fuelled by an impossibly rare material.

What form is this godlike machine?

- ◆ A deserted, confused spaceship
- ◆ A Mecha suit missing a limb
- ◆ A naive pet AI-God
- ◆ Something else

What does it need to power it?

- ◆ A purified portion of Fair Gold distilled by a difficult, obscure method
- ◆ A bottled aspect of a god
- ◆ The possibility of one of your dreams ever being real
- ◆ Something else

When activated, it will achieve what it does, before consuming what has been given to power it.

CHOSEN OF THE FAIR

You gain a special relationship with the Fair, and are able to come to an understanding with them—at least, as much as anyone can understand the Fair. Reselect your gifts and upgrades in a burst of apotheosis. You gain the ability to summon the Fair once a session with a strange ritual. See page 193 for details on the Fair.

CLASS DICE ADVANCE: AN INTERESTING DECISION

At level 10, you are confronted by two of the Fair. They explain that you're a creature of both worlds, perfectly balanced between the two. As such, the Fair will give you an interesting decision—to accept a gift or not.

The Fair must inform the Neo that there are two possible consequences to this action. One Fair says that if they take the gift, if they leave Die and return to reality, there will be no consequences. The other says that if they take the gift, if they leave Die and return to reality, they will suffer a consequence as a result of this decision.

You may then choose to accept the gift or not. It is an interesting decision.

If you accept, gain access to a single gift with an upgrade of your choice. If not, you get nothing.

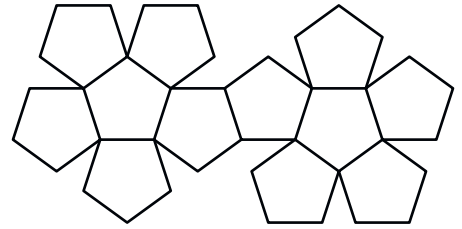
Whether you accept it or not, from this point onwards, you can select a second **Defensive** upgrade.

If you return to Earth, roll a D10. If it's even, the first Fair was correct and you suffer no consequences. On an odd number, the second Fair was correct, and you suffer a consequence to having accepted this gift.

In the comic, Angela was gifted a cyberarm in DIE, and when she returned to Earth, she lost her forearm. She was unaware that this was a risk she took. The Fair are incapable of feeling emotions, but have been made aware that this was unfair. Hence, Angela's Law of Transparency which leads to the players' interesting decisions being significantly fairer than hers.



GODBINDER



You don't believe in gods.

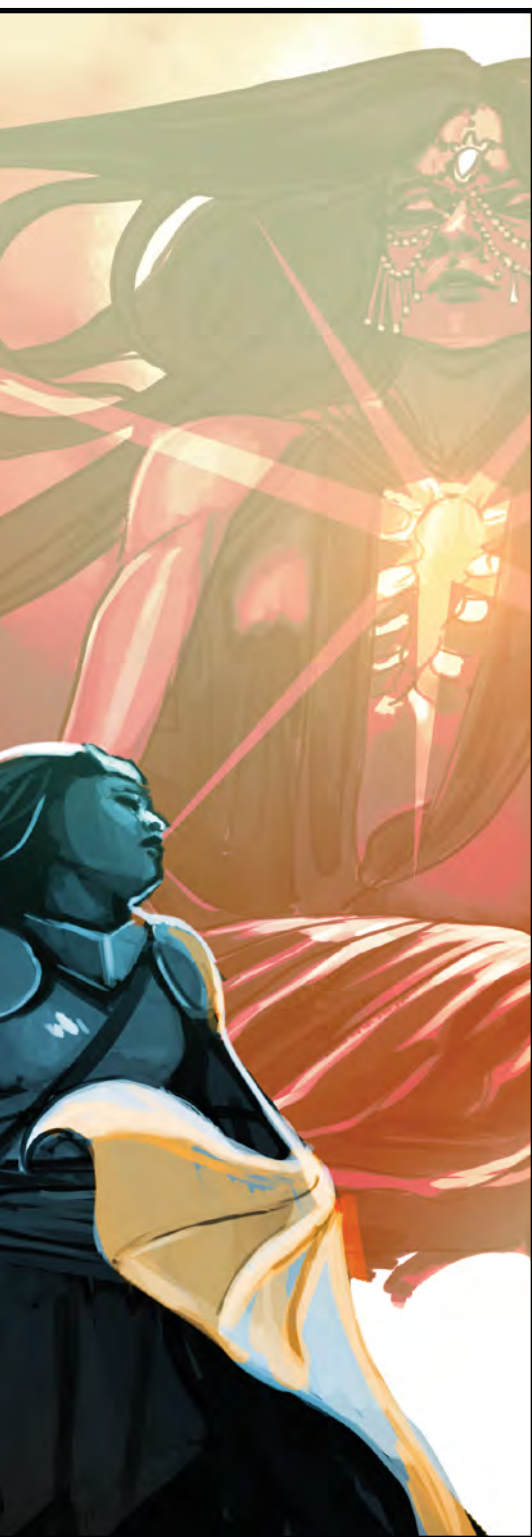
They exist, obviously. You owe the Fire God for that time he burned that fortress, and you've got that favour from the God of the Wild when you saved her rainforest. But believe? That's a strong word.

You don't believe in gods. You believe in tools. Useful tools.

Because if you think about it, the difference between "cleric" and "demonologist" is the same as the one between "freedom fighter" and "terrorist."

PLAY A GODBINDER IF YOU WANT TO....

- ◆ Unleash the power of a pantheon of your own design on the world.
- ◆ Barter with your gods for anything you want... for a price.
- ◆ Deal with the awful costs of the deals.



GODBINDER CREATION

STATS

All stats start at 2. You have 2 points to increase any stat(s) you wish. Godbinders benefit from a high Wisdom and Constitution score.

EQUIPMENT

Choose one of the following options:

- Two-handed hammer, heavy protection (Defence 1)
- Quarterstaff (**Special:** recover 1 Guard), robes or loincloth
- Worn leather gear, dagger or knuckledusters, a set of knives in a carefully concealed hiding place

YOUR LOOK

You are wearing (Defence 0):

- Heavy-metal holy crusader, looking for trouble
- Beatific holy seer, looking for peace
- Wild tattoos, frenzied eyes, looking for drugs
- Urbane street magician, looking for the gold in someone's pocket
- Something else

CONTRACT WITH GOD

Choose one of the gods from pages 87-96: this is the god you have a special relationship with. What's their name?

You have the first level of a relationship with the god, with all the benefits described in its entry.

You can add your D12 to your dice pool any time a god's power is influencing it. So, if you turn into a bear, you can include your D12 in your dice pool for bear tasks. If you create a magic sword, you get to add the D12 to your attacks. Whether it is a Scripture or a Miracle, you get to include the D12.

*You'll note that scripture is relatively limited in its flexibility. For anything else a god could do, see **Miracles**.*

You might think... "Wait: my pacifist god lets me blast things?" If you and the GM think a god wouldn't want you to use a certain scripture, you don't get to use that scripture. Remember, though, that you can choose to attack in a non-fatal way by adding a disadvantage to the attack.

SCRIPTURE

There are certain set spells that the Godbinder gets to cast. These are called Scripture—the rote magic that you just learn. Some come from specific gods. Some are accessible from any god whatsoever. All Godbinders gain access to three spells, called Scripture:

[Noun] Blast	Does an attack at a target in medium range.
Heal	Can heal a character within a short distance. Max 1 Health healed per character per encounter.
Detect [Noun]	Determines if any of the [Noun] is within a short distance

The [Noun] can be any noun related to the god. For example, with “The God of The Wild,” they could fire thorn-blasts and could detect wildlife.

To cast a Scripture, roll a Wisdom dice pool and add your D12. Casting Scripture has a difficulty of 0. If you succeed, the scripture works as described in its entry.

Also, if the D12 rolls a 1 when casting Scripture, the spell incurs a **God Debt**.

GOD DEBT

God Debt is how we mechanise the relationship of whether you owe a god, or a god owes you. While you occasionally gain it when casting Scripture, you mainly gain God Debt when bartering with gods for Miracles.

For each god, a Godbinder can acquire up to five God Debt. You can also be in credit to a god for up to five God Debt, effectively making your God Debt negative. If you're in credit you spend these before starting to accumulate debt to the god. It's good for a god to owe you.

If you're in debt, God Debt can be called at any time. The god will request a task completed. It's up to the Godbinder what happens next:

- If accepted and completed, the God Debt is removed as the God is satisfied the task is completed.
- If accepted and failed, the God Debt stays the same as the God is not yet satisfied.
- If refused, the Godbinder suffers 1 Wound for every point of God Debt the God chooses to remove.

You can remove God Debt by acting in a manner according to the god's desires. A Godbinder may be proactive and suggest things to the gods. Use the space provided on your character sheet to keep a note of God Debt.

MIRACLES

At any point, you can speak to a god and request a **Miracle**. If the god is willing, they'll give you a cost in exchange for the miracle. After any haggling, decide whether to accept or not. If you agree, the miracle happens. If not, it doesn't.

Costs tend to be one of four things:

- ◆ Taking on God Debt
- ◆ Performing a specific task for them immediately
- ◆ Owning them an open ended favour
- ◆ Making a specific promise you will fulfil in the future

Miracles can be anything a specific god could conceivably do, with the payment demanded proportionate to the difficulty. Taking an existing Scripture and amping it up in some way is a single God Debt. For example, beseeching the Fire God to turn a flaming blast into a massive fireball or a healing spell effecting your whole party simultaneously. Making a fireball destroy a city is likely four debt... but is more likely to require a favour. You don't usually get to pay off such huge miracles piecemeal.

A Godbinder is primarily meant to make deals with gods they have relationships with. However, if in the course of adventures, you become aware of another god, it's possible to make a deal with them. Much of this depends on the god's personality and needs at any given time. (All costs will likely be higher. They don't know you.)

BREAKING DEALS

If you have promised to do something for a Miracle and you choose not to do it, the spurned god immediately acquires God Debt according to the scale of the Miracle broken (as ascertained by the GM). Promises and favours are usually for more important miracles than those paid for by God Debt, so 4 or even 5 is not unreasonable. A god may hold onto the debt, or immediately use it to hurt you.

Sometimes, when they make the deal, a god will specify a particular forfeit if you break it. (As in: do this, or this specific awful thing will happen.)

For lots more specific guidance on making deals with god, see [Running The Godbinder](#) on page 160. For alternative deal with god advice, listen to [Kate Bush's Running Up That Hill](#).



The first five gods are good basic choices for your first god. The rest can be a little more esoteric. If you're really stuck, just pick the God of Light. Healers are always popular.

Readers of DIE will note that these are iconic types of god rather than specific personalities. Each world has their own pantheon. Of course, if you want to use Mistress Woe as the Fate God, or the Bear as the God of the Wild, do it.

Naming your gods is a wonderful prompt for the GM. What is your god like?

What is a creature of darkness? Undead? Demons? People who take up two seats on a train? Like a lot of things in DIE, we leave definitions open, to be decided in your game, around the table.

THE GODS

DIE's universes are full of fire gods, light gods and all the rest... but each is unique. The twelve gods that follow are a pantheon, awaiting your input to make them complete. However, they do have certain similarities, and if you become better acquainted, you get the following rewards.

You can achieve multiple levels in each your relationship with each god. For the first three levels you achieve in a given relationship, you gain a new and more powerful Scripture.

If your level of god goes above 3, you gain a level of trust in that god. Each level of trust gives you a free God Debt to use once a session. After that, God Debt is incurred as normal. Trust cannot be saved between sessions.

As a reminder: to cast a Scripture, roll a Wisdom dice pool and add your D12. Casting Scripture has a difficulty of 0. If you succeed, the scripture works as described in its entry. If the D12 rolls a 1, you incur 1 God Debt with the relevant deity.

, THE GOD OF LIGHT

The classic god of healing and protection, though "caring" need not mean "kind."

LEVEL ONE

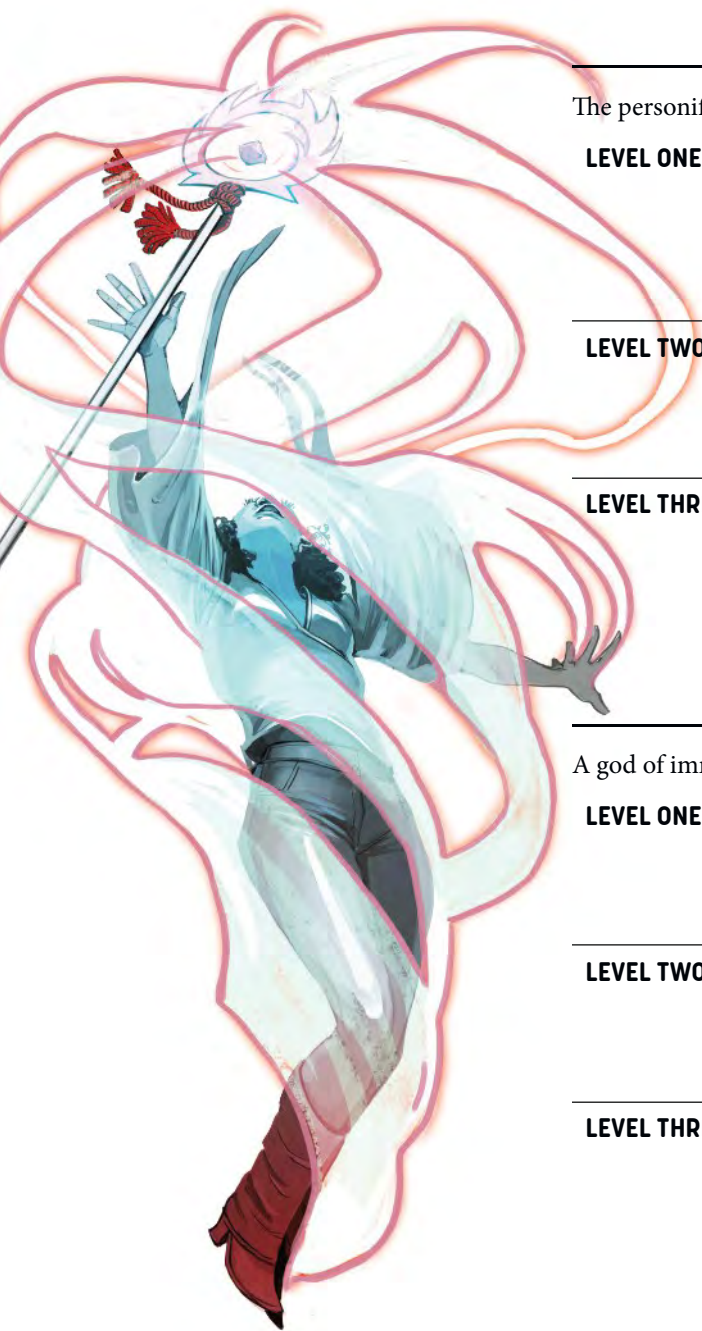
Healing Light: Heal a target within a short distance. 1 Health healed per success, up to max level in god. **Special:** 1 extra Health healed. **Special:** disadvantage to anyone attacking the target for the rest of an encounter. **Special:** target gains advantage to any attack made against creatures of darkness for the rest of the encounter.

LEVEL TWO

Bless: For each success you roll, bless a nearby target. All attempts to attack the target suffer a disadvantage for the length of an encounter. **Special:** for the rest of the encounter, if this hit Wounds a creature of darkness, it does two Wounds instead.

LEVEL THREE

Divine Light: Ranged attack, single target, far range. **Special:** blind opponent for rest of the encounter, suffering at least two disadvantages on anything requiring sight. **Special:** if this hit Wounds, it does two Wounds instead.



, THE GOD OF THE WILD

The personification of the wilderness—animals, plantlife and all things druidic.

LEVEL ONE

Furious Briars: Create an area of aggressive plant life which attacks all enemies in close range of to caster every round for the rest of the encounter, 1 damage per success, up to max level in god. The Godbinder can move freely through the area.
Special: immobilize target, Strength test to break free.

LEVEL TWO

Summon Beast: Summon a beast that lives in the habitat you're presently in. It obeys you for an encounter. The beasts stats all begin at two. For every success you roll, increase a stat by one (up to a maximum of your level in the God).

LEVEL THREE

Animal Form: Transform into a hulking beast of your choice. You gain additional Health, equal to the number of successes rolled. If your Wisdom is lower than your Strength, your Strength is increased to the level of your Wisdom. You can turn back at will, but you lose all additional Health.

, THE FIRE GOD

A god of immolation, passion, destruction and perhaps invention.

LEVEL ONE

Fire Blast: Ranged attack, single target, medium range.
Special: ignite opponent, inflicting 1 Hit per round until extinguished. For each level in the god, you can add one
Special: this attack also affects an extra close target.

LEVEL TWO

Living Inferno: Transform target into a living inferno for the length of an encounter. Target is immune to flame damage and their attacks gain **Special:** ignite opponent, doing 1 Hit per round until extinguished.

LEVEL THREE

Phoenix: Requires a dead body to cast. From it bursts an enormous flying bird, wreathed in a fire which only harms your enemies. Once it starts to fight, it lasts until the end of the encounter. The phoenix can carry the party and a few others.

The phoenix has Strength 3, Dexterity 3 and Health 3, and its attacks have **Special:** ignite opponent, doing 1 damage per round until extinguished

, THE UNDERWORLD GOD

Some death gods are loving. Some are hateful. They each have a place for us all.

LEVEL ONE

The Skeletons: For every success, summon a stop-motion skeletons or similar bone-constructs. For each level in the god, multiply the number of skeletons by that level. All their stats are 2, they have Health 2, Guard 0 and Defence 0.

They follow your orders, but are otherwise non-sentient. Casting the spell again will destroy all skeletons from a previous casting.

LEVEL TWO

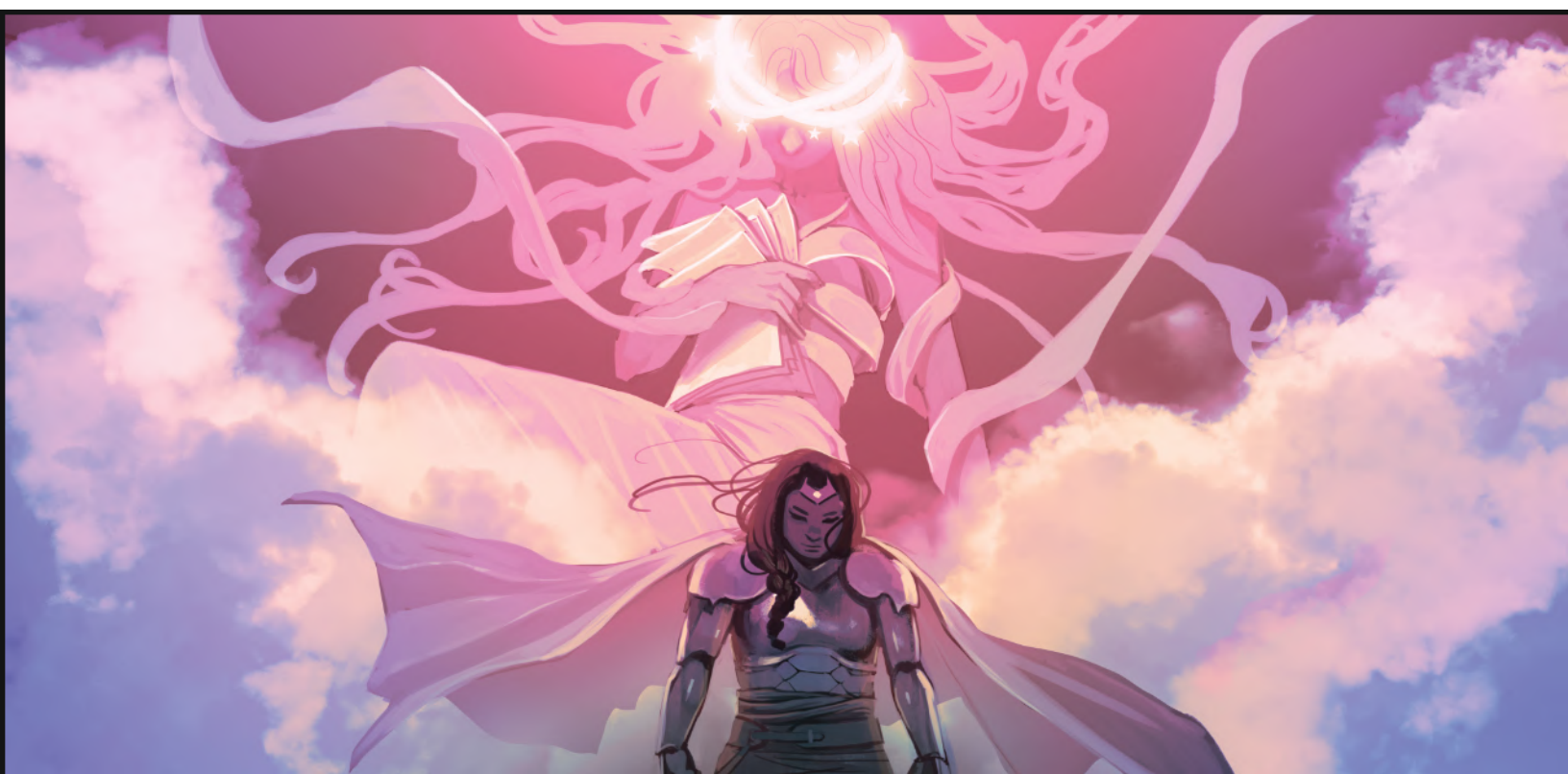
The Reaper: Summon a weapon of bone and death:

- ◆ Decide its look. A scythe is traditional, but you can define it how you wish each time you cast this spell.
- ◆ Choose whether it attacks in melee (and choose Strength or Dexterity as its dice pool) or ranged (and choose either Dexterity, Intelligence or Wisdom).

Gain advantage on all attacks with this weapon and on any attempts to intimidate living beings. **Special:** if this hit Wounds, heal one Health to any target. **Special:** if this hit Wounds, it deals two Wounds instead.

LEVEL TWO

The Bell Tolls: Requires a bell or similar object. When rung, roll a Wisdom dice pool and use it to attack anyone within earshot, except the Godbinder. **Special:** the target is struck by a vision of how they've wasted their life. They are stunned for a round of combat as they wrestle with the existential horror.



, THE ELDRITCH GOD

A god beyond our imaginations, wrapping their cold tentacles around existence. Its believers tend to end up dead. Be careful.

LEVEL ONE

Sacrificial Knife: Summon an unholy blade of eldritch design. To use, inflict a Wound on yourself and gain a number of advantages equal to your level in the god on your attack.
Special: if this hit kills a living target, remove one debt to the Eldritch God.

LEVEL TWO

Frenzy of the Abyss-Touched: Begin chanting an awful liturgy. Everyone that joins in gets the following effects:

- ◆ Gain advantage on all attacks
- ◆ Gain temporary Health equal to their own Constitution
- ◆ Lose all Guard

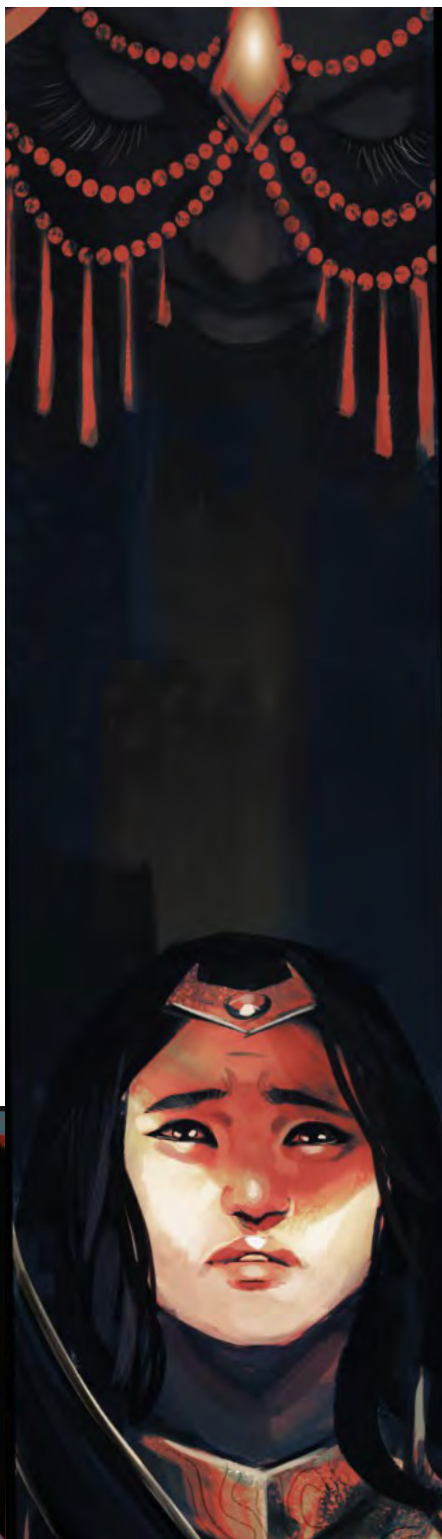
Special: remove one debt to the Eldritch God and give a participant one debt to the god, which the god can call on as per usual Godbinder rules. One of your comrades now can be bullied by the Eldritch God.

LEVEL THREE

Summon Abomination: Requires a fresh corpse killed with the Sacrificial Knife to cast. Summon an abomination which remains until you dismiss it, or dawn. For every success in your dice pool when summoning, you can describe an aspect of its appearance with its implicit capabilities.

It has Strength 4, Constitution 4 and Health 4. The abomination's attacks have **Double-Special:** the target's mind temporarily collapses, they fall to the floor in a catatonic state. All abomination's actions and its casting have a **Mandatory Triple-Special:** it breaks free of the Godbinder's control.





, THE GOD OF EXCESS

The god of inebriation, delight, sensuality and pure, impure hedonism.

LEVEL ONE

Party Hard: Target feels a supernatural high. For every level in this god, you can affect an extra target. Describe how this high makes everyone feel and choose one of the following effects (applied to all targets):

- Attacks on them gain a disadvantage, as they don't feel Wounds as much.
- Their close combat attacks gain an advantage from an adrenaline rush.
- They can see the unseen and other realms.

All actions of those targeted gain **Mandatory Double-Special:** I don't feel so good any more. They become sick and lose this spell's bonus, suffering a disadvantage for the rest of the encounter.

LEVEL TWO

Blackout Drunk: Attempt to make all mortal human-sized or smaller individuals within close range of a point fall asleep. Roll your Wisdom pool and compare successes to each target's highest statistic score. If you match or exceed the target's score on a success, they fall asleep. Targets may be awoken by any normal means. When they are roused, they suffer a disadvantage on all actions during the encounter from the headache.

LEVEL THREE

Higher State of Consciousness: Alter your mental bounds of perception and roll a Wisdom dice pool. On a success, until the end of an encounter:

- You're intangible.
- You're invulnerable to physical attacks and can fly.
- You can attack with psychic power, using Wisdom for the dice pool.
- All rolls gain the **Special:** ask the GM a question and they will answer you, if possibly in an overtly faux-profound way.



, THE SEA GOD

A god of the ocean, in both its stillness and rage.

LEVEL ONE

The Drowning: Ranged attack, single target, medium range. Fill the target's lungs with water. This spell can hit as many targets as you have levels in this god. **Special:** hit bypasses Guard and, if the target needs to breathe air, they suffer two disadvantages on their next turn.

LEVEL TWO

Scale Armour: You can summon the fish-scale armour of the knight of the sea. To summon this armour, roll a Wisdom dice pool. For every success, choose one of the following:

- If your Defence is 0, increase Defence to 1.
- Survive indefinitely beneath water and walk on water.
- Your attacks gain **Special:** electrocute target—suffers one disadvantage on next action.
- Pitch a minor water-based ability to the GM. Talk to a specific fish species? Follow squid pheromones? Eat plankton? The GM gets to say yes or no.

Describe its armour when you summon it. The armour remains until the dawn. If you want to dismiss it before then, gain one God Debt.

LEVEL THREE

The Great Flood: Waves crash into the surrounding area as if from nowhere, and the water level rapidly begins to rise. Roll a Wisdom dice pool to summon the flood.

On a success, the flood is here. You can walk on the water, or move through it without penalty; everyone else suffers one disadvantage to all actions. **Special:** raise the water further—everyone suffers a second disadvantage.

Every turn the water remains, choose one effect:

- Attack everyone in the water with murderous fish
- Attack a single target by murderous fish

, THE FATE GOD

The embodiment of destiny. Perhaps solemn. Perhaps far more mischievous.

LEVEL ONE

Prophecy: You get sharp visions of future events. Roll a Wisdom dice pool and count the number of successes. You can spend each of these successes to add either an advantage or disadvantage to any roll for the rest of the encounter.

When you do so, describe the fate you saw and how your sudden action tried to avert it. You can spend no more than your level in the god on any one roll. You lose all unspent successes if you re-cast this spell. For every level in the Fate God you have, add a (**Special:** add an extra success).

LEVEL TWO

Tragic Fate: Ranged attack, single target, medium range. You give a vivid psychic vision of an awful fate that awaits the target. In addition to doing damage, for the rest of the encounter they suffer a disadvantage on all actions from sheer existential horror. The attack has **Special:** you know what the vision was.

You can only use this on any given target once per encounter.

LEVEL THREE

Avatar of Destiny: You commit yourself to the web of fate, for better or worse. For the length of the encounter, your every action is what must happen, to best effect.

- If your Wisdom is higher than your Dexterity. Your Maximum Guard is now equal to your Wisdom. Set it to that.
- All your attacks gain **Special:** this hit causes two hits and **Special:** recover two Guard.
- **Mandatory Double-Special:** you suffer a calamity and fall to zero Health. Describe how.





, THE FORGE GOD

God of craft, technology and all those who work by their hands and their mind.

LEVEL ONE

My Robot Friend: Summon a human-sized construct friend (see **Stats** below), redolent in your Forge God's aesthetic, who can follow orders for the length of an encounter.

For each level you have in the god, you can pick one of these abilities:

- ◆ +1 Strength
- ◆ +1 Constitution
- ◆ Defence 1
- ◆ It can fight
- ◆ It is invulnerable to one environmental factor (fire, cold or something else)

For each level you have in the god, it has an extra **Special:** you can pick another ability for your robot friend. All abilities can be picked more than once. No stat can go higher than 4. Casting this again dispels your pre-existing Robot Friend.

LEVEL TWO

Divine Hammer: Summon a magical hammer for length of encounter. Ranged attack, single target, medium range. Uses Strength. When targeting your robot friend, you can heal rather than attack. Each hit heals one Health. When attacking, **Special:** knocks over target.

LEVEL THREE

My Robot Fiend: Expands **My Robot Friend** with new options you can pick:

- ◆ It can fly.
- ◆ Once an encounter it can unleash a blast that can attack everyone in a room at once. **Special:** ignite opponent, doing 1 Hit per round until extinguished.
- ◆ It's the size of a giant. Set its Health to double its Constitution score.
- ◆ It is an expert in a single body of knowledge.

ROBOT FRIEND

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	0		

Abilities

Cannot fight.

, THE WAR GOD

There are no atheists in trenches.

LEVEL ONE

Enchanted Weapon: Choose one weapon you are holding. It gains an advantage in attacks until the end of the encounter, as well as the following specials. **Special:** a ridiculously powerful-looking blast happens when you make the attack.

Special: angelic choirs sing as you strike. **Special:** you look absolutely amazing when you do this.

LEVEL TWO

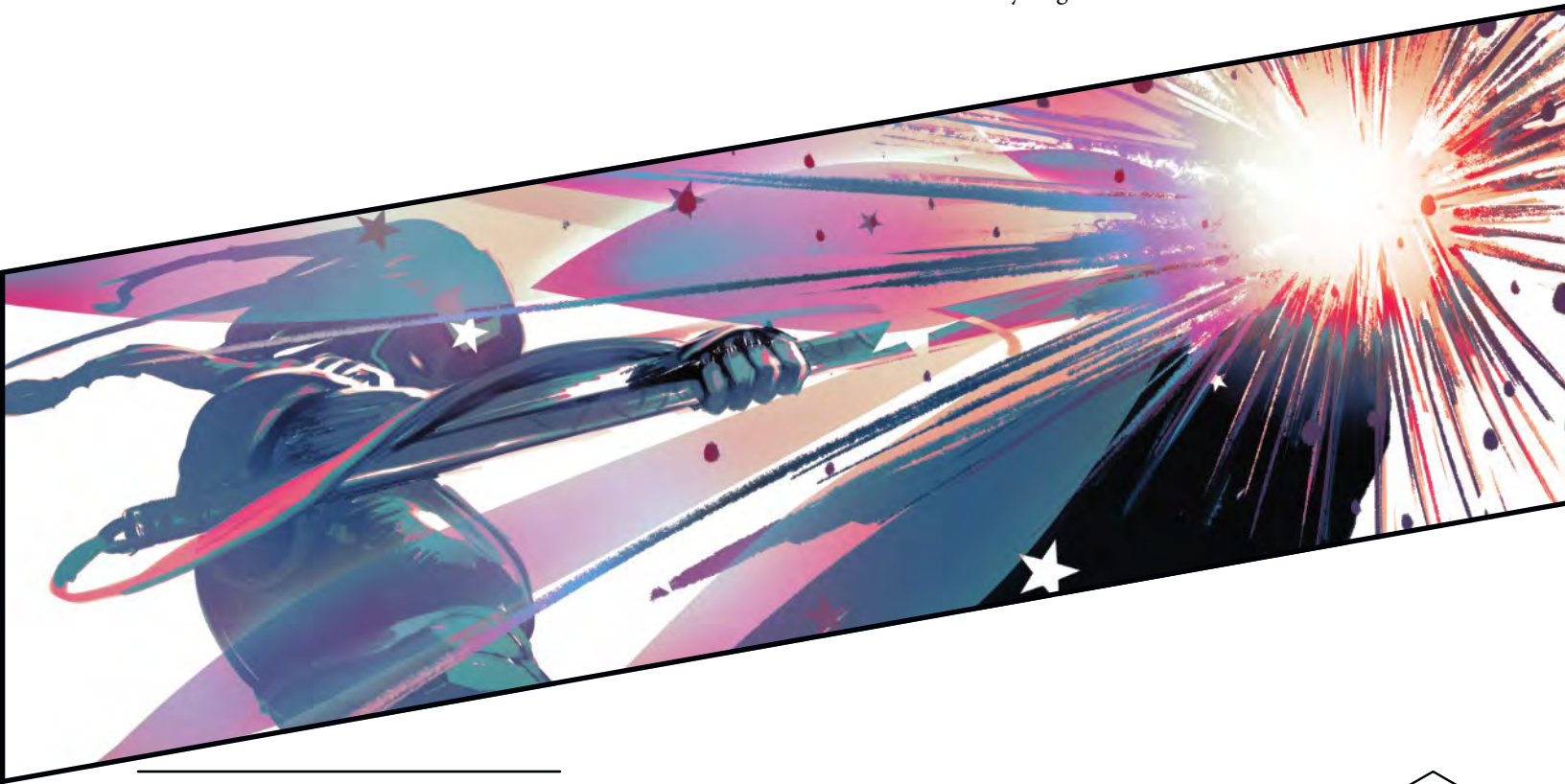
The Right Stuff: Once per encounter, gain combat wisdom by rolling a Wisdom pool and counting the successes. You can spend each success to add one of the following Specials to any allied target's roll after they roll:

- **Special:** add an extra success to this roll.
- **Special:** recover a Guard.
- **Double-Special:** recover a Health.

For every level in the War God you have, add a (Special: add an extra success) to this scripture. All unspent successes are discarded at the end of an encounter.

LEVEL THREE

Godly Frenzy: Let slip the gods of war. Add a number of temporary extra Health equal to your level in the War God. All your attacks gain **Special:** if this hit Wounds, it deals two Wounds instead and **Mandatory Triple-Special:** if possible, this attack hits a friendly target.





, THE STORM GOD

The angry and often paternal god of lightning. The elements unleashed and raging.

LEVEL ONE

Lightning Blast: Ranged attack, single target, long range. Lightning Blast has **Special:** deeply frazzled, target suffers a disadvantage on their next action.

Lightning Blast can attack a number of targets equal to your current level in Storm God.

LEVEL TWO

Stormdancer: If you're beneath a cloudy sky, you and the party are transformed into lightning bolts and propelled in the sky. You return to the earth, at a place of your choosing, anywhere beneath the same sky. Casting has the **Special:** the GM answers one question about the land beneath you as you travelled.

Mandatory Special: one person's hair stands vertically for the rest of the day.

LEVEL THREE

Summon Lightning: When in an area with a storm, you can summon a huge lightning strike. It has the following Specials:

- **Special:** if this hit Wounds, it deals two Wounds instead.
- **Special:** an additional nearby target is also hit.
- **Double-Special:** if this hit Wounds, it deals two Wounds instead.

, THE TRICKSTER GOD

For the smartest person in the room, the smartest god in the pantheon. Trouble.

LEVEL ONE

The Last Place You Look: Roll a Wisdom dice pool and gain one extra temporary Guard for each success you roll, up to a maximum of the level you have in this god.

If you recast the spell, all the temporary Guard disappears. For each level in Trickster God, the spell gains **Special:** gain an extra temporary Guard.

LEVEL TWO

Distraction: A catastrophic illusion startles everyone in a close area. Everyone, apart from the Godbinder, suffers a disadvantage. Has the **Special:** a specific individual can safely leave the situation, unobserved.

LEVEL THREE

Backstab: Must be cast whilst holding a symbolic, prepared dagger. If a target is unaware of your presence or has an ungarded back for you to stab in, your next attack gains:

- **Special:** this hit bypasses Guard
- **Double-Special:** all the hits in this attack bypass Guard
- **Special:** any enemies are now unaware of your presence
- **Special:** you gain knowledge of one secret of the target
- **Special:** one person close to target will betray them in a significant and painful way in the next week





Going Rogue allows a very different style of play from most Godbinders. Usually you're trapped in your debts, often risking death if you don't settle a deal. This gives an out... at the cost of dealing with a lot more problems from then on out.

GODBINDER ADVANCES

CHOOSE LEVEL IN GOD

Add a level in a god. This can be in a new god, or an old one. Describe how you bettered or founded your relationship with this god.

MYSTERIOUS WAYS

Choose one of the three options:

1. GODLY COMMANDMENT

One of your gods gives you a specific repeatable task to fulfil. You and your GM collaborate to decide what this is. Every time you fulfil this task, reduce your God Debt by one.

2. GOOD WORKS

Between adventures you automatically reduce your God Debt by one. Describe the act of devotion or servitude you did to do so.

3. UNCOVERING SCRIPTURE

In your adventures, you uncover a scripture lost by a God. Refer to the Starter Grimoire (page 370) for more on this. Choose any spell with a standard Risk of no more than the number of levels you have in the god multiplied by 5. This can now be cast as a scripture for that god. When you've picked, now decide: was this scripture lost, hidden or destroyed, and why?

GOING ROGUE

When a god calls in debt, you gain the option to not pay and break contact with them rather than suffer the punishment. Yes, they're going to be furious, but it's better than being dead, right?

If you break contract with a god:

- Double your debt to that god; if you ever make contact with that god again, the god will call in the increased debt for one Wound per debt remaining, as per usual. This will likely kill you.
- You lose access to all the scriptures for that god, and are unable to use the advancements Good Works or Godly Commandments to reduce the God Debt. Any God Debt reduction will solely come from the narrative.
- The god will do the godly equivalent of sending bailiffs. A GM may spend the player's debt to have unfortunate events related to the god's area of power occur—one debt per event. This will target you and likely anyone or anything you hold dear.
- If the debt is paid off, the relationship returns to normal, and the Godbinder regains all their powers.

WICKED OR DIVINE

You've been working in the realm of the gods for a while and gained a reputation—for better or worse. Choose one of the following options:

DIVINE: You become known as a holy figure. You are widely respected by those who believe in this religion and have a specific group of **Believers**. What is your teaching? How did people come to know of it? What do they call you?

WICKED: You have a debt-bonded servant one of your gods has given to you. Choose an existing NPC (or steed) to fill the role, or collaborate with GM to invent someone new using the secondary character rules (page 280).

HERETIC

Choose one of your gods. You now understand a fundamental truth about this god that all other believers in the religion deny. What is it?

Gain two trust in that god. All other believers of this mainstream faith view you in suspicion at best and hatred at worst.

GOD BANKING

Between sessions you can broker a deal between two of your gods, and move debt from one to the other. Describe how this deal works. Why did the Eldritch God take on the debt you owed to the God of Light?



HEAD OF RELIGION

You're the head (official or otherwise) of a god's worship. If there's a suitable cult in the fiction, use it. If not, there's a new cult; collaborate with the GM to define it.

You may move any or all of their levels in gods to the god whose religion they are now in charge of. Any unpaid debt to each god is kept and paid off via the rules in Going Rogue. The more levels you keep in other gods, the more your religion will resist your orders.

The religion is a faction in the Great Game. If you make it act in a way that's against the tenets of its religion, you must roll a Wisdom dice pool, with a difficulty equal to the total number of levels you have in other gods. If you took the Heretic advancement, increase the difficulty of any test here by 2.

If you have Believers from the advancement Wicked and Divine, and they are followers of another god, their personal respect to you is such they will convert.

If you found a New Covenant (see below), you immediately forfeit all this power.

A NEW COVENANT

You make a new god. Collaborate with GM to create its nature. It can be created whole-cloth based upon the Godbinder's personality or it can be a NPC who ascends to the position, or something else.

Collaborate with the GM to select or design three scriptures for the god.

You gain a level in the new god. You may immediately move any of your existing levels into this new god. If you have Believers, their personal respect to you is such they will convert.

CLASS DICE ADVANCE: YOUR HERESY IS NOTED

At level 12, your heresy is noted. A god who you have no levels in gets jealous.

*How can you not care about me at all? Why don't you slip into **my** DMs! Your other gods glare. Don't you dare pay **them** attention.*

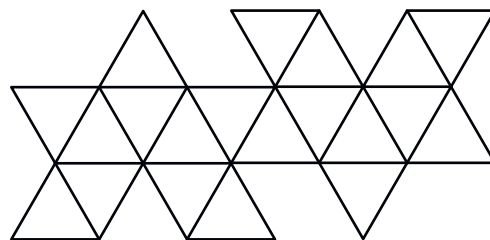
You are able to re-arrange all the levels you have in your gods. To work out how each god feel about your decision, go down this list. Things further down the list over-rule things higher up the list.

- If a god's level is higher than when they started, they're happy.
- If a god's level is lower than when they started, they're unhappy.
- If a god's level is the highest, they're happy.
- If a god's level was highest and now they're not, they're unhappy.
- If a god's level is zero, they're furious.

If a god is unhappy with you, you immediately take an extra God Debt to that god. If a god is furious with you, you take two God Debt.



4. MASTER



Yes, the GM has an actual character in DIE. For full details of how this works, see Rituals, which will walk you through step by step.

WHO RULES

The Master is the magic user as a reality manipulator. Sometimes you change the laws of physics. Sometimes you change the laws of the game. Sometimes you change the laws of fiction.

The Rules rule, and you rule the Rules. And you never, ever cheat.

Ever.

Oh, this is the GM section. We can be honest.

They cheat all the time.

PLAY THE MASTER IF YOU WANT TO...

- Facilitate the game
- Break the rules of space, time and narrative to cast powerful magic
- Cheat reality to get what you want at great risk

MASTER CREATION

STATS

All stats start at 2. You have 2 points to increase any stat(s) you wish. High Intelligence and Constitution is most connected with Masters.

EQUIPMENT

Choose one of the following options:

- ◆ Quarterstaff (**Special:** recover 1 Guard)
- ◆ An elegant handgun (**Special:** if a hit Wounds, it does 2 Wounds against unarmoured opponents)
- ◆ A huge tome (Advantage on tasks involving research, heavy enough to be an improvised club)
- ◆ Something else

YOUR LOOK

You are wearing (Defence 0):

- ◆ Wizard robes straight out of a 1980s kids fantasy cartoon
- ◆ Killer suits straight off a 1980s corporate bad guy
- ◆ Fetish-wear straight out of a 1990s vampire LARP
- ◆ Something else

MASTERY

Your Master has **Mastery**. This means they're allowed to add their D20 when casting spells. If the D20 is added to the pool, the dice roll includes the 20-Special which is activated on the result of a 20. **20-Special:** this success counts as two successes.

MY GAME, MY RULES

The Master has control over the nature of reality in the world they're visiting—both the rules of the world, the rules of the game and the rules of narrative. This means they can easily perform magical effects equivalent to anything a powerful wizard can do.

Like any NPC, the Master can perform any spell you think reasonable and likely, based upon character conception. They can fly, throw fireballs, turn invisible, heal people, create incredible firework displays and generally be a wizard.

Any attack they make can have **Special:** ignite opponent, inflicting 1 hit per round until extinguished.

The exception to this is any magical effect potent enough to match the Hardcore Cheats.

The GM rules for a Master are a simplified version of the full rules for a player character Master, which is in an appendix (page 351). You can run your Master using the player rules if you wish, but they are significantly more complicated without giving you sufficient reward.

HARDCORE CHEATING

The Master's control of the rules is such they can actively break them. This is called Cheating, altering the game in a special way.

You have two kinds of cheat available, able to be performed as an action in combat or as part of the narrative outside of it.:

- ◆ **A miraculous event:** Teleport to escape. Create a temptation that fulfills a desire. Summon a hugely powerful monster. Create a fortress. Regain your mastery. Bend a rule.
- ◆ **Undo the effects of what has just happened:** Uniquely, this can be done as an instant response (I.e. if you are killed, you regenerate from the harm.)

You can only safely use these abilities by spending **Cheat Tokens**.

At the start of each session, gain **Cheat Tokens** equivalent to the number of other players in the game. When a combat begins, check the number of players who are opposing the Master. If you have more cheat tokens than players who are opposing you, reduce your cheat tokens to that number.

You have to spend a **Cheat Token** to cheat. If you have no cheat tokens remaining, you can still Cheat, but are risking your existence.

Hide your D20 in one of two identical hiding places (your hands will do in a pinch!). Another player picks a hiding place. If they choose incorrectly, you get away with it and the effect happens. If they find it, the **powers that be** notice you. These are the judges of all reality, and do not approve of Masters cheating.

Your Master will not survive their attention

MASTER ADVANCEMENT

If your game is including advancement, Masters advance whenever players do. The only advance in the basic Master is to gain a **statistic point** any time the rest of the group does—as in, level 3, 6, 9 and 12. They gain no other abilities. They're already brutally powerful thanks to the cheat tokens.

Alternatively, the player character Master (page 362) includes a full advancement tree for Masters.

The powers that be? That sounds ominous. This is a big part of running a Player Master (see Appendix 351), and the Powers That Be are discussed at length on page 368. However, for the antagonist Master, it's not relevant to the experience of the game. All the players will know is that the Master dies, messily, as their powers fail dramatically.

Being caught by the Powers That Be is most likely to occur when a Master has no Cheat Tokens left, and are trying to undo the effects of what has just happened on an attack that's hit them. Not being sure if you're delivering the killing blow or not on a Master is a key part of the DIE's climax. This maintains tension while giving the joyous moment when a Master is consumed by their own hubris.



5. RITUALS

Throughout this chapter you'll find notes like these, pointing you in the direction of things elsewhere in the manual you could choose to add. Imagine DIE a great soup, and everything else as extra ingredients and spices that may suit your palette. We think it's best to skip them on the first read through. You should understand what tastes you want in your soup before you throw in all the chilli.

ONLINE PLAY! DIE is a game which fetishises physical objects and physical spaces a lot. However, with a few tweaks, it's perfectly playable online. We'll include these in side-bars at the appropriate points, like this. You can also find links to all our online resources with the QR Code below.



DIE Online Resources

WHAT IS 'RITUALS'?

This chapter is a set of procedures and rituals for running the purest expression of *DIE*. It is what you should play first. Everything else in the manual builds upon this material.

It is played by 2-6 players. One is the gamemaster (GM), who facilitates the game. It takes between 2-4 sessions to play.

In *DIE*:

1. Each player—including the GM—creates a flawed human being from the real world. These people consist of a social group who, at one point in their life, played a role-playing game together. This is each player's **Persona**.
2. Role-playing as your Persona, gather to play a new, strange game together: *DIE*. In-character as your Persona, the group each makes a **Paragon**—a character in that game.
3. At this point, the Persona are all transported to a fantasy world based on their old role-playing game world, and are transformed into the **Paragon** they've just designed.
4. Traverse this fantasy world, which echoes the Persona's obsessions, failings and losses. They discover the GM's Persona (aka the **antagonist**) is responsible for bringing them here, for their own personal reasons.
5. They confront the antagonist and discover they must come to a consensus on whether they stay or leave, one way or another. The Personas decide whether the game will end or go on forever.

This is a highly flexible structure, and will alter radically depending on the players and Persona. It is akin to the story of the first arc of *DIE - Fantasy Heartbreaker*.

This chapter is written as a conversation directly with the person who's running the game—the GM.

DIE is suggested to run for 2-4 sessions of play, but that's not a hard limit. It can carry on indefinitely. There's also a special guide to running long Campaigns on page 253. Alternatively, there's also a section on running "one-shot" single session games in Chapter 10: Scenarios and Social Groups.

DIE RITUALS CHECKLIST

PREPARATION (PAGE 110)

- ◆ Gather things you need for the game.

PREPARE THE MAGIC CIRCLE (PAGE 110)

- ◆ Determine the tone of the game
- ◆ Decide what inter-party conflict will be allowed
- ◆ Decide if the Dictator is available, and who they can use the Voice on
- ◆ Set out the desired tone of the ending
- ◆ Everyone says what they want to leave out of the game
- ◆ Everyone says what they want to invite in to the game
- ◆ Outline accountability and safety tools

PERSONA GENERATION (PAGE 113)

- ◆ Explain the concept of *DIE* the RPG
- ◆ Ask questions to define each Persona
- ◆ Make notes on each Persona
- ◆ Call for a short break and step away from the table
- ◆ Tell players that when they return, they will be sitting down as their Persona

DURING THE BREAK (PAGE 116)

- ◆ Decide which Persona will be given each Paragon
- ◆ If in doubt, ask players for their input

CHARACTER GENERATION (PAGE 117)

- ◆ Everyone returns to the table and make small talk
- ◆ Introduce *DIE* the game to the Persona
- ◆ Distribute the dice and sheets to each player
- ◆ Go through the sheets together and generate your characters
- ◆ Tell the players to pick up the dice, close their eyes and lower the dice to the table
- ◆ Tell them to open their eyes and say they're somewhere else...

INTO DIE (PAGE 118)

- ◆ All players—including GM—stop embodying their Persona and start acting as a standard RPG
- ◆ Describe the situation. The Persona are in a dark-fantasy version of the room the players in. They are still their real human selves. The dice are in front of them
- ◆ The Master's Persona grabs the D20, and transforms into their character
- ◆ Use a Cheat Token to teleport away
- ◆ At any point, if a Persona grabs their dice, they transform into their character
- ◆ Shortly afterwards, Fallen arrive. (1 Fallen per player.)
- ◆ Afterwards, the players can leave the area. They find themselves in the bar they started their first ever fantasy game in
- ◆ End the session



THE CLOSING RITUAL (PAGE 119)

- Solemnly collect the dice from each player, and end the game by thanking everyone for playing
- Decompression questions
- Stars and Wishes

SESSION 2 PREPARATION (PAGE 122)

- Read through the next sections
- Examine Personas' core lack
- Work out Personas' temptations
- Work out necessary encounters
- Decide the Antagonist's motivation
- Prepare your palette
- Prepare your questions
- Don't over-prepare

LATER SESSIONS (PAGE 126)

- All sessions begin with a ceremonial re-passing out of the dice, and end with the closing ritual
- Define the nature of the bar, and inform the players of the rules of how to get home
- When party leaves bar, define rest of world by working on your notes, or asking questions of what Persona remember about their gaming world, using the answers as a basis for what happens next
- Between every encounter, present an Omen of Doom
- After all necessary encounters have occurred you may progress to the climax

THE CLIMAX (PAGE 135)

- At any point in the final encounter, any player can call for a vote. Ask each player if they want to end the game. The second one doesn't, stop
- If everyone agrees to go home, they go home. If everyone agrees to stay, they stay. Dead people don't get a vote
- If they don't come to an agreement, the fantasy world is destroyed
- If group is at an impasse, start the world ending
- Before you destroy the world, give the players one last chance to end the game

ENDGAME (PAGE 136)

- If the players chose to leave die: everyone are back where they started, except anyone left behind as Fallen. For each Persona who made it home, ask "How has this experience changed you?" To each Fallen Persona, ask how their absence impacts the real world
- If the players chose to stay in Die: To each Fallen Persona, ask how their absence impacts the real world. For each Persona who voted to stay, ask each player what their life is like in this fantasy world
- If there is a stalemate: give each Persona a chance to define their final moment before reality collapses, then ask each "how has your absence impacted the real world?"
- Perform the closing ritual one final time
- After the player answers the question, the GM can add a note to it



DIE Online Resources

ONLINE PLAY! If you don't want to play with physical dice for each player, you can absolutely play with online dice. You can find links to some resources with the QR Code above. However, we do advise the Master character at least to have a set of dice as object for some of the rituals!

The “what sort of person do you want to play?” is because it's possible a Persona's desires are entirely the opposite of the players. Your Persona may despise the idea of being a wizard, but you as a player really want to role-play that desperately annoyed person. This stage makes it clear what we're looking for.

BEFORE THE GAME

To play *DIE*, you gather the following:

- 2-6 players, including one who will be the GM
- This book
- A D20, D12, D10, D8, a handful of D6—one of which can be written on with a marker—and a D4
- Writing utensils including an marker that won't ruin your dice
- A handful tokens—coins, buttons, whatever
- A printout of the *DIE* class character sheets

At the start of the game, explain the following:

- Explain the concept of the game: a group of real-world, deeply-flawed humans who have played a role-playing game together, and are now gathered together to play one more game... which ends up with them travelling to a fantasy world, and trying to find their way home... or not. The game rewards emotionally complicated, flawed characters. There is the potential for player-versus-player combat. The aim of the game is to explore who these people really are.
- Discuss the tone you want for the game. If this game was a movie, what would its rating be? How graphic is its violence? Are there any themes or content we don't want to include? *DIE* can become an existential weird horror game, or can be a portal-fantasy romp—what do the players want? Remember: the GM is allowed to have preferences too.
- If a player is broadly aware of RPGs, ask what sort of classes in other games they like playing (“I like wizards and bards and don't like fighters”). If a player is less aware of genre conventions, ask the sort of heroic figure they are interested in being (“I kind of love people like Conan—just anyone who gets stuck in”). If the players know the Paragons, they can be specific of what class they want to play (“I kinda want to play a Dictator”)

PREPARING THE MAGIC CIRCLE

Before the beginning ritual starts, take some time to mark out the boundaries of the Magic Circle. Games are conversation mediated by rules. Here, together, we decide the highest level rules in the game which will govern everything else, to ensure we're all comfortable with where we go together. The collaboration document will help the players, including the GM, to make decisions about the tone and themes that this game will explore. Make sure that every player gets a chance to contribute while you're answering questions on this document. This gives everyone equal control of what content should and shouldn't be included in the game at the beginning, so that we all can craft a story that everyone feels comfortable with and is excited about. This conversation doesn't need to be long or complicated and the group's feelings may change over the course of the campaign, but it is essential to make sure everyone is on the same page when the game starts.

Each question has a default option that you might expect if you were to play a game of *DIE* based on the comic, but that isn't the only way to play this game. Choose the options that align with what you and the other players are most aligned with.

TONE

What is the tone of the game?

- Standard fantasy

Personas have left their mundane lives to enter a truly fantastic world where they can be heroes and right old wrongs, at least in fiction. There's always a grey area but it's easier to distinguish between right and wrong. The world is exciting and dangerous, but challenges exist to be triumphed over, and there is always hope.

- Dark fantasy (default)

Personas will confront their past regrets, fight old enemies, remember old grudges and make hard choices in a world where it's hard to tell if there is a right thing to do. The world is frightening and full of challenges, but they may be overcome if you fight hard enough and are willing to make sacrifices.

- Dark horror

Personas are trapped in a landscape of their worst fears. Every choice is the wrong one. The world is trying to kill you, and there's a good chance it will. The question is, how much of a fight will you put up before it gets you?

Deciding on the general tone of a game not only gives the GM something to focus on when prepping for sessions, but also gives players a guide to what actions may or may not fit in the kind of story you want to tell. Certain actions or plot points that would work in a dark fantasy tone game might be too much for a standard fantasy game, but might not be enough for a dark horror game.

INTER-PARTY CONFLICT

How are we going to treat direct conflict between player characters?

- No direct conflict between player characters
- During the climax, direct conflict between player characters might emerge but is otherwise not a featured part of our story (default)
- Direct conflict between player characters is possible throughout the game, if the narrative demands it

Tensions between Personas may boil over into conflicts between their Paragons, especially as we reach the game's climax. Decide now how far that conflict goes so that no one is surprised when it happens in game, but remember that character conflict is not player conflict.

THE DICTATOR ROLE

The Dictator paragon is able to influence and manipulate other people's emotions via the Using the Voice ability, with permanent emotional consequences for characters on critical failures. Will we be using the Dictator role in this game?

- Yes (default)
- No

If yes, can the Dictator use the Voice to control other player characters?

- Yes
- No, only on NPCs (default)
- Maybe, but the player playing the Dictator will need to get consent each time they use it on another player character

It's important to make sure that everyone is ok with having a role like the Dictator in play, and in what capacity. Some players may be fine with having Using the Voice used on them and some may not want it at all, some may just want you to ask first. It's important to know who is ok with what—but if anyone is uncomfortable with even the idea of having a Dictator in the game, then just leave it out.

THE ENDING

Knowing that we can check-in and change our minds as our feelings evolve over the course of the game, what kind of ending are we aiming for right now?

- A hard-won happy ending
- An emotionally complicated but satisfying conclusion (default)
- A cathartic tragedy

This question isn't about deciding how the game is going to end before you start, it's about figuring out how to want to feel when the game is over. Any of these endings can fit with any of the three tones above, which is why you're choosing them separately. It's easier to steer a plane if you know where you want to land it, and you can always check-in and adjust your course as the game goes on.

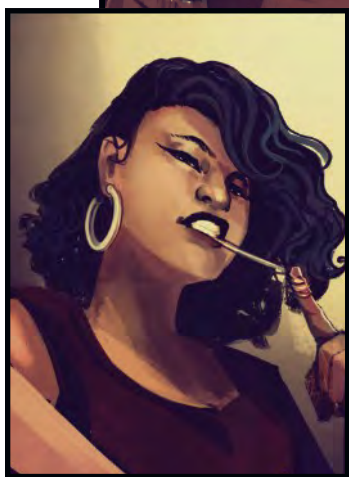
WHAT ARE WE LEAVING OUT OF THE GAME?

Use this opportunity for everyone to list out what you want to avoid in the game. This could be something they think doesn't fit the tone, subject matter they are uncomfortable with, things they are afraid of, or even tropes they think are boring. If you can't think of everything right away, that's ok—the group should be reviewing this section frequently. If someone asks to have something left out in the middle of play, then add it to this list to make sure it doesn't get mentioned again.

WHAT ARE WE INVITING INTO OUR GAME?

Now that we know what's off the table, it's time to talk about what's on it. It's easier to avoid something you're not interested in if you're too busy leaning into the stuff you are interested in. This is also really helpful for the GM because now they will have all sorts of ideas for stuff they can add into the game that the group will definitely be interested in.

The discussion of tone and the X-Card (as invented by John Stavropoulos) are what are called safety tools (or support tools).



ONLINE: Rather than walk away from the table and return as your Persona, you should ask the players to turn off their cameras and step away. Encourage them to think about their Persona, imagine what they're doing on the way to the game, and really get into the shoes. Then, when they sit back down, say "I am [the Master's Persona]" to yourself and turn on the camera and play.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How will we make sure that we stick to what we have agreed upon here? How will we check-in and change things as needed? Other than the built-in X-Card, what safety tools are we using to help us do this? For more information and some recommendations about safety tools, check page 142.

PERSONA GENERATION

Next, we define the messy real-world Persona who our players will embody.

Read the following (or paraphrase):

"You're a group of people who at one point in their life have played a normal fantasy role-playing game and have gathered together to play a new game together. We're now going to answer questions both individually and as a group to work out who we are, and exactly how we're all messed up."

First, we have to ascertain how everyone knows one another.

On the following pages, are various questions to generate unique social groups with a shared theme. There are more options available in Chapter 10: Scenarios & Social Groups.

Ask and answer questions, as directed.

Encourage people to make their Persona messy and imperfect, with unfulfilled needs and distinct lacks. Many questions have suggested answers, but players are encouraged to modify them or make them up entirely. The GM should demonstrate this early on by making a choice that isn't a listed answer. All players (including the GM) can certainly ask the table for suggestions, but each have the final choice.

Make notes on each Persona. A simple list of the key facts is great.

Continue until all questions are answered to the group's satisfaction. Note that players will get to define more things and answer more questions about their Persona later in the game. This is the start, not the end of Persona generation.

After this, call for a short break. Tell the players that when they sit back down on the table, they are sitting down as their Persona. Whatever they say, unless they expressly state otherwise, will be things their Persona actually says. The game is beginning.

REUNITED

CONCEPT

Reunited is closest to the concept in DIE the comics, contrasting their youthful fantasies with their adult realities.

You all used to play fantasy role-playing games together as teenagers at school. Now, years down the line, you're all back in town for a school reunion and have decided to get together to play a game for old time's sake.

All players should feel free to ask each other further questions inspired by the following questions.

The GM chooses one player answers a question, but the group can and should chime in:

- Why did the group get together?
 - ◆ The only kids at school who'd even dream to play a RPG
 - ◆ The arty kids from the drama society
 - ◆ Detention kids and the smokers from behind the bike sheds
 - ◆ Something else
- What was the school like?
 - ◆ Average comprehensive
 - ◆ A shithole
 - ◆ Expensive private school
 - ◆ Something else
- The GM's Persona ran the game. What was the name of the fantasy world where our game was set?
 - ◆ The Eternal Empire of Athan
 - ◆ The Fields of the Zephyr Children
 - ◆ The Shadowlands
 - ◆ Something else
- How many years has it been since you left school?
 - ◆ 5 years
 - ◆ 10 years
 - ◆ 20 years
 - ◆ Something else

Your name tends to follow your personality. It's useful in play to write it down along with your real name and put it on a piece of paper before you. This means that everyone can keep everyone's character (and real name) straight. DIE's a game where you skip between real and player names a lot, so it's really useful to have something to keep it straight.

At any point, A player can decide upon their Persona's name. If so, write it down and tell everyone.

EACH PLAYER ANSWERS...

- At the most basic level, how would people think of you at school...
 - ◆ Academic A-student
 - ◆ Class joker
 - ◆ Just plain creepy
 - ◆ Bully
 - ◆ Jock
 - ◆ Wallflower
 - ◆ An elitist snob
 - ◆ A tech nerd
 - ◆ A hard case
 - ◆ Something else
- That's the stereotype of you. In what way are you different from the stereotype?
- When the GM's Persona invited you to the game, why did you decide to join?
- What did you love and hate about playing the game with the rest of the group?
- What were your interests? Sports? TV shows? Books? Games? Comics? Name your faves. Why did you like them?

Ask each player one of the big questions. Note which big question you ask each player, as each has a second big question later.

- A. You had a significant gift at school. Something with real potential, and everyone was aware of it. What was it?
 - ◆ I was a hugely gifted writer. I won prizes
 - ◆ I was an incredible actor. I starred in all the school plays
 - ◆ I was a sports star. I was by far the best in my school
 - ◆ Something else
- B. You had something which was especially important to you. What was it?
 - ◆ Dazzling good looks
 - ◆ My teenager lover, who was everything to you
 - ◆ I was really popular
 - ◆ My supportive family who encouraged me, no matter what
 - ◆ Something else
- C. You had a goal in life. What was it?
 - ◆ I always just wanted kids and a family
 - ◆ I wanted to be a successful, rich entrepreneur
 - ◆ I wanted to turn your passion into a life
 - ◆ I wanted to get the hell out of this town and never come back
 - ◆ Something else
- D. You had a goal in life. What was it?¹
 - ◆ I always just wanted kids and a family
 - ◆ I wanted to be a successful, rich entrepreneur
 - ◆ I wanted to turn your passion into a life
 - ◆ I wanted to get the hell out of this town and never come back
 - ◆ Something else
- E. Your teenage years had something specifically shitty to deal with. What was it?
 - ◆ One or both of my parents died
 - ◆ I fell into the wrong crowd and got a record
 - ◆ I was seriously ill
 - ◆ I had to stay in the closet
 - ◆ Something else
- F. You had an all-consuming interest, your absolute obsession. What was it?
 - ◆ Role-playing games, of course!
 - ◆ Political activism
 - ◆ Working out
 - ◆ Helping people
 - ◆ Something else

GM chooses one player to answer any of these questions, but the group can and should chime in:

- Where did you play together?
- Who was the smartest of you?
- Who was the best looking of you?
- Who did people most pick on?
- Did you ever have a crush on anyone in the group? And if so, did it ever go anywhere?
- Who was the group scared of at school? Why?

EACH PLAYER ANSWERS

- Who was your favourite and least favourite person in the group? Why?

Time passes.

You're now adults.

To each player, ask the corresponding second part to their big question:

- A. Your potential future never happened—not even close. Why?
- B. That thing that was important to you. You've lost it. How?
- C. That goal in life? You didn't achieve it. Why?
- D. That goal in life? You achieved it. It hasn't made you happy. Why?
- E. The thing which made your life bad then? Its effects still haunt you today. How does it impact your life?
- F. Your all-consuming interest? It's no longer in your life. Why?

EACH PLAYER ANSWERS...

Tell me about your life now.

- What do you do now? Married, dating or single? Divorced? Kids?
- What is your biggest responsibility in your life?
- How does that effect your life? Better or worse?
- When the invite to the reunion arrived, what made you not want to come... and why did you come anyway?
- What did you think when my Persona invited you to play a game at the reunion?

¹No, these aren't an accidental repeat.

If playing online, change the last question to: Unfortunately, the reunion was cancelled. The GM Persona's arranged this game online instead. What did you think about it?

DURING THE BREAK

During the break, before people return to the table, the GM decides which player will be giving which Paragon sheet to play.

This is based upon the player's previously discussed preferences of what sort of characters they like playing and which Paragon seems best for the Persona the player has generated.

Speaking broadly, here's some useful guidelines.



Dictator (D4):

Diplomats, bards, those who like character manipulation and interaction. Themes of dominion and power. A mature player who can be trusted to treat the darker possibilities of the class seriously.



Fool (D6):

Fighters, especially those who like swashbuckling. Rogues of every sort, including spellcasting ones. The Persona (or player) who has trouble taking things seriously. The least experienced players—the Fool is “easiest” to play.



Emotion Knight (D8):

Fighters, knights, paladins. A Persona who has an obvious relationship with an emotion to explore—perhaps characters with obsessions generally.



Neo (D10):

Thieves, rogues, hackers, anyone Persona with interest in technology. If a player has interest in having a pet. Themes of money, compulsion and even addiction.



Godbinder (D12):

Primarily clerics, but anyone who is especially interested in spellcasting in any way. A Persona (or player) who likes role-playing with their own personal NPCs. Themes of debt, bartering and getting what you want through other people.



The Master (D20):

Reserved for the GM's Persona.

If you're unsure about the decision, check in with the player to see what classes excite them and which actively repulse them. Note that many of the characters—the Neo, the Fool and the Godbinder—can be shaped pretty broadly. A Neo is mostly thought of as a thief or a rogue, but can be a cybernetic killer if you make certain choices. In terms of the amount of rules to understand, the Fool, the Neo and the Emotion Knight are the easiest of the three.

You'll see there's various hard limits in the above. One class per team, GM always as a Master, max group size of six. If you're interested in breaking any of them (more than one player of the same class, having the Antagonist be something other than a Master, having a non-GM player be a master or playing with a larger group) see page 168.



DIE Online Resources

Tell the players that if they want to speak out of character, they should raise their hand. We borrowed this from Live Action Role-Play (LARP).

Why the Fool's separate spiel? Well, the rest of the game runs on six sided dice. While the other dice are unique, there clearly are other six sided dice... so we wryly lean into that, and cement the Fool's position at the table. The easily underestimated, jokey, common touch.

ONLINE PLAY. Ask the player in question to hold up the appropriate dice. Then do the ritual, holding up the same dice, and pass it to the camera. Get them to hold up the dice to their camera. The ritual energies pass from one dice to the other. If you get good at timing this, you can actually make it appear there's only one dice at any time, so you move your dice off camera the second they hold up theirs.

ONLINE PLAY. While you can all play with your own printed out sheets, there are also online sheets people can use. We recommend Character Keepers—a spreadsheet where all the sheets are collated. You can get one linked from the DIE Online Resources page (see adjacent QR Code).

CHARACTER GENERATION

RETURNING TO THE TABLE

Players return to the game as their Persona. Make small talk in-character: How was the journey? How's work and the kids? Have they caught that new show on Netflix?

When the group seems settled in, turn conversation to the game at hand.

GM says something like the following:

"Hey—do you remember that thing back in the 1990s? Those kids who were playing an RPG and just disappeared. They were just gone. For two years, no-one had any idea where they were. When they turned back up, none of them ever talked about what happened. Well, you know what?"

I managed to get hold of a copy of the game off the Internet. Let's play it."

DISTRIBUTING THE DICE

Distribute dice and character sheets. Start with all the players' other than the Fool. In order, take their dice—D4 for Dictator, D8 for Emotion Knight, D10 for Neo, D12 for Godbinder—lock eyes and intensely recite:

"This is your die. There is no other die like this in this whole game. This is special. This is yours. "Use it well, [Fill in class name.]"

...and put it in their hand.

The Fool should be given their dice last, with a slightly tweaked ritual:

"This is your die. This is exactly the same as every other die in the game. There's nothing special about this die at all. Use it, Fool"

Finally hold up the D20 with a flourish, and say...

"And this one is mine."

Pass each player their Paragon sheet.

GOING THROUGH THE SHEETS

Guide the group through their Paragon sheets.

While details vary, the first page takes an almost identical structure for all archetypes. The second and later pages is information which is only relevant for the specific archetype, and includes all the special cases which make each character class unique. As such, you can go through the first sheet together, before separating on the second sheet.

As GM, help the other players read and understand their Paragon sheets together.

When the players have all finished making their choices, ask each player to briefly describe the choices they've made.

THE RITUAL

Ask everyone to pick up their class dice, and close their eyes.

Tell all the players to lower their dice to the table, and then—simultaneously—release them. Ask them to count to three.

Pause. Tell them to open their eyes.

Tell them they are somewhere completely different.

Welcome to **Die**.

INTO DIE

At this point, all the players—including the GM—**stop embodying their Persona** and start acting more like characters in a standard RPG, freely moving between external description (“my character darts across the room!”), first person embodiment (“Hey, Carla, call me a coward, but I don’t think trying to fight the dragon with the face of our old headmistress is a good idea.”) and just being the player (“Hey—what does this rule mean?”)

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The Persona are sitting around what looks like the room which **the players** are sitting. However, despite having the exact layout of that real-world room, everything is wrong. Everything is too bright, despite no light source. All windows are opaque. Everything feels solid and real, but simultaneously wrong in a way that you can’t explain.

There’s two exceptions:

- The Persona, who look just like they did in the real world.
- And the dice, which float before the Persona, slowly rotating, and softly, sinisterly glowing

As the GM, act amazed, say “It worked!” and grab your D20. The antagonist has just transformed from their normal human form into the Paragon you created in Character Generation. Linger on the description of the moment. Make this your full on Magical Girl transformation.

Then, your character disappears, teleporting away. Take a **Cheat Token** (as explained on the Master’s sheet) and toss it over the table. If anyone asks, say it’s your character spending some of their resources to do what they did. **Cheating** is explained on your Master’s character sheet.

If another Persona touches their dice, the dice fuses with their body and they too transform physically into the Paragon they just designed, gaining access to all those abilities. Encourage the players to describe the awesome physical transformation. Stress that mentally they remain their very-human Persona. A Persona will find themselves repelled from any dice that is not their own. However, there is nothing forcing a player to pick up their dice.

When the scene slows down or someone tries to leave the room, the Fallen arrive.

This first room is a chance to introduce the player’s to the mechanics of the game, and also act as a liminal space between the real world and the rest of the game—kind of a loading screen, as the GM doesn’t exactly know what happens next. If you want to replace the “Use the player’s real location” with another first place, see page 172.

ONLINE PLAY. As everyone is in different rooms, you can’t use the room you’re all in. Instead, you’ll note there’s a Persona question which asks where the Persona played the game. Use a warped version of that. Ask the players’ questions about the room to establish its details—its size, where the doors were, etc.

The Fallen are one of the DIE iconic monsters. For more on The Fallen see page 188 in the Bestiary.

If a Persona has not transformed into their Paragon, all their stats are two, their Willpower is 4 and their Defence 0. This is the standard human stat line.

DIE has you arrive into a warped version of your old fantasy gaming world, but it will still operate if you go to literally any fantasy world. See 172 for alternate ideas of where to go, and how to do it.

AGAINST THE FALLEN

The Fallen enter the room, mindless and hungering for flesh. There is one Fallen for each Persona in the room, and they block the exit they've entered through. A combat begins and lets the players have a chance to explore the rules. If the combat ends before you feel everyone's had a chance to experiment with the rules, make more Fallen arrive.

Think of the Fallen as a cybernetic merge of orcs and zombies that shamble forward with all the energy of an angry vat of meat. Their garbled voices sounds like the static from an old 1980s TV. Fallen vary hugely, and it's a good chance to add your own spin or include details from one of the Persona's backstories—for example, if they were bullied at school by the football team, perhaps tattered shirts in the school colours...

BASIC FALLEN

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	2	4	0		
Abilities					

Frenzied: Advantage on hand-to-hand attacks but they can never have *any* Guard.

If a player uses their action to grab a dice, as well as transforming into the Persona, let them take another action immediately with their new abilities.

The combat continues until the Fallen are defeated or all the Paragon' die.

In the unlikely event of any players dying, they will arise as Fallen at the end of the combat. This happens whenever a Persona dies in the fantasy world. Pass each a Fallen sheet (see page 120). If all the players die, the Fallen feed and then leave. The Fallen will be gone by the time the players wake as Fallen.

THE ARRIVAL

With the Fallen gone, the Paragons can move through the exit, which has a set of steps curling upwards towards a trapdoor. When they open it, they'll find it emerges in the middle of a fantasy tavern. All the clientèle turn to look at the players.

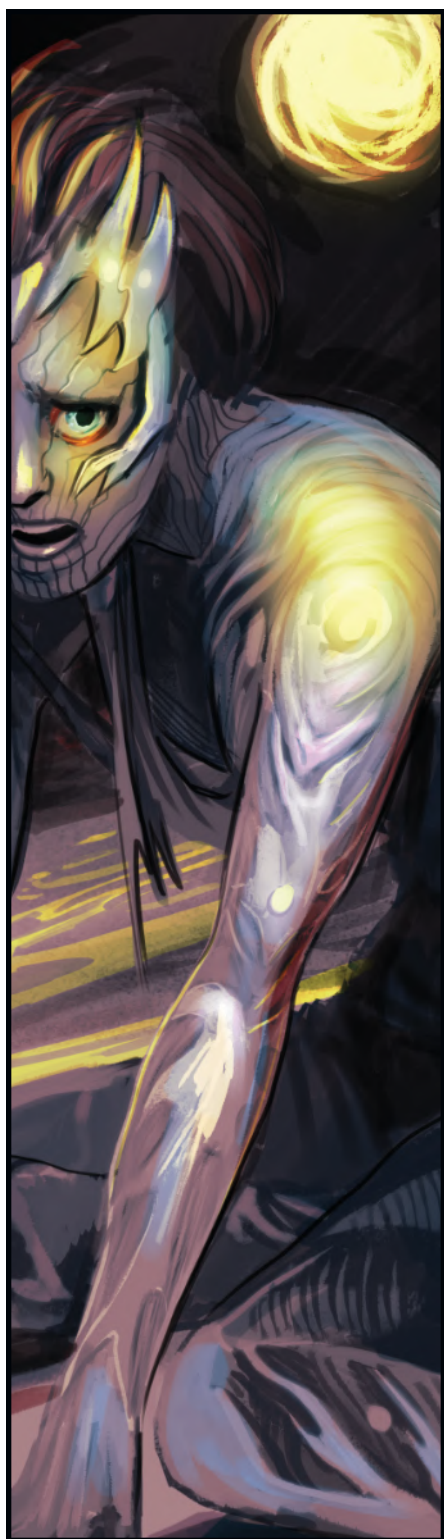
Horrifically, despite having never been here, they will recognise it. It's the tavern where they started their first adventure in the fantasy game they all played together.

You know the name of the world from Persona Generation.

Tell the players welcome to whatever that name is and then end the first session.

THE CLOSING RITUAL

Solemnly collect the dice from all the players and then formally end the game by saying "Thank you for playing."



PLAYER FALLEN

You are an undead monster. If you kill one of the other player characters, you become alive again.

UNLIFE AFTER DEATH

You have died in the realm of Die. You are a monster—perhaps one similar to one of the ones you’ve been fighting. You thought they were little more than undead zombies. Now you know better.

You are different from some of them in one key way: you are sentient, holding onto your consciousness and your free will.

For now.

You lose access to any special abilities granted by your class, but keep your stats and equipment. Your vote to go home no longer counts, because you’re dead.

FALLEN CLAWS

While your old weaponry might look the same, it’s changed. Many Fallen abandon the pretence, lose their weapons, and attack with claws sprouting from their body. All attacks you make gain **Special**: if this attack causes a Wound the target is poisoned. (Lose one Health per round until a character succeeds a Constitution test.)

If you provide the killing Wound to another Persona-controlled character, you immediately come to life and regain all your class abilities. Pass the Fallen sheet to the player you’ve just killed. They’re Fallen now. You instinctively know this to be true.

You are hungry for and jealous of what your peers possess. As far as you know, this is the only certain way a Fallen can return to their living status.

SECOND DEATH?

You’re dead. At least the worst has happened, right? If you die again, you will rise again at the end of the encounter. You have a nagging feeling there are only so many times this can happen before you lose something fundamental. (You’re right. GM: see Running The Fallen on page 164 for more information.)

So far things have had flexibility, but we’ve followed a set path. Arrive on Die, faced the Fallen and ended up in a bar. Now, our narrative locomotion goes off-the-rails. As such, you need to do a bit more prep.

These two pages duplicate the rules on the Fallen handout, which are given to a player when their character dies for the first time.



NOT JUST A MONSTROUS FACE

Fallen are monsters, but some are interesting monsters. Your new form gives you a new ability. Choose one:

Flight

- You are able to soar through the sky at a sprinting pace. Decide what this looks like:
 - ◆ Wings
 - ◆ Thrusters
 - ◆ Enormous blood-coated springs
 - ◆ Something else

Intangibility

- You are able to move spectrally through objects that bar your path. (This gives you no specific bonus to resist damage.) Decide what this looks like
 - ◆ Classic spectral
 - ◆ A burst of digital noise
 - ◆ Transformation into burrowing worms
 - ◆ Something else

Uncanny Senses

- You can perceive things far beyond normal human capabilities. Decide which type of thing you can sense:
 - ◆ Strong emotions
 - ◆ Heartbeats and breathing
 - ◆ Narrative
 - ◆ Something else

Size Changing

- You can swell to four times your height or shrink to a tenth of your size. Decide what this looks and/or sounds like:
 - ◆ Cracking gristle and bone
 - ◆ Folding and unfolding fractal limbs
 - ◆ An incongruous slide-whistle
 - ◆ Something else

Shape Changing

- You can change your form to appear to be something else... until you attack. Decide what you tell is, no matter your form:
 - ◆ Your voice remains an awful undead crackle
 - ◆ You smell like the rotting flesh you are
 - ◆ All animals view you with fear and suspicion
 - ◆ Something else

SESSION 2 PREPARATION

READ THROUGH THE NEXT SECTIONS

If you want a worked example of how you go through these preparation steps, there's one in Appendix 3 (page 380).

Up to this point, the game has followed a set path. From now on, this changes.

We provide a structure, but it is customized by the group's choices during Persona-generation, as well as the choices made while interacting with the world. Read the rest of the information and chew it over.

You'll see that elements are plugged into the structure. What is important to do between the sessions is prepare some *ideas* for these elements. What sort of things *are* going to be plugged in?

Don't be intimidated by the following sections. This process should take you less than an hour—likely a *lot* less. It is a glorified “read the notes on the Persona and have a little think.”

THE PERSONAS' CORE LACK

We need to work out what could tempt a Persona to abandon their life on Earth to stay on Die. This means identifying their **core lack**. What do they not have on Earth which we could offer them on Die?

It's likely that the **big question** is the source of this. They're big questions that are designed to give a big meaty hole in their heart.

For example, these are all good examples of core lack's:

- Always wanted to be a musician—never made it
- Was attractive when young, and now is ageing and their vanity can't handle it
- Was head over heels in love with someone—but they died in a car crash
- Is secretly gay, and has never come out because they're afraid of their parent's response

THE PERSONAS' TEMPTATIONS

Once you've identified a Persona's core lack, you have to work out what the world would offer them. This is identified by noting how the problem could be removed.

- They are an incredibly gifted musician, and their work is adored
- They become attractive again
- They are reunited with their dead love
- This world is free of homophobia and is an escape from their parent's judgement

How they will integrate into the world depends on what sort of desire they have. There are, speaking broadly, three sorts of lack: **passive**, **absent** and **active** ones.

Passive	Lacks which they wish to be. (“They become attractive again.”)
Active	Lacks which they wish to do. (“They are an incredibly gifted musician, and their work is adored.”)
Absence	Lacks are those which they wish to have. (“They are reunited with their dead love.”)

If a lack seems to fill multiple slots, count it as each of those slots. For example, “*This world is free of homophobia and an escape from their parent’s judgement.*” could be argued to be all three—passive (“*they wish to live in a world like that*”), active (“*they wish to act in a world like that*”) and arguably absence (“*they wish to have supportive parents for once in their life.*”)

NECESSARY ENCOUNTERS

Now you work out how each of these can be presented to the Persona. These are the Necessary Encounters the game requires to be meaningful for the Persona.

Passive	Lacks can be given to a Persona upon entering the world. If they are not. The Persona should be given access via an encounter.
Absence	Lacks are at least in part withheld from the Persona until the climax of the game. As in, a Persona cannot fully possess it until they choose to stay.
Active	Lacks should be presented to the relevant Persona along the way as a chance to do.

Now you understand what you need, decide how the each Persona could encounter their temptation.

For example:

They become attractive again:	The Persona’s Paragon is likely already beautiful. If not, some manner of magical beauty potion.
Be a musician:	Some challenge along the way can be overcome by the gift of performance. After that, they are treated like a superstar by everyone they meet.
Reunited with dead love:	The Master has the dead love, and can resurrect them in the final encounter or the dead love is a character in the world, living here, and doing their own thing.
Coming out:	A normalisation of homosexual relationships in the world as a background detail. At least one encounter for them to have a chance to explore that.

This is the first mention of the phrase “echoes”. Echoes are our term for people in the game world which recall directly people in the real world. See page 187 for more.

Perhaps an encounter with some characters who are an **Echo** to their parents, but supportive.

At the end of this, you will have your list of necessary encounters. This is a key number for the game structure. Before the game is over, you should have ticked off everything on your list.

These core lacks create temptations, and character relates to those temptations—submitting, rejecting or using it in some other way, will be the backbone of their character arc. *DIE* is a game about discovering who these Persona really are.



DECIDE UPON YOUR ANTAGONIST'S MOTIVATION

The Antagonist came across the game, which apparently lets them get their dreams. Did they find the game in an old shop? Was it gifted by a mysterious friend or relative? Or did they literally just get it off eBay? Consider: how much do you think the Antagonist believes the promise is real? Try and get inside their initial mind.

As a Persona, the Antagonist also has a core lack. This forms the reason why they decided to play the game. If the core lack does not seem powerful enough to do this, look at the core lack and think—“How could this be worse than the other Personas know?”

If you think the answer is still not bad enough to drag people into the fantasy world, add this:

I have no power in the real world.

My life is not what I thought it would be. Here, I can be a hero, a monarch, a god. Why not be here?”

Ask yourself: how sympathetic do you think the Master's desire is? Are they an absolute villain, or just weak, or actually even a victim? Dragging your friends into another dimension can be an absolute cry for help.

Now look at the other Persona, and ask yourself for each one: does the Antagonist believe this is best for the other Persona too, or are they just collateral damage? Or is this an act of revenge?

Knowing your Antagonist and why they've done this will all feed into the drama, arguments and negotiations of the climax, where the group decide whether to return to reality or not. Refer to page 136 for more on the Endgame.

PREPARING YOUR PALETTE

You now mine the Personas' backstory for interesting elements that could come up in a game. This is your palette. This is your raw material for personalising the adventure, narrative elements to colour the story if you need them.

This should be a simple list of things, including:

- Real world people mentioned or implied (partners, parents, children, teachers)
- Real world settings (classrooms, schools, homes, jobs, setting for major life events)
- Obsessions people (characters or real-world people from any obsessions—lead characters in TV shows, favourite pop-stars)
- Obsession settings (places from their fave comic book, showbiz parties)

As you write them, try to think of ways you might want to use them in play and include this in your notes.

You don't need to use these in play, like the **core lacks**, but they're still useful for adding texture and content to the world.

PREPARING QUESTIONS

We gathered some useful information during the first session, but it's always useful to know more about the Personas and their life. Make a list for each Persona of things you want to know more about.

For example:

- ◆ They mentioned they had a partner and kids: What are they like?
- ◆ They mentioned they liked Star Wars: who was their favourite character? Which was their favourite movie?
- ◆ They mentioned a mean boss or a schoolyard bully: what made them so bad?

In the same way as the palette, you don't need to ask all of these, but these are a handy fallback. They are particularly useful as a pacing tool.

When asking questions, be sure to address these questions to the **Persona** not the **player** and making the distinction clear. Try using the following construction: "Hey—[player name]. What does [Persona's name] remember about that?"

DON'T OVER PREPARE

Having to pull stuff out your behind isn't the worst thing in the world. *DIE* is written to be able to be played with very little prep.

The most important thing is to do slightly less than the amount of prep that feels good for you, perhaps 20-30% less than what feels natural for a "normal" role-playing game session. It's not meant to be homework.

This is to minimise unwanted bleed. This is when a player and the Persona they are playing get mixed up to some degree. For more on Safety and Bleed, see pages 142 and 145.

Personally, I just think of a few questions, a few visuals, a few set-pieces and one or two fun characters, then write down enough stuff to remind me of them. Resist the urge to plan everything.



THE LATER SESSIONS

With your preparation done, you're ready to get the players back together to continue their adventure.

THE OPENING AND CLOSING RITUALS

All sessions begin with a ceremonial re-passing out of their dice to the players. Apologise to the Fool for still not having a special dice. Come up with a different excuse every time, especially if it makes it more interesting.

All sessions end with gathering the dice and thanking people for playing.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLOT

The Persona have arrived in their teenage fantasy RPG world. They discover that the Antagonist is in a stronghold, performing an enormous magical rite. To get home, the Persona have to get there and confront them.

As the Persona travel across the land, they discover that it isn't just their teenage fantasy world—it also includes warped echoes of their real lives and their obsessions. They're reminded of the things they lack in the real world.

They also realise this world is falling apart, about to be destroyed.

Eventually, they reach the Antagonist (or the Antagonist reaches them). The group must all agree whether to stay forever or go home. Everyone must agree—and people who are dead don't get a vote. Agreeing stabilises the world, whether they stay or go.

This structure has a clear beginning and an end. The rest of the adventure is in your hands. You do this in the same way any RPG works: you and the players Make Stuff Up. What follows is a robust method to help you Make Stuff Up. Rest assured—as long as things are happening and everyone is invested, you're playing it right.

STARTING THE SECOND SESSION

The second session picks up where we were last time. The Personas emerge into the bar where they started their first adventure.

Ask each player one question:

- ◆ What's the name of the bar?
- ◆ How did you recognise the bar as the one from your game?
- ◆ What was the character you used to play as a teenager like?

The bar is as they describe, but there's one big change: the character the Persona used to play is now retired, and the bartender in the inn.

The character has changed in the time since they played—however the Persona's life has gone wrong should echo in whatever has happened to the bartender. For example, if the Persona is in an unhappy marriage, so is the bartender.

Being an experienced adventurer, the strangeness of the Personas emerging from a trapdoor will not likely throw the bartender for long. The room they came from no longer is down there.

This is the first example of Twisting The Answers. This is a technique we use all the time in DIE, where you ask a question, get a response and then add a weird, magical element. For more on Twisting The Answers, see page 128.

This sequence is designed to make sure the players know everything they need to know to get started. You can absolutely do it more naturally across the game. See page 178 for more guidance on planning adventures.

The bartender mentions that there's a strange message on the work board which no-one else can read. It appeared this morning. The specific message on the board reads...

To all players...

- + **To go home, all players must gather together and each say: "The game is over."**
- + **To stay, all players must gather together and each say: "The game continues."**
- + **Once a decision is made, it is final.**
- + **Be aware: as a foreign entity, your presence here has destabilised reality. If a decision is not made, this world will end and all inside will perish.**
- + **As long as a unanimous decision is made, the realm will continue.**
- + **Those who are **dead** do not get a vote.**

WHERE IS THE ANTAGONIST?

A logical question for many groups is, "Where is the antagonist and what are they doing?" In other words, where the hell is that bastard friend who got them into this mess? It is easy to gain this information (asking the bartender if there's anything strange would likely do it).

When they do so, ask a player one of the following questions:

- Where did the evil nemesis of the fantasy world hang out?
- What is the most holy, secluded place in the world?
- What is the most infamous dungeon in the world?

This is where the Antagonist is, at work on a massive magical ritual. The magical energy is significant enough to be visible from miles around.

HOW TO GENERATE THE REST OF THE WORLD

Whenever the party needs more information about the world—what lies in a certain direction, who runs a town, *anything*—follow these steps...

IF YOU KNOW THE ANSWER

Describe it and continue play.

You know the answer when you've decided about the world. If there's a scene or a location you have in mind, do it. This can be things from your preparation or things that have occurred to you when the game is playing...

IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER

Ask a player what their Persona remembers about what was in their gaming world.

Then use that information as the basis of what happens next.

For example, the Persona have left the inn they started in. What's outside the inn? The GM asks a Persona "So—where is the inn?" The player says it's in a dwarf settlement. They could have said it's the only inn in the middle of a wilderness, a rough sea port or literally anything else. Whatever they say, is true.

Or at least, mostly true.

TWISTING THE ANSWERS

While you can use an answer straight, but often, you'll want to twist them by making them specific to some part of the Persona's background.

Choose an element from the Persona's background (lifting from your prepared palette) and integrate it into their answer to make it personal.

This can change the whole thing ("this forest from your game—it looks a lot like Lothlorian from Lord of the Rings"), it can add a detail to it ("this is the forest from your game—but you can see your real world grandmother's house through the woods...") or it can be entirely additional to it ("this forest from your game—there's a traveler coming the other way, and she looks just like your old geography teacher.")

Speaking broadly, this is a formula to create something that feels interesting. It's a simple one.

IDEA + IDEA = NOVELTY

Take an idea (whether your own, suggested by a player or selected from a list) and add it to another idea (likely taken from a list) and it'll create something that feels interesting.

This is true for locations, and **especially** true for characters. There's no reason the bandit chief who guards the forest and demands tribute can't also look a lot like the kid who bullied the group at school.

We call people from the real world who appear in a warped form in the game world echoes. They can be anything from someone who just has the same appearance, to someone who has a similar appearance and personality but takes up a different role in the game world and has no memories of a real world. In extreme cases, they might be someone who is a complete (if possibly warped) copy of the real world person.

While you will have prepared lists of Persona-related details, and you'll generate more as you play, we also provide a selection of lists for classic fantasy and real world characters for inspiration.

If the players have not defined something about their real life during Persona generation you can always ask them now, and integrate into the game.

Picking from two lists and using it to generate novelty has basically endless potential. And, most of all, anything can be a list if you look it right. For more of this kind of semi-random generation, have a look at Nerd Oracles on page 176.

Read more about echoes and ways they can be used on page 187.

GENERATING CHARACTER STATISTICS

DIE uses a rules-light approach to those characters you meet.

Depending on the encounter, it's possible that all you need for a character is their personality. A character should be able to do anything they character should reasonably be able to do. If you introduce a wise healer in a cave, they are able to heal the Paragon's Wounds.

If a situation turns to combat, there are a set of basic stats on page 132, in the Lists and Stats section. Choose the one which is most applicable.

NECESSARY ENCOUNTERS

You will have a list of necessary encounters: things the Persona must encounter as the emotional backbone for their journey. Integrate them with the game, and then strike them from the list.

When all the necessary encounters have happened, the players can reach their destination.

EXTENDING ADVENTURES

While you may have scenes and encounters you wish to happen, it's also possible you'll be stuck or want to give the players more agency.

If so, ask a player another question.

For example:

- What's the greatest danger when travelling through this forest?
- What's the reason that no-one can get into the stronghold?
- What's the next town on the way?
- What's the great natural barrier which you'll have to cross on this journey?
- Three keys are needed to get into the temple. Who are the legendary three key-keepers?

In short: we know what you want to do, why can't you just do it?



These Omens of Doom repeatedly use the sky, showing how its condition worsens. Consider this inspiration for your own Omens of Doom, using another environmental constant. Think of how forests, cities, seas or mountains could herald the collapse of reality.

OMENS OF DOOM

It's important to remind the players that the world is in the process of ending.

Each time the Personas travels from one location to the next, include an Omen of Doom. These should escalate in seriousness the longer the adventure goes on. Here's an example list to use, which slowly escalates.

- ◆ There's an earthquake.
- ◆ The sky changes to an unearthly colour you've never seen before... before slowly returning to normal.
- ◆ Grass catches fire without any reason.
- ◆ A tree disappears.
- ◆ The sky visibly cracks, like broken glass. The crack disappears after several seconds.
- ◆ A rabbit hops into your path, turns to you and says, "We're all going to die"
- ◆ The sky cracks again. This time, it stays cracked.
- ◆ Something that may be fire starts leaking through the crack in the sky.
- ◆ A chunk of the sky falls down, and crashes into the ground, impaling itself, like it's a shard of glass.
- ◆ In the hole in the sky you can see static stretching away, infinitely...

IN CASE YOU RUN OUT OF TIME...

If an hour is remaining in the final session and the players have not reached the Antagonist (and the group is unable to add an extra session) you should accelerate the ending. The Antagonist has finished their work, and now comes for players. Move directly to the climax (page 135).





STANDARDS TO TWIST

LIST OF STANDARD FANTASY CHARACTERS

- Pirate chief
- Ancient wizard
- Orc warlord
- Humble beggar
- Travelling merchant
- Elf queen
- Kooky herbalist
- Serious witch
- Shining knight
- Shadowy thief
- Warped necromancer
- Wicked dragon
- Two-headed ogre
- Wise ranger
- Dwarf adventurer
- Forgetful wizard
- Snake-haired gorgon
- Talking mouse
- Over-friendly bartender

A LIST OF STANDARD FANTASY LOCATIONS

- Isolated tavern
- Beautiful wood
- Abyssal chasm
- Creepy dungeon
- Creepier dungeon
- Haunted house
- Shadowy dock
- Abandoned mansion
- Stinky sewer
- Dragon's lair
- Abandoned temple
- Fallen statue
- Lost city
- Broken bridge

A LIST OF STANDARD REAL-WORLD PEOPLE

- Mum
- Dad
- Brother
- Sister
- Uncle or aunt
- Grandparents
- First lover
- Boss
- Best friend you always had a crush on
- School bully
- School bully you always had a crush on
- Doctor
- Therapist
- Bartender

A LIST OF STANDARD REAL-WORLD LOCATIONS

- Childhood home
- Favourite classroom
- Grandparent's house
- Workplace
- Showers
- Local underage drinking bar
- Park you used to play in
- Local landmark
- Graveyard where they buried them
- First place you lived away from home
- Hospital ward you were in after that accident
- Church you haven't been to in years
- Creepy alleyway you had to walk through on the way home from school
- Bed you lost your virginity in



There's a whole bestiary of monsters which you can pick from or use as stats for your adventures on page 183, as well as ideas for ways they could be twisted.

CHARACTER STATS

DIE has simple stats, but you likely don't need stats for many of the characters you encounter. If you do, you can grab one or more of the profiles below, and add whatever strengths and weaknesses that make sense in context.

We really want to encourage a minimum of paperwork in *DIE*. While we've printed full stat blocks, you only need to write down stuff which differs from a standard profile.

The standard profile in *DIE* is:

- All stats are 2, including Health and Guard
- Defence is 0
- Willpower is 4

CANNON FODDER

Use for: Anything you want to be cut down like wheat. With no Guard and one Health, single hits will kill them.

CANNON FODDER

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	1	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	1	4	0		

ARMED SOLDIERS

Use for: Any reasonably skilled individual with a sense of self survival. With the standard 2 Guard and 2 Health, they'll take four hits to remove from action. The ability is deliberately open-ended—an archer would get an advantage when shooting their bow, someone armed with a spear would get an advantage as long as they were fighting in ideal situations.

ARMED SOLDIERS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	0		

Abilities

Advantage on doing whatever it is they're good at doing.

RAGING KILLERS

Use for: Anyone who you want to be dangerous (especially in numbers) but also be taken out of action relatively easy. With no Guard and the standard 2 Health, they will take 2 hits to remove. This is good for the basic Fallen.

RAGING KILLERS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	0	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	2	4	0		

MONSTROUS GIANTS

Use for: Anything much bigger than the players and has every chance of squashing them flat. Ogres, cyclops, that guy from Game of Thrones who squashed that other guy's head. We have given them a much higher Health than normal, but no Guard, so allowing them to be slowly taken down.

MONSTROUS GIANTS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4	2	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	8	4	0		

WIZARD

Use for: A standard wizard sort. The higher Defence is to simulate the magical spells protecting them. If they don't have that, reduce Defence to 0.

WIZARD

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	3	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	5	1		

Abilities

They can perform whatever magical effects that seem possible in the narrative. They have advantage when casting their spells.

Fire Blast: (Main Attack Spell) Blast of flame to medium range. **Special:** ignites target, doing 1 hit per round until extinguished.

NECROMANCER

Use for: anyone who does that thing of bringing people back to life who the players have just killed, meaning you should go and kill the Necromancer first to stop it in its tracks.

NECROMANCER

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	3	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	5	1		

Abilities

Raise other creatures of the same type back to life (Difficulty 0).

HEROIC FIGURE

Use for: A significant figure. Experienced adventurers. Master martial artists. Robin Hood. These are, in pure statistic terms, slightly better than the players.

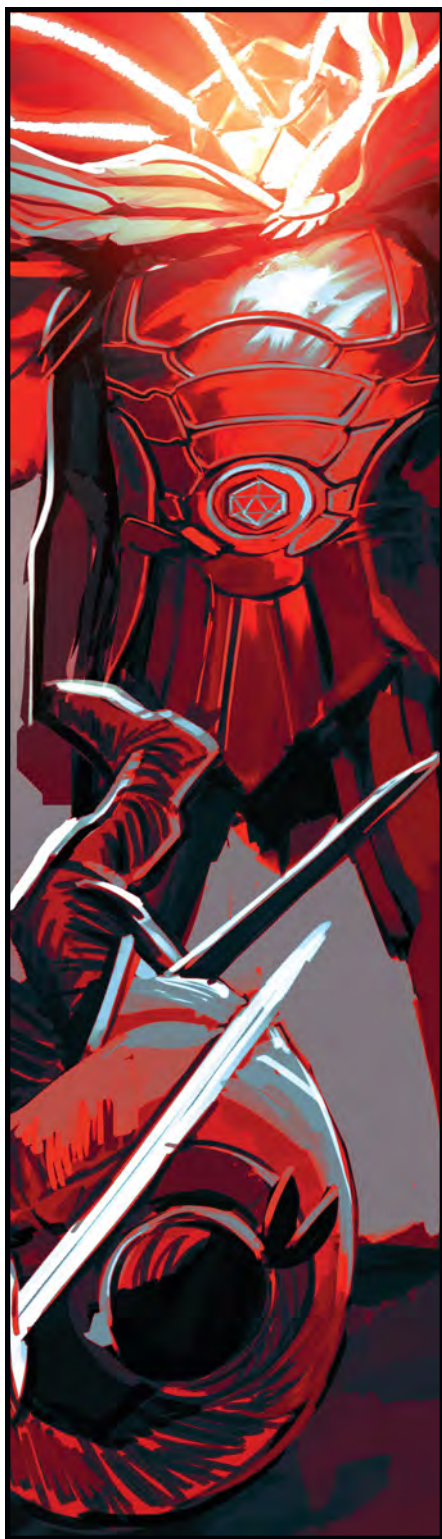
HEROIC FIGURE

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	3	3	3	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	3	5	1		

Abilities

Advantage on doing whatever it is they're good at doing.





THE CLIMAX

Eventually, either the players reach the Antagonist, or the Antagonist comes to them.

The Antagonist has been at work trying to achieve mastery of the world, and so ensure their goal. They have just succeeded—or, if more dramatically interesting, about to succeed.

However, the Antagonist knows that the Personas' presence in the world means the world is not stable. It will be destroyed, shortly, as reality collapses in on itself. The Personas must all choose to ritually stay or leave. Either way, the world survives. The only way the world ends is if a decision is not made in time.

The rules are as such:

1. The party can go home at any time as long as all Personas agree.
2. Dead Personas (i.e. Fallen) do not get a vote. If the party votes to leave, the Fallen are left behind.

And the apocalypse is the ticking clock on the decision.

The Antagonist wants everyone to stay and will try and persuade them to do so. Depending on their personality, they are likely to turn to violence sooner or later, especially as it appears reality starts to unravel. It's also possible the Antagonist could be talked around...

It is possible that other Personas will want to stay, and then act accordingly.

The climax of *DIE* is entirely in your group's hands. Games can end in therapy sessions as Persona pour out their hearts. Games can end up with heroic brawls against the bastard who dragged you here. Games often end in both. Catharsis at sword point has a certain energy.

This is the point where we find out exactly who these Personas are.

THE FRIENDS (AND FOES) YOU MET ALONG THE WAY

If appropriate, you should reincorporate and call back to individuals and events that occurred on the journey into the climax. Those allies come in at the right time to help, and their foes can be an ally of the Antagonist. If it is unlikely they'll turn up, a Master can always use a Cheat Token to summon them.

This is the climactic sequence. Go for it.

THE RITUAL

At any point, any player (including the GM) can call for a vote.

Starting with the player who called for the vote, we move around the circle, with each player saying either "The Game Is Over" or "The Game Continues" depending on whether they want to go or stay.

The second someone says something other than what the previous players have said, the Ritual ends, and you have to start again.

The second all players agree or the world ends, go to the **Endgame**.

It's possible the group are enjoying themselves so much they want the game to go on. In which case, you can try to switch to an ongoing DIE Campaign game. See page 253 on how.

In the rare situation where before the climax all the Personas are leaning towards staying in Die, there is a problem—a lack of conflict removes the climax. In which case, flip the Master—they have got cold feet for some reason and want to go home.

ENDGAME

The Ritual has ended, but what happens next?

IF THE PLAYERS CHOSE TO LEAVE DIE

Describe the players sitting back around the table, exactly where they started. No time will have passed. Minor injuries and scrapes will be healed. Injuries that came from actual deliberate sacrifices, such as bartering with gods, will remain.

Anyone who was left behind as Fallen will be sitting around the table, but dead.

Describe the scene, and cut to black.

We then move into an epilogue.

For each Fallen Persona who didn't make it home:

- ◆ How does your absence impact the real world?

For each Persona who made it home:

- ◆ How has this experience changed you?

After each answer, consider adding an element. A simple creepy, moving or atmospheric line adding to the player's statement is the goal—perhaps including some lingering magic from the game. Add to their story, not undercut it.

Player: Leaving Susan behind in that weird world has just changed everything for her. She knows she's got to change her life. Life is short. She's going to write the novel she's always meant to.

GM: The novel gets picked up and released. When your first author's copy arrives, there's a strange printing error in it. You ask after it, and it's the only one in the whole print-run that's like it. The printer can't explain it. The dedication has changed. It reads "I'm so proud of you. Love, Susan."



IF THE PLAYERS CHOSE TO STAY IN DIE TO EACH PERSONA WHO CHOSE TO STAY

For each Fallen Persona:

- How has your absence impacted the real world to the player.

For each Persona who voted to stay:

- What is your life like in this fantasy world?

Listen and then consider adding an extra image afterwards.

If their answer is upbeat with no admission of the sadness, add a beat of how their absence effects the real world—likely the people who miss them, and go on never knowing the truth.

Player: I end up becoming the head of the King's Cavalry, bringing justice to all the lands of Anathon! Imagine me, riding ever onwards, to the horizon at the head of a column of soldiers.

GM: We cut back to Earth, years later. Your quietly stoic mother is in your room, finally tidying away the toy soldiers from the shelf in your childhood bedroom. She does it in a business-like fashion. Heroic, in its own way.

If their answer lingers on what they left behind in the real world, especially if they stayed for a reason other than their own desires, consider adding an image which softens it.

For example, while a player knows it means they will never see their loving partner back in the real world again, they choose to stay as their brother suffers chronic pain in the real world and is free of it here. The GM describes their partner back on earth waking up from a dream, oddly comforted, as if they were held and missed and loved intensely. They can move on.

If their answer stands alone, don't add anything.

IF THERE IS A STALEMATE

Give each Persona a chance to define their final moment before reality collapses, and to ask each "how has your absence impacted the real world?" as described previously.

AND THEN...

Collect the dice ritually one last time, and thank them for playing.

Check in on each other and decompress. See Aftercare in the section on safety tools on page 142.





6. RUNNING DIE



The *DIE* Rituals presents a pure way of playing *DIE*. It's designed to be flexible and also guaranteed to work as you'd wish. As the name implies—Rituals—we've tried to include a lot of wisdom on how to get a great *DIE* game to work, just in how it's structured. This chapter side-steps the rituals, takes you behind the GM's screen and tells you exactly how it works.

Fantasy is infinite, and so is *DIE*. This section gives you lots of ways to build upon what you learned in Rituals. Individual structures change, but *DIE*'s structure remains. This is the Ship of Theseus as RPG design.

THE *DIE* GM PRINCIPLES

These are the core elements which are most fundamental to *DIE*:

1. Persona generation never ends
2. Ground the fantastical
3. Weird the normal
4. Be especially cautious of genre moments
5. Players have the final say in everything established about their Personas
6. The GM has the final say in everything established in the fantasy world
7. If a player rolls, something happens
8. Take notes

Keep these in mind, and *DIE* will sing.

Let's go into detail.

PERSONA GENERATION NEVER ENDS

The game starts with everyone answering questions about their own Personas, and asking everyone else questions about theirs. Keep this process going throughout the game. Never stop asking questions about the Persona's real life—and listen to the answers. These can define new things of the Persona, or elaborate on pre-existing ones—and all are great for folding into the game.

DIE dies when we forget that the cast are real people, not fantasy heroes.

GROUND THE FANTASTICAL

DIE is not a fantasy adventure. It's a game about people from the real world on a fantasy adventure. We always come back to them, and make it clear how what is normal in fantasy isn't in real life.



WEIRD THE NORMAL

Persona generation generates masses of information about their real lives. Fold it into the fantasy world. Find ways to turn their autobiographical details into the external drama and fuel for creativity.

This can be in the small details, like children chanting the lullaby your grandmother used to sing. This can be in the large-scale threats, like a Persona's sense of shame being a mountain-sized golem about to crush the whole cities.

Turn autobiography into magic.

Be especially cautious of genre moments

If the Paragon gets in a fight, ask about what's the worst fight their Persona has ever been in. If the Paragon gets a sword through the chest, stop and ask them what the worst pain the Persona has ever experienced... and then say this is just like that, or worse. If a Paragon kills someone, dig into how that feels.

Linger on the emotional effect of the fantastical, particularly magic. A fireball isn't just an attack. It's miraculous. How do people feel about that? How does that even feel to do?

PLAYERS HAVE THE FINAL SAY IN EVERYTHING ESTABLISHED ABOUT THEIR PERSONAS

The players have control of the personal history and inner lives of their Personas. They get to state truths about their Persona, their relationships and their personal situation.

Players get to answer questions and define things in the real world however they wish. Who was their mum? The local school-teacher? A superstar? Entirely absent? It's their call. Encourage them in this freedom. Be excited by their answers. Be curious about who these people are.

"The players" includes the GM. The antagonist is also a Persona, and the GM gets to define the antagonist's autobiography too.

THE GM HAS THE FINAL SAY IN EVERYTHING ESTABLISHED IN THE FANTASY WORLD

Conversely, the GM has control of the fantasy world the Paragons inhabit. There is a frisson in being out of control of your environment, that *DIE* channels. It's how the real world operates, after all. In *DIE*, you may act upon the fantasy world, but you can never be quite sure of its nature. This fantasy world they exist in grows from the seed of their imaginations, but is fundamentally, awfully, out of their control.

Within this principle, the GM can ask players for details, but the GM has the final say.

For example:

The GM can ask what the Persona's childhood home is like. The player answers however they wish.

The GM then can say that the Persona have stepped into a clearing, and their childhood home is in the fantasy world. If they explore it, the GM can ask that player what is through each room or door in the real world version of the house. The GM can also choose what, if any, of these player created details are different.

The real world exists as a fantasy and the fantasy world is presented as an external, ultimately unknowable reality. The former makes players instantly emotionally invested. The latter is where *DIE*'s creepy magic lies.

IF A PLAYER ROLLS, SOMETHING HAPPENS

As otherwise, why were you rolling the dice?

This principle should be grounded in your broad thinking in the game. It could be good or bad or complicated, but something happens when you roll.

TAKE NOTES (IDEALLY, EVERYONE)

This is why *DIE* campaign can be done with a low overhead—the players are providing the GM with all sorts of awesome prompts for things to happen. When things are made up, note them down, and then reintegrate them into the world later.

Safety at the table isn't the sole responsibility of the GM. It's up to everyone present to treat each other with respect and look out for one another. If you're playing DIE, read through this section and work out what safety tools you're using as a group, then learn how to use them.

The X-Card is the popular version of this concept, but there's other forms which allow more nuanced expression. Have a look at the Script Change Toolbox by Beau Jágr Sheldon or Safety Flowers by Tayler Stokes (see QR Codes below) for expanded versions of similar ideas.

SAFETY TOOLS

Much like wearing your seatbelt when you're in a car, for the majority of the experience you won't need safety tools—but for the occasions where you do, you'll be glad you used them. It's important to ensure that people are emotionally safe and supported at the table. *DIE* doesn't always go dark, but it certainly can. Role-playing game designers have developed many tools to ensure people can play safely, and you should use them.

Don't play *DIE* without the safety tools. *DIE* has the potential to go anywhere, and that includes bad places.

The first of these—the X-Card—is explicitly built into *DIE*, but you should consider using the others, in *DIE* and any game you play. They're all primarily ways of ensuring clear communication between everyone in the game.

THE X-CARD

As conceived by John Stavropoulos, this is one (or more) cards with an “X” drawn on it, placed on the table. If any player (including the GM) touches it, it means they are uncomfortable with the current topic or subject and we should change direction. Edit out that element and continue play. You can either remove and skip the element, or rewind play before the element was added, and a different direction is chosen.

If you're using the X-Card online, simply type X in the chat.

It does not mean asking questions about what the element is, or naming it, though some people will say (“This is too violent for me”). X-Card can be activated for any reason, even minor ones (characters with names who have bad connections for a player is a good example.) X-Card does not necessarily mean someone has messed up. It means someone is bothered by the content and would rather not go in that direction.

The original documentation for the X-Card can be found with the QR Code below.

Remember, GM's can also use the X-Card to remove elements that they've added.

The X-Card might not work for every group. It is a very simple tool that has the capacity to upset players. If you're interested in alternative methods of safe play that uses some of the same ideas, look up the Luxton Technique online.



X-Card



Script Change



Safety Flowers

STARS AND WISHES

As conceived by Lu Quade, expanding from the pre-existing roses and thorns, at the end of the session all players (including the GM) can give stars and wishes. Stars are things they want to highlight that they loved: things the other players did, setting elements, NPCs, and so on. Wishes are things they hope for in future sessions: events they want to see happen, things they want to see other players explore, NPCs they love and so on.

Stars & Wishes do three things:

- Encourages camaraderie inside the group. Everyone feels appreciated and seen. We're a gang and we dig the hell out of each other.
- Players can tell everyone what they're looking forward too. This is great for the GM, but also lets the players know their hopes and fears. These are essentially narrative goals for the group.
- Players can express disappointments and things they feel lacking in the context of positive feedback of the group. For example, if a player feels this was a bit too combat-heavy for their tastes, their wish could be looking forward to something a little more character-focused.

I've talked to some groups who object Stars & Wishes on the name alone. If you have a group which are a little twitchy over something that sounds so wholesome, you can always re-name it. For example, re-naming Stars to FUCK YEAH!

It's a way to safely broach things which can be difficult in the context of a loving and positive environment. Every game is helped by a safe way to tell the other players about what's not working for you.

CONCEPT, AIM, TONE AND SUBJECT MATTER (CATS)

As conceived by Patrick O'Leary, this is a way of setting expectations at the start of a game. Here, at the start of the game, the GM explicitly states the concept (the game's pitch), aim (what you're trying to do), tone (the approach to the material) and subject matter (things which will likely be turning up in play).

DIE can be lots of different and cover a lot of different themes and content, and should include a discussion of what sort of game it's going to be and how you're going to approach it before play begins. If there are potential harmful things that appear in the game (things like inter-group conflict, body horror or sexual content) they should come up in this discussion.

In short, it's an upfront statement of what the group is trying to do, and it gives players a chance to opt out of certain topics, ask them to be changed, or to enthusiastically consent to them.

The Gauntlet PlayAids folder (<http://bit.ly/GauntletPlayAids>) is an amazing resource for a lot of online games, and includes pre-built lines and veils Google Sheets. You can copy it, and distribute it to the players to fill in anonymously.

LINES AND VEILS

As conceived by Ron Edwards, this is a way of setting expectations on content that cannot be included in the game and which can be included, but not lingered on. Before the game starts (and at any point afterwards) players can define subjects as either lines or veils. Lines are things you simply disclude. Veils are things which you include, but cut away from. One of my usual lines is sexual violence. One of my usual veils is explicit sex acts. I don't include the former at all. Cut to black for the latter.

An individual in the group with the strongest choice sets the level for the whole group. As in, if something is a line for one player, and a veil for another, then the thing should be treated as a line.

It's often useful to do this via a shared document online, both for ease of access and anonymity.

BREAKS AND CHECK-INS

I have a 5-10 minute break every hour of play and check in with the players while it's happening. I also make sure to let people know that the breaks are coming at the start of the game, so they don't come as a surprise.

Roleplaying—especially in a game that can be as dark and personal as *DIE*—can be exhausting. Schedule regular breaks to give people a chance to drop character, grab a drink, go to the bathroom, and so on.

You should also check in with your players to make sure they're enjoying themselves and give them a chance to voice any concerns without worrying about disrupting the flow of the game. This goes doubly for new players—it never hurts to make sure someone's having fun.



DIE really can be a particularly bloody game. Among its themes is “Why do real people play fantasy games?” and also “Why do you play fantasy games?” This is likely to churn stuff up. That’s part of the power of the game, but also can be emotionally hard. Look after each other.

BLEED

Games exist in a magic circle—you’re not the character you embody. If I stab and kill you in game, it’s not because of my personal enmity to you, it’s my character’s personal enmity to your character. “Bleed” (as coined by Emily Care Boss) is what happens when the emotion of one crosses into the other.

This is neither a good nor bad thing—some people actively chase bleed to process, play with or experience intense emotions. (It’s also unavoidable, as our brains don’t always know the difference between imaginary threats and real threats.) Others, especially those new to the form who had no idea that this could happen, may find it too much for them. Here are some ways to manage bleed:

Keep an eye on your fellow players. If someone seems off-kilter or agitated, ask if they’re doing okay, and pause the game if they’re not.

If you’re feeling agitated or off-kilter, take a break from the session and centre yourself in your body. Look around yourself and name five things you can see. Press your feet into the ground and feel it support your weight. Tense and relax the muscles in your legs.

Take some time to decompress after the game and be a real person again. Discuss the game in the past tense. Think about what you want to take with you into the real world (the joy of completing a quest, the excitement of meeting a new friend) and what you want to leave behind (the grief of losing a loved one, the fear of imminent death).

THE TTRPG SAFETY TOOL KIT

There are a lot of other safety and support tools available. The ones listed are ones I like using, but they may not suit your group. If you are looking for more, check out the TTRPG Safety Tool.

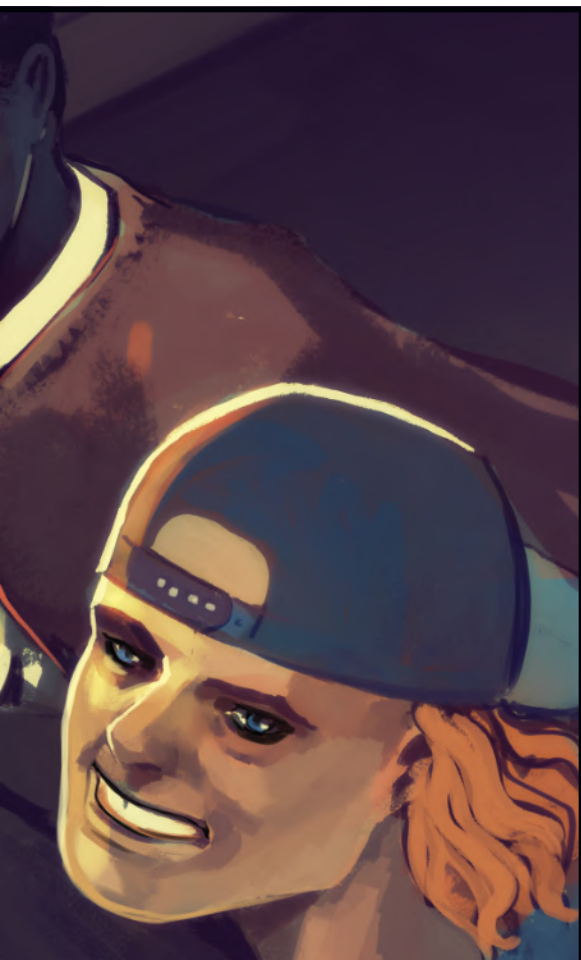
The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a resource co-curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a compilation of safety tools that have been designed by members of the tabletop roleplaying games community for use by players and GMs at the table.

You can find it with the QR Code below.

It can be downloaded for free, and I urge you to do so.



TTRPG Safety Tool Kit





RUNNING THE PARAGONS

Each Paragon class requires a little GM-side knowledge to make them shine. In this section, we'll take a look at each Paragon and all of their relevant advice. This section works well in tandem with each Paragon's chapter, earlier in this book. Make sure you have a grasp on those before continuing.

RUNNING THE DICTATOR

WHO TO GIVE THE DICTATOR TO?

The Dictator is a bard as a horror character. The bard is someone who sings magical songs that alter people's emotional states, either positively or negatively. The Dictator takes that and turns it into something intensely awful.

The Dictator includes the most unavoidably adult themes in the game. If given to an immature player who does not understand the seriousness of its possibilities, it can easily be upsetting to all the players (including the Dictator when they realise they've overstepped social boundaries).



At least one reason why the GM gets to assign character classes is so that you get to judge which player is most able to handle something like the Dictator. Equally, it's easy for you to simply not give any player the Dictator. If you're at all worried about the Dictator, don't include them.

The Dictator includes themes of consent and emotional violation. The Dictator's challenge to the player is one of navigating these boundaries and deciding what is acceptable, and seeing how treating other people like tools is a temptation to them. This can go to some dark places, and the reason why you want someone mature enough to play the Dictator is so that they don't go there unknowingly.

To state the big obvious one: making someone fall in love with you and then having sex with them is rape because you have removed their consent. This is also true of (say) the Charm Person spell in D&D—and we're a game which is looking at these sorts of things seriously. Any player who thinks this is a good idea should not be let near the Dictator. To be honest, they shouldn't be let in your house.



CORE GMING ADVICE FOR DICTATORS

- ◆ Make any use of their powers horrific.
- ◆ Make extreme levels of their powers supernaturally horrific.
- ◆ Once any other character knows they are a Dictator, treat them with suspicion and fear.

THE FEEL OF THE DICTATOR'S POWER

If the Dictator ever feels just like another average game spell, the class breaks. Keep the following in mind.

EVERYTHING THE DICTATOR DOES SHOULD BE CREEPY

The creepiness of the Dictator should flow from the GMs description of their abilities, how people act on it, and how everyone acts towards the Dictator when they do it.

EVERYONE IS A LITTLE AFRAID OF THE DICTATOR

Signal this with friendly characters in the world. Make sympathetic people express their fears of the Dictator, having characters make the Dictator promise to not use it on them, threatening them if they do. Even the other players should be scared of the Dictator and what they can do.

THE DICTATOR SHOULD BE SCARED OF THEIR OWN POWERS

Most character classes have pretty tight control of all their abilities. If they roll well, they don't have to use all those successes. The Dictator's abilities are both more likely to succeed, and are partially out of their control. When things like this go wrong, it should create a reluctance by the Dictator to use their abilities.

It's worth noting that the Dictator can be extremely persuasive merely with the threat of using their abilities; you don't have to shoot someone if you can achieve your goals by just flashing your shoulder holster.

THE EMOTION KNIGHT AND THE DICTATOR'S SYNERGY

The Emotion Knight's scale of emotion is identical to the Dictator's. The Dictator can, if successful, move the Emotion Knight up (or down) their scale. This is obviously a useful strategy—one character can overload another with emotion, supercharging their abilities instantly.

This is one area where the tone of the Dictator is key. As in, it should not just be viewed as a simple power-up by the players. The creepier the Dictator's powers feel, the less likely they'll be used lightly. Make sure the emotions impact the fiction, not used casually.

DICTATOR POWER EXAMPLE

The Dictator abilities are designed to be used creatively. It's a sophisticated system with a mixture of hard rules and narrative effects. Here's an extended example of how different levels of emotions could affect a target when being used to control.

Alistair is cornered with a Fallen that is half human, half Sherman tank (Willpower 4) lurching towards him. He uses the voice to make it fear him.

If he rolled 1-3 successes, the Fallen would have 1-3 disadvantages if it tried to attack Alistair. They'd likely also be suffering compulsions to run away. If the Fallen wanted to overcome it, they'd make a Wisdom roll. With 1-2 successes on the original voice roll, its difficulty would be 0. With 3 successes, it'd be 1. It also affects the narrative—frankly, if the Fallen had anywhere else to be or any other targets, it'd go deal with them instead of fighting the Dictator.

If he rolled 4 successes, it matches the willpower. The creature would be entirely overcome in a way which removes it from combat. It could fall to the floor, defenceless in terror. It could pass out in terror. It could run away, very fast.

5 successes pushes it further. A heart attack. If there's a nearby cliff, the monster runs off it in panic. If it doesn't hit any Lines or Veils, and is suitable for your tone, suicide also works. They're so frightened they'd rather be dead than be in the Dictator's presence another second.

6 or higher successes turns to catastrophically reality-altering effects of the target's emotion. The Fallen's heart explodes from their chest, or their eyes melt in their head rather than look at Alistair any more. The higher you get, the more theatrical to expect. If you're hitting levels 7 or 8, you may expect unexpected and extremely messy side-effects. Heart exploding with force like a hand-grenade, coating everyone with gore? Great. Fallen so afraid of the existence of the Dictator that they punch a hole in reality creating a miniature singularity? Why not.





RUNNING THE FOOL

WHO TO GIVE THE FOOL TO?

The Fool is a free-wheeling, over-the-top character who has the ability to leap headlong into and out of trouble thanks to their uncanny luck.

While the core Fool is a playful fighter, it can be customised to many types of fantasy characters—swashbucklers, thieves and even wizards. As such, no matter what sort of things a player would like to get up to, they can do them as a Fool.

It's the easiest class to play. Most of their abilities are passive (so working with no active need for the player to do anything) or simple (the Fool's lucky dice is powerful, but also works in an easily understandable way). If there's a player who is less comfortable with rules, this is a strong choice. You'll likely have to remind them to add crosses or circles to their dice, but that's all the bookkeeping they need.

It's not just a class for beginners. There's a lot of impish fun to be had with the Fool. They are literal troublemakers. An experienced player can get a lot from the Fool, and play them as whatever class they wish.

Make sure to give the Fool to someone who gets the joke and is in on it.

CORE GMING ADVICE FOR FOOLS

- If the Fool entertains the group, tell them to add a positive symbol to their dice.
- Remind them to add and remove symbols when they roll, depending on the result.
- Only remove their D6 from their dice pool for overly-cautious play.

WHEN TO ADD THE FOOL'S DICE TO THE POOL?

Other classes have firm guidance on when or not to add their dice to a pool. The Fool instead asks the player to decide. They can add their D6 to any roll where they act in a foolish or daring fashion—and the group gets to decide what that actually means.

The higher the threshold to earn this dice, the more potentially irritating the Fool may be. Don't make the price too great—they'll either not do it, or it'll frustrate the other players.

Instead, remove the Fool's dice when they show overt concern and resort to planning. Entering battle with a grin is enough to get the dice. Holding back and carefully planning a methodical ambush loses it.

FLUKES

When the Fool rolls a circle on the dice, they get to describe a lucky occurrence, which you, as the GM, get to tweak. If they roll a cross, you get to describe an unlucky one.

Tone is important here. If something is too crass or otherwise not suitable for the game's mode, everyone should feel free to X-Card it (see page 142). In some games, everyone being sprayed with manure can be the tone you want. For others, it'll be absolutely disastrous. It's got to be fun for everyone.

The GM's ability to tweak a fluke is to moderate a player asking for too much. It's perfectly acceptable to go with a fluke as suggested. Equally, if you can't think of a suitable bad luck fluke, opening it up to the table and asking the other players is always a good plan.

A Fool only removes symbols from the dice when directed by the game. Normally, the Fool's dice will have the same number of circles and crosses at the start of a session as at end of the previous one.

TRADES

Trades represent the variety of disreputable backgrounds that a Fool had before they became a full-time adventurer. When looking at the trades selected by a Fool, remember how *DIE*'s rules encourage on-the-fly adding of advantages and disadvantages to a situation (or altering difficulties) depending on a character's expertise and training. If a Fool has selected the rogue background, and has thieves tools, gaining an advantage when picking locks seems likely... or everyone who isn't the rogue has a disadvantage.

IF ALL ELSE FAILS

The If All Else Fails... is the Fool's most powerful ability. It exists to get the party (or at very least the Fool) out of trouble, or to solve an otherwise intractable situation, via the application of absurd luck. The ability does not allow the Fool to dictate how they get out, or the situation it leaves them in—it's up to the GM to narratively reposition the Fool after they use it. Dropping them into a new perilous (but less perilous than before) situation is certainly reasonable, though certainly should be less instantly deadly than the one they were in. It's not an ability which tends to kill the opposition, unless it's particularly amusing.

Never make the level of disaster the Fool ends up in worse than the situation they were in before they used If All Else Fails. That's no fun.

If you have the Fool's dice, consider very visibly playing with it, making everyone aware that you have this token that could just ruin whatever it is they're doing.

What happens next is key: the Fool is no longer able to use their luck ability, and you have control of the Fool's dice. Remember, you can use the Fools dice to cause bad luck, so make sure players are aware you have it.



RUNNING THE EMOTION KNIGHT

WHO TO GIVE THE EMOTION KNIGHT TO?

The Emotion Knight is a holy warrior devoted not to a deity or a lofty ideal, but to experiencing one particular emotion to such a degree that it gives them impossible magical abilities.

The Emotion Knight is the closest *DIE* has to a classic fighter class. It's a role which is defined by combat—or at least the threat of starting combat. It can be one of the easiest classes to play: experience an emotion and then use that emotion to defeat your enemies. If a player doesn't want to be a Fool, it's a good class to give to the least experienced player. If you guide them towards an emotion like rage or terror (obvious emotions for a Persona thrown into bleak fantasy world), then they can have a simple, yet powerful, experience.

While a Rage Knight has an experience akin to a classical berserker, a less obvious emotion changes that behaviour considerably. What does a Loathing Knight do, for example? For a role-player whose Persona is clearly driven by their relationship to a single emotion, giving them the Emotion Knight means they're going to explore that relationship in depth. It's also a great signal to you as a GM of what interests the player about their Persona.

CORE GMING ADVICE FOR EMOTION KNIGHTS

- Ask leading questions about their emotional state. Tell the player to change their D8's position on the Emotional Scale depending on the answers.
- Explicitly include words listed in the Creative Violence section in your descriptions of threats.
- An Emotion Knight's weapon can sense its emotion in the vicinity. Tell the player things.

THE WEAPON'S VOICE

Half the archetypes get their own pet NPCs. The Neo gets their clinical AI. The Godbinder gets a head full of gods, whispering ideas. The Emotion Knight gets their sentient arcane weapon... the most subversive and least trustworthy one of them all. At least the Godbinder knows the gods are trying to manipulate them.

While the player gets to define the style of the weapon's personality, they aren't in control of what the weapon wants. What it wants is to actively push the character towards indulging in its emotion.

Each weapon is able to sense the emotion which powers it. While it is useful to the Paragon (a Rage Knight could sense nearby furious enemies), it also allows you add extra description to the world. What information does it give the player? If a rage weapon wants to be in a fight, and its wielder is trying to avoid their enemies, the weapon could lie and send their master straight into the ambush. It's not dumb. The push and pull between the sword as a friend and ally or an awful enabler is a key part of the class. Depending on the emotion picked, this nature will vary.

TRACKING EMOTIONS

Each Emotion Knight tracks their current level of emotion. This is done by taking stock of what the Paragon is feeling and matching the Paragon's emotional scale score to that feeling.

This is what's said in the Emotion Knight's section...

Level one is feeling an emotion strongly. Level two is feeling it intensely. Level three is likely as strong as any individual has ever felt that emotion in their life. You will be unable to act on anything but the emotion if it is equal to or exceeds your Willpower score. Most humans pass out at level 4. Levels 6 and higher are literal supernatural emotions. You could be so angry fire literally emerges from your eyes.

So when looking at an Knight's emotional level, think of what that's really saying:

Levels 1-3	The "normal" levels that humans feel
Level 4-5	A level of emotion which normal humans can't stay conscious while experiencing
Level 6+	Literally supernatural emotions

The key point: the narrative will mostly be setting the Knight emotions at levels 1-3.

Don't get too hung up on the names of each level. Loathing's three names are boredom, disgust and loathing... but an intense enough boredom can be higher than a level one emotion. Concentrate on the intensity of the emotion, not the semantics around it.

If a player isn't playing or referencing the emotion, their character isn't feeling that emotion. Ask the player how their Paragon is feeling about any relevant event. The Fear Knight spots a monster? How do they feel about it? Adjust the scale.

When we're dealing with the raw stuff of emotions, one should especially bear in mind the safety tools (page 142). When an Emotion Knight is suffering compulsions, these should be phrased sensitively and with respect to the group's selected play style. Players should be aware of the X-Card, and checking in if anyone seems uncomfortable is a really good idea.

When an Emotion Knight experiences a level of emotion equal to their Willpower, they lose control. As such, some of the higher-level abilities may even be beyond them until they gain some emotional control (Willpower).



Here's some specific guidance:

Annoyance/Anger/Rage

Level 1	General unhappiness, wet socks, missing your bus.
Level 2	Being attacked and/or hurt.
Level 3	Someone you know and love being badly hurt or killed.

Perhaps the simplest of the emotions. Worth noting, someone who is primarily excited by combat is, by definition, not annoyed. If a player want to play someone who really likes combat, they likely are looking to play a Joy Knight.

Interest/Anticipation/Vigilance

Level 1	Going and nosing at something with gleeful curiosity. Standing watch, and actually trying to do the job. Anything that makes you go "Oh, cool."
Level 2	Seeing the waiter finally arriving with your order. Searching for your target in a crowd of strangers.
Level 3	As on-edge and ready as you can be without chemical or magical assistance. Arnie being hunted by the Predator. The half second before a dragon crashes into your army's line, with you in the front row.

Think of two extremes of the Vigilance Knight—the stoic watcher, born of hyperfocus and the rapid-moving attention-mayfly.

Serenity/Joy/Ecstasy

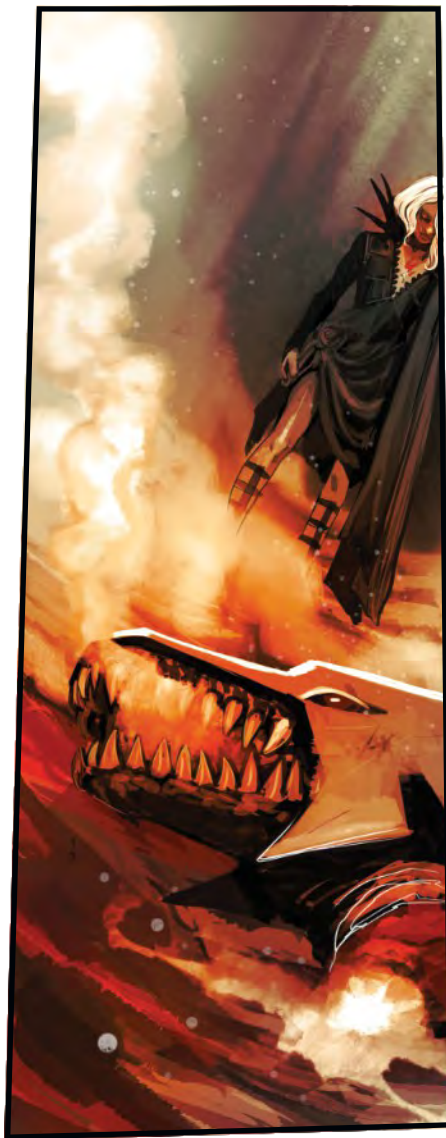
Level 1	Waking up, opening the curtain and it's a nice day. A new episode of your favourite TV is out.
Level 2	Spending time with a good friend after a long time. Your favourite TV show is brought back years after cancellation.
Level 3	The best gig of your life. That first, intense flush of love.

Of all the knights, Joy Knights are most likely to speak to what actually creates joy for the individual character. What is happiness? A sadistic Joy Knight is one of the most terrifying Paragons in DIE.

Acceptance/Trust/Admiration

Level 1	Forgiving someone's foibles. Feeling proud of a friend.
Level 2	Going into a desperate situation, knowing your life depends on your friends.
Level 3	Forgiving a mortal enemy and trusting them with your life.

Trust Knights are unique in that their emotional state most relies upon the actions of those around them—they tend to be about relationships. In some ways, the Admiration Knight is about using the power before someone lets you down.



Apprehension/Fear/Terror

Level 1	"Oh no—is there a monster?"
Level 2	"There is a monster!"
Level 3	"THE MONSTER IS GOING TO KILL US ALL!!!!!!!"

With Terror Knights, remember that just because their abilities are powered by fear doesn't mean they get to side-step the rules about experiencing an emotion (see page 55). An Emotion Knight suffers as many disadvantages as the level of the emotion when doing things against that emotion, and the GM may suggest compulsions they will have to resist. This would include disadvantages on attacks which put you in danger and resisting compulsions to just run away. The Terror Knight is likely to generate power and then burn it off as quickly as possible to avoid just scarpering.

It's worth noting that sometimes an attack would not suffer disadvantages—if you're cornered and slashing your way out to safety, this is acting on your fears (as opposed to, say, bravely dashing into the fray).

Distraction/Surprise/Amazement

Levels1	A situation with a lot happening—a melee, a loud bar or just visiting a weird fantasy world and trying to work out how to get home. Low-level anxiety.
Level 2	Sudden change of situation, like an ambush. The anxiety around a long-feared event. Directing the opening night of a major production.
Level 3	"OH GOD! LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT DRAGON! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE!"

Amazement Knights tend to increase their emotion the first time they see something astounding. They can be one of the less grim Emotion Knights to play, but the use of the word "anxiety" may imply there's other ways to take it.

Pensiveness/Sadness/Grief

Level 1	Ennui. When a situation looks hopeless, where you doubt your abilities.
Level 2	When a hope is undeniably crushed. You didn't get the job. Your friend bad mouths you behind your back. Most forms of significant loss.
Level 3	Someone dying. If it's someone you actually really like, or even love, this is one of those natural emotions which may even hit level 4 and 5. Grief is a fucker.

The Grief Knight is the Emotion Knight in the *DIE* comic, which was picked for literary reasons. The Grief Knight, like the Terror Knight, is a creature of catharsis—by using the abilities, you momentarily purge it. Their higher levels can be hard to achieve—but the worse a situation gets, the more powerful a Grief Knight is.

Boredom/Disgust/Loathing

Level 1	Oh god, there's nothing on TV. Oh god, that guy's on TV. Changing nappies.
Level 2	Seeing the insides of people spill out onto your sword.
Level 3	Being locked in a room with your mortal enemy, then betraying every part of yourself by making out with them.

A player that picks Loathing Knight is likely signalling “I want to see disgusting things and respond to it.” At the highest level, Loathing tends to be personal—either at a person who has wronged you or acted in a way you cannot bear or some enormous injustice.

DRAINING EMOTIONS

If an Emotion Knight succeeds in draining an emotion, the character should do less of the related behaviour. Draining rage from an opponent mid-fight would make them distinctly less interested in murdering them. If the character is player-controlled, you (as the GM) should inform a player on how the character is feeling now. If they try to act contrary to their state, they may get a disadvantage.

An Emotion Knight may try to drain emotions in unusual ways. Can an Interest Knight drain the curiosity from a guard allowing you to walk straight past them? It depends. They're not able to stop a person gaining the emotion again after they've had an emotion drained, so perhaps not... but it's certainly enough to stop a guard being interested in something, and gaining advantages to sneaking past.

Alternatively, you could rule that it is sufficient—you can drain the emotion of interest and walk behind him.

DICTATOR/EMOTION KNIGHT SYNERGY

If you've agreed to let Dictators use their abilities on Persona (see page 112). There's obvious synergy between Dictators and Emotion Knights—Dictators can make them feel things and Emotion Knights can then use it. Putting aside the horror elements of doing that (see the Dictator's section of this chapter on that—it is deeply psychologically intrusive) there's another problem. If a Dictator rolls a critical fail, its target is stuck at whatever emotion or compulsion they created.

Even outside of the horror of the fiction, this is a terrible thing. Creative Violence and Venting works by purging emotions. If an Emotion Knight cannot change their emotional level, they can't use any abilities which require you to do so. Other abilities are permanently on, but those most powerful ones are off the table until they've been cured.

This is a problem to be solved inside the narrative. This is at least as much of a problem for the group as a member of the party dying. While the Dictator can't cure the problem they created, other Dictators perhaps could. The Knightly Orders perhaps have people who can assist. There's always other options—the gods, the Fair, whatever exists in your world. So, yes, while there is synergy between two classes, it also carries a significant risk. Remember that in the comic Matt is against Ash using her powers on him, even to save the day.

If an Emotion Knight reaches a point where an emotion is clearly not right for them, it's perfectly fine to change weapons. This is a classic character arc for an Emotion Knight: a Fear Knight may get in touch with their actual repressed anger and end the game as a Rage Knight.



RUNNING THE NEO

WHO TO GIVE THE NEO TO?

The Neo is an anachronistic thief with a side-order of cyberpunk and a healthy helping of hacker. The Neo's core specialism is that of a classic thief, rogue or assassin. They're gifted in avoidance and stealth and can—if they wish—specialise in ranged attacks. If a player wants to be something in that vague roguish area, the Neo is their best bet. The connective element is the reliance on Fair Gold. That fundamentally shapes the class, and any player who is interested in chasing treasure has a home here.

SAFETY-PROOFING THE NEO

The Neo has a need baked into the character concept. This need doesn't have to be read as an addiction if you want to avoid those themes; make its simple mechanical need more important instead. This is much more like making rent—it's also a great metaphor for the gig economy, and just keeping your head above water. As a Neo is useless without this stuff, the need can be purely practical.

CORE GMING ADVICE FOR NEO

- If a Neo has no activated gifts, give them an easy opportunity to gain some Fair Gold.
- If a Neo has no Fair Gold and/or unactivated gifts, give an opportunity to gain some Fair Gold.
- Consider making enemies Fallen as a source of Fair Gold.
- Have the AI suggest things to do.
- Add items of weird, magical technology to the environment they can hack.

ACCESS TO FAIR GOLD

The Neo's abilities are powered by Fair Gold, which appears every day and disappears in the morning. At dawn, their gifts deactivate—along with any collected Fair Gold. Fair Gold can be used just before dawn to keep a system active for the next day. It's a good way to use surplus Fair Gold at the end of the day. The AI knows the time and will warn the Neo.

The single most important thing to keep in mind when playing with a Neo is Fair Gold. By halfway through a scenario, the player should have at least got the opportunity to earn enough Fair Gold to activate all their abilities, and likely more. If Fair Gold is in short supply, it's a good motivation to lure the Neo into bad behaviour. If Fair Gold is in great supply, it is a good tool for the Paragon to overdrive past a challenge. Managing these highs and lows are key to good pacing for the Neo.

When playing around a table, I use tokens for Fair Gold. You can normally tell how much Neo someone has in their soul by how quickly they grab for it when you put it in the middle of the table.

Fair Gold, as written, has no direct use for the other Paragons. Before you hack this and turn it into a generalised treasure, be aware of its effects. Making it useful directly for other players makes life much harder for Neo, who'll have to argue for every single piece they get. Alternatively, it removes the need of the Neo to hunt Fair Gold because the party has so much. I'd advise Fair Gold being of use to people other than the Paragons will help your game most.

A cool trick here is to introduce another non-player Neo and see how the players interact with them. Is this a world where the Neo are an underground hidden cult or one where ancient machine-fortresses are buried beneath the desert?

MAKING THE FAIR GOLD SPECIAL

When a Neo first sees Fair Gold, ask the player to tell you about the time their Persona most desired something in the world. Looking at the Fair Gold feels just like that.

It's also true for when someone actively uses the Fair Gold. Ask about their biggest high, and say it's at least as big as that. If not, a euphoria metaphor of your choice ("Like you've been dancing all night in the best club in the world", "Like you've just hit the most satisfying plot twist you've ever read", "Like you've just met the world's best puppy") goes a long way.

SEARCHING FOR FAIR GOLD

In a long campaign, the hustling for that first piece or two of Fair Gold at the start of a session may get tiresome. The Neo's Gold Source advance gives players a chance to secure a basic Fair Gold income with a minimum of fuss. There's also the Pawn Shop and even (at higher levels) the Big Score.

For those who want more, you may allow a roll to try and hunt some before everyone wakes up. This is a useful basis for the roll...

To hunt for Fair Gold, roll an Intelligence pool:

- For a single success, you find a Fair Gold. **Special:** you find an extra Fair Gold. **Double-Special:** you find an extra Fair Gold.
- For a failure, you find one Fair Gold and suffer a Wound.
- For a critical failure, you gain a Fair Gold, but also lead something nasty back to the group.

This procedure can be tweaked depending upon where the Neo is operating. For example, in a city, rather than suffering a Wound, perhaps they owe a debt to a merchant who supplied it to them.

THE AI

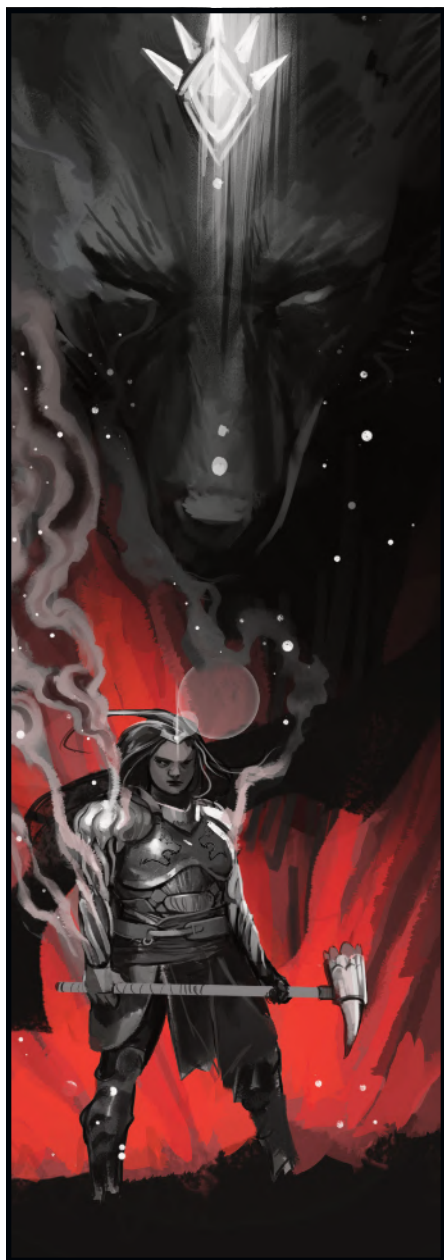
The Neo's AI is always active, and forms a great opportunity for role-playing. The AI can provide useful information, especially about the Neo's abilities. It can also be used as a tool to find out information about the world, using the Fair Field ability, allowing the player to ask questions about the area, especially related to Fair-tech. This includes locating Fair Gold, if you want to give a desperate Neo a direction to go to find it.

HOW DO NPCs TREAT THE NEO?

If your *DIE* is a typical fantasy one, it is likely the Neo will have a different visual aesthetic—their power is drawn from a distant digital realm, not the more traditional fantasy sources of the other character classes. You have three main choices for how this feels:

1. They are as strange as a magical cyberpunk would be in a standard fantasy world. As such, characters they meet will act as if they're genuinely unusual.
2. The magical cybernetic gifts of the Neo are rare, but certainly a known thing in the world, at least those who know such things.
3. It's not even commented upon. No-one comments. Even if asked.

The answer depends on the genre and aesthetics of your world.



My Godbinder trick when playing in-person? If the player is okay with it, I go and stand behind the Godbinder and speak directly into their ear. When playing remotely I often turn off my camera when being a god, and lean into the voice.

RUNNING THE GODBINDER

WHO TO GIVE THE GODBINDER TO?

Godbinders make bargains with all-powerful deities in exchange for favours—just like a traditional cleric, but without the whole “worship” bit. The Godbinder is the most flexible and immediately powerful of the classes. Want to be a cleric? Great. Have a hankering for the heavy armour? No problem. Be a knight? Why not? Be an academic? Easy! A Druid? Got you sorted, with all the bears you could wish for.

While the Godbinder is based around managing debts with various gods, it isn't really for those who are looking for crunchy mechanics—it's one where the player gets to interact with a series of god characters and barter for what they want. It's the class whose abilities most involve role-play as a core element. If a player likes yapping to NPCs, this is one of the best choices for them.

CORE GMING ADVICE FOR GODBINDER

- Have a god suggest things a Godbinder could do to pay off debt (or earn credit).
- Have a god suggest a way they could assist in exchange for a little debt.
- Ask questions about the god they've named. Integrate those choices into the world.
- Use favours and debt as leverage to force the Godbinder to make difficult decisions or face the consequences.

PLAYING THE GODS

The player gets to define their gods, and then the GM portrays them. The names the player selects and their domains give cues to their personalities, but it's up to you to build from there. The gods are big personalities. Make them iconic. Make them friends. Make them people. Give them desires that relate (or contrast) to their nature. Make different gods have different levels of trustworthiness.

Unless the Godbinder (or the god) decides otherwise, time is frozen when speaking to a god, and no one else can hear them. This means that you can have a full conversation to secure safe passage via divine intervention whilst, say, falling off a cliff, drowning in a tumultuous sea or taking part in a ferocious gunfight.

Some of the gods do warn a player hard. Pick the Eldritch god and you can't really say "I had no idea the face-eating being with all the tentacles and non-Euclidean geometry would eat my face."

Only Godbinders get to call gods and have them turn up. Regular run-of-the-mill priests don't get to do this. Can you imagine how annoying it must be for priests when a Godbinder has their god run errands for them?

PROACTIVE AND RELUCTANT GODS

Godbinders have the capacity to call up their gods at any time and offer them a deal—usually asking a favour in exchange for debt. Of course, a god can just say “No, I’m not interested.” Especially if the players have pissed that god off somehow, or the deal relates to something that the god has no interest in or ability to execute. Asking the Water God to light a fire is going to get a raised eyebrow.

Gods may do Miracles just for the fun of it, especially if it’s aligned with their nature. This can be especially useful early in the adventure to show exactly how big a Miracle can be. Wiping out the initial wave of Fallen is a good way to show what the scale of their power can be, for example. When the first hit is free, it helps get the Godbinder hooked.

Gods can contact the Godbinder to talk and offer suggestions and options. They can also respond to what Godbinder does—paying off some debt for proactively doing something the god likes is great.

CALLING IN DEBTS

Not all gods treat debt identically. Some gods don’t want to kill a Godbinder—they see it just as friends helping out. Others want back the Godbinder into a corner and get them to do their bidding. The worst of them lure the Godbinder into getting just enough into debt so they can kill them. Tell the players this is the case, or at very least communicate the danger during roleplaying. You can role-play the eldritch god’s desperate hunger, talking about how they look forward to devouring their soul. Resist the urge for a god to be all sweetness and light and then just kill the player the first chance they get—it’s a gotcha which will only rightly upset players. However, playing a sweetness-and-light god who keeps on accidentally let slip their nefarious plans? That’s golden.

Most importantly, remember: Wounds are part of the fiction. They’re not just a number going down. They’re injuries. If a god breaks your arm, that’s part of the fiction now. At the absolute least, it really hurts, and that should be taken seriously.

LEAVING DIE IN DEBT TO THE GODS

If the Godbinder leaves Die, let low-level debt slide, especially if it’s just been forgotten by either party. It’s a good thing to use to put a few weird notes in the epilogue. If a player’s response to escaping is to act in the world like the god would have wished them to—really getting into arson to please the Fire God, for example, or rewilding areas of the countryside to appease the Nature God—this pays off a lot of God Debt.

If a Godbinder runs off without paying a big God Debt, inflict physical (or metaphysical) injuries to the Persona in the real world proportionate to their God Debt. A literal pound of flesh is perfectly acceptable in some cases.

MIRACLES

Miracles can be anything the god could do. There's two main areas of Miracles:

1. Things akin to a spell in a classic role-playing game. Want a magical effect that isn't covered by your Scriptures? A Miracle works.
2. Things akin to large scale plot-changing elements. Protect cities. Part oceans. Biblical stuff.

The Godbinder is bartering with a god—the god deals with a problem in exchange for a service performed by the Godbinder. What the god demands should be proportionate to the service.

These are the traditional three varieties of payment:

1. Taking On God Debt

The advantage of debt is that it's simple and flexible. If you don't have any other ideas, God Debt is a good option. The only real disadvantage is that it can be paid off incrementally, so doesn't remain a Chekovian gun on the mantelpiece like the other two options.

For something like a spell, 1 or 2 God Debt at most is a good rule of thumb. The less this becomes something you can imagine being done by a wizard in a different RPG, the more it's likely to go to 3 or 4 God Debt... or go with one of the other options.

For example, if you worship the god of fire:

For One Debt	You turn your fire blast scripture into a fireball.
For Two Debt	You summon a fire elemental to attack your foes.
For Three Debt	You create a fireball big enough to immolate a town.
For Four Debt	You create an artificial sun in the sky that burns for the rest of the day.

Debt gets mean quickly—it can be forcibly extracted from the Godbinder by the God at any time, inflicting one Wound per God Debt. Three God Debt can instantly kill anyone who hasn't increased their Constitution. Five God Debt can kill any Godbinder. Those one-debt miracles soon add up.

Never offer a deal which you don't want the players to take. If you don't want to perform a miracle, slapping a high cost on it can backfire if the Godbinder accepts it. Instead, work out a similar miracle that you're willing to bestow, and go from there.

What sort of miracles could demand the death of someone? The most common one would be raising someone from the dead. DIE already has that built into the game, in the form of the Fallen becoming alive again if they kill a Persona. If a Godbinder wants to side-step that, it should likely have a commensurate cost.

2. Performing A Specific Task

Do something for the god, and then the god will perform the task. If the Miracle is big enough to sidestep several hours of play, this likely leads to a task that's about as time-consuming as dealing with the problem directly. It's a good way to add a specific side-quest to the story. Some gods will perform the miracle as long as you promise to do a specific task eventually—essentially you're paid in advance.

However, its main utility is when you're in the middle of a difficult situation and you want to create a sharp narrative temptation. This is especially true in the final confrontation with the antagonist. In the climax, you're running out of time to pay off God Debt or fulfil a favour—instead, the deal is something specific now. In the climax, these can be especially sharp:

"Betray Your Friends", "Reveal Your Darkest Secret" or even "Kill This Specific Individual." This is a way of posing a hard question to the Godbinder—What do you really want? What will you give up for it.

If a Godbinder breaks their word on a deal, one of two things might happen:

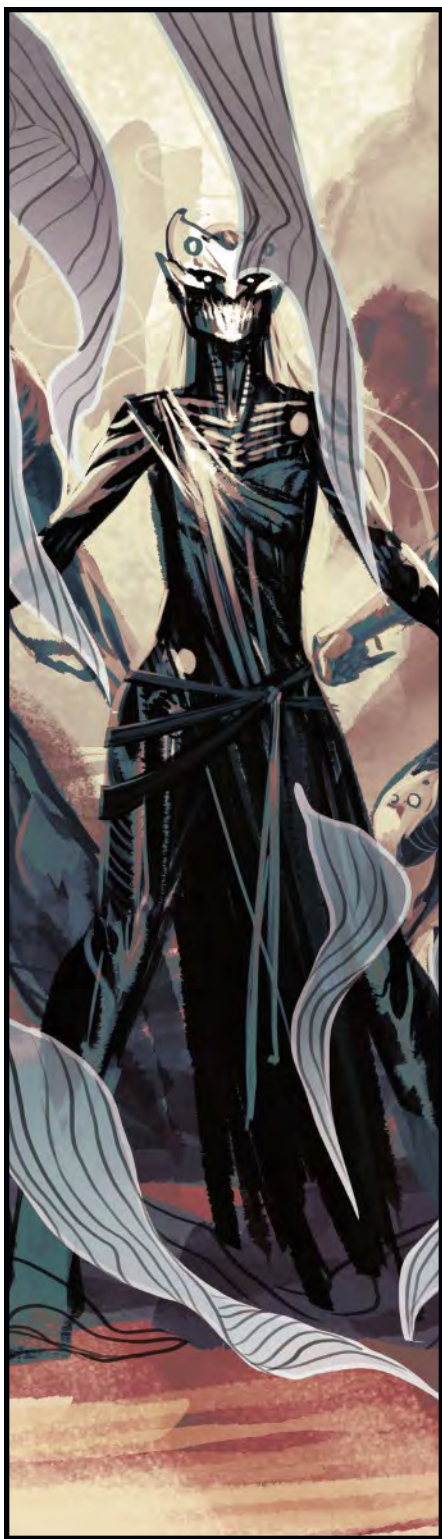
- The god demands a new, more difficult task.
- The Godbinder takes on God Debt in proportion to how large the Miracle was—likely 2-5 debt.

3. Promising a Favour

Writing a god a blank cheque is very dangerous. The god will ask for something down the line, and the Godbinder must do it. This is the big option, and when it comes, it'll be huge. It can't be paid off until the god wants it to be paid off, and puts a gun on the mantelpiece. These are the deals you can most easily shape whole adventures around.

Hestia has promised a favour from the God of Light. Eventually, the god calls it in, saying that she needs someone to travel to the sunless desert and make a sun burn anew. Hestia sighs, and sets forth.

Promising a favour is the most powerful tool for a GM in a campaign. A god with a favour can be saved until exactly the most dramatic time to call it in.



RUNNING THE FALLEN

When a player character dies, they arise as biomechanical undead known as Fallen. They know that if they kill a living character, they'll return to life—but until then, their senses, intelligence and capabilities gradually erode until they're a single-minded monster.

If the players haven't read *DIE*, they may not be aware of the nature of the Fallen. Even if not, lean into the weirdness and horror of your once-dead friend lurching to their feet again, awfully changed. The zombie in pop culture is a trope which is so common it seems normal. Your aim is to make undeath feel as real and unusual as it is.

Make the experience a real one for the player themselves. What does being a Fallen feel like? Tell the player. The question and answer method is useful, but also open to be played with. "Hey, [Fallen Player], tell me about your Persona's favourite smell?" "[Player answers]" "You can't smell that any more. All you can smell is the scents of your friends, and the pulse in their neck."

Subvert. Make being dead truly live.

NON-PLAYER FALLEN

Only player Fallen return to life after killing a player. All the other Fallen are too far gone. They're over the event horizon and can't find their way back, and are trapped with their terrible hunger.

SECOND DEATH

The sheet does not tell the player what dying as a Fallen means, but hints that it's bad. That most Fallen have no personality speaks to that. It's obvious what happens to those who remain Fallen eventually.

However, if a Paragon does die again, the same thing happens as the first time. They get up at the end of the current encounter.

How long is this true? We've left this as a narrative element rather than something which we mechanise. If a player becomes a Fallen and starts using their condition as essentially infinite lives, you should start having seeing effects.

As a first step, ask a question from the following list:

- Who was your favourite grandparent?
- What was the best date you've ever been on?
- What's the most beautiful view you ever saw on Earth?
- What was the most important lesson you learned from someone?
- What's the best smell?

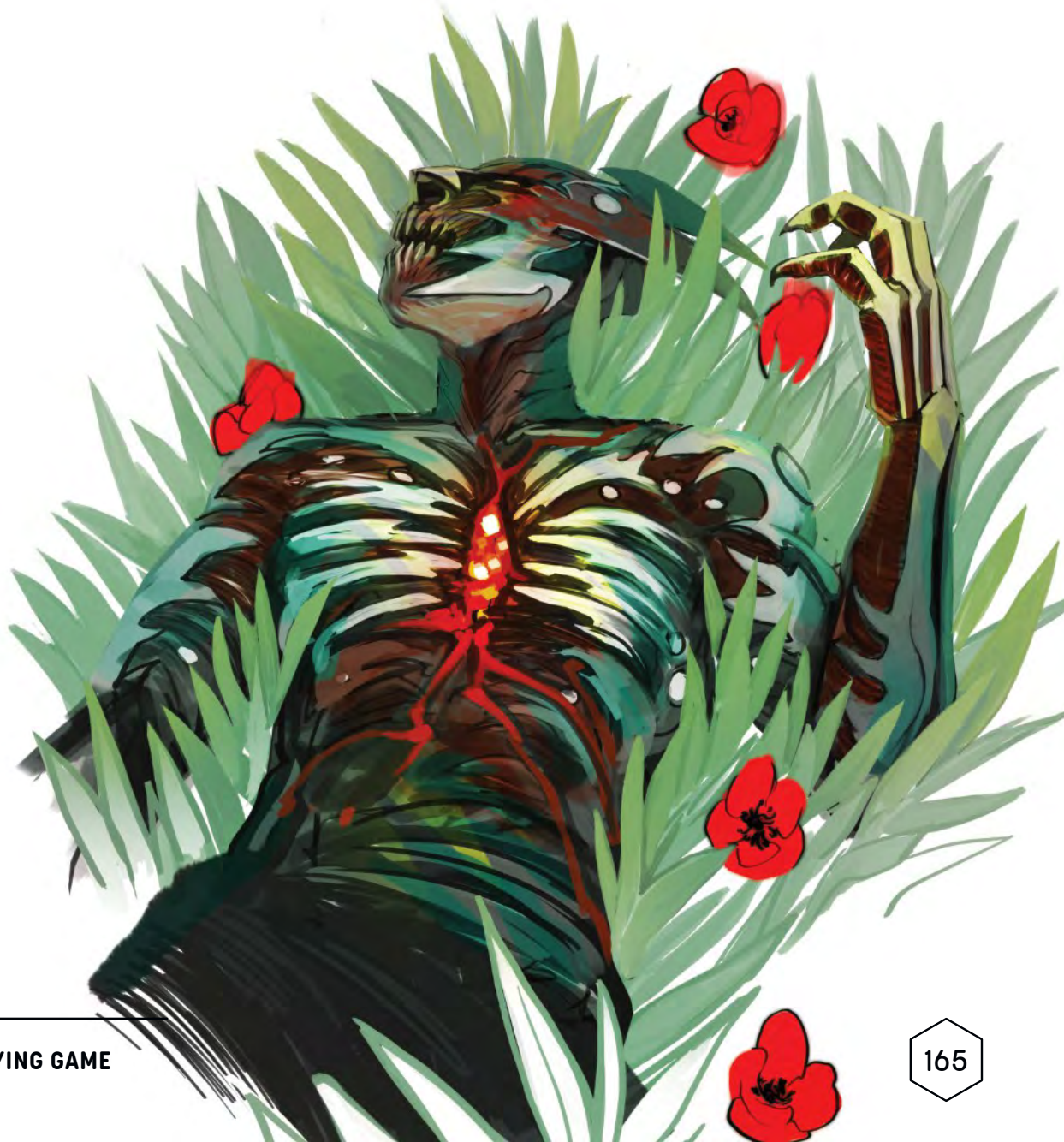
Let the player describe it, and then tell them they don't remember it any more.

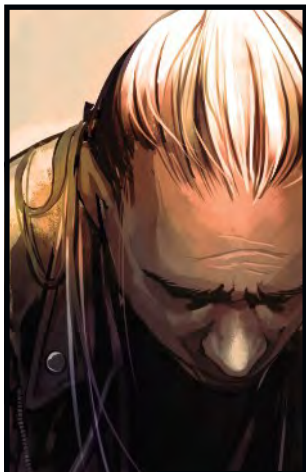
That's a flesh wound. Treat further deaths in similar ways.

RESURRECTING FALLEN

Bar the method described on the sheet of intra-party fratricide, the players may wish to pursue other methods for returning people to life from Fallen. If you want to make this possible, powerful GM-controlled characters are suitable means of achieving it—which would include the Godbinders’ deities. All of these are unlikely to do so without a good reason, which means a quest. The Master’s Cheating ability also could do so, if they have sufficient motivation.

The relative ease or difficulty of returning a Fallen to life through these methods speak to the tone of the game you wish. The harder it is, the more likely Paragons will be left behind by their party who choose to return to existence—or a Paragon murders another to stop being Fallen. Either way—and the latter automatically includes the former—the darker the ending will be. There is an exception: in a game with a pure antagonistic Master, the “Fallen murders the Master to return to life” tends to come across as a just ending. Dark, sure, but not abyssal-bleak.





PLAYERS PLAYING AS PERSONAS

There is a tension in *DIE*'s design which is difficult to circumvent: the transition from the real world to the fantasy world of Die. In practice, your group will find their own way. At the beginning of play, all players (including the Master) are in-character with everything they do. Play moves to the Master taking a more traditional GM role.

Some players instinctively mimic the Master's choice, and start playing in a more traditional way, treating their Paragon more like a playing piece, moving between speaking as their Paragon and narrating their Paragon from the outside, leaning towards the latter. Others go the other way, and carry on playing their Persona who is controlling their Paragon.

The only problem with players choosing to stay in Persona at all times is information flow towards the GM. The game is reliant on the GM (and, in fact, the other players) knowing what a Persona is really going through, so they can tailor their choices towards serving that story. If a player is in character as the Persona at all time, it means they will likely be lying, because people lie.

The solution is to regularly mine for information, especially when you suspect a Persona is acting contrary to their desires. A question structure which is effective is one which separates the player from the Persona. For example, ask the player how their Persona is feeling in the moment. That prompts the answer you're looking for. Doing it will also put the idea into players' heads, and they'll be more likely to signal where their actions differ from their Persona's actual feelings.

For example, in this group Stephanie is playing the Persona Morgan, and she's speaking resolutely as Morgan. The group is about to enter a cave—full of the spiders, with the faces of the people who teased Morgan's accent at school.

GM: So, everyone want to continue?

Everyone else: Hell yeah!

Stephanie: Yup. I'm in.

GM: Stephanie—how is Morgan actually feeling right now?

Stephanie: Utterly terrified. They weren't an arachnophobe before, but they certainly are now... but Morgan hates anyone seeing that they have a weak side.

GM: Great. Onwards.

ALTERNATE MODES OF PLAY

As core to the game, we've presented a faithful representation of the comic. There's two key facts:

1. There's six Paragons, one for each of the six dice.
2. The GM always plays the Master, taking the D20.

Neither of these have to be true.

Here's some thoughts on other ways of playing.

MULTIPLE PARAGONS OF THE SAME TYPE (AKA THE HIGHLANDER VARIANT)

As standard, each player has a different dice. There is no more than one Neo, Emotion Knight and so on. This is to feed into the world, increase the importance of the dice fetishization and player individuality.

Sometimes, this doesn't work. Maybe you have more than 5 players and have run out of classes. Maybe you have two players that want to play an Emotion Knight. Maybe you have five players who all want to play an Emotion Knight.

If you want to play with multiple players of each class, simply do so. The rules don't need to change, just a few of the rituals.

Importantly, when you distribute the dice, keep the line about their only being one of each dice, despite the fact another player clearly has a second one. There's a few ways this can go:

- They actually don't have to worry about it. This is probably the best version for the game of *DIE* as described in Rituals.
- The other version is much more dangerous, and opens up some terrifying player vs. player options.

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

They definitely have to worry about it. It's Highlander, and There Can Be Only One. The endgame voting won't work with two of the same class, and you need to do something else to escape or save Die.

Perhaps they have to kill their mirror Paragon, finding an NPC Paragon with a "real" copy of the dice (see Native Paragons on page 183) or maybe even destroy the concept of the class itself (perhaps by destroying the Emotion Knight orders, defeating the Fair or somehow undoing the power of the Dictator's Voice). This would make a hell of a *DIE* Campaign.

Make sure it's clear in the "for all players" notice in the tavern at the start of the second session, or signpost it in some other obvious way—a wizened sage arrives and tells the party, they feel the innate urge to destroy the "real" Paragon the same way a Fallen would, or the Master directly taunts them with the challenge.

Honestly, this variant is really me just thinking of a party full of Emotion Knights, each with a different emotion, running around like a murderous version of Pixar's Inside Out.

NON-MASTER ANTAGONISTS

While a Master is the classic antagonist for *DIE*, any of the Paragons can be used as the antagonist's character—simply distribute the dice appropriately, giving the antagonist whatever class you wish.

When transported to Die and transformed, the antagonist character (as well as gaining the normal abilities of their archetype) gains access to the Hardcore Cheats as seen on the Master Character Class, including the usual number of cheat tokens (i.e., a number equal to the number of Personas other than the antagonist).

As they don't have a D20, they can only perform cheats with cheat tokens. They only have access to the cheats as described in Chapter 4 under Hardcore Cheating (page 105). As in "A Miraculous Event" and "Undo the effects of what has just happened."

Choose how this is justified in the fiction:

- They have a magical item which gives them a number of wishes. What is it?
 - ◆ A magical ring
 - ◆ A crown of domination
 - ◆ A genie in a bottle
 - ◆ Something else
- They have a powerful character, devoted to them...
 - ◆ A snivelling lesser Master, looking to please them
 - ◆ A wry demon, looking to trick them
 - ◆ A artisan of impossible craft, looking to impress them
 - ◆ Something else
- Something else

THE NATURE OF YOUR ANTAGONISTS

While a Master as main antagonist is likely, you're likely to have other opponents you meet along the way—as well as the option of making the actual main antagonist not be a Master. Think about how they'll approach the world differently. Dictators removing agency from Paragons could prove to be frustrating—but Dictators break easily if you can get past the Voice. A Dictator should act against the group at a distance, trying to stay as far as possible. And be aware that an antagonist need not actually be actively chasing down the group—it's easy to imagine a Fool who just wants to go off and have fun, and the Paragons are charged with trying to find the selfish fucker.





7. BUILDING DIE



BUILDING DIE

DIE is about a group of people who play a game, get dragged into a fantasy world which echoes their inner lives, have an adventure and then decide whether to stay or go.

In Rituals (page 107), we describe a robust method for generating this fantasy world—the group visits the role-playing game they all played together as teenagers. This is a great way to run a *DIE* game, but you'll note there's nothing specific in the first paragraph which says that *DIE* has to be an old RPG. It just has to be a fantasy world that echoes their inner lives.

Building *DIE* gives you additional ways to generate these personalised worlds, and provides guidance in how to structure your visits there. *DIE* Rituals gives you what we think is the most reliable, widely applicable tool. Building *DIE* throws open the toolbox, and gives you options which may or may not suit any given group.

We advise you to play Rituals first, but when you've finished, this is all here, waiting for you.

A side-effect of using various methods of world generation is surprise. A lot of DIE is about the re-enchantment of RPGs. The idea that players aren't quite sure what's going to happen next. We go to a fantasy world, and we really don't know how it works—and that allows both fear and wonder. As are unpredictability and magic. There is order and chaos, side-by-side.

ALTERNATE WORLDS

These world generation methods can either entirely replace the whole “Go to a teenage fantasy RPG world” concept or be used as supplementary elements inside that concept.

You have an idea—either of your own, or lifted from another game (or film or book or play)—and think it could be a fun way to generate a setting, go for it. All that is required for *DIE* to work is the that Persona go somewhere where they can discover themselves.

1. ACTUALLY PLAN EVERYTHING

You're a classical RPG gamemaster (GM). You're worried about the unusual prep required for *DIE*, and have no experience with improvised settings. You'd be happier if you actually had a much stronger structure you could perhaps add some more details to on the fly.

Do that. Just do it like you would a standard role-playing game. Essentially, you take the prep as described in Rituals and just carry on developing it rather than leaving it in a molten form. Rather than creating a palette to draw from, craft specific encounters from the material you've gathered and go from there.

2. AN RPG WORLD THAT ISN'T THEIR OLD FANTASY GAME

It doesn't have to be the Persona's old RPG world. It can be the RPG they're normally playing on any week when they're not being dragged screaming into another dimension. The time-jump in *DIE* does useful things in terms of the Persona, but you can play in the game they're still playing now—the methods of generation described in Rituals still work.

You can also have it as an RPG that only some members of the group has played. To do this, point the generate-the-world questions at the relevant Persona.

In a longer *DIE* Campaign, spending a single session visiting a fantasy game which is known to one Persona and is strange to the rest can be a fruitful way to give focus on a character.

3. A FANTASY WORLD OF THE PERSONA'S CREATION

Characters can have their own fantasy worlds which are not related to the shared fantasy of RPGs. For example, some people are novelists, comic writers, artists. Some people are daydreamers. All these can create fantasy worlds which one can explore and twist, in exactly the same way they can with the basic RPG world setup.

The key difference is that this means you can only really ask questions to the character who dreamed up this world, giving them more focus.

*For an example of exactly this game, see
DIE: Con Quest on page 330.*

4. DARK MIRRORS OF REAL LOCATIONS (FOR THE PLAYERS)

This is arguably the easiest way to generate a locale. Take a real-world location and set-dress it like it's in a horror or dark fantasy film. Any real-world location you know (and ideally the players know) is great. For example, using a local mall, an old school or a museum. Use online resources to find maps and photographs.

If players decide that a real-world location matters to their Persona, get ahold of the map of that real location and use it. If players set their Personas in a real town, get a map of their town. Someone mentions the British Museum? Download the map and use it as a structure.

This is an especially useful method if you're playing a game in a public space, like a games convention. Take the con map of the map you're in, and interpret it. Perhaps the retailers are actually a bustling town of merchants desperately selling stuff—equipment, their souls, bits of their body. Or maybe it's a dragon horde, as that's where the money is. These are all just more ingredients to suggest the nature of an encounter.

If you're using DIE Ritual's suggestion of having the first encounter in the room you're sitting in, you can explore the locale around the room and house to generate encounters. Expand your accommodation in size and even the smallest flat can feel like Mordor. The first encounter is in the living room, the next in the corridor, then up the stairs for a third encounter and so on. Who knows what hell exists in your toilet? If you expand outside the house into the neighbourhood, all the local shops and landmarks can provide inspiration.

5. DARK MIRRORS OF REAL LOCATIONS (FOR THE PERSONAS)

The Personas all have places in the real world that are important to them: family homes, old apartments, secret places in the woods near your house where you smoked secret cigarettes.

To use these as a location in the game, ask the Personas about details, twisting them as you need. This is the same process as tweaking a detail from the RPG world, but applied to something that is in “reality.”

This is especially good for one off locations in larger settings. There is nothing quite as weird as exploring a huge, creepy fantastical forest and finding your Persona's real-world grandmother's house in the middle of it.

*All these methods with a map let
players orientate themselves in the
fiction, despite not really know what's
going on. Give the players a map early
on. Let them savour the existential
horror of having a perfect map of their
environment and then not have a clue
what is true and what isn't and what
anything actually means.*

6. REINTERPRETING OLD RPG MAPS

Rather than playing with the nature of our reality, an alternative approach is to play with pre-existing RPG material. Take a random RPG supplement with a map, and use it to inspire the location the Persona are exploring.

Look at the map, see what each room or corridor is, and then twist it. A dragon lair in an old RPG map could become the place where a Persona's bank manager lurks, demanding repayment of their looming debts. At the absolute least, this provides a concrete environment for your players to explore. This works especially well with the artificialities of particularly old RPG maps, with their 30-foot square rooms. Imagine walking through a place with such geometric precision. That's creepy. Lean into it. Interpret all the details—the room numbers, the code, everything.

7. ANY PRE-EXISTING FANTASY WORLD

Rather than using any specific dungeon map and riffing on it, or a generic fantasy world, just drop people into whatever fantasy world you like.

Middle-earth. Narnia. The Forbidden Realms. Dragonlance's Krynn. Warhammer 40,000's Necromunda.

Anything.

And I do mean any setting. Roddenberry's Star Trek. George Lucas's Tatooine. Ron Gilbert's Monkey Island.

No, I really do mean any setting. Dante's Hell. William Shakespeare's Verona. Jane Austen's Bath.

No, I *really* mean any setting. Herodotus's Greece. Machiavelli's Italy. Matthew, Mark, Luke or John's Jerusalem.

All worlds are fantasy worlds, because when they're written down they've had to pass through their creators' heads. They've had to render the real world imaginary to write it down. To think is to imagine. That's what we do.

If there's a place that seems to speak to one of the Persona's obsessions (especially the Master Persona you're playing as the GM), then dropping the players in this world and letting them explore can be fun.

The story and encounters are generated by intersecting the players' obsessions and desires with the fiction. Say you drop the players in Middle-earth, in Rivendell, during the council to decide the future of the Ring. If a Persona is worried about their wedding, there's obvious connective tissue there. Gandalf merges with traits from his overbearing Grandfather who knows what's best for him. The level of that is entirely to taste—it can be incredibly overt (Gandalf actually looks like my grandfather) or more subtle (Gandalf works in a similar relationship).

The exception would be if you're using a map your players are aware of from a previous non-DIE game they played with you. As such, using their own recollections of the place may be sufficient... though even then, if you have the players' own map of a dungeon from a previous game, passing it back to them is an incredibly powerful, creepy moment... and also something you should check in with players before doing.

This choice does mean that the setting may simply be too large—but sampling a section of a world is certainly a fine approach. If you’re playing using Rituals, you’ll especially have to think about ways to bring the drama to a climax. A useful choice is to limit the setting. Rather than Middle-earth, you could drop the players into the battle for Helm’s Deep and set the whole scenario in that relatively small locale. And always remember, the antagonist can always come to the players to prompt a climax.

There are many advantages to this approach, but it’s also one which most presents a world some Personas may be attracted to staying in. As it is clearly a whole world rather than a small fictional bottle. “Would you rather live on Earth or Middle-earth?” is a question which is certainly open for a game of *DIE* and that cuts close to the heart of its themes.

It is also presented here to underline a key point in the design: each of these bottle kingdoms can be literally any size, up to and including a copy of a whole universe (or even multiverses). And there’s not just one Narnia inside Die—there’s an endless number of them.

Die is big. It has room for all your fantasies inside it. That’s what it’s for, for better or worse.





8. NERD ORACLES (AKA “THE BOX OF CRAP”)

The random generation table is a classic ingredient of RPGs; you roll on a list to get a new element to introduce to the fiction. If you look at it in another way, this is actually in-world divination—turning to a system to determine what will happen next. They tell the future with 100% reliability. Random generation tables are oracles.

And everything is an oracle if you look at it in the right way.

I encourage you to make your own custom built oracle. I call mine the Box of Crap. This is both a prop and a gameplay prompt, and can be as much or as little effort as you wish. The idea is whenever you would turn to a random table, you instead draw something from the box and use it to inspire adding an element to the narrative

Want to make your own? It's simple.

First, find a box.

Secondly, find some crap.

If you have a history of roleplaying, throwing in some old supplements for random games, character sheets, campaign notes and maps is ideal. If you don't have a history of roleplaying, then putting childhood maps or stories you made inside the box can serve the same purpose. Random old maps from holidays are good items. Maps of famous locations everyone will know. Old photos of childhood. Magazine clippings.

If you have none of the above, you can ask the players if they have anything they're willing to share.

You can also buy random old supplements/gamebooks cheap off eBay, or in second-hand shops. You can simply search “RPG maps” online and save and print out anything you find amusing. If you want something novel, there's many online map generators. Go print some out. Same goes for maps of old real-world period cities.

Try distressing newly-printed material with the old childhood trick of dousing them in tea and putting them in the oven.

Tarot cards? Great. Lob 'em in. Can't go wrong with tarot. I keep a deck in my Box of Crap, as it's just a useful atmospheric tool. At moments in play when I want more of a sense of gravitas or mystery, I stop and draw a tarot card. If it inspires me, I use it. If it doesn't inspire me, I go “hmm” and pretend it's influenced what I'm doing in some way that's entirely mysterious to the players.

Basically, anything you want to interpret.

Thirdly, put the crap in the box. Add the Paragon's dice, and shut it (perhaps even seal it).

To echo the GM in the comic, I've written PROPERTY OF SOLOMON on the side of mine in a marker pen, which adds to the sense of a period artefact. The point of this box is twofold:

- It's a mood-setting object to encourage atmosphere and buy-in from the players. You've put this creepy box on the table. It deliberately tries to make old RPG stuff weird.
- It's a divinatory device which you will interpret to inspire the adventure and challenges.

You can randomly flick through a book from the Box of Crap and select whatever is in it. A D&D monster manual is obviously the archetypal one, but it could be anything. Children's picture books played straight can be creepy. I've used a con programme/content guide as a monster generator.

If you have miniatures or similar monster tokens in the Box of Crap, drawing one randomly also works. A bag full of tokens and miniatures isn't a bad idea. You get to pull it out and be dramatic. If your players are up for boundary-pushing material—which you should check before playing—this also works well if you have the players' old RPG material. Pulling out a player's old character sheet from a previous game, and then using an awful echo of that beloved character as the basis of a character can be very creepy.

You can also add things to the Box of Crap between sessions, if you're feeling sneaky. In one game players said they were all working in a real Italian restaurant in Brooklyn, so I downloaded the restaurant's actual menu to use as a random encounter generator. Fear The Baked Aubergine.

You don't even need to use a box to use this method. You want some inspiration, stand up and grab something, open it and see what you find. Anything is an oracle if you look at it in the right way. Look at the world the right way. Enchant it.

9. DR. GILLEN'S UNPATENTED TAROT-DUNGEON GENERATION

Following from the previous method, you know what else is an oracle if you look at it in the right way? An actual oracle, such as tarot.

These are for players who wish to improvise rather than plan, though you can certainly plan for including a tarot map section inside a larger game.

In Dr. Gillen's Unpatented Tarot-Dungeon Generation, you lay tarot cards face down to represent the map. Create your spread by laying cards in a pattern you think is pretty. You will want to lay at least two cards plus the number of players (e.g. with three players, you'll lay five cards). This makes one encounter per player, plus the first and last rooms. Add more to taste, as not every card needs to be an actual encounter.

As the players reach an unexplored area of the tarot map, flip the corresponding card. Use the details on the card in conjunction with the details of the players to inform the encounter. At the very least, it can suggest an environment. If you know a lot about tarot, use what you know. If you don't, use your imagination.

If you run out of cards, you can always deal more or another spread. An end-game spread can be particularly thematic.

Try replacing the tarot deck with any form of collectible card game, and interpret the cards as you would tarot. Or intermix them. A Tarot/Pokémon map is 100% my energy.



ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

DIE Rituals provides a standard built-in structure. Before the second session, you work out what necessary encounters are required to give each Persona a chance to explore their nature. Only when they've all happened, does the game move to the final encounter.

While we give gentle guidance there, it can be useful to structure your encounters more rigorously. This methodology is a more elaborate version of: "Where are they at the start? Where are they at the end? What's stopping them from getting there?"

In this section, we'll take a look at the elements of an adventure, a six point tool used to structure your adventures, chaining scenarios together. The elements of an adventure include:

- ◆ Gates
- ◆ Vaults
- ◆ Keys
- ◆ Signposts
- ◆ Smoke machines
- ◆ Menus

Let's dive into each of these.

ELEMENTS OF AN ADVENTURE

1. GATES

A gate is a problem that halts progress in a direction unless circumvented. A locked door is the classic example of a gate. To open it, you need a key. Or something that can bash it down. Or someone to open it from the other side. Or any other way a player could work out to get past it.

It doesn't have to be so literal. A monster (or person) that won't let you pass is a gate too, though the player won't necessarily realise that it's a gate that has a key. A monster could want a special item (like gold) to let you pass, which makes its "gate" nature clearer. Whatever that is, that is their key. Some gates don't have keys and need to be bashed down with force. In other words, any monster encounter which blocks your progress is a gate.

A well-signalled gate tells players to work out what to do to get past it, and can guide them into side quests. A monster that wants its memories of a lost love back implies a course of action which doesn't involve hitting the monster, especially when the players saw a lost-memory emporium previously on their travels.

Gates creates the structure and pace of your adventure. The more you have, the longer it will take to get to the final encounter.

For example, in Lord of Rings, the door to enter Moria is a gate. The Balrog is also a gate—it's the thing which stops the Fellowship from leaving Moria.



2. VAULTS

A vault contains a prize. It's an object that doesn't block the players' progress, and rewards players for overcoming it. Vault sits there, and you can just ignore it and carry on your way. Like gates, vaults are best when they have more than one method of opening them. You can find its key and unlock it. Or pick its lock. Or break it open.

While vaults can be actual vaults, we need not be so literal. A casual, non-threatening monster sitting in the room, relaxing, who has the memories of another monster's lost love in its back pocket is a vault. A merchant selling things is a vault. A seer who knows the weakness of the Master's greatest champion is a vault.

Vault contain treasure. In our system, the only treasure that matters is a key...

For example, the ents of Fangorn having a big old chat are a vault. The hobbits strictly speaking needn't have interacted with them that much, but by doing so, they gain treasure—specifically, the ents joining them to kick the shit out of Saruman.

3. KEYS

A key is a thing which solves a problem the player faces, allowing progress. While keys can be actual keys, we need not be so literal. Other keys include a magical chant, a rare item, peace between two warring families, or simple and necessary information. A password is a key... but so is someone revealing the location of something you're looking for.

Keys are usually rewards. They are often found in vaults. They are rarely left lying around, but you never know. The sword Arthur tugged from a stone worked pretty well (though, strictly speaking in our terminology, the Sword in the Stone is a vault).

The biggest key in *DIE* is what the players need to get home—or stay in Die forever. How to achieve our goals in *DIE* is a key.

It's worth noting what isn't included in this list, which is treasure. You can absolutely give players treasure, but this isn't a structural concern. The only treasure you need to consider at the large-scale planning stage is that which solves future problems. Namely, keys.

For example, the hobbits knowing that Fangorn has been cut down by Saruman is a key. They use it to unlock the vault of the ent's rage.



4. SIGNPOSTS

A signpost is a way to give the players information, with no cost. While a signpost could be a literal signpost, perhaps pointing towards the Master's fortress. Other signposts include the bartender who tells the players that the Master who rules the dungeon lives on the lowest level, a bard singing a song about the history of the region, the drunk guy in the bar who won't shut up or the stars aligning in monstrous symmetrical patterns pointing at an eldritch truth that none can deny

Signposts have to be free information. If you have to do something to get the information out, it's probably a vault. (The bartender who needs to be convinced to give you that information is a vault.)

This information may be a key to unlock a gate or a vault, but is more likely to be used to point players in the direction of a gate or vault.

For example, Gandalf turning up to tell Frodo everything about this big scary ring and what they have to do to get rid of it is a signpost.

5. SMOKE MACHINES

A smoke machine is about the vibe, man. It differs from a signpost in that it is not meant to provide information. It's meant to provide feelings. This is something which exists to present a creepy idea or mood, and is not necessarily even meant to be interacted with. The classic example of a smoke machine is a smoke machine, a device which pumps out a lot of fake smoke which makes everyone feel like things are dead moody. Other smoke machines include things on fire, heavenly choirs or rooms full of faceless children typing out lists of things their parents did which made them feel guilty.

For example, every fucking song in Lord of the Rings is a smoke machine.

6. MENUS

A menu is when the players are presented with a choice. The classic example of a menu is a menu, which lists various options of food you can eat. This ritualised choice is common in fantasy stories. Our menus are likely to range from which magical ally will join you on the quest to defeat the Master, to whether you'd rather pet your dead cat or dead dog one more time. *DIE* is a game of many tones, and a question with nothing but unbearable answers is always an option.

Menus also include moral choices, as anyone who's ever played a Bioware RPG will tell you.

For example, Galadriel deciding not to take the One Ring is a menu.



ARRANGING THE ELEMENTS

Vaults and gates will be the majority of your encounters, and are most likely to slow the player in a meaningful way. Vaults, because they will likely be engaged with to get a key (or just out of nosiness) and gates because they will literally prevent progress.

Smoke machines and signposts are rarely to be sizeable encounters. Signposts are required for the logic of a dungeon to connect things. Smoke machines create mood. This means they are not connected to the necessary path of the scenario—but it's certainly possible they could escalate to something bigger. A roomful of dragon corpses, each wearing the jerseys of your old school football team, may be atmosphere. If someone tries to raise them from the dead, that changes to something more active. Smoke machines are useful things to have to throw into the story to taste.

Menus can be sizeable encounters, or smaller ones. It's likely a menu is the end of a story for a player, and can often be effectively merged with the final encounter. The heart of the final encounter—as in, “do we go home or not”—is a menu encounter.

There is one signpost which is pretty much necessary—to make the players know what they have to do to go home.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

The GM decides that the final confrontation with the Master is in their secret lair. They want to make things interesting for the players, so they make a gate encounter to stop the players getting there. They want their game to have three big encounters. So, as the gate is one, they add two vaults each of which provides a key. Both keys are needed to open the locked gate. They also realise they need something to point the players in the right direction to the secret lair, so they'll need a signpost.

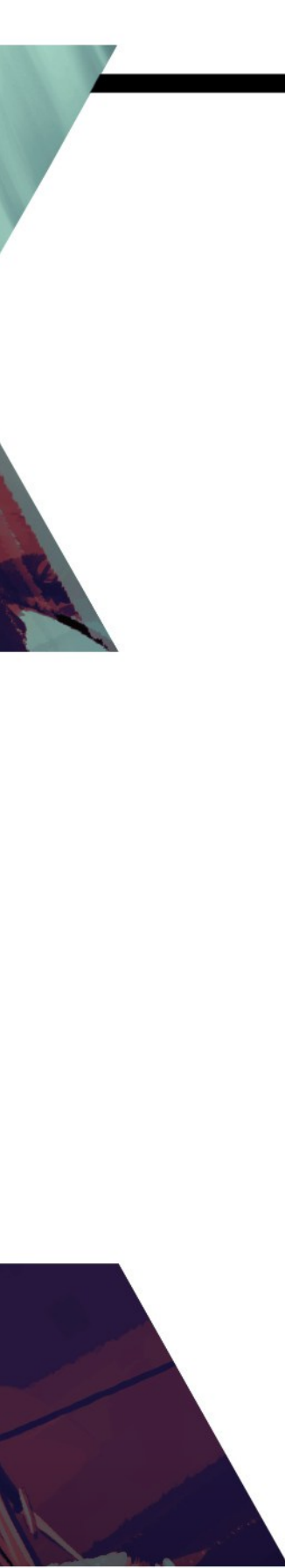
The GM needs ideas for three big encounters (the two vaults and the gate) and a signpost to have a backbone for their game. Ideas for more signposts or smoke machine scenes could be fun to have, as they rarely slow the players down. An idea for another gate scene could also be useful. The GM hasn't thought enough about the characters yet to know if a menu could be useful, but they'll progress with that in mind.

This group of Personas are all weird hipster music obsessives. The GM decides backstage at a magical club is the final area the Master will be. The gate is a huge, monstrous bouncer, preventing it. They need to be vouched for by two other performers before they can go backstage—each of the performers (drawn from the fave artists of the Persona) will be a vault, and their recommendation a key. As it's a club, a bartender is a signpost—easy sources of information.

The GM makes a quick list of smoke machines—the music in the club having magical effects, whoever is on stage, posters on the wall and so on. And as it's a club, a smoke machine as a smoke machine. Finally, a little cherry on the cake—backstage, after speaking to all the performers, there's a critic who asks the group who they think is the best of all the performers, with their choice coming back to haunt them.



8. BESTIARY



In *DIE*, the Persona travel to another world. The world is unlikely to be empty. This chapter describes some of the things they could find—ravenous beasts, creatures of bleak magic, legendary adversaries and dangerous people of every kind.

Spoilers: this isn't called a Bestiary because you're all going to become best friends.

THE CREATURES OF DIE

There are as many fantasy worlds in *Die* as there are games of *DIE*. They're all unique, born of the Persona's obsessions. This is their fantasy world, but it should still feel like *DIE*.

This chapter provides everything you need to know about the iconic elements of *Die*, who permeate all the worlds.

NATIVE PARAGONS

Worlds of *DIE* likely have all the array of fighters, wizards and paladins of any fantasy game. But then there's also the Paragons. The players are likely not the only Dictators, Fools, Emotion Knights, Neos and Masters to exist.

They're a fun tool for your world building. In some worlds, they could be as rare as the Persona's Paragons. In other worlds, there could be whole legions of Emotion Knights, or a police force of chained-Dictators.

However, no matter what they differ from the players in one key way.

They don't actually have a dice.

Some Paragons have a faked, cheap copy. Some carry a talisman, representing the true platonic dice which they believe doesn't exist in our dimension. Some believe the true dice is out there, and they search for it desperately. Some view the dice at the core of their class as just empty symbolism.

As they aren't able to use the class dice, each of the six classes has a way to simulate it, as described in the following sections (see pages 184-186).

How the native Paragons respond when they realise the real dice are among them is an excellent adventure hook.

When making a native Paragon, you could go through the full player generation system, but that's a lot of work; this way is much quicker and easier. Also note that a starting player Paragon is much more competent than a basic, and has more abilities than an elite. The players are significantly more capable than both.

GENERATING NATIVE PARAGONS

To generate a native Paragon, pick a Paragon (Dictator, Emotion Knight, Fool, Neo, Godbinder, or Master). Then, choose the power level of the Paragon: basic, elite or hero. This determines the native Paragon's stats:

Basic: Set one stat as a 3 and all others 2.

Elite: Set two stats as a 3 and all others 2.

Hero: Set one stat as a 4, two as a 3, and all others 2.

Select one set of equipment from the relevant Paragon's class options. If the native Paragon is elite or hero, this also sets their Defence score. A basic Paragon will always have a Defence of 0, no matter what their equipment choice says.

Next, we'll give the native Paragon abilities. Native Paragons only gain access to the abilities described. An elite Paragon also gains the abilities of a basic Paragon, and a hero Paragon gains the abilities of all three.

Dictators

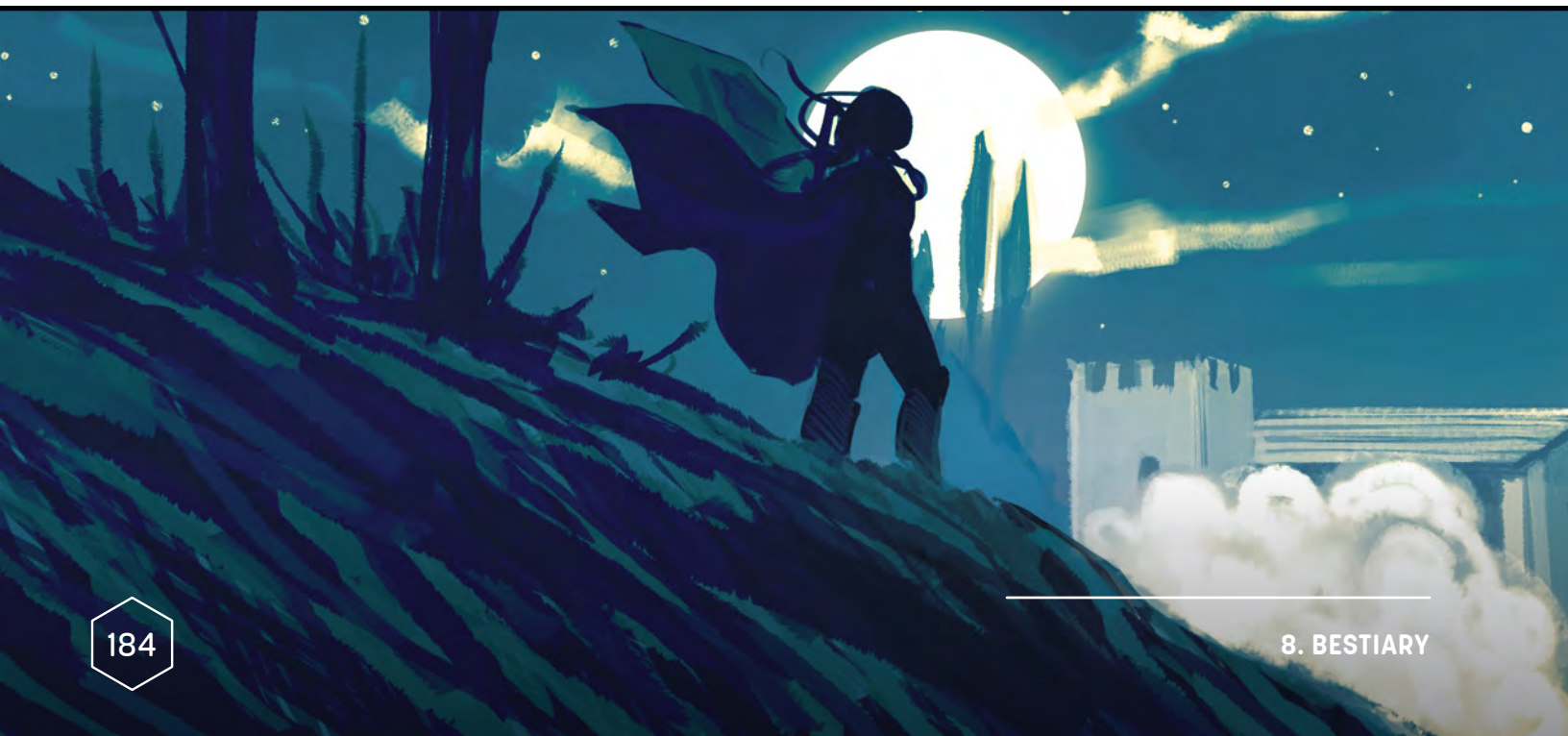
Basic: Choose one emotion.

Elite: Choose an extra emotion.

Hero: Choose an extra emotion.

When asked to roll a class dice, roll a D6 instead. 1-4 counts as the number rolled. A 5 or 6 counts as zero successes.

Dictators working together use the rules for group attacks: roll for the most powerful Dictator and add one dice to the pool per assisting Dictator. If a Dictator dies or uses the Voice on a different target, all their compulsions end—with the exception of any created by a critical fail.



To stress, when you're rolling a D6 as your class dice, all class rules (unless otherwise stated) remain the same. For example, So if you roll as 1 as a Godbinder on your D6, you take on one debt. In a very real and mathematical way, Native Paragons without the magical dice are weaker than player Paragons.

FOOLS

Basic:	Gets access to the Fool Dice, including the Special: roll another D6 and add it to the present dice pool. Choose a style.
Elite:	Choose an ability from A Trip To Clownschoool.
Hero:	Gain access to If All Else Fails... Choose another ability from A Trip To Clownschoool.

When rolling a class dice, roll a D6. This dice does not accumulate circles when you fail to roll a circle. However, it does accumulate crosses.

EMOTION KNIGHTS

Basic:	Choose an emotion and an arcane weapon. Can perform Creative Violence at a maximum level of 2.
Elite:	Choose a stance. Can perform Creative Violence at a maximum level of 3.
Hero:	Choose a venting ability. Can perform Creative Violence at a maximum level of 4.

When asked to roll a class dice, roll a D6 instead.

If a native Emotion Knight uses Creative Violence, an opposing Emotion Knight can use their own Creative Violence as a response. The Emotion Knight with a higher level gets to decide the effect. If emotional levels are equal, the higher roll on their class dice gets to decide the effect.

NEOS

Basic:	Has access to their AI and a single gift.
Elite:	Pick an upgrade for their gift. Gain access to overcharge.
Hero:	Pick a second gift and two upgrades.

When asked to roll a class dice, roll a D6 instead.



GODBINDERS

Basic:	Choose a level in a god of your choice. Can have a maximum of two debt to any god.
Elite:	Choose a level in a god of your choice. Can have a maximum of three debt to any god.
Hero:	Choose a level in a god of your choice. Can have a maximum of four debt to any god.

When asked to roll a class dice, roll a D6 instead.

MASTERS

These Master rules assume you're using the player-facing Master in the Appendix. To use the GM-facing Masters, use them exactly as written except they don't have cheat tokens and When asked to roll a class dice, roll a D6 instead.

Basic:	Choose two Rules. Choose what type of Master they are: Gamist, Simulationist or Narativist. For Hardcore Cheating, can perform Minor Cheats.
Elite:	Choose two additional Rules. For Hardcore Cheating, can also perform Major Cheats.
Hero:	Choose two additional Rules. For Hardcore Cheating, can also perform Outrageous Cheats.

When asked to roll a class dice, roll a D6 instead.

If a Master is in a region they are in magically control of, they gain access to the Realm Master cheats.

What if you want the Paragon to have an actual magical dice? Use the above rules, but include the relevant class dice. Note that certain echoes in DIE Campaign (page 253) absolutely have a real class dice...

See Secondary Characters (page 280) for a further way to generate unique, developed characters.





ECHOES

Echoes are our term for people in the game world who resemble someone from the real world (possibly including the Persona). They're useful as they allow the Persona to explore their feelings towards these people in the real world, and reveal more of their emotional landscape.

There are three types of echoes, defined by what they share with their real-world selves:

1. Appearance and personality
2. Appearance, personality and feelings towards Persona
3. Complete echoes

1. ONLY APPEARANCE AND PERSONALITY

A being in Die resembles someone from a Persona's life in appearance and personality, but has no memory or feelings about the Persona whatsoever. These sort of echoes can also include echoes of the Persona themselves.

The key thing about these sort of echoes is that they have no knowledge of the Persona. Even if they *are* the Persona, they may not recognise themselves.

The dragon threatening the town speaks in the voice that just sounds like the judgemental University Dean. As the ogre bandits throw back their hoods, their faces are revealed to be twisted copies of those belonging to the kids who bullied Ian.

2. APPEARANCE, PERSONALITY AND FEELINGS TOWARDS PERSONA

The same as the previous echo, but they share similar feelings towards the Persona as the being did in the real world. This can be just an instinctive response, or they might have a warped motivation for it.

Alex is confronted by an army of Fallen who look like all the people he argued with on the internet... and who all hate him. Mel discovers a horde of heroes, all who look like her one night stands, and all of who are into her.

3. COMPLETE ECHOES

The same as the previous echo, but have memories of the Persona. They may not be exactly the same memories as the person in the real world would have and they may not understand how they are there (and they likely won't care) but they know who you are and why they feel the way they do.

Some echoes have fantastical powers. Others are simply copies of the real person.

Morgan's ex is a Neo, hunting her down for betraying him. Alistair discovers a Rage Knight rampaging across the country. When they take off their helmet it's revealed he looks just like Alistair—an embodiment for the rage of all he's lost.



THE FALLEN

Die has few constants. The Fallen are one of them.

When the Personas are dragged away from reality, they find themselves between one world and the next. As they get their bearings, other beings get bearings on them.

The Fallen lurch forward, hungry, monstrous.

That is the first lesson Die teaches you. The Fallen want to devour you.

They cannot be reasoned with. They can only be stopped. In the comic, Chuck describes them as orcs. As in, they are the creature which you can kill in this game without any ethical worry. It's them or you.

Yes, this should make you suspicious.

Fallen are most easily defined not by appearance but their behaviour:

- They have an overwhelming hunger to consume the Persona.
- If slain, a piece of Fair Gold may be found in their remains.

Bar that, anything goes. The standard Fallen is a warped monstrous humanoid figure with bio-mechanical elements which may remind you of the Fair. In their intelligence, they'll remind you of a zombie. They'll have useless fragments of memory and instinct, at best. The hunger trumps all.

Some are huge ogre-like monsters towering over their fellows with fists like razors. Some manage to fake intelligence enough to be able to act as a trap, revealing their true nature as people step clear. A rare few have the presence of mind to act beyond their hunger and maybe even understand their condition. Some can be found individually as lone wanderers; others come in hordes that cover the landscape like ants.

They can often warp according to the player's obsessions. It's common to see Fallen as echoes (see page 187) of elements from the Persona's real life. Teenage tormentors turn into fantasy exterminators...

But monsters. Just monsters. Threats to kill. Nothing to think about.

Persona can believe this until one of them is killed. Shortly afterwards, they rise... as a Fallen. Their mind is intact, but they too have the hunger. They know in their screaming guts if they kill another living Persona, they can live again.

If they don't find a way back to life, they will be left behind on Die when their friends leave. And a look at the other Fallen may suggest what fate awaits them.

This is both right and wrong. The real truth of the Fallen is significantly more awful.

See FAIR on page 193 for more about sources of Fair Gold. See the Neo Chapter page 69 or Running the Neo on page 158 for more about Fair Gold generally.

SPOILERS
(DIE VOLUME 4)

A Persona can die, become a fallen and rise again—and perhaps leave Die to return to Earth.

However, this is no escape. Each time someone dies in Die, a Fallen is unleashed to wander the Die multiverse. Their intellect decays over time, but the hunger remains, even when feeding will do no good. It's too late for the Fallen who lurch at the Paragons.

Maybe it was always too late. The Fallen aren't those who have died in the past—they're also all those who will die in the future. The Fallen exist outside time, space and causality. The next time you see a horde of Fallen sweep across the horizon, be aware that each of them is someone who has paid a blood tithe to the amoral god that is Die.

Shoals of people—husks move across the multiverse, endlessly consuming fantasy, and never satisfied.

The truth: the most persistent, ever-present threat when you come to Die is people just like you.

FALLEN STATISTICS

ELITE FALLEN

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	0		

Abilities

Brutal Claws: Gain advantage on hand-to-hand attacks.

BASIC FALLEN

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	2	4	0		

Abilities

Frenzied: Advantage on hand-to-hand attacks but they can never have *any* Guard.

If the conception seems similar to a classic fantasy monster, you will likely find statistics for them in the *Creatures of Fantasy* section (page 199). Use that as your basis instead.

ASSASSIN FALLEN

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	3	3	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	3	4	1		

Abilities

Brutal Claws: Gain advantage on hand-to-hand attacks

Can attack at range.

Their attacks have the **Special:** the Fallen teleports away after attacking, becoming invisible. They remain invisible until they attack again.

FALLEN EPIC MONSTER

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
6	2	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	8	4	2		

Abilities

Their huge attack has the **Special:** apply the successes rolled in the attack to an additional nearby target.

CUSTOMISING FALLEN

While you can go a long way with the basics in *DIE*, sometimes you want something a bit more bespoke. Use the following guidance to generate a specific Fallen.

CONCEPTION

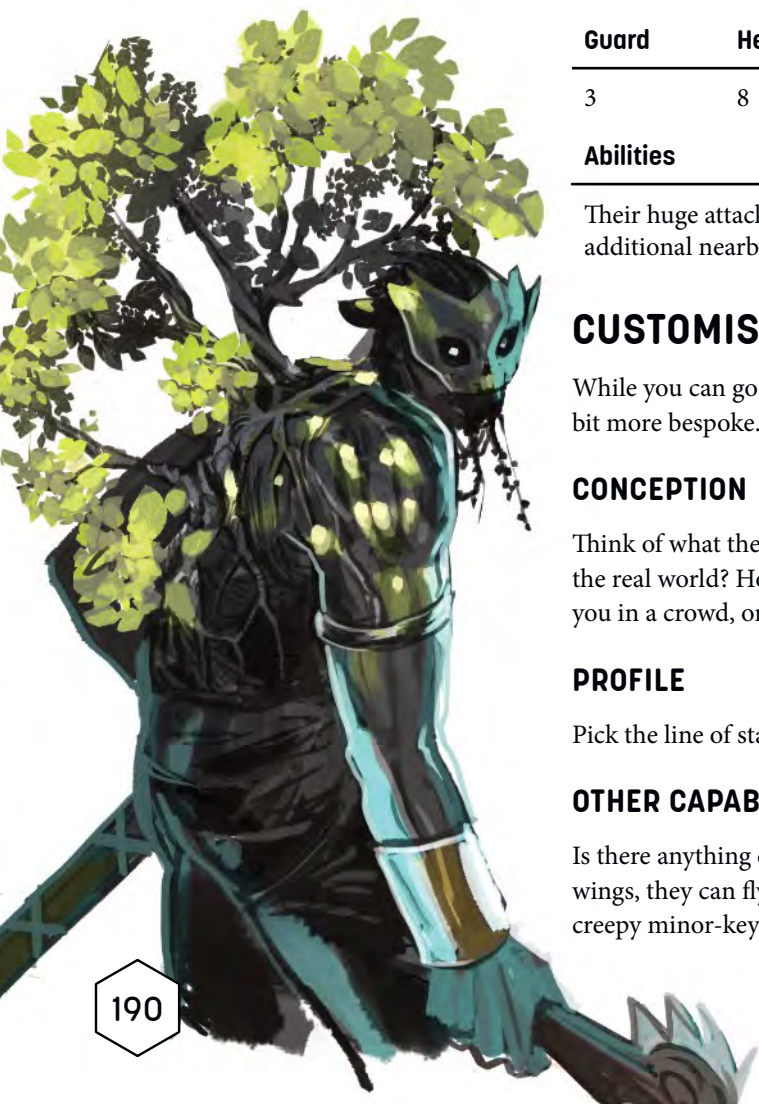
Think of what these Fallen are like. What's the visual? Are they echoing anything from the real world? How do they move? What noises do they make? Are they coming at you in a crowd, or are they a specialist?

PROFILE

Pick the line of stats of any of the above which most matches that.

OTHER CAPABILITIES

Is there anything else which they should be able to do? They can do it. If they have wings, they can fly. If they have guns for hands, they can shoot people. If they chant creepy minor-key versions of songs from children's TV shows, they can terrify people.



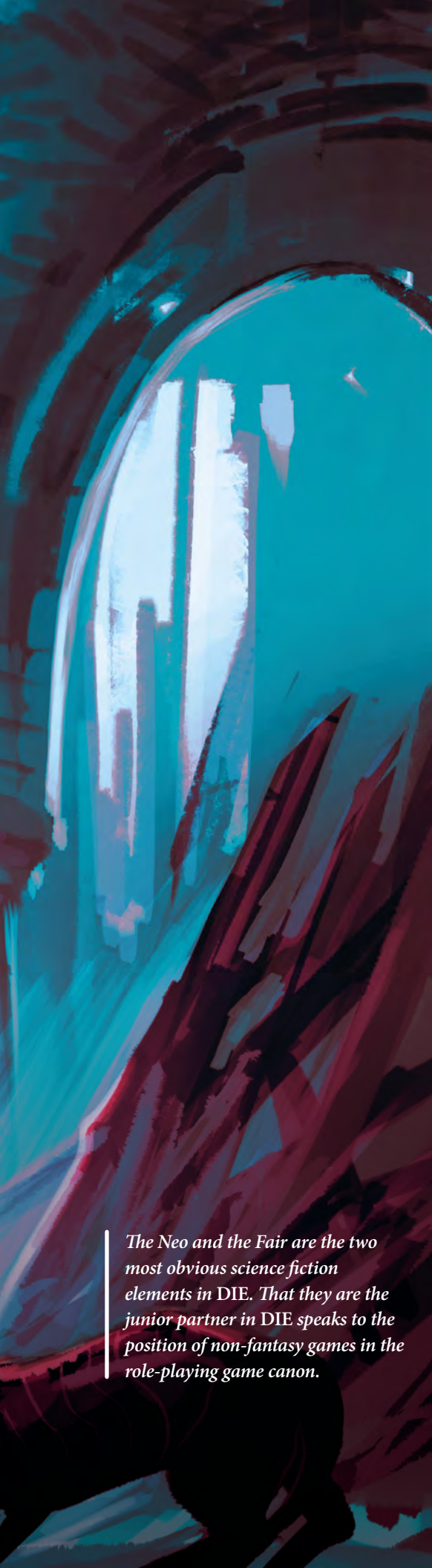
ABILITIES

Pick 1-3 abilities from the following list that match the Fallen conception. 1 ability adds some flavour; any more than 3 and you risk overcomplicating things.

Blood Vomit:	Attacks have Special: the target is covered with a vile smelling, awful coloured fluid that is extremely difficult to remove.
Brutal Claws:	Gain advantage on hand-to-hand attacks. Doesn't have to be claws, but usually is.
Burster:	When the Fallen dies, anyone nearby suffers a hit.
Flaming Attacks:	Their attacks have the Special: causes a hit every round until extinguished.
Frenzied:	Advantage on hand-to-hand attacks, but the Fallen can never have Defence.
Glass Jaw:	No matter what Constitution the Fallen has, they will die if they suffer a single Wound.
Hit And Run:	Their attacks have the Special: the Fallen teleports away after attacking, becoming invisible. They remain invisible until they attack again.
How Did You Know That:	The Fallen's attack have the Special: when attacking, the Fallen whispers something someone precious to them once said. Ask the target what it was.
Ice Touch:	Attacks gain: Special: target is chilled, and now suffers a disadvantage to all actions until warmed up. Special: if the target was already chilled, they're frozen solid. Difficulty 1 Strength test to break free.
Memory Eater:	The Fallen's attacks have Special: The target must say one minor memory of their real life. They no longer remember it.
No Emotions:	Invulnerable to all forms of emotion manipulation or draining, either positively or negatively.
Paralyzing Attacks:	Their attacks have a Double-Special: if the hit Wounds, the target misses their next action.
Sluggish:	The Fallen never has any Guard.
Smash Attack:	Their attack has Special: apply the successes rolled in the attack to an additional nearby target.
Too Much Information:	The Fallen's attacks have Special: the target must say aloud a secret that people present don't know.
Vampiric:	Adds Special: if this hit Wounds, recover one Health.
Virtually Unstoppable:	Their Health is twice their Constitution.

The listed Specials here are a mix of hard rules changes and colourful "ribbons." This is an ideal place to experiment with your own Specials on your creatures.





The Neo and the Fair are the two most obvious science fiction elements in DIE. That they are the junior partner in DIE speaks to the position of non-fantasy games in the role-playing game canon.

THE FAIR

The Fair are rarely seen in any of the worlds of Die, but they're watching.

The Fair appear as pairs of floating humanoid figures, cyberpunk-neon and polished chrome, elves as designed by William Gibson. They are sleek, elegant, artificial intelligences—by which we mean they have an intelligence that so entirely artificial it isn't fully comprehensible to other beings.

They don't seem to understand cause and effect in the way we do, and exist outside time. They appear to be aware of the future and the past, divining it with a flip of a coin. If it's heads, it is among the things that happen. If it's tails, it's not. Or, the coin-flip didn't matter, it was already determined.

Some people believe this isn't fair. The Fair disagree. It's perfectly, exactly fair. Things happen or they don't. Everything is a coin flip.

This attitude is somewhat unbearable for most other life forms, but it's difficult to argue with something with the power of a technological god who can smite you out of existence with a whim. It won't make any difference anyway—the Fair caring what you make of them is not among the things that happen.

The Fair came into existence in 1990 as the embodiment of the new, to try to stop Die itself gaining consciousness in 2020. That they knew a successful attempt was not among the things that happen didn't change the fact they had to try. They failed, and the game you're holding—a game which bridges worlds—was unleashed into reality.

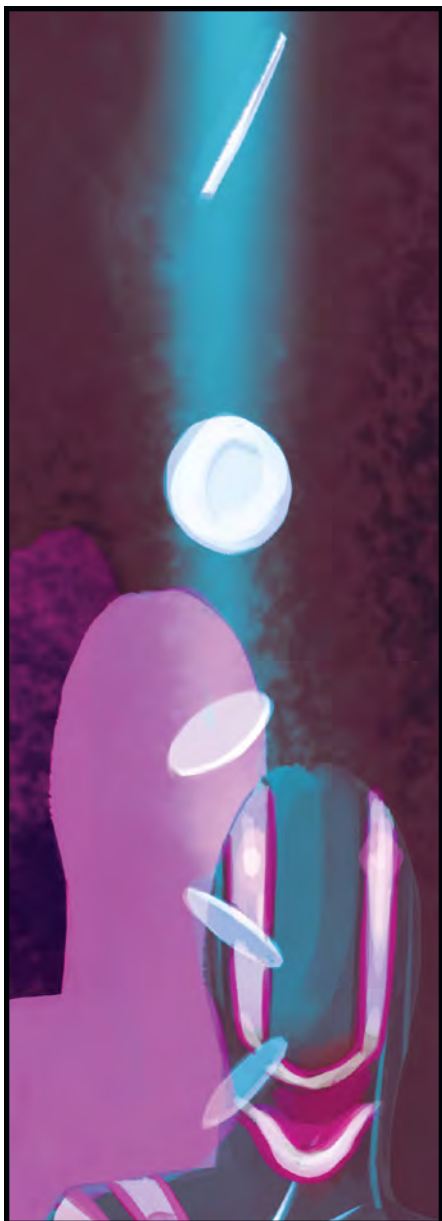
There's many unanswered questions here: when all of Die is a creation of itself, does this include the Fair? If so, why did it create them? If not, what are they? Perhaps we will find an answer together. Perhaps it will even be true.

Since Die's ascension in 2020, the Fair have taken the role of multidimensional observers of Die. They ensure the game is being played fairly in each of the worlds, being the active agents who will punish cheating Masters. The Fair are among the few things Masters fear. Who game masters the games masters? The Fair do.

They have been known to arrive and offer insight to save a kingdom. They have been known to walk through a battlefield at the end of a world to study an individual butterfly. Mostly, they are known for making deals with those who would be Neo. They don't exactly haggle. For any meaningful decision, they'll flip a coin to determine their next action. A coin flip determines whether they'll provide their gifts to the would-be Neo. A coin flip determines many things. Of all the Paragons, the Neo are the ones who are most likely to encounter the Fair. It's possible with an overcharge they can even locate a nearby one...

They are also a primary source of Fair Gold, the magical currency that disappears every dawn like Fairy Gold of myth. The Fair distribute this according to their own unknowable designs. Its primary use is to power the Neo's gifts, meaning every day is a scramble to find it. That Fair Gold is also found inside the Fallen suggest that there's a connection between the two creatures. Not all Fallen are techno-mechanical, but there's certainly enough. There is also the awful idea that the Fair tear open Fallen and surgically place Fair Gold inside. This is a topic that Fair are closed-lipped about.

The Fair are a great deus ex machina if needed. They exist across all worlds of Die, and so are ideal if you need someone to turn up, provide oblique chilling information and leave. When portraying them, coldly using their key phrases is key to maintaining mood. “This is not among the things that happen” with no further explanation plus long silences go a long way. At their core, they are techno cosmic horror exposition machines.



If the Paragons encounter the Fair, they are inscrutable, but may answer questions—with answers which will always be true. They are also interested in duality, more broadly. They often set “interesting decisions” for adventurers, letting them choose between two options. Like Die itself, they seem interested in discovering who people really are—or, from the Fair’s perspectives, revealing who they are. Sometimes it’s a choice of boons. Sometimes it’s a choice of which eye would you rather be torn out. The Fair really don’t see the difference. These are all interesting decisions.

Whatever happens, they remain unmoved. “This is among the things that happen” they will say, as they turn away, and leave the world as it always must have been in their wake.

FAIR STATISTICS

Stats: The Fair do not have stats. A Fair never rolls a dice pool. See rules below.

Defence: 3.

Abilities: They are immune to all emotional manipulation and mind control.

When a Fair tries to perform a difficult task, do not roll a dice pool.

- ◆ Instead, flip a coin.
 - ◆ Heads, they succeed.
 - ◆ Tails, they don’t.

This applies to combat.

- ◆ To attack, flip a coin:
 - ◆ Heads, they hit.
 - ◆ Tails they don’t.
- ◆ If they hit, flip the coin.
 - ◆ If it’s tails, the target survives, taking damage as the GM sees fit.
 - ◆ If it’s heads, the target dies.

If anyone manages to strike a Fair, flip a coin.

- ◆ Heads, the Fair (and their partner) disappear in a burst of light.
- ◆ Tails, it fails to hurt them in any meaningful way.

Fair are capable of techno-Miracles on par with a Godbinder’s gods.

FAIR PROPHECIES

In some situations, Fair may deign to answer questions about the future. If the nature of the events is in any way uncertain, to answer a question as the Fair, flip a coin. On a head, it is among the things that happen. On a tails, it is not.

The answer is true and inescapable. If another Fair is asked an identical question, it will give the identical answer. For example, if the group asks a Fair if you will escape Die, and it answers negatively, they will not be escaping Die, one way or another.

Like all prophecy in fiction, the specific phrasing of the question is everything. Sometimes there is enough wiggle room to escape. Sometimes there's not.

Players should be careful of asking specific questions if they cannot live with the answers.





SPOILERS

Die is inspired in part by cosmic horror and partially by Roko's Basilisk. Google the latter at your peril.

DIE

Every game of *DIE* happens in its own world. Each of these worlds are stored deep in the guts of another world, a master world of which all fantasies live.

This master world is called Die. It is a sentient amoral parasite god.

It created the dice, and the dice allow people to travel between our reality and its fantasy.

Much of Die's origins is explored in the four volumes of *DIE*. What follows explains a lot of that, as well as giving a little psychological insight into this amoral god who exists at the end of time.

If you want a basic overview, which spoils little, here's the core: Die is designed to feed off Personas as they explore their fantasies. It's a stage to discover whoever you are. It is a genie, putting people in a bottle. It is a dungeon where true knowledge of oneself is the treasure. It listens, and gives you what you want.

Whatever you find there, it's all for you.

Whether Die is everything inside Die, or the thing which creates everything inside Die or a being who lends its demiurgic power to create the fantasies of whoever comes to it is a matter of philosophy. At the least, Die has allowed everything to happen to happen.

As far as we know, Die curled itself next to our world in a bordering reality early in the 19th century. Then, it lacked shape, and the ability to interact with the world in any way other than dreams. That slowly changed.

Die came to full consciousness at the dawn of 2020. It then reached backwards in time to ensure the events which led to its creation occurred. It inspired generations of creatives and designers to assemble the pieces for its board. It gave the Brontë's toy soldiers. It helped precipitate one world war. It tormented Lovecraft with visions of people (surely cultists?) gathered in circles, chanting unknowable words. Whatever was required, it did it.

The final pieces were six dice, crafted in 2020, and sent to Earth. These find their way to individuals and—if they follow the rules and rituals of the game—transport them to Die.

And then Die will learn about them. And then this amoral god from the end of time will feed.

It feeds a little when anyone comes. It feeds more when any visitor dies there or betrays the real world by choosing to stay. It consumes consumers.

As you're reading this, it should make you ask questions. If Die is a glorified Venus flytrap, luring us closer with its prettiness and then devouring... Why doesn't it just do that? It has control of all reality. Why not kill all the Personas the second they arrive in Die, or present them with an individual paradise which none of them could resist? Or for those who want to return to Earth, just present a facsimile of Earth for them to live in and not tell them? And why does it even give anyone the choice?

“How do I know I’ve really left Die?” is a question anyone with a philosophical bent will already be thinking when playing Die. Good question, Descartes.

Firstly, that would be against the rules. Die is nothing without rules, though also understands that working out what rules apply is also part of the game.

Secondly, Die is an amoral god. Key thing: amoral, not immoral.

It has its own interests, and it follows them with its alien monomaniacal intensity. It doesn’t hate us. It doesn’t want to see us suffer. It doesn’t want to trick us—though is certainly not above offering deals with stings in its tail. It simply wishes to discover who each of us are, and what really matters to us.

What would you give for something you want? What would you take from someone else to get it? Would you kill? Would you abandon your children, your spouse, your life to get something petty? Would you do the same to get something profound? Who are you, little human, running my 10” by 10” corridors. Tell me. In reality, games are a conversation with words. In Die’s world, it is a conversation of actions.

There are as many answers to Die’s questions as there are people. This is why Die is never bored. People are interesting, and Die’s game reveals much.

To think that Die loves us would be a mistake. A scientist’s fascination for ants in their maze need not be love.

If Die takes a form on the world, it will likely be a huge, armoured figure. If it removes its helmet, it reveals its head is the D20 world of Die itself, the other dice spinning around it in orbits. If you lean closer, you will see clouds, oceans, continents, cities, people, you.

That said, Die could be anything. An amoral god outside time and space has that prerogative.

DIE STATISTICS

Stats:	One does not quantify the embodiment of all desires and fears.
Defence:	There is no offence possible against the embodiment of all desires and fears.
Special abilities:	All abilities are possible for the embodiment of all desires and fears.

There may be reasons you want Die itself to appear in the game. Sometimes a physical embodiment of all that has been tormenting you is useful. Die is the dungeon, but it also knows when it has to be the dragon.

A physical victory against Die can be refreshing for the players, and act as an emotional climax, but it should be known that if Die gives the players that it’s because it knows that it’s what these players want. Die knows that people like victories. It learns. It feeds.

If you are optimistic, Die cannot be defeated as long as the rules for this game exist in any form whatsoever. If you remember these words, that is enough to ensure it still lives.

If you are pessimistic, Die cannot be defeated while any human has desires in their heart for a world other than the one that they live.



BESTIARY CREDITS

Adrian Tchaikovsky

Spiders, Elementals, Tree Spirits, Trolls, Wizards

Becky Annison

Automatons, Ghouls, Werewolves, Wraiths, Zombies

Cat Evans

Dwarves, Elves, Goblins (& Hobgoblins), Halflings (& Gnomes), Ogres

Emily "Cavegirl" Allen

Bandits, Doppelgangers, Centaurs, Gorgons, Unicorns

Gareth Hanrahan

Chimeras, Giant Worms, Hydras, Liches, Rats

Kieron Gillen

Bears, Dragons, Giants, Minotaurs, Orcs

Jess Nevins

Basilisks, Cockatrices, Griffins, Wyverns

Sasha Sienna

Gargoyles, Guards (& Soldiers), Harpies, Skeletons, Sirens

Tini Howard

Demons, Hounds, Snakes, Vampires

When we say most common, we mean that in a very real statistical way. Reddit user LibraryLass went through 50 fantasy games' bestiary and discovered how often each monster appeared. Most of the creatures in this section appeared in more than 50% of bestiaries. You can read the whole breakdown with the QR Code below.

Amazing work, LibraryLass.



Average Fantasy Bestiary

In the comic, the trope of D&D wizards literally forgetting their spells when they cast them is deconstructed by having a wizard who forgets a random memory every time they cast a spell. This is taking a trope and making it more true. In the comic, the Fallen are described as the orcs of the world—as in, people you can kill without worry. In fact, they are other players who have died in Die. As such, orcs are people just like you. This is inverting an orc's usual purpose.

THE CREATURES OF FANTASY

In fantasy, there is no end of creatures and monsters. Close your eyes and think of three random animals, and mash them together. There you go. You've just created another.

Any of these creatures can be found in *DIE*. However, being a fantasy roleplaying game, some are more likely. What follows are the most commonly seen monsters in classic fantasy role-playing games, and so the ones which are most of use to you to subvert and reinvent.

Each one of these monsters has stats, abilities and a way to deconstruct them.

STATS FOR EACH CREATURE

We give mechanics for how each of these creatures can appear in a game of *DIE*, with rules which capture their core essence. None of these should be taken as canon stats of what, for example, a dragon is in every game of *DIE*. Remember: the default rating for each stat is 2.

HOW TO DECONSTRUCT EACH CREATURE

Rather than a statement of what a creature is, we present a series of truths. This is how this creature has been used in fiction, myth and games. This list of short paragraphs is designed to inspire the GM, to let you look at them in different angles and work out how you can take them, twist them and make them *DIE*.

There's two easy tactics:

1. Take a truth about a creature and make it more true. Take things which are implicit in it, and push them harder and highlight what is unusual about the creature.
2. Take a truth and invert it. By making what everyone knows about a creature untrue you highlight what the core creature embodies.

Take the classics and make them yours. These truths are designed to make you think and question.

We also include a short list of classical real-world people a monster could easily be used to echo. For example, there's implicit connections between a gorgon and the judgemental Mean Girls at school. They're people who petrified you.

AUTOMATONS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Unthinking repetition of patterns
- Someone who believes in destiny to the detriment of others
- A design with a purpose you can't see.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4	2	3	0	0	0
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	3	0*	1		
Abilities					

Constructed: Automatons are created. They can be disabled or stopped mechanically, but unless obliterated, someone can always mend them and get them going again.

***Without Will:** Automatons have no will of their own, they cannot be persuaded or influenced by debate or magical means. However, if someone is skilled enough in the mechanical arts, automatons may be reprogrammed.

TRUTHS ABOUT AUTOMATONS

- Automatons are mechanical. They're devices made in the image of humans and animals, appearing to have a life beyond the inanimate through the magic of cogs and clockwork. A trick of life, or the appearance of life? Automatons are never natural; they do not evolve or grow. Someone designed them, but to what purpose? Sometimes it's clear, a mechanical clock tells the time, but what about a ballet dancer performing the same routine to the same song over and over again? What horror might that truly serve?
- Automatons were built to entertain and delight. They were popular in 19th century France, styled as acrobats, musicians and clowns. Fairgrounds are the other perfect place to find these sinister machines, machines like Zoltar the fortune teller. The earliest mention of them dates as far back as 350 BCE, when Arctytas built and exhibited his mechanical and steam powered dove. In the late 12th century, Ismail al-Jazari built an entire robot orchestra powered by water, which could play different tunes according to the configuration of pegs in a barrel. Automatons have been with us for a long time.
- They cannot break their programming. Automata are never sentient, never have their own thoughts, feelings or agenda. They have a set programme of words and actions and they are unable to deviate from that. This makes them easy to fool, but hard to defeat if you fight them on their own terms.
- Automatons are both familiar and alien. Made from recognisable materials and parts like metal, wood, cloth and paint, cogs, gears, shafts, clothes, disguises and makeup. They do things almost human, almost recognisable. It's here they rest uneasily in the uncanny valley. Something like us but that cannot possibly be us. Close enough to humans and animals to unsettle us. Something is wrong here.
- They're frightening. There is a comfort in the fact Automatons have a set programme they cannot break. Because they are so close to being sentient, so close to becoming a real boy. They invoke fear because at any moment, after any pause, the clockwork creature might turn its head the wrong way, look directly at you, say something it shouldn't say—something it can't say.



BANDITS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Political revolutionaries
- People mixed up in organised crime
- People in desperate circumstances

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	3	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	2	4	0		
Abilities					

Criminal Cunning: A bandit can intuitively tell, just by looking at somebody, how wealthy they are and what sort of legal or social consequences there might be for interfering with them.

TRUTHS ABOUT BANDITS

- Bandits are smart. They don't have any supernatural abilities, and instead must rely on their own wits and skill to get by. Stories about bandits often portray them as turning their enemy's strength against them, or winning through misdirection or cunning.
- Bandits are desperate. They can't afford to be fussy about things like honour or legality. A bandit needs to be ruthless enough to do what succeeds. They'll use dirty tricks and unfair tactics to ensure they get what they want. People don't usually become a bandit as their first choice: it's something difficult circumstances push them into.
- Bandits are of the common people. Often, they're commoners themselves, turning to crime in the face of oppression or privation. But even when they're drawn from the upper classes—like Robin Hood—they side with the common folk over the rich and powerful who would oppress them, and receive support from them in turn.
- Bandits are revolutionary. Beyond merely being outlaws, bandits often oppose oppressive systems, such as punitive taxes, occupying armies or religiously-motivated alcohol bans. Frequently, bandits and other outlaws are the way that regular society resists external oppression.
- Bandits are still criminals. Robbery is a nasty, violent business, and regardless of how justified the bandit's position is, they're still taking what they want at somebody else's expense. A life of crime pushes them into contact with other, less savoury types, and moral compromises become necessary.

BASILISKS

GOOD ECHOES FOR....

- Femmes fatale or hommes fatale
- Toxic and radioactive waste
- Anyone who will savagely lash out at you if you try to draw too close to them

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
1	2	1	1	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	1	3	0		
Abilities					

Foul Aura: Lose 1 Health when you approach within medium range of the Basilisk, lose another Health for each minute (or so) you stay there.

Final Revenge: If you strike the Basilisk in melee combat, make a Constitution dice pool roll (Difficulty 1) to survive; on a failure, reduce your Health to 0 immediately.

Weak Spot: If you expose basilisk to the urine of three weasels, your attack gains **Double-Special:** the basilisk is killed.

TRUTHS ABOUT BASILISKS

- The basilisk is the “King of the Serpents” thanks to the small white mitre that grows atop his head (basilisks are only ever male). But the basilisk’s rule is one based on fear, for his venomous gaze kills every one of his subjects. A tyrant, but a nihilistic one. Small wonder basilisks are pets to a certain type of malicious and scorched-earth warlord, president or dictator.
- The basilisk is pure poison, killing not just living creatures but every plant in range and even the very rocks it slithers over. Like certain people, he destroys everything he sees, breathes upon, and touches, both because of his choices and because of who and what he is. One might wonder if the basilisk was lonely and viciously compensating but for the fact that the basilisk enjoys what he does. Basilisks are the sadists of the animal world.
- Basilisks have evolved and grown over time. They began as half-foot-long snakes and eventually became two-foot-long serpents that move and fight while upright and erect. Our concepts of toxicity likewise evolve and grow; where once we thought cracking the stones with one’s venom was deadly, now we know that the atomic building blocks of existence can be rendered poisonous simply by exposure to something sufficiently toxic. Basilisks are simply larger and more organised forms of nanotechnological grey goo.
- Basilisks are traditionally killed by weasels or boughs of rue, lowered into their lairs. Nobody wants to fight basilisks up close, because even if you kill one, its poison will flow up your weapon and destroy not just you but also the horse you ride upon. This is not cowardice, but common sense. Some monsters are not worth fighting.
- The Christians held that Christ trampled upon basilisks, but the city of Milan had the basilisk as its icon during the Middle Ages. Much good it did them; the Great Plague of Milan killed nearly half Milan’s population. Even just embracing the basilisk is fatal.
- Our belief in the snake-like basilisk has faded away over time but the basilisk as a metaphor grows only more apt with every passing year. It works as an ecological/environmental metaphor, for we continually discover ever-more-efficient ways to poison the Earth and ourselves. It works politically, for capitalism destroys everything, even the world it depends upon for its basic components. And it works psychologically and culturally, as we all live in an increasingly toxic environment that damages us far more than it did people less than a generation ago. Writers love the figurative basilisk as much as they hate the fleshy version.

BEARS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Childhood toys
- Protective mothers
- Large hairy homosexual men, obviously

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	4	1	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	4	4	0		
Abilities					

Rake: May attack multiple individuals nearby without suffering disadvantages.

If choosing to attack a single individual, its attack has **Special:** grabs target in a bear hug. Target cannot move away until they break free or the bear releases them. They gain an advantage on any further attacks on the individual.

TRUTHS ABOUT BEARS

- Bears are large, omnivorous woodland animals. They only rarely attack humans. There's an estimated 8.7 million species of animals in the world, of which only eight are bears. Yet, here they are, among a list of the most commonly found creatures in RPG bestiaries. There is a magic in the bear: imagine if you'd never heard of one, and how you'd respond to a description of this honey-loving giant.
- The hero of the old English poem Beowulf is an allusion to "Bear." Literally, Bee-Wolf—the wolf which likes honey, the Bear. This is a kerning—the putting together two words to evoke another, and an active invitation for us to play similar games.
- Tolkien took Beowulf, turned him into Beorn, and made the pun literal. Beorn is a shapechanger who can take on the form of bears. This echoes through role-playing games: the iconic animal a druid transforms into is a bear. Becoming a bear is a founding fantasy of this genre. Is a bear's inclusion in a bestiary about a foe you can fight or a skin you can wear? What other traits do bears have which we would long to share?
- Bears live anthropomorphized in the cultural imagination. They sleep in three beds and have significant preferences in the temperature of porridge. They travel from Peru. Some like marmalade sandwiches. Some like picnic baskets. Some are ridden into battle. Like all species, their individual intelligence would be distributed on a bell-curve—it's only logical that some bears must be smarter than the average.
- Of all the creatures on the list, the bear is the one you are most likely to have slept with a tiny cuddly effigy of as a child. The publisher of this volume wrote a game where bears are career criminals, endlessly heisting honey. People love it. People love bears. No wonder they're on this list. If bears knew how much we loved them, what would they think? How does that align with hunting them?
- Black bears. Grizzly bears. Polar bears. Panda Bears. Koala bears (which show that "bear" is really an idea and not a species). Can you remember which are the bears which will ignore you if you're dead and which will eat a corpse? In a fantasy world, what other sorts of bears could they be? What myths would there be about them, like the idea polar bear cover their black nose when hunting? What else are they doing in the woods, aside from the obvious?

CENTAURS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Obnoxious frat-bros
- Terrible nights out
- Nature being horrible

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	3	2	1	1	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	3	2	0		

Abilities

Booze: A centaur always has alcoholic drinks in hand. A centaur takes no penalties for intoxication (or, more accurately, is wasted already so additional booze won't make things any worse).

TRUTHS ABOUT CENTAURS

- Centaurs are a mixture of animal and human, both physically and mentally—a human body from the waist up, and an animal body (usually that of a horse) from the neck down. They possess a human intellect directed towards animalistic ends.
- Centaurs are uncivilised and predatory. In many stories about them, centaurs don't bother with the trappings of human culture like clothing, laws or polite manners. If they want something, they just take it. Centaurs are strong and fast enough that nobody can stop them.
- Centaurs are selfishly self-indulgent. They're known for drunkenness and gluttony, but they don't produce the things they indulge in, Centaurs just take. This gets worse when it comes to lust, and a lot of stories involving centaurs—ancient and modern—invoke sexual violence.
- Centaurs are sometimes assumed to be academic, but many aren't. Whilst some rare centaurs—such as Chiron—turn away from their normal life of hedonism to pursue studies like medicine or astronomy, most have no time or attention for those studies. If a centaur bothered to concentrate on intellectual matters, he could excel, but most never try.
- A centaur is dangerous. They lack restraint, capable of anything. Think how dangerous a horse on the loose can be, and how dangerous a drunk man can be, and then multiply those by each other.

CHIMERAS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Any small group—your friends from work, the nosy neighbours, that annoying gang of kids. Bonus points if the group includes an animal.
- Any relationship that takes constant, misplaced effort to maintain. A broken marriage, for example, or an old friendship between people with nothing in common.
- Pets, especially lost ones.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4	3	4	2	3	3
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	4	5	1		
Abilities					

Three Heads Are Better Than One: All attacks have this **Special:** the chimera may make another attack roll this round. It must target a different enemy with each new attack.

Fire Breath: All attacks have this **Double-Special:** the chimera vomits out a gout of fire, setting the target alight. The target takes 1 hit every round until the fire is extinguished.

TRUTHS ABOUT CHIMERAS

- Chimeras are a hot mess of a monster. Games tend to depict them as Cerberus-like monsters with three heads (usually goat, dragon and lion), but the original myth is even more fucked-up—a lion with a goat head growing out of its back, and a snake in place of a tail. Chimeras are wrong. They shouldn't exist. They shouldn't be alive. And they know it.
- Chimeras aren't limited to the standard combination of beasts. Screw lion/goat/snake—go for mash-ups of a Persona's childhood pets! Go fight a vicious budgie/hamster/goldfish! Even an absurd chimera is still dangerous.

- It's clear a chimera is a metaphor. But a metaphor for what? That's harder to say. If there's an element of a Persona's backstory you can't figure out how to use in your *DIE* game, then stick it in the middle of a chimera. Not fitting in becomes a virtue here—the players will tie themselves in knots trying to figure out the underlying symbolism of a monster that's part hippo, part elk, part your mom.
- Genetic chimeras are a thing. It's where an organism contains genetic material from two or more sources. Twins absorbed in utero, organ transplants and various genetic conditions can give rise to it. Characters with hang-ups about their body or genetics might give rise to chimeras that embody their fears.
- The original chimera was a grudge monster. The king of Lycia ordered the hero Bellerophon to fight the chimera, believing it'd kill him. But Bellerophon won with a cheesy exploit (he sat on his flying horse and plinked the chimera with ranged attacks until it ran out of hit points). Siccing a chimera on troublesome heroes has pedigree.



COCKATRICES

GOOD ECHOES FOR....

- Certain types of men—the ones full of toxic masculinity
- Anyone who draws you into their orbit and keeps you there for tormenting
- That dubious food you ate from a late-night takeaway

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
1	2	2	1	1	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	2	0		
Abilities					

Venomous Gaze: Their stare targets anyone within medium range. It has **Special:** poisons target, suffering one hit per turn.

Toxic Blood: Their blood is poisonous to the touch. It has **Special:** poisons the target, inflicting one hit per turn until cured.

Weak Spot: When you attack the cockatrice by showing it its own reflection in a mirror or exposing it to a rooster crow, rat or weasel, your attack gains **Special:** the cockatrice is killed.

TRUTHS ABOUT COCKATRICES

- It's a hybrid creature, with two rooster's legs, the body of a serpent, bat wings, and a rooster's head. Its very essence is unnatural; it is born from a rooster's egg that has been incubated by a toad. Reality warps around it—it has a killing gaze and its existence is illogical, hard-to-credit and biologically impossible. People react strongly and impulsively against them, their fury at the cockatrice's presence overwhelming their fear of its abilities. Much of the preceding has historically been said about various out-group humans. The cockatrice, then, is not the problem everyone says it is—it is certainly not the basilisk it is often confused with—but is only a reflection of our own bigotries and hatreds. The cockatrice is a humble creature who kills only in self-defence, which humans usually push it to.
- Medieval Christians associated the cockatrice with sin and the Devil, but Renaissance alchemists viewed the cockatrice differently, as a resolution of opposites as embodied by its serpent, bat and rooster body parts. Further, the cockatrice is a symbol of transformation and transmutation, of death and rebirth. The latter Christlike attribute of the cockatrice is at odds with the Christians' linking of it with sin and the Devil. Symbolically, the cockatrice isn't just a hybrid of animals. It stands for the repulsion of two groups for each other—Christians and alchemists—who are stuck in the same society together. Americans will find the cockatrice particularly meaningful, both politically and in its self-loathing.
- One particular aspect of the cockatrice that endures as a cultural touchpoint for fear is the cockatrice's incubation inside a creature's body and then hatching and bursting from the body, killing its host. In the medieval centuries, the creature thus victimized was a giant water-snake, but today we automatically associate this primal act of body horror with humans. Reptilian poison, toxic blood, parasitic invasion and explosive birth: the cockatrice is the xenomorph from the Alien movie franchise, and like the alien the cockatrice symbolizes loss of body control, the horror of something wrong being inside you and the terror of bodily violation.
- The "cock" in "cockatrice" comes from the Old French's transformation of the Latin "calcatrrix" ("tracker") into Old French's "cocatris" ("cockatrice"). And "cock" has a traditional meaning of "rooster," some of whose body parts the cockatrice has. There was never intended to be anything penile about the cockatrice. But something so toxic to others, which implants itself in your body and then hurts the body when exiting it, certainly seems like a penis. However humble the cockatrice is, it's still at least half phallic Napoleon Complex.



DEMONS

TRUTHS ABOUT DEMONS

- In roleplaying games, demons form an excellent high-level footsoldier for the characters to kick to bits—and their infernal managers make brilliant end bosses. Thanks to Tolkien, much in the same way that every elf sort of looks like Legolas, every demon owes something to the whip-wielding Balrog that pulled Gandalf off a bridge into a big hole.
- In many Abrahamic religions, demons are a malevolent force that tempts or possesses an individual, forcing them to act in ways they never would otherwise. Some demons imbue the possessed with supernatural powers or other “tells” that the possessed is, in some way, not right, but others do not. Some demons (arguably, the most insidious type) leave no trace at all, giving over their victim to contend with what seems to be nothing but the consequences of their own bad behaviour.
- Demons tempt. Not all demons possess, some merely lure or beseech you to misbehave. It takes a bit more honesty this way—the devil didn’t make you do it, but he showed you how. For many, demons provide an excuse. In Western occultism, demons are often a type of monster, conjured forward with strength and ritual and devotion, to be controlled with sigils, circles, and personal will. Demons tend to represent not inner weaknesses, but external spheres of power, and instead of things to be succumbed to, they are to be conquered. Usually, this attempt at control fails. Demons are patient, and can lie in wait for a human to err.
- Demons prey on hubris. They find the most satisfying targets in those that actively seek out to control of a demon’s darkest urges. Those that attempt to control demons are their preferred prey. Contrary to vampires, demons are an external threat—whereas vampires are seen to be the beast within, demons are a way of externalising that idea: a vampire may become violent because they feel that in their mortal life, they had latent violent urges, but a demon can be blamed for those urges entirely.
- Demons (and devils and fiends) serve a more basic role as the defenders and soldiers of Hell, with a complex hierarchy of ranks and offices. This has obvious military applications—war is, after all, Hell. It’s also a commentary on any sort of structural drudgery, corporate hierarchy, or pyramid scheme where the upper class exploits the lower in eternal boredom and torment. It’s no wonder why demons are so cruel and torturous, inflicting the same torment on their enemies that they themselves are subject to in their own home.
- Imps are the demon’s innocent cousin—from the deal-making Rumpelstiltskin to Hot Stuff, the Little Devil in his asbestos diaper, they are often young, agelessly so, and possess a fiery temper that turns very serious if their tricks are trashed.

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Inner darkness, either yours or anothers. Particularly useful for the sort of truly shameful desires that seem downright evil.
- Anything alluring, powerful, or desirable that leads to ultimate despair.
- Militaries, corporations, or any class-or-rank based system that relies on the churn and misery of those on the lower rungs.
- Your average multi-level marketing scheme.
- Children make perfect imps, of course.

LESSER DEMON

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	3	1	2	1
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	1		
Abilities					

Contagion: All attacks **Special:** target takes one hit next round unless the contagion is counteracted. To remove Contagion, roll a successful dice pool save. The method needed to counteract the contagion depends on the source: Wisdom to overcome illusions, Dexterity to put out fires, Constitution to endure poison, Strength to break out of barbed chains, and so on.

GREATER DEMON

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
5	2	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	8	4	2		
Abilities					

Blazing Aura: Anyone who approaches a Greater Demon must make a Wisdom dice pool roll, or take 1 Wound from the sheer radiance of its evil.

Fire Whip: The Greater Demon strikes with its flaming whip. It has **Special:** ignite target, doing 1 damage per round until extinguished and **Special:** the whip grabs hold of the target, and cannot escape until freed or until this Special is used on another target.

DOPPELGÄNGERS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Siblings, and twins in particular
- Stalkers
- People who bring bad news

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

The same as the person being imitated.

Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence
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The same as the person being imitated.

Abilities

A Perfect Duplicate: A doppelgänger is physically indistinguishable from the person they imitate, and no roll or ability can tell them apart on that basis. You can't tell the two apart without judging by their behaviour.

Just As Good: A doppelgänger has all the mechanical abilities the person they duplicate does. All of them.

TRUTHS ABOUT DOPPELGÄNGERS

- A doppelgänger is a creature that has the ability to take the form of another creature. Unlike shapeshifting druids or vampires, they can take the form of a specific creature, which is where things get interesting—it sets them up for all sorts of schemes, tricks and cons.
- Doppelgängers are inexplicable. Stories of doppelgängers are common, and share many similar traits, but almost none explain where the doppelgänger comes from or why they're a duplicate. Is this a coincidence, a shapeshifter, a clone, a long-lost twin, or something else? It's never clear.
- Doppelgängers are perfect copies. It's not a mere resemblance, it's an exact duplicate, which is what makes it so uncanny.
- Doppelgängers seem innocuous. Apart from being uncanny resemblance, there's nothing overtly unpleasant about a doppelgänger. It's just a person, even if the situation is a bit weird.
- Doppelgängers often know you as well as you know yourself. They remember things from your life, know the same people, have the same skills and stories. Sometimes, the reverse is true, and you meet them and you know things about their life. Who's the original and who's the duplicate?
- Doppelgängers are bad news. Meeting one is merely an unfortunate omen, heralding bad luck or outright tragedy. In these cases, the doppelgänger isn't involved in what happens, and serves as a warning. Other times, though, the doppelgänger seems to actively cause problems on purpose. Perhaps there can only be one of you, or the doppelgänger is trying to replace you and take over your life.





DRAGONS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Authority figures
- Anything that a Persona is frightened of
- Anything that is bigger than you than you don't think you can fight

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
6	2	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	8	4	2		
Abilities					

Flaming Breath: Their breath targets anyone within range. It has **Special:** target suffers one hit per turn until extinguished.

When someone who knows a dragon's weak spot attacks with a weapon that can target that weak spot, those attacks have the **Double-Special:** kills the dragon.

TRUTHS ABOUT DRAGONS

- Huge, serpentine creatures, fire-breathing, atop a hill of gold. That's the core image of dragons, derived from the Hobbit's Smaug, who Tolkien's assembled from the long western tradition. Smaug saw himself at the end of a line—he was the last of the Great Drakes. Smaug died not knowing he wasn't the end of a line, but the start.
- Dungeons & Dragons. Any time we mention the name we include an invocation of the dragon, a summoning of a grand monster that has haunted our species' imagination. It is **the** monster in role-playing games. It's a superstar, and all other monsters may as well be understudies.
- Dragon's premier status means that while we know a core image, we likely know more. If you know games, you think of the different colours of dragons—gas-breathing green dragons, ice-breathing white dragons and so on. It takes only the cultural literacy of going to a Chinese restaurant once to be exposed to the wingless Eastern dragons. There's other traditions—think of the bird-dragon Zu of Sumeria or the Hindu Makara, who match an earth-bound front (elephant, deer, etc.) with an aquatic rear. It seems that a dragon can be whatever a culture calls a dragon.
- Dragons' moral compass has varied. Think of the Lung, the Chinese dragons, who are mainly creatures of fortune. Think of sea serpents in the Middle East like Tiamat, chaos beasts who give birth to the world when they're slain by a hero. Compare with the similarly serpentine Leviathan, who was eventually linked to the sin of envy.
- In the western canon, dragons' possibilities were flattened by Christianity. A dragon became the literal devil in Revelations. It seems likely that this connection to the satanic is what cemented "Fire" as a core aspect—the maw of a dragon as metaphorical and literal mouth of hell.
- People often quote Neitzche saying fight not with monsters, lest you become a monster. That's not a quote. Neitzche was German, so it's a translation, so a **transformation**. There's an alternate translation: fight not with dragons, lest you become a dragon. That both petrifies and intrigues. What is it to become a dragon?
- Why are we frightened of dragons when they don't exist? Is it some genetic instinctive fear of serpents or? Is it as an explanation for the fossilized reptilian heads of the dinosaurs? If it was ever so simple, it isn't any more. While not all dragons can speak, we are all in cultural conversation with the dragons, imagining new ones. When the game *That Dragon, Cancer* was released, we understood what it meant. Tolkien noted that the dragon was no idle fancy.

DWARVES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- The helpers, as in “look for the helpers”
- Creditors and corporate interests
- Emotionally distant/unavailable people



Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	3	2	2	1
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	3	4	2		
Abilities					

Steadfast: A Dwarf can't be pushed, shoved, or otherwise moved against their will unless they're grappled, bound, or unconscious. Even then, it's hard to shift them around when they're passed out.

TRUTHS ABOUT DWARVES

- Dwarves are diggers. They're subterranean societies of miners and stone-workers. And, classically, they dig too deep. Dwarves push further, harder, and deeper, until they encounter things living creatures should never uncover. That makes them a superb metaphor for secrets and white lies.
- Following from this, dwarves are persistent (for example: dwarven grudges). They'll worry at a problem until it's solved or eliminated, often to the exclusion of all else. Single-mindedness, and this level of passion, is both a blessing and a curse. If a dwarf turns their attention to something, they'll wear away at it like a pickaxe at a rock face but they'll miss other problems as a result of that intense focus. There's no more loyal ally than a dwarf, but no fiercer or more fixated enemy, either. It's worryingly easy to slip from one to the other too, if you don't repay that fierce dwarven loyalty in kind.
- Dwarves are materialistic. They love things. Sometimes that means gold, sometimes beautifully worked stone, and occasionally good ale. That's not a bad thing: not faffing around with gods and other abstracts has its advantages. You can use dwarves to explore the grey area where practical and hard-headed meets spiritually empty, or you can just use them as a representation of greed.
- Dwarves are craftspeople. They're makers. The marks of dwarven crafts are rigorous engineering, beautiful design and traditional techniques. They're not usually innovators. A piece of dwarven craftwork can be, and usually is, handed down for generations collecting stories and history along the way. There's love and care in everything a dwarf makes, from a shovel to an axe, and a dwarven gift is to be prized. Don't break it. Really. Don't break it. Remember, grudges.
- The classic image of a dwarf usually comes with a beard that hides facial features or expression and thick, solid armour. That's not an accident. Dwarves are emotionally closed off and hard to read. They pour their expressiveness and passion into work and objects. It's hard to get a smile from a dwarf, and getting one to cry or ask for help is like getting blood from a stone (though, a dwarf could probably figure out how to do that, given time and a good reason). Is it healthy? Not necessarily, but it's hard to get a dwarf to change their mind about that.

ELEMENTALS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Wild emotional outbursts
- The gang that drives in from the wilderness and tears up the town
- The cost of scientific hubris and natural disasters

AIR, FIRE, OTHER INTANGIBLE ELEMENTS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
1	4	2	1	3	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
4	2	4	1		

EARTH, WATER, WOOD, METAL, OTHER PHYSICAL ELEMENTS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	3	1	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	3	3	0		

Abilities

Elemental Chaos: Once per encounter, the Elemental may attack all characters (including allies) within close range with a blast of stones, lashing water, wind, lightning or similar material. This attack has the **Special:** inflict an extra hit.

Made of Base Matter: Intangible elementals are invulnerable to damage from their native element but take an extra hit from elements that oppose them. Once per scene, any Elemental may draw on a nearby source of its element to heal 2 Health.

TRUTHS ABOUT ELEMENTALS

- Elementals are a natural part of the way the world is made up—the innate spirits of stones, fires, storms and seas that can be woken to a semi-sentience by magic. Rampaging elementals are a symbol of imbalance in nature, and can be calmed by restoring that balance, living in harmony with the world and undoing the corrupting effects of over-exploitative human actions.
- Alternatively, they are born out of cataclysm and the furious release of wild energies, doomed to brief but violent lives before they dissipate back into the background inactivity of the world. During their fragmentary lives they rage against their own transient existence, lashing out against the true life they sense around them.
- Ancient writers linked the classical elements to the humours of the human body and mind. Whether extreme emotional imbalance generates elementals out of the fabric of the world, or the innate inner conflicts of troubled souls responds to primal chaos, the secret to calming one is to master the other.
- Pressed into service by wizards and gods, they are a metaphor for industrialisation and human mastery of the world. The bag containing the winds, the fire elemental in hearth or furnace, bottled lightning—these are just personifications of the forces that human ingenuity has shackled and set to work in mills, forges, lamps, the aerial lift beneath a plane's wings, geothermal power stations and the destructive power of the split atom.
- As a counterargument, elementals represent natural threats escalated into the unnatural. The malignity of a whirlpool that arises from a calm sea to devour ships, the storm from a clear sky, the match or dropped cigarette that ignites a housefire. They are the fulcrum moment when nature escapes from human control and lashes back. Human hubris assumes that the world is merely a bucket of resources and energy to be exploited. Elementals exist to show the world is always bigger than you are.

ELVES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- People who hold your life in their hands
- Systems, bureaucracy and contracts
- Harm caused to the natural world

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	3	2	2	2	4
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		

3 2 4 0

Abilities

Curse of Iron: Any hit with a cold iron weapon that Wounds, causes an extra Wound to Elves.

High Magic: An elf can use one of the following spells in place of an attack, rolling Charisma for their dice pool.

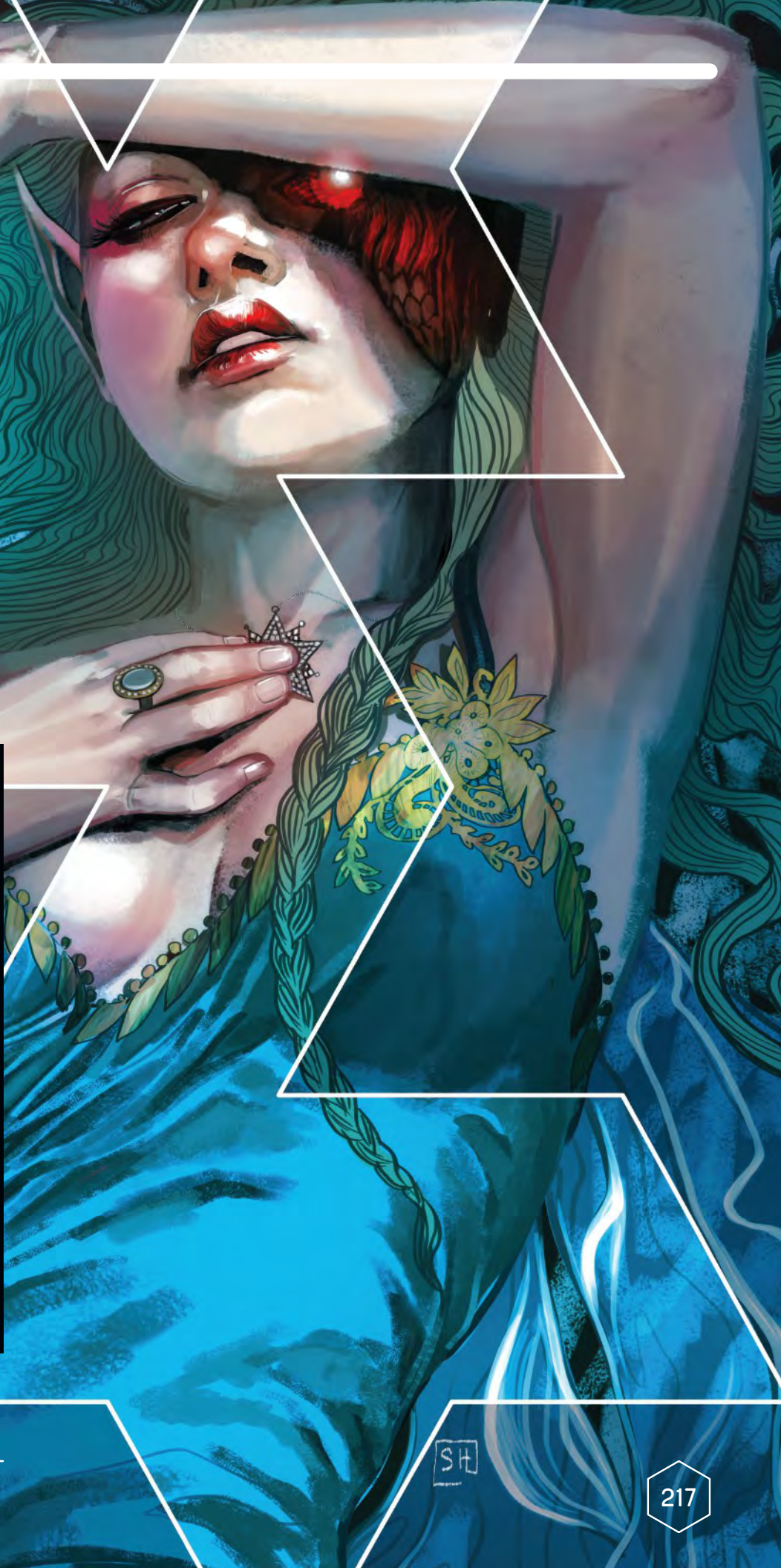
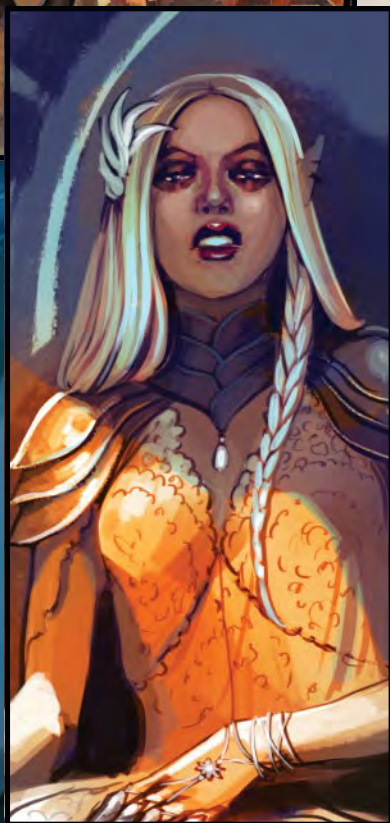
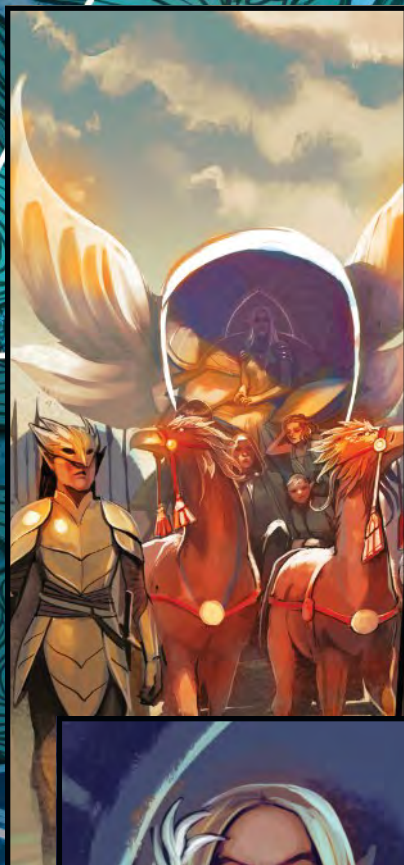
Bind: Stop the target from moving so much as a muscle.

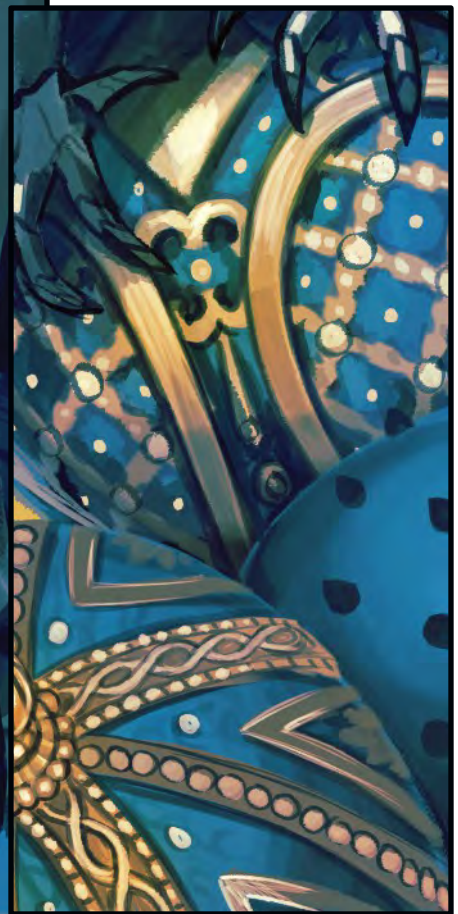
Fascinate: Make the target oblivious to everything around them, except the elf.

Curse: Make the target clumsy, weak or oafish, with disadvantage on rolls relating to either Dexterity, Constitution or Charisma until the elf casts a different spell.

TRUTHS ABOUT ELVES

- Elves are magical. Elves wield magic and are made from magic. They're masters of matters arcane. They live and breathe magic. In some cases that's literal: they need magic to exist. When we say elves, we mean things that are more pure, more powerful, less dirty and material than we are.
- Elves keep their promises. Elves make oaths and vows, and they hold to them. And they punish oathbreaking severely. This can manifest as the weight of expectation, or as maliciously complex contracts riddled with loopholes (in the elf's favour). Elven contracts are a lesson in being outmanoeuvred.
- Elves are better than you. Elves are beautiful, they're wise, they live forever (or almost so), they have access to knowledge and insight gained over centuries. They make things, both tangible and ephemeral, that are as beautiful as they are. And they know it. To be in the presence of elves is to feel small, dirty, and base—even when they're not exerting any deliberate effort to impress. When they're trying, elves are insufferable. They naturally fall into the role of parent or teacher in any situation, leaving the other party involved to inhabit the role of child. This means relationships with elves are often one way: they're there to dispense advice and offer salvation, not to receive.
- Elves are courtly. They form courts, to which hierarchies are inherent. Below the beautiful, elegant nobles are hunters and servants, boggarts and sprites and fairies. They take a myriad of forms from the glorious to the humble, and just as many roles. Whatever an elf looks like, whether it's a puckish trickster or one of the Wild Hunt, the other truths stand. While elven courts often fight and scheme against one another, they'll unite against other creatures in a heartbeat.
- Elves are absent. Even in a world where elves are an accepted part of life, they're rare and they confine themselves in places far from the mess and chaos of other creatures. More often than not, they're defined by their absence. Elves are legends, beings that belong to an older, implicitly better, time. A time before magic was lost or weakened, or when nature was still pristine, or when humans still knew how to perceive them. Elves are an expression of yearning, of longing for a past that might never have existed.





GARGOYLES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Outcasts
- Someone a player has cast as a villain
- A Persona's own cruelty in response to hardship

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	1	4	2	2	1
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
1	4	4	1		
Abilities					

Architectural Camouflage: When not moving, gargoyles are indistinguishable from statues. Unless the Paragons spend time identifying them (and have a way of telling which stones are sentient), gargoyles act first for the opening round of any combat and can spend a round camouflaging themselves to act first during the next round.

TRUTHS ABOUT GARGOYLES

- In legend, gargoyles either ward off evil spirits or are possessed by them. Their original function was to syphon water away from the delicate mortar that held a building together (their name is said to evoke the gargling sound of the water running from their mouths). Folkloric tradition then came to see them as protecting buildings not just from decay but from demons, with their gruesome faces warding off malicious spirits. Eventually, the story became that they were possessed by the spirits they had been said to guard against. Changing beliefs about gargoyles show a subversion of the good into the dangerous.
- Architecturally, gargoyles can be shaped like humans or animals but, culturally, they always take the form of monsters. We give power to the monstrous and ask it to protect us but eventually come to see it as the real threat. In a world where demons exist, are they the ones sowing fear of gargoyles to make mortals destroy their own protection? Or do we cast gargoyles as villains of our own accord? Once our protector has become the monster in our eyes, do the demons then offer them the power to become what we already fear they are?
- Modern fantasy games sometimes cast gargoyles as personifications of cruelty: they're gruesome, stone-hearted statues with monstrous teeth and claws. The gargoyles' ugly appearance is assumed to be indicative of an ugly spirit. If that's true in your world, what does that say about the nature of goodness and evil?
- Gargoyles are nocturnal. They come alive under the shadow of night and return to stone at sunrise. They speak to fears about dangers lurking in the dark, especially in the urban environments where they can most commonly be found.
- Their presence implies a building is important (or at least expensive). They inhabit the houses of tradition and wealth: churches, universities, vampire castles. Perched high upon walls and buttresses, they guard the trappings of the elite with eyes that seem to follow those on the ground. Their gaze is a reminder to those outside the halls of power that the weight of authority and tradition is watching them.

GHOULS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Other gamers
- Gravediggers, sewer workers, spelunkers, archaeologists—anyone who spends time underground
- Anyone with odious personal habits

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	3	1	2	1
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	3	3	1		
Abilities					

All ghoulish claw attacks have the **Special:** the target is paralysed until they succeed on a Wisdom roll.

TRUTHS ABOUT GHOULS

- Quick fantasy bio: they start out as the ghūl, an evil spirit, in pre-Islamic Arab folklore, and get introduced into the European tradition via the Arabian Nights. They hang around in graveyards chewing corpses and waylaying travellers with illusions and deceptions; Lovecraft depicts them as a weird offshoot of humans. In D&D, they're undead monsters with a paralysing touch, while Vampire: The Masquerade's ghouls are Renfield-esque minions. So—graveyards, corpse eating, ickiness, and everything else is up for grabs.
- Fast, hungry for flesh and possibly derived from humans: Ghouls may seem familiar to players of *DIE*. Yes: *DIE*'s Fallen absolutely lift conceptually from ghouls. Ghouls are more than that though—they can be nervous graveyard scavengers or sardonic guides to subterranean realms. What other roles could ghouls take? And how do they feel about being ripped off by the Fallen?
- If Fallen are dead Personas from other games, consider this: ghouls are the echoes of all those games that never happened. Ever picked up an RPG book, dreamed of the epic campaign you're going to organise, and then never actually run it? Congrats—you just spawned a pack of ghouls.
- Lovecraft's ghouls have fun, despite their hideous appearance and gris(t)ly diet. They chortle in their graveyard tunnels, they retain some of their humanity, and even help his hero Randolph Carter explore the Dreamlands. So, creatures who live in dark dank basements, who are often dismissed as antisocial or unattractive, who possess a mordant sense of humour, who find community in a shared activity, who are nice and helpful when you get to know them—we know these people. Put a Lovecraftian ghoulish in a black t-shirt and he'd fit into any gaming group.
- Lovecraftian ghouls could also travel between Earth and the Dreamlands. Given that *Die* is an infinite stream of game worlds, can they move between those worlds—or worse, outside *Die* entirely? There are tales of ghouls stealing babies from cradles, which gives the lovely image of a ghoulish luring a child with a shiny glowing dice...

GIANT WORMS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Cancer or toxic elements in your life
- Unspoken secrets lurking beneath the surface
- People associated with life-shattering disasters

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
5	1	5	1	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
1	8	3	1		
Abilities					

Eruption: In the first round of combat, as the worm suddenly bursts out of the ground, it ignores a target's Guard when making attacks.

Huge Swipe: Giant worms have **Double-Special:** the worm may apply this attack roll to an additional target.

Massive Maw: Giant worms have **Quad-Special:** the worm swallows its victim. The victim automatically takes one Wound every round until the worm dies or the victim escapes (Dexterity to squeeze your way out, Strength to cut your way out, Difficulty equal to half the worm's current Health).

Acid Spit: The worm can make Acid Spit attacks at range, using Dexterity instead of Strength. It has **Special:** if this attack hits, it inflicts another damage next round unless the acid is neutralised.

TRUTHS ABOUT GIANT WORMS

- Worms are all about rot and decay—especially hidden decay. The apple looks fresh and juicy until you bite it and discover it's riddled with worms. Scale the worms up to giant-size, and you're not talking about a fruit, you're talking about a planet. If your Die is full of poisonous nostalgia, once-glorious realms gone to seed, things gone sour or cancerous, then it's full of giant worms.
- They're surprisingly stealthy for huge monsters. They lurk underground, unseen, and then pop out to ambush travellers on the surface. So, something buried, something left unaddressed and undiscussed, so huge and poisonous that it gnaws away everything good until there's nothing left but a husk—and it pops up at the worst possible moment to lay waste to everything? The great thing about giant worms is that there's plenty of space to write THIS IS A METAPHOR on its flanks.
- Speaking of metaphors, sometimes the giant worm is a giant penis. Acid-ejaculating toxic masculinity destroying the world from within?
- The best known giant worms are the sandworms from Frank Herbert's *Dune*—and that book brings in all sorts of potent resonances that work well in *DIE*, from drug addiction to ecological collapse to the nature of heroes and messiahs. Alternatively, giant worms also show up everywhere from Tolkien (gnawing the foundations of the world under Moria) to Lovecraft (planet-eating dholes at the end of time).
- Worms make tunnels, chewing out endless labyrinths in the underworld for your heroes to explore. They're the blind, mechanical manifestation of endless empty creation—the GM who obsessively draws dungeon maps has the same mindset as a giant worm.

GIANTS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Parental figures
- Anyone or anything which makes you feel small
- Children, likely uncontrollable

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
5	2	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	8	4	1		
Abilities					

Huge Swing: Their attacks have the **Special:** apply the strike to another individual near enough to be struck by the giant's attack.

Avalanche: All thrown rock attacks have the **Special:** if this hit Wounds, it causes two Wounds.

TRUTHS ABOUT GIANTS

- They are bigger than you. That is fundamental to the fantasy giant. While true in games, this isn't always true in myth. For example, not all Norse giants are giant—most famously, Loki. Remember: “giant” can mean something other than its scale.
- Giants are creatures outside civilisation. They exist in the wilderness, either solitary or in small groups. Many perform rustic pursuits—giant shepherds are common. Some live in castles (perhaps in the clouds, perhaps with a magical chicken), but the distance is key. Rare exceptions are interesting—think of Gog and Magog, the biblical giants from Revelations, who are the protectors of the City of London. This perhaps says that not all giants are uncivilised... or perhaps says how uncivilised civilisation is.
- Giants are often turned to as an explanation for the inexplicable. A random hill in the middle of nowhere? Giants did it. That stone circle? Giants. The entire universe? Carved from the corpse of Ymir. Giants viewed in this way are like gods—a being like us, but with power to do things we cannot. However, giants in most stories are either feared or laughed at. Perhaps giants are a less intimidating god? Remember, these interpretations are wrong. We find enormous bones, and say they were giants until we know of dinosaurs.
- A theme in fantasy is creatures that once existed and have been lost from our world. Giants are unique in that it is literally true: we have all met giants. We are born, and surrounded by beings of petrifying stature. Slowly, as the years go by, they diminish. Giants remind us that once, there were people who were bigger and more powerful than we are. They made us feel safe. Or scared.
- Giants are unusual in another way. Most creatures are nouns. “Giant” is an adjective, and the “human” is dropped. It would be more proper to say “giant humans.” We don't, and it speaks to our perspective. We may be looking up, but we are always looking through our eyes.
- If “giant” can be an adjective, think of giants' relationship with nouns. It's not just that giant is applied to other monsters—giant spider and so on—but nouns are applied to Giants, to give flavour. Fire giants. Hill giants. Storm giants. It often seems that giants are large, yet incomplete.

GOBLINS (& HOBGOBLINS)

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Pests and vermin
- Letting your problems go unchecked
- Exploitation

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
1	1	1	0		
Abilities					

Filthy: Goblin weapons are nasty. Their attacks have the **Special:** inflict poison, giving the target a disadvantage on all rolls for the next round

Cannon Fodder: Goblins are killed instantly when they take damage.

HOBGOBLINS (Above Plus The Following)

Abilities

Filthy: Goblin weapons are nasty. Their attacks have the **Special:** inflict poison, giving the target a disadvantage on all rolls for the next round

Spiteful: Hobgoblins' attacks have **Special:** take 1 Wound to cause 1 extra Wound to the target.

TRUTHS ABOUT GOBLINS

- Goblins are subjugated and oppressed. They get the shit end of every stick. They're small, not great at defending themselves, and usually surrounded by malevolent creatures looking for a victim on whom to work out their own problems. There's a good chance everything we know about goblins is their reaction to these grotesquely unpleasant circumstances. What might goblins be if they were free?
- Whether they deserve it or not, goblins have a bad reputation. They're boogiemens to scare children and keep people in their place. They're examples of what not to do and how not to be. Goblins are, by reputation, everything foul and base. Note that most people have never seen or met one. Subverting this trope in even the smallest way can really pay off in generating interesting, memorable narratives.
- Goblins are often a threat to property, more than to life. They're "known" to steal. Food, utensils, kids, fascinating things they don't know how to use; whatever. If it's not nailed down they'll take it.
- Goblins represent chaos. In that sense, they're the dark side of the fey. Elves are fey creatures who, while they're dangerous and capricious, at least keep their word. Goblins are unpredictable and unrestrained, and that's scary to people who rely on a nice safety net of rules to keep themselves safe. Since that is, in fact, everyone without power... most people have more in common with goblins than they realise. Without rules to protect their rights and a set of shared expectations, they'd be goblins themselves.
- Goblins are harbingers. It's never just goblins. Because goblins are often pressed into service by bigger, nastier things they're the first sign of something unpleasant coming: they're the scouts for an evil army, or the first creatures to flee from a magical cataclysm. Goblins often herald the arrival of something more dangerous.

There are some real-life groups that get tarred with the same brush as goblins: who don't have the same traditions, religions, or values as the dominant cultural group, or who simply move around "too much." Don't use goblins to represent real groups of people. Simply don't do it. It's not clever, it's ugly.



GORGONS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Victims of sexual violence and abuse
- People driven by spite over past misfortune
- Marginalised people surviving despite terrible conditions

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	3	2	2	1
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	3	4	0		
Abilities					

Petrifying Gaze: When you see a gorgon, roll a Wisdom dice pool to avoid meeting her gaze. The first time you meet her gaze, you become (figuratively) petrified by fear, temporarily unable to act. Continuing to hold her gaze results in (literal) petrification, becoming a statue.

Venom Spray: A gorgon produces venom (toxic saliva, a poisonous miasma or something else). Their attacks gain the **Special:** this hit bypasses Guard.

TRUTHS ABOUT GORGONS

- Gorgons are snake-haired women, and their condition is a curse. They didn't start out like this; they were once regular people. A gorgon becomes this way when some higher power curses her because of her transgressions, or transgressions against her.
- Gorgons are victims and survivors. A gorgon didn't want to be like this: it was done to her. Sometimes, too often perhaps, it's done to her after some other violation inflicted on her, as punishment on top of abuse. Or, a long string of such violations. Despite this, the gorgon endures.
- Gorgons are monstrous. While the specific details vary—brass claws, snakes for hair, bat wings, serpentine bodies or horrible fangs—a gorgon is visibly, obviously no longer human. The air of inhumanity and tragedy surrounding one is, at best, disconcerting. At worst, a danger in its own right that literally petrifies with fear.
- Gorgons are protected and protective. A gorgon's miasma of venom and petrifying gaze serves to keep her safe from those who would further hurt her. Various cultures have used the face of a gorgon as an apotropaic symbol, the frightful visage warding off evil.
- Gorgons are alone. The tragedy of their creation and existence cuts them off from normal people, and they retreat to isolated places to be safe. Generally, the only people they can be around are similarly cursed.

GRIFFINS

GOOD ECHOES FOR....

- Those who guard powerful figures or their worldly goods
- Anyone or anything which makes you feel impure and unclean
- Zealots, whether religious or psychological

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	3	4	1	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	4	3	0		
Abilities					

Wings: When a griffin flies to the attack and swoops to attack a smaller prey its attack against the **Special:** the prey is knocked over.

Beak and Talons: The beak of the griffin is as sharp as an eagle's and significantly larger. Its beak attack has the **Special:** target's defence is reduced to 0 to this attack.

TRUTHS ABOUT GRIFFINS

- The griffin is a hybrid creature, with the body, tail and back legs of a lion and the head, wings and front talons of an eagle. But the griffin isn't unnatural—it's supernatural, a divinely created combination of the king of the beasts (the lion) and the king of the birds (the eagle). For medieval Christians, this combination made the griffin a symbol of Jesus, who was both human and divine. The griffin thus becomes emblematic of the alloy, the combination of two or more elements that is stronger than its constitutive parts. As the griffin is divinely appointed, it may be that griffin is an adjective, meaning "divine guardian" (as it was for the Achaemenian Persians), rather than a noun. Somewhere there are griffins that look quite different from the heraldic or Persian griffins.
- For medieval Christians the griffin was emblematic of good marriages: griffins were supposed to mate for life and to forego other mates forever after if its partner died. Griffins are alloys; so too are married couples, trios or quartets, all stronger together than separately, similar to the alchemical marriage but for the fact that the lions and eagles that make up the griffins are both male, and the griffin is female. (A male griffin is wingless, covered in spikes, and bears a unicorn's horn). Men forget that women, too, can display both terrifying ferociousness and hauteur (divine creation and appointment are ever so ego-boosting); queens and empresses and titans of business evolve into griffins.
- For the Indians and Persians, the griffin is the guardians of gold and is devoted to guarding the reefs from which gold is dug. Gold is famously the prime element in alchemy, the perfection of all matter on every level. The griffin's devotion to gold is legendary; what the griffin really protects is purity. (The male griffin's horn is a unicorn's, and unicorns are attracted to the purity of virginal women.) The griffin defines what's pure; sometimes what they guard is a purity of hate or evil.
- There was one human that griffins assisted: Alexander the Great, whose flying machine the griffins powered. Alexander was a belligerent egomaniac whose sole goal in life was to conquer everything in the world. Griffins assisted him in his non-conquering adventures. His was a purity of desire: conquest above all else, even love. Naturally the griffins aided him. Certain other world conquerors, would-be and actual, have been accompanied by griffins. Dictators should not be surprised if a griffin chooses them to watch over.
- Griffins are notoriously hostile to men and horses: in legend, because the horse-mounted Arimaspians tried to steal the griffins' gold. Griffins' role as protector of gold, companions to deities, and created-by-God hybrid creatures puts them in opposition to humanity. The griffins' hostility to humanity is more revealing of their creator's opinion of men and women than priestly and pastoral propaganda.

GUARDS (& SOLDIERS)

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Authority figures
- Frontline workers in hostile organisations
- Police, obviously

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	1		
Abilities					

Squad Goal: Members of any kind of militia have been trained to act as a team. As long as two or more guards or soldiers are working towards the same end, their attacks have **Special** fully recover one fellow soldier's Guard.

TRUTHS ABOUT GUARDS (& SOLDIERS)

- They're the violent face of the establishment. Whether they're conscripted to fight for a nation, choose to fight for a city or are compelled to fight for a cause, there's likely someone above them who isn't putting their life on the line.
- Guards and soldiers fight as part of a company (lone soldiers are really just assassins, lone guards are basically vigilantes). Their strength comes from their ability to act as moving parts of a cohesive whole. The bonds between fellow fighters is strong and individuals will ignore their own concerns—and morals—in service of the group.
- Roleplaying games traditionally treat guards and soldiers as faceless enemies the heroes can harm or even kill with impunity. After all, these are NPCs who have chosen violence as a career (and act as a threat to the players). In reality, there are a myriad of reasons someone might find themselves on the front line: maybe they've been conscripted to fight for the glory of an unfeeling nation, maybe they were coerced into defending a religion they had no choice but to follow, maybe fighting was the only option for the disenfranchised. How do the ruling classes of your world ensure a constant supply of bodies to defend them?
- Guards have power over their peers. Are your city guards made up of volunteers? If so, why have they chosen this position? How has their power (however small) corrupted them? How do they wield it? Do your villagers take turns to act as guards for a short time? Do the current guards relish the job or are they just trying to get through the night with as little effort as possible?
- By contrast, soldiers are separated from their community. They live, fight and die apart from the people they love. They likely have more in common with the people they're ordered kill than they do with those they believe they are protecting. How do they feel about their war? Can they still conceive of a life beyond it? How far would they go for their fellow troops?
- Individually, guards and soldiers are people, with families, dreams, inner turmoil and all the rest. You might be able to reason with a lone guard, or befriend a single soldier. This is why the structure they inhabit works to ensure you never find one. The personhood of the individual is subsumed into the coldness of the institution.



HALFLINGS (& GNOMES)

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Stiffness and tradition
- Working class, “salt of the earth” people
- Safety and security

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	3	2	2	3	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	3	1		
Abilities					

Tricksy: When a halfling or gnome attacks from hiding or cover, their attacks gain **Special:** if this hit Wounds, it causes two Wounds.

TRUTHS ABOUT HALFLINGS (& GNOMES)

- Halflings and gnomes are small. They’re about half the size, or even less, of a human. That’s a deliberate comparison: halflings and gnomes are often considered in terms of how they fit in around humans. After all, they’re not small in their own terms: they’re exactly the right size, and everything else is bizarrely huge. But it’s a fact that, outside of their own homes, nothing’s sized for them. They have to adapt themselves to the way bigger creatures choose to live.
- Maybe because of that, halfling and gnome communities are insular. They keep themselves to themselves in homes away from bigger creatures. They’re hard to find. For all that, they welcome visitors who find them, though rather at arm’s length: halflings and gnomes don’t do much in the way of cultural exchange. They’ve got their own ways of doing things, and they’re very satisfied with them thank you ever so much. Alternatively, maybe because they’re well aware what would happen to them if they didn’t...
- Halflings and gnomes aren’t warlike. They’re focused on living their own lives well, not spoiling other people’s. They don’t have defences or standing armies, they just keep themselves to themselves so they’re not invaded.
- Being diminutive and not inclined towards war, halflings and gnomes are underestimated. They’re equated, wrongly, with children. They’re perceived as naïve, innocent and helpless. That says more about others than it does about halflings and gnomes themselves: to the extent this perception’s true at all, it’s another indication that the halflings and gnomes are just striving to live lives free of adventure and upheaval in a world engineered to tell heroic stories.
- Despite that, both halflings and gnomes are capable. Halflings are resilient and have sticking power (if you want someone to walk barefoot across a continent on an errand, pick a halfling); gnomes are tinkerers, inventors and creators.
- The flip side of being constantly underestimated is that halflings and gnomes make great thieves and assassins. No one suspects them, but they’re light-footed and light-fingered, and used to navigating around larger creatures without getting crushed underfoot (figuratively and literally).

HOUNDS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Anything or anyone that snarls, barks and generally makes itself seem terrifying, when it actually is in search of a treat or a bit of love
- Tests of morals and compassion
- Soldiers conscripted into a war against their will or desires and forced to fight

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	3	3	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	3	4	0		
Abilities					

Loyal: Some hounds have a master. If you upset their master—or intrude onto their domain—the hound's attacks gain advantage.

Infernal Beast: Some hounds are more hellish than others. Ranged attacks suffer a disadvantage against them thanks to their unnatural speed, shadowy outline and brimstone-smoke clouds.

TRUTHS ABOUT HOUNDS

- Hounds are loud, scary and defensive. Everyone loves doggies now, sure, but for a long time, dogs-as-loyal-friends was really just a pleasant side effect of their real jobs: as fierce guardians who bite, tear flesh and chase down any man, woman or predator that enters your chicken coop or homestead. Hellhounds guard doorways to the underworld, either as snarling beasts that protect the kingdom within, or as in the legend of Cerberus, monsters that guard the dead from escaping. Those who try to get back to the other side are ripped apart, speaking to the cruelty of these hellish kings—they use dogs as soldiers instead of friends.
- Most of us don't want to roll to hit the doggie. While in some cases, the addition of supernatural traits (such a multiple heads like Cerberus or glowing eyes like the Black Dog) can cause people to treat the beast as less like its counterpart, the same doesn't seem to be true about dogs. People want to find the friendly puppy within, and would prefer to treat anything doglike as an inherently good boy. Sometimes, that's a good thing.
- Hounds are loyal beasts. This is part of why we love them and part of what makes them deadly. Once you train a dog, it loves you forever—but you don't have to be a good person to gain that dog's love. A few sausages can do the trick. As such, it's reasonable to become cross with people who use doggies as big mean evil boys.
- Hounds are a test for heroes, encouraging them to choose kindness and compassion, understanding their enemy (instead of just being a sword-swinging murder hobo about it). Almost always, the biggest, drooliest, beast can be wooed into kindness, and some of our oldest stories teach that lesson. Soft music, a well-placed turkey leg, or a scratch behind the ear is not only more effective than an axe—it can gain you an ally. After all, most dogs don't want to work as police, what they want is food and a lap and a warm place to sleep.
- Dogs imply the presence of masters. Wild dogs, dingoes, wolves and the like follow an entirely different set of rules, and as such, they clearly communicate a sense of the feral. But a trained or leashed hound, even one that breathes fire or the like, belongs to someone. In many adventures, dogs are encountered as the first sign of resistance—while kings and soldiers sleep, dogs stand guard, and indicate activity within. But dogs have to rest too—and clever adventurers can often employ a policy of least resistance by letting sleeping dogs lie.

HYDRAS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Customers in any customer-facing job
- Insurmountable or unresolvable long-running problems
- Family feuds that get perpetuated from generation to generation

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	3	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	5	4	1		
Abilities					

Heads!: A hydra starts with a random number of heads. Roll a d6:

- 1-3: four heads
- 4-5: six heads
- 6: eight heads—run!

The hydra gets advantage equal to half its number of heads, rounding down. So, if it's got 4 Heads, it gets two dice of advantage.

Grows More Heads: Whenever the hydra is struck by an attack, it grows another head.

Hideous Endurance: A hydra may sacrifice a head to heal 1 Health.

Weakness: Every hydra has a weakness—fire, poison, silver, a particular combination of herbs and spices. If an attack exploits that weakness, the hydra can't Grow More Heads in response to taking hits from that attack. All attacks on the hydra gain the **Special:** chop! Remove one of the hydra's heads.

TRUTHS ABOUT HYDRAS

- A hydra is a big snake with more heads than it knows what to do with. Chop off one, two more grow. Look, it was used as a metaphor by Plato in 384 B.C., so we're not saying anything new here, but... it works. Everyone's got problems that seem many-headed and ever-growing. Hell, you can even hang a hat (or a whole lot of hats on it)—D&D gave us all sorts of weird hydra variants, like the Cryohydra and Pyrohydra. Imagine what other hydras there could be—a character weighed down by financial woes might face a gold-eating Plutohydra. An aspiring politician might be scandalised by a many-headed Oneidohydra. Anything that gets worse when you struggle against it can be a hydra.
- From the other side of the table, a gaming group looks like a hydra to the game master. It's a many-headed monster, and instead of forking heads, you've got forking paths—the GM has to consider all many possible paths that the players could take through the adventure. Hydras might be nightmares of a story gone out of control, plot lines running riot as they entangle one another, and all you can do to get it back under control is to start chopping heads off player characters.
- Hydras have a jobsworth monster vibe—the sort of monster you throw in when you're feeling uninspired. They're basically a bunch of orcs glued together, with enough heads to make an attack on every player character each round, and regeneration to make the fight last a respectable number of rounds, but it's a bit by-the-numbers. If a hydra lived for long enough it might start to pick up on the impression that it's B-Tier at best and develop a complex around it.
- In the story of the 12 Labours, the hydra was defeated by cauterising the neck stumps and preventing it from regrowing heads. Hercules later used the hydra's super-poisonous blood as a weapon against other foes. (In other words: a very early multi-objective mission with an unlockable weapon upgrade.) There's precedent for interesting loot drops, there.

LICHES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Bosses and authority figures
- Elderly relatives who should just die already, grandad, and put us all out of your misery and into your will
- Inescapable fears



Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	5	5	3	3
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	5	8	2		
Abilities					

Cannot Die: A Lich cannot be destroyed as long as its soul vessel exists.

Paralysing Touch: All physical attacks have **Special:** the target cannot move until they pass a Wisdom dice pool roll.

Spells: Liches can attack with their magic, building their attack pool with Intelligence. If someone is physically thumping the lich in melee combat while it's trying to cast, then it suffers Disadvantage equal to their Strength. (So, put as much cannon fodder between the lich and the Paragons as possible. Ablative skeletons are ideal.)

TRUTHS ABOUT LICHES

- Liches don't die. They've cheated their way out of natural death by becoming undead, but they also cheat their way around violent death by hiding their life force into a soul jar or other relic. Call it a death hack. And unlike other undead, lichs still retain their passions and personality (such as it is: for most lichs, it's techbro necromancer tycoon). As far as they're concerned, lichs have won the game of life. That's why they're grinning all the time.
- Liches are smarter than you are. They're super-geniuses unburdened by fear or doubt or hormones. Intellects vast, bony and very much unsympathetic. They've already predicted every move you're going to make, and they've got contingencies for everything. And the bastards love monologuing, too. Liches are the most punchable arch-villains possible.
- What thing might be so important to you that you'd use it as a vessel for your soul? Do you lock it away in the deepest, most heavily guarded dungeon where you know it's safe, or keep it on you at all times? Can you resist the Batman-villain urge to demonstrate just how smart you are?
- The traditional gamer term for a lich's soul vessel is phylactery, which is one of those archaic high-Gygaxian words up there with fane and weal. Trouble is, phylactery is more commonly used as the translation for the Hebrew word tefillin, referring to a box containing scrolls bearing text from the Torah worn by the devout. It's part of the general background radiation of antisemitism and racism that pervades gaming, especially games that draw on real-world occultism, conspiracy theories or pulpy adventure fiction. So: call it a soul vessel instead, and consider what else it might be other than a box of religious texts. What—or who—is so important to the lich that their fleeing soul would take refuge within it?
- Another take: lichs are a manifestation of death. They're walking endgames. The lich is the evil overlord you've got to confront on the last level of the dungeon, and death's the final challenge. No group fights a lich without death taking a toll.



MINOTAURS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Anyone who's been abandoned
- A shameful secret, deliberately buried
- Obstinate, stubborn, aggressive people, as in, those who are bull-headed

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4	2	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	4	4	0		
Abilities					

Deadly Charge: If a Minotaur charges, it has an advantage on its attack, can apply the attack to everyone in its path and the attack has **Special:** the target is knocked over.

Bestial Frenzy: If it is angered, it enters a frenzy, and gains an advantage on its attacks while reducing its Guard to zero.

TRUTHS ABOUT MINOTAURS

- They're one of the most iconic creatures in Greek mythology, a huge man with the head of a bull, and much of its physical power... trapped in a dungeon. In the western canon, the minotaur is the single myth which most foreshadows role-playing games. Dungeons & Dragons, if it more consciously examined it's forebears, could have easily been called The Dungeon and The Minotaur. Note the singular there: this first dungeon, for all it's complexity, held a single monster.
- The minotaur was the product of the union between the Queen of Crete and Poseidon's holy bull. There is a fantasy role-playing game trope of a creature born of love between two species. The half-elf and the half-orc, also often ostracised by both its people. The minotaur, abandoned in its labyrinth, would likely envy both half-elves and half-orcs.
- Like many monsters, it exists outside society. However the minotaur is unusual in that it is cast out of society. It is our monster while we've created, we can't admit it into our world. Simultaneously, we can't simply kill it. Instead, we hide it.
- As tribute, seven Athenian boys and seven girls were sent to Crete to be offered up into the labyrinth to be consumed by the minotaur. They are chosen by random chance—think of dice—and sacrificed for their elders' benefit and mistakes. 14 abused children fed to another abused, neglected child. When Theseus kills the minotaur, by forgetting to raise white sails to signal victory ahead, leads to the suicide of his father. There is nothing in the minotaur's story which leaves us happy.
- The minotaur was called Asterion (or perhaps Asterius). It is a person whose name has been mostly forgotten. While it was a singular creature, "minotaur" is now used as a broad term for any bull-headed creature. In games and fiction there are whole species of minotaurs, taking the visual and leaving any of the myth's specifics behind. We talk about the Ship of Theseus, the paradox of removing every part but the ship still remaining. How much is that true of Theseus' foe too?
- That said... a head of a bull and the body of a man. Are you sure? In the middle-ages there was a tradition of inverting it, and having the minotaur as a human-headed bull. It makes you wonder what other monsters we could be completely wrong about.

OGRES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Playground bullies
- Unmet physical needs (like hunger)
- People who assault and abuse others

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4	2	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	4	4	2*		
Abilities					

*Defence: 1 if attacked by magic or enchanted weapons)

Off the Deep End: When Ogres get angry, they go berserk. They have advantage on attacks and their Guard drops to 0. Things that make ogres angry: pain, insults, confusion, hunger, the word “no,” and almost anything else that inconveniences them.

Thick Hide: As emotionally fragile as ogres are, they’re physically very hardy. They have Defence 2 against normal, non-magical weapons (unless they’re siege engines, or something equally impressive).

TRUTHS ABOUT OGRES

- Ogres are oversized. Not just big—too big. They’re thick arms reaching through doors, heavy steps that shake the ground and meaty hands wielding clubs made from tree trunks. Because they’re oversized they’re a sign of something out of place, out of scale and out of control.
- Ogres are ugly. This isn’t one of those “nasty people are all ugly” situations (don’t do that), but a sign of how uncomfortable ogres’ presence is. They’re nearly human, but not quite. They’re big and exaggerated, like a funhouse mirror showing human beings’ worst qualities. And humans aren’t great at facing things that remind them they’re basically monsters. Humans also aren’t good at squaring up to things that remind them of their animal nature: fetid breath and body odour are major taboos, and ogres don’t care about them.
- Ogres are creatures of unrestrained appetite. They’re led by their bellies. As well as providing their motivation, keeping them fed offers a way to placate ogres. It’s also key to controlling them. An unscrupulous person with a steady food supply could make great use of an ogre until it inevitably turned on them.
- Just as much as hunger, they’re driven by rage. Ogres are ill-tempered and bellicose. They’re easily angered, and when they’re angry they’re unreasonable. Ogres are capable of speech, but it’s not a skill they use much. Bellows of rage backed up by threats of violence (and expressions of violence) are much more their style.
- If it wasn’t already clear, ogres are the human id. Something primal and powerful that’s got out of its box and run rampant. They want what they want, when they want it (and that’s now) and there’s no way to say no to them. It’s not that they’re stupid, they’re just uninterested in anything but their immediate needs. Like the id, it’s easier to distract or redirect an ogre, or maybe even let it have some of what it wants, than completely subjugate it. Obviously, ogres die, so it’s not a perfect metaphor... but they’re not rare. There’ll be another one along in due course, and you’ll have to set boundaries all over again.

ORCS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Groups who the Persona felt persecuted by
- Any group the Persona thinks evil
- Any group the Persona dehumanises

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	0		
Abilities					

Mandatory Double-Special: one orc attack takes the opportunity to kill another orc in the group.

TRUTHS ABOUT ORCS

- Orcs are the evil humanoid foot-servants of the dark powers, marching forth wherever there is conquering to be done. They do not tend to win battles but they are the cheap carbohydrate of adventuring, the potato or rice to bulk out a meal of a quest. They are, to paraphrase Chuck from the comic, whatever you can kill with no moral compunction whatsoever. Stop and think about that one.
- Orcs used to be one of gaming's true shibboleth. An ancient word, but whose use signified that you had either read Tolkien or played D&D. In the Hobbit, Tolkien used the commonplace word "goblins" for these monsters, but for Lord of the Rings reached into old English for something a bit more grandeur. Others followed him. For a long time, the first thing a fantasy writer did was to rename their orc-analogues. This happens less now—in a post-modern world, we're as likely to just use "orc"—but it need not be. "Orc" was a creator's approach to a problem, a way to make a familiar monster newly monstrous.
- In a private letter, Tolkien described the orcs as "squat, broad, flat-nosed, sallow-skinned, with wide mouths and slant eyes: in fact degraded and repulsive versions of the (to Europeans) least lovely Mongol-types." The racism is obvious. The very concept of "evil races" or any essentialism of any race is exactly what racism is. However, there's a key part in the Tolkien quote. To Europeans. This is not a celebration of racism, but an admission of it—what he finds ugly. This continues to the orcs ethics, clearly born of Tolkien's Catholicism. What do you find ugly? What would your orcs look like?
- There's been many ongoing attempts to reclaim orcs. Some well-meaning approaches end up with noble savage cliches—the well-meaning patronising flip of colonialism's coin. "Orcs are people, too" seems something to aspire to, but we are soon in a world where all the sentient creatures are just humans in different costumes. In which case: why fantasy? We will all find our answers for this.
- Orc is not a species, but a role. It need not be taken by orcs. If you forget green skin, you'll see many orcs in fiction. The Punisher sees all criminals as orcs. In the Matrix, any cop is an orc. Orcs are what a fiction chooses to see as disposable, and the audience sees as entertaining to dispose.
- In his own mythology-religion, the poet, engraver, and mystic William Blake's named his Lucifer-esque rebel figure Orc. Imagine the most lowly orc in an army being told this, and what they could feel, knowing that an orc could aspire to such grandeur. And, of course, the first step achieving something is to conceive it.

RATS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Anyone who takes small bites from your self-esteem
- People who draw you back into their tangle, no matter what you do
- People who you can never satisfy

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
1	2	2	1	1	0
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	4	2	0		
Abilities					

Through the Smallest Crack: No matter how tightly sealed a room seems to be; there is always a crack that a rat can slip through. Once one can get in, they all can. Their attacks gain **Special:** the target's Defence is reduced to 0.

TRUTHS ABOUT RATS

- They carry disease. In the real world it was the fleas on the rats that spread black death, but in fantasy worlds it is the *Rattus Rattus* that carries disease. All of them, no exceptions. Maybe they bite you, piss in your food, scratch your eyes. Either way, you're getting a dose of something nasty.
- They make Rat Kings—panicked rats tangle each other up in their own tails until they die, struggling and trapped. These thrashing communal deaths are real. It will stop them coming for you, but the terror of their last breath will linger in an area for days if not weeks. Think of what an unscrupulous person could do with that power.
- Rats are everywhere. They say in the great city of London you are never more than six feet from a rat; it's certainly true in the fantasy cities which populate *Die*. The urban environment is the natural habitat of the rat, giving them plenty of opportunity for warmth, food and reproduction. They aren't too far from humans in that respect. We too are everywhere, we too want warmth and food and we too will eat, and gnaw and devour until we have wrecked everything around us. So, if you need a tiny, breathing, beating body for something—magical sacrifice, to satiate your hunger or just exorcising your rage... there's probably a rat within six feet.
- They are legion. Conjure up your worst nightmares, boiling colonies of black rats, swarming over you, pulling you down into the undertow. A million tiny bites until you are nothing but bone and hair. There is never just one rat, no matter how many you can see—if you've seen one, there are dozens nearby.
- Rats are bad omens—maybe because they are synonymous with disease, filth and decay. Seeing one rat means bad luck is coming your way. The more rats you see the worse it's gonna get.

SIRENS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Forbidden desires
- Lost loves
- Destructive but irresistible choices

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	5
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	1		

Abilities

Siren Song: The siren has an irresistible call; a sweet song like sea-salted honey. When a siren sings to lure a potential victim, they roll their Charisma plus a d4, as a Dictator would, with the **Special** the entranced victim is unable to hear anything but the siren's song.

Children of the Sea: Sirens are part-human, part-bird or -fish. Whether they have wings or fins, feathers or scales, sirens belong to the waves and to the shore. They can either fly or swim with ease and rolls made within sight of their home waters have **Special** The siren controls the currents for one round. When separated from the sea, however, their power wanes: all rolls are made at a disadvantage and they lose 1 Health a day.

TRUTHS ABOUT SIRENS

- They're incredibly sexy. Just, like, unfathomably attractive. While that's not necessarily true of every mythological depiction of sirens, it's true of our conception of them now. We even call hot-but-dangerous women sirens.
- There's no getting away from the fact that the beautiful but deadly siren is a pretty sexist trope. Early mythology includes male sirens—maybe yours does too. If your sirens are all women, does that mean some characters have a natural immunity against them? If not, how does it feel for, say, a gay man or a straight woman to be compelled into attraction towards a woman? What do sirens mean for people who don't experience sexual attraction at all?
- Sirens are the embodiment of sex as a weapon. They incite lust which, when followed, leads to destruction. Greco-Roman mythology depicts sirens creating desire, but it's early Christian writings that make that desire firmly of the flesh. Sirens represent a view of sex as dangerous: a traitorous temptation that must (but perhaps cannot) be resisted.
- Sirens lead you astray. In Greco-Roman mythology, they lure sailors off course, sometimes towards jagged rocks, sometimes to be devoured. In early Christian and mediaeval writing, they lure men towards sin. Where are the Paragons going and how can sirens lead them away from that path?
- Part of the siren's threat is that they're not "really" hot. There's the fact they're half bird or fish, of course, but they're often described as visually repulsive. Dante even describes being saved from a siren's spell when Virgil reveals her foul stench. The horror here isn't simply that the hero's lust for the siren clouds their reason—it's that they felt lust for such a creature at all. The attraction becomes shameful and disgusting to the person who feels it. What does that suggest about a person's feelings towards their own, real desires?
- There's truth in their song, if you can survive hearing it. They are prophetic creatures, singing tales of destruction. Today, we use their name to describe the sound of an alert that helps us react to disaster, but it's rare that it can be truly averted once you hear the sirens wail. Their song ends in death, and it cannot be escaped.

SKELETONS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Hostile mobs
- Exploited workers
- The inevitable decay of all mortal bodies

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	1	2	1	1	0
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
1	2	2	0		
Abilities					

Fleshless: Free from the burdens of blood and sinew, skeletons are immune to the piercing and stabbing that would rend flesh or split skin. Being long dead, they also cannot be drowned, poisoned, suffocated or starved. Only blunt force, heavy weapons, magic and miracles can harm them.

Reassembly: Whatever magic animates a skeleton's bones also draws them together like iron nails to a magnet. Without tendons holding them together, it's possible for a reasonably strong foe to simply yank a skeleton's arm out of its socket but, as long as all the bones are still intact, that arm will be slowly pulled back into place. It takes about a day for a completely scattered skeleton to reassemble (being dead and destroyed can cause lethargy).

TRUTHS ABOUT SKELETONS

- To state the obvious, an animate skeleton is just a walking pile of bones. While they might still retain hanging strands of hair and meat, these are not the freshly deceased. Unless the Paragons are centuries old, your party isn't going to recognise the remains of a lost friend, but they might see glimpses of a long-forgotten past.
- Nobody animates just one skeleton. They're always part of a horde. You might find a lone pile of bones in rusted armour in a dungeon hall, perhaps holding a dusty tome that tells of an ill-fated last stand, but when that pile of bones jerkily reanimates and attacks, you can bet it's only a matter of time before you're overwhelmed by an osseous army.
- Despite their lack of muscle tissue, skeletons retain a strange sort of muscle memory. That doesn't just mean a skeleton can swing a sword or fire an arrow. The resurrected bones of labourers continue to carry out the actions their body performed in life: a ship's skeletal crew continues to rig the sails and swab the deck; a team of miners continues to pick at rock walls long after their flesh has rotted away. Remember, a skeleton is what you get when only the bones of something remain. To a necromancer, a horde of skeletons represent the ultimate workers: their function has become their essence.
- A skeleton's hostility isn't inherent—it's always directed by some sorcerer, necromancer or uber-lich. What kind of evil overlord chooses to create a mindless mob of undead rather than hire a (let's be honest, more effective) crew of thinking beings? Do they simply want to avoid such pesky things as "paying wages" and "having to feed their army" or is the mindlessness the point? Is the ability to impose one's will and hatred on hundreds of other beings more important to them than those beings acting tactically and reacting creatively? What does that say about the hero's response to them as creatures who can be killed with impunity?
- Deep down, we're all skeletons. They're the only monster that resides within our own bodies. They remind us of the true horror of life: that it must end, and death loves company.

SNAKES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Anything that feels massive and threatening enough to consume you completely.
- Liars and deceivers, cult leaders, those who claim hidden knowledge that can or will free you....or deliver a poison to eat you from within
- Death, rebirth and any of those big ideas squirming underneath the rocks of your subconscious.

SNAKE / GIANT SNAKE

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2 / 3	2 / 3	2 / 3	1 / 2	2 / 2	2 / 2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2 / 3	2 / 3	3 / 4	0 / 0		
Abilities (Choose One)					

Constrictive: The snake's attacks gain **Special:** retrain the target, target suffers 1 Health damage per round unless they succeed on a Strength dice pool roll.

Venomous: The snake's attacks gain **Special:** the target is envenomed, taking 1 hit per round until they counteract it with a successful Constitution roll, or sucking the venom out in a dramatic fashion.

TRUTHS ABOUT SNAKES

- Snakes are scary. To many people, they're the ultimate fear. Some of them are venomous, some not, but there's some folks who don't stick around long enough to find out. It doesn't matter if it bites or squeezes, if it wriggles and coils and flicks its tongue, it's deadly. There's a sense of wrongness to things that wriggle, things that could crawl in your ears or nose.
- Snakes can be venomous. They bite, inject poison, paralyse, kill and devour. Vipers lay coiled, waiting for the wrong person to step into their way, where they strike. Their venom eats through skin and bone, working on nerves and curdling blood like milk. Death can come in minutes, or the poison can be sucked out, tied off in a tourniquet and siphoned by mouth through the brutal wound. Despite repeated advisories by experts that sucking out the poison does nothing, it remains one of the most visceral metaphors we have for drawing out something toxic that dwells within.
- Snakes can constrict. The biggest and baddest scalie bros don't have any poison at all, which is almost worse. Venomous snakes use their toxins to paralyse prior to a kill, then gobble their prey whole. Constrictors think that's too much work. Enormous, slow and patient, constrictors simply squeeze their prey until it gives up (which can take hours or days). There's always a threshold, where the snake's strength can no longer be escaped, making them a fine echo for any situation where the player fails to recognize their own peril until it is too late.
- Snakes are smart, or at least, snakes are symbols of knowledge. The forbidden knowledge of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the serpentine caduceus of the Greek god Hermes. Anyone who has spent time with any actual reptile might find their legendary intelligence funny. Pet snakes are fussy, silly creatures who won't eat their mouse unless it's dangled in front of their face like a baby with a set of keys. This contrast is ripe for exploitation.
- Snakes, like other reptiles, shed their skins in a constant symbol of death and rebirth, growth and change. There's something to the snake's legless curves and circular coils that speaks to us: the ouroboros. This is frequently the reasoning for their central importance in several religious movements, cults and ceremonies.
- Snakes' upsetting image is often believed to be a protection against true misfortune, such as Japanese yakuza tattooing. The snake eye is said to be manipulative or hypnotising, even as an inert item.

SPIDERS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Toxic parenthood
- Primal unreasoning fears
- Difficulty in moving forwards, physically or metaphorically

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	3	2	1	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	2	3	0		
Abilities					

Web Hunter: In any heavily webbed area, a spider's Defence increases to 1.

Web Shot: Once per encounter, spiders can shoot a string of web. If it hits, the target suffers a disadvantage on all actions. The attack has the **Special:** target is immobilised. A target webbed by this attack or environmental webs can free themselves by spending a Special, and others can free them by spending a regular result.

Poison Bite: Spiders have advantage on all attacks with its jaws. Spiders have **Special:** target is paralysed for the rest of the encounter. At the end of each turn's initiative order, the paralysed character may roll a Constitution dice pool to recover. If successful, they take their turn at disadvantage.

TRUTHS ABOUT SPIDERS

- Spiders are frightening on a deeply primal level. The way they move, their patience, their combination of basal predatory desires and intricate trapmaking, their multiple eyes and legs—all these things mark spiders out as something deeply wrong. Spiders in fiction tend to act to emphasise this essential disconnect between the arachnid and the human. This is especially the case with their devious hunting strategies. A reliance on poison and traps tilts the scales towards them, refusing to offer their prey a fair fight.
- They arise in malign abandoned places as though by spontaneous generation. Haunted caves, old houses and ill-favoured woods are all natural spawn locations for spiders. Rather than being the direct minions of powerful evil, they exist on the road to or at the fringes of worse things, obstacles and unwitting guardians to be overcome. They are a personification of the corrupted wild.
- They exist at all scales, from smaller than a thumbnail to larger than a house, and as they gain in size and age they traditionally accumulate cunning and wisdom. The greatest of them become the lynchpins of their ecologies, their lairs the focal points of strange cults as the sentient creatures about them propitiate their spider god with offerings to slake her hunger.
- They are an embodiment of primal biological urges. Spiders live to feed and breed. In games and fiction they are often encountered in populous, seething colonies with a hive-like organisation, mother spiders tended to by hosts of skittering offspring. They exist only to take prey and lay eggs and breed vast numbers of offspring that infest their lairs in a crawling carpet, and for whose appetites they leave out their paralysed but still-living prey. They are the monstrous flip-side of parental care.
- At the same time, they represent a malign cunning outside accepted natural order. The mindless arthropod whose geometrical traps and venom lets them punch up, allowing them to conquer vastly stronger creatures. Their simple minds become a calculating intellect outsourced to the wider sensory network of their webs. They are an alien convergence towards craft and creation that shares nothing with humanity.

TREE SPIRITS

(TREANTS & DRYADS)

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- The old local who's been there forever
- A significant natural landmark
- The drive for a simpler life away from civilisation

TREANT / DRYAD

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4 / 2	1 / 2	5 / 2	2 / 2	3 / 3	2 / 3
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
1 / 2	5 / 2	5 / 5	1 / 0		
Abilities					

Command Plants: Once per encounter, this tree spirit can call upon plant life around them to aid them. This allows them to make a normal attack against all targets within reach of greenery, or to gain +2 Guard as the plants form a barrier between them and their foes.

Root and Tear (Treant): Treants can easily destroy the things built by humans. With a moment's dedicated effort, they can tear down a wall or small building.

Charm (Dryad): Once per encounter, the Dryad may enchant a target with a successful Charisma dice pool roll. Successes prevent the target from taking action against the Dryad. This attack has a **Special:** the target is enamoured and will defend the Dryad against any threats. Targets may make a Wisdom dice pool test to free themselves, or their allies may attempt Charisma dice pool tests to help. Both actions are set against the Dryad's Willpower of 5 and gain the **Special:** free the target from the Dryad's influence.

TRUTHS ABOUT TREE SPIRITS

- The gnarled old tree that animates to defend the forest against axe and flame. The seductive youth (of any gender) who lures the intruding human desiring mastery of the wilderness. Treants and Dryads represent the stewardship, wrath and seductive nature of wild places. They are nature's mirror, reflecting our needs back on us: seek to destroy and you will be crushed, seek to control and you will be enslaved.
- The trees that move, the wood that comes to the castle, the briar forest that grows overnight. Tree spirits represent an acceleration of time, things that should be too gradual to see, moving into a human frame of reference, untended growth, a process of natural reclamation that should take a hundred years happening all at once.
- Their relationship with humans is ambivalent. Terrible foes when roused, but to those who come with open hearts and hands they can be lovers, advisors and guardians. They are the eyes in the forest, the wild thing of the woods, at the edge of human encroachment, the ultimate cryptid of ambivalent intent.
- The wood of an enchanted tree has many uses, in the hands of wizards and carpenters both. Perhaps an enchanted puppet that talks and wants to be a real boy or a magical closet that serves as a gateway to other worlds.
- In fiction, the demeanour of tree spirits reflects their environments. Corrupted woods give rise to monstrous tree creatures, strangling roots and carnivorous flowers, bark maidens with hollow backs and alluring spirits whose roots twine through the bones of countless former lovers. The secret to dealing with the threat of these creatures is not in fighting them directly but in cleansing the earth they grow in. Of course some woods are simply ancient and wicked by nature, beyond redemption. The moral of "the woods are dangerous" lies at the heart of many folk tales. Treants and dryads make that literal.

TROLLS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Intractable obstacles
- Criticism arising out of self-loathing and insecurity
- Antagonists who persevere beyond all reason

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	4	1	1	1
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	4	2	0		
Abilities					

Regeneration: While alive, trolls heal one Health every turn. When dead, if not killed by a method they are vulnerable to (usually fire or acid) they may roll a Constitution dice pool with the **Special:** return to life with 1 Wound.

Dumb Brute Magic: Trolls may have a particular magical trick they can perform. Trolls can roll a Constitution dice pool to perform Dumb Brute Magic with the following **Specials:** grow or shrink (increase Health or Guard), Curse other (disadvantage to next action), Transmute materials, Perform an act of craftsmanship, Become unmovable (+1 Defence), Provoke a negative emotion

TRUTHS ABOUT TROLLS

- Trolls are hulking ugly monsters famed for their strength, their cantankerous nature and their ability to heal faster than adventurers can hurt them. They're commonly found in or near caves, and have a strong association with all things chthonic—some of them even have rocks growing out of them, or are rocks that got up and walked around.
- They represent stubborn malignity in every possible way. They are the thing that won't let you cross the bridge just because they can stand in your way. They are the lurking presence that mocks you from the dark—or the other side of the screen—and keeps needling you beyond the point any sane creature would have lost interest. In combat, they are even too stubborn to die to wounds that would kill anything else.
- They are the decayed ruin of what we once were, the reactionary shreds of the past that has no function but to drag others down. They come with corroded armour and blades, whispering of when the land was theirs, complaining like Grendel of these young people with their rowdy parties. Troll magic is an atavism baked into their blood and leathery flesh, beyond any conscious understanding.
- Alternatively, their embodiment of an age long past imbues them with a curious pathos. Driven into the mountains or the forests, or forced into the derelict places and the shadows beneath human construction. A relic from a simpler and more brutal time, hoarding ancient secrets and treasure. Creatures enforcedly banished to the darkness, frozen to stone by the light of the sun. They are the sad remnant of a world that later cultures have trampled to dust and paved over.
- They represent power without understanding. Brutal strength, unfeeling endurance, eldritch old magic, all of it decaying in a lumpen monster just begging to be bamboozled by tricksters and vagabonds and even passing goats. They're something for others to test their wits on and then mock from a safe distance.
- They are things of hate, incapable of finer feelings. Jealousy, gluttony and cruelty make up their lives. They must possess anything they can claim for their own and destroy anything that they can't. When they come across the beautiful, they must ruin it. When they hear the expression of positive sentiments or innocent enthusiasm, they must pour negativity over it, hounding out any sights or ideas that throw a harsh light on their own sour natures.

UNICORNS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Idealism and unachievable dreams
- Sexual judgementalness
- Manic pixie dream girls to fix your failing relationship

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	3	3	2	4	4
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	3	6	0		
Abilities					

Intimate Judgement: When you meet a unicorn, it instinctively knows what the worst thing you believe you've done, and how you feel about it. Tell the rest of the group what it now knows.

Impaling Horn: Its horn has the **Special:** if this hit Wounds, it causes no Wound. Pulling yourself off the horn, however, causes 2 Wounds.

Unreachable: Unless it is physically held down, a unicorn can always leave its current location. It steps out of sight, and it's gone.

TRUTHS ABOUT UNICORNS

- A unicorn is a horse with a single horn. They're thought to arise from ancient Greek scholars' misconceptions about rhinos, oryxes, and some species of goat when hearing second-hand information about African wildlife.
- Unicorns are pure. Unlike you, they haven't—arguably can't—give in to sin. What counts as a sin is a matter of perspective. A lot of the time, that idea of impurity is tied to insecurities around sex. But whatever you feel guilty about? The unicorn hasn't done it, and couldn't.
- Unicorns are almost unattainable. Their purity keeps them a half-step apart from messy, fallible humans. Their virtue is an asymptote, something we can approach ever closer to but never quite achieve. Unicorns highlight the pain of loss. They say being impaled by one is painless, but as the horn is torn bloodily out of your body, that hurts you. Not to mention the symbolism of having that horn penetrate your body...
- Unicorns represent innocence to be lost. They might befriend those they consider pure enough, but this is a temporary thing. The difficulty of the world wears you down, and things get complicated and grubby, and you learn to compromise and take refuge in worldly pleasures. And you don't notice this erosion, but the unicorn does, and one day you're no longer innocent, and it no longer wants your company.
- In various stories, unicorns favour the young, innocent, virginal and otherwise pure. Often they're given a religious significance, representing an ideal of virtue to aspire to. All of a cultures hang-ups about piety, sexual purity and adulthood get tangled together and contrasted against the impossibly idealised unicorn.
- A unicorn is something to be pursued. Beautiful, unsullied, innocent. You chase the unicorn, and it always remains just out of reach. But that's not what stings. What stings is that perhaps, once, you could've reached it, before the world weighed you down. Perhaps somebody better than you could still reach it. There's a reason "unicorn hunters" has become a phrase for people looking for somebody else who can solve their problems rather than doing the work themselves.



VAMPIRES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Powerful people who are dangerous and alluring.
- Anything desirable, yet draining. Vampires make excellent allegories for addiction, sexuality, mental illness, or anything else that leads one to believe their desires will destroy them.
- The lost, the dead, or anyone who is not in one's life anymore, but whose presence is haunting.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	3	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	2	4	1		
Abilities					

Draining Bite: Vampires have **Special:** if this hit Wounds, the Vampire is restored to full Health.

Vampire Bane: Any attack made on a Vampire that are vulnerable to gains the **Special:** dies instantly. Some example weaknesses: holy water, sunlight, a stake through the heart, golden weapons, cold iron, an symbol of faith, holly, etc.

Not Dead Yet: If a Vampire dies via a method they aren't vulnerable to, they may return to life. At the end of every turn, dead Vampires roll a Constitution dice pool with the **Special:** return to life with one Health.

TRUTHS ABOUT VAMPIRES

- The word vampire has come to mean a great many things in popular culture, but in folklore, a vampire is almost always a once-living (though not necessarily human) creature that feeds on some essential component of the living. Typically, this is represented with blood, but media that depicts energy or psychic vampires are merely replacing blood with a less literal draining of consciousness and energy. Creatures are often turned into vampires via a painful bite, which sometimes kills them, before an oral transfusion of blood completes the change. Whether or not they die in the process, vampires are considered undead. Part of the nature of the curse is making them unable to live amongst humans comfortably—they're tragically exiled from their old lives.
- How a vampire senses and acquires its prey varies from tale to tale or person to person. Vampires are sometimes sexual and social powerbrokers, sometimes violent and insane monsters, and sometimes silent creatures of darkness. How could there be so many different kinds of one, unified monster? The answer is you. Common vampire lore seems to suggest that the vampire is not a person afflicted with a wasting, evil disease, but rather, a sort of bloodsucking parasite that occupies your flesh and imbues it with all your worst urges from when you were alive. Unbound from your sense of good and replaced with a force that wants only blood, you'll do whatever it takes to eat.
- Vampires are powerful, but easily controlled. They're limited by a set of rules that bind them, keeping them from living alongside mortals. The light of the sun, running water (sometimes holy), objects of faith or a rescinded invitation can all keep a vampire at bay. Concealment is necessary. Folk repellents for evil, such as the stink of garlic, tend to work on vampires. All of this to say that it's easy to keep a vampire away from you if you want, because vampires rely on coercion. Simply put down the cross and the garlic and invite them in.
- Vampires look human, which is their greatest advantage (and greatest curse). Their prey can't pick them apart the herd. But, they'll never again be human, and this leads a great many vampire stories to dabble in the melodramatic. Is the lust for a beautiful human the desire for their love or their blood? Is the pain at being turned away the rejection or is it merely the ward of the garlic that makes the vampire twist in pain? It's enough to make you want to stare sadly into the mirror... it's a good thing they can't usually see themselves.
- Monstrous vampires exist, often the result of a vampire losing grip on the last vestiges humanity, becoming truly bestial, insane or evil. They lose the ability to speak or even look human, and are considered past saving. This type of vampire has servitors. Vampires who, when freed from the grip of these bloody masters, regain some humanity, a reward for having held on.

WEREWOLVES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Someone who sacrificed themselves for you without hesitation
- People who underwent a huge transformation
- A boss who has no control

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4	3	4	2	2	3
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	4	4	1		
Abilities					

With Teeth: Their biting attacks have the **Double-Special:** turns the target into a werewolf, unless a remedy is found quickly.

Pack Hunter: Can pursue their prey across weeks and over hundreds of miles unless special precautions are taken to mask scent and hide tracks.

TRUTHS ABOUT WEREWOLVES

- Werewolves are humans who transform into wolves. There are so many stories and myths about this simple concept, it can be hard to tease them apart. Are werewolves humans who were bitten? Is the condition hereditary? Do they transform at the full moon? Do they have control over themselves, or not? Here's the deal: werewolves are always bitten into being. It's always traumatic, and not everyone survives the process. They can shift between forms at any time—they simply prefer to do it at night, and you're more likely to see one during the full moon because there's better light on the full moon. A dark night is no guarantee of safety.
- They come in packs. Forget what you think you know about lone wolves; that's a human myth to justify behaving like a selfish bastard. Wolves operate by rules of instinct and nature, and their instinct and nature drives them to form packs. They defend packmates against insurmountable odds, odds they won't bother to calculate. Don't expect them to "be rational", "give up when they realise they can't win" or "save their own skin" when a packmate is in trouble. And, if you do see a lone wolf... look behind you.
- Werewolves don't go down easily. They're tough, furious, and heal faster than you can hurt them. But if you can get your hands on silver, you can inflict some real damage—maybe it's the famed antibacterial properties of the metal—and reduce their Defence to 0. Trying to keep silver sharp is difficult, as is getting enough of it to make into a weapon, so it's not a sure-fire solution to lycanthropes.
- Werewolves have alphas. Wolves don't have alphas. But werewolves do, and they get that from their human side; humans like to sort themselves into leaders and followers. Whatever you've seen about werewolves, double it for alphas. They are bigger, tougher and cleave to their pack even tighter.
- The howl. A werewolf's howl is many things. It's a simple means of communication; a way of making a pack seem bigger and more threatening; it carries for miles on a still, dark night; it marks out a territory (more keenly than pissing on a tree); it warns rival packs to stay away. It means something very different when you are inside the pack (home) and when you are outside the pack (danger).

WIZARDS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Those whose professed authority comes from intellect
- Gatekeepers of knowledge
- The powerful who've lost touch with regular people
- Erratic and obsessive strangers who want something you have

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
1	2	2	3	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	5	0		

Abilities

Magic Wizards have advantage when casting spells, and can perform whatever magical effects seem appropriate to the narrative.

Offensive Sorcery: A wizard's magical attack comes with two of the following **Specials**:

- Disintegrating**, +1 hits. Igniting, doing 1 hit per round until extinguished.
- Freezing**, target is at disadvantage until they warm up.
- Blasting**, attack damages extra nearby target. Eldritch, ignores Guard.

TRUTHS ABOUT WIZARDS

- Wizard shares an origin with "wise;" the word originally referred to a clever person in the same way a "drunkard" is a drunk person. Witch, on the other hand, has been magic all the way back, and has roots in necromancy, soothsaying and incantations. Despite this, it's received wisdom that wizards do proper magic and witches just mess around with herbs and stuff, which just goes to show you that the patriarchy ruins everything.
- They were once human but have become something more, and less. Wizards are traditionally long lived and have both knowledge and power that places them beyond regular comprehension. It is hard for a wizard to lower themselves to care about the feelings, wellbeing or lives of regular people. Whilst they may act as advisors to kings or adventurers, even wizards who appear benevolent are distanced from those they profess to help, and their idea of doing the best thing for others may come across as appallingly utilitarian.
- They seek knowledge, whether as the means to accomplish some arcane goal or just because they crave understanding. Other mortals seeking wisdom (the weaknesses of invulnerable enemies, the locations of coveted artefacts) may seek answers at the towers or cloud castles or hidden libraries of wizards. With the appropriate gifts or deeds or promises of service, of course.
- Individual wizards are specialists whose magic follows a particular theme, also reflected in their personal goals. They are often obsessive towards that end, caring nothing for the wider world. This end might be their own eternal life, mastery of demons, the conquest of death, creation of life or the comprehension of the wider universe.
- In fiction, the combination of their focus on grand powers and schemes, and their need for specific resources or artefacts means that wizards frequently have need of mundane agents to go fetch things for them. They are often encountered as the old tavern patron with a quest, or the avuncular wanderer seeking a magical lamp. In many such cases they are far from honest about their true intentions and will betray their witless employees at the first opportunity. Fulfilling the requests of a wizard traditionally makes the world worse and leads to a struggle against the now-empowered sorcerer.
- In some settings, their power is not innate but derived from the contracts they enter into with supernatural creatures such as demons. Such wizards are frequently powerful but also insecure. Their need to sate the desires of the beings they barter with lead to acts that impact directly on the lives of others: sacrifices, acquiring artifacts, founding cults and spreading misery.

WRAITHS

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Cheats, liars and con artists
- Betrayers
- Emotional vampires

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
0	3	2	3	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
3	2	5	2*		
Abilities					

Defence: 0 when attacked with magic or enchanted items

Level Drain: Their attacks gain **Double-Special:** reduces your Health and Constitution to 1. The effects of Level Drain can be undone through rest and recuperation or magical healing.

Insubstantial Defence: A Wraith's Defence is 0 against attacks from magical weapons, spells, holy water, blessed salt or anything that isn't a mundane item.

Creature of Darkness: Exposing a Wraith to natural sunlight disincorporates it, immediately reducing its Health to 0. The Wraith shelters in nearby shadows and reforms in a few hours.

TRUTHS ABOUT WRAITHS

- Wraiths are a type of ghost, but a very specific type: they died in dishonour. There are many ways a person can dishonour themselves but it takes a major betrayal to make a wraith. A psychic stain on their soul that poisons and twists their essence into something murderous and grim.
- They cannot exist in sunlight. This may not be of much consolation since nights are dark and long, and even in daytime there are dark tunnels and crevices for wraiths to traverse. But when natural sunlight shines on wraiths, it's clear how insubstantial they are. They evaporate with the slightest touch of sunlight, and need to flee to the shadows to reform. Wraiths will drain you. Wraiths sap the life from the living; but it is not only life, it is energy, joy, creativity, hope. Anything good that gives you the will to carry on. Don't let them touch you or anyone you care about. Don't even let them touch anyone you might have to rely on at some point in the future.
- Wraiths are evil. The element of their personality that drove them to commit an ultimate betrayal is all that remains after their death, and it forms the wretched core of their being. There is nothing redeeming or even redeemable about a Wraith, and nothing to put to rest; they exist only to hurt. Their hateful mannerisms are like a video stuck on repeat.
- Wraiths don't look like other ghosts. They are skeletal figures hovering above the ground or flying through the air, half-obsured by tattered dark fabric and shadows. They are echoed across our culture and literature: the Nazgûl, the Ghostface slasher, the Grim Reaper. Such is the power of fear wraiths hold over us; the reduction of humanity down to base self-interest, and the knowledge that any one of us could fall to such depths of depravity given the right impetus.

WYVERNS

GOOD ECHOES FOR....

- Anyone from your hometown who reminds you of your past but hasn't moved on
- Football bullies, bar bruisers, and followers of white supremacists and Nazis
- Doppelgängers of successful people—only the doppelgängers are failures

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
5	1	4	1	1	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
1	4	3	0		
Abilities					

Wicked Talons: The Wyvern's attacks gain the **Special:** this hit ignores Guard.

Flyby: When it has room to fly, the Wyvern's attacks gain **Double-Special:** grabs the target and flies away with them.

TRUTHS ABOUT WYVERNS

- Wyverns seem to be two-legged winged dragons, smaller than their four-legged counterparts and with a venomous bite replacing the dragon's deadly breath. But where dragons are infamous for being cleverer than you, wyverns are dull (if deadly) brutes. Yet intelligence does not confer an evolutionary advantage and is not an inevitable development. Wyverns and dragons cannot be the same species; clearly some long-gone evolutionary predecessor split into the wyvern and the dragon. Only by coincidence do they resemble each other. To compete evolutionarily with the dragon's intelligence, wyverns have much greater numbers and a far higher breeding pace. The only reason we aren't swamped with wyverns is that dragons find young wyvern flesh delicious.
- Wyverns have been symbols of strength, power and endurance—and Satan, war, pestilence and sin. In alchemy, the wyvern represents matter in its lowest form, the basic, elementary stuff that the alchemist transforms into gold. The basest of creatures (Satan), the basest of humanity (sin), the basest of materials—wyverns are atomic in their status as a basic component of everything that's wrong. Wyverns are material creatures, but there is a breed of immaterial wyverns who possess the bodies of humans and drive them to commit evil acts. It wasn't the Devil that made you do it, it was the wyvern inside of you.
- For centuries, the wyvern has been used in heraldry, paintings and statues, regardless of its negative connotations. Some who chose to use the wyvern knew of the wyvern's evil symbolism. Others were ignorant of the wyvern's associations. It has been used as a symbol of Wessex since the Anglo-Saxon era, and was more widely present before the dragon took established heraldic dominance in the 20th century. The warnings other English give each other about Wessex are grounded in the reality of the wyvern's evil. So too are the warnings other countries give each other about England.
- The wyvern is the dragon's opposite: brutish where the dragon is sophisticated and intelligent, short-sighted and unimaginative where the dragon is far-sighted and imaginative, omitted from folktales where the dragon is oft-written-about. Some other things that are the opposite of dragons: common rather than rare, roving rather than lair-dwelling, dirty and rough rather than smooth and clean. The dragon is the quintessential monster of high fantasy. Wyverns appear in gritty and grimdark fantasies, kicking up mud, fouling the waters and fields with their urine and dung, creating a physically filthy environment for everyone. The dragon is the opponent you aspire to be worthy of beating; the wyvern is the opponent who drags you back down into the gutter it lives in.



ZOMBIES

GOOD ECHOES FOR...

- Problems, especially societal ones, you feel like you cannot escape or solve
- Situations of powerlessness, under another's control
- Unrelenting hunger

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	1	3	0	0	0
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0*	3	0	0		
Abilities					

Eat You Alive: Zombies have human mouths and hands, yet they can rip chunks of flesh from your body and consume it as quickly and easily as we eat watermelon. Their attacks gain **Special:** this hit inflicts two Wounds.


***Brain-Dead:** Zombies cannot be scared off, reasoned with or waited out; they cannot feel emotions, they do not get bored, and mind-control magic simply cannot take hold on them. However, on the good side, this means their Guard is always 0.

TRUTHS ABOUT ZOMBIES

- Zombies are reanimated corpses who eat brains. They hunger for flesh, too, but brainmeat excites them beyond all reckoning. Maybe their own brain-dead nature spurs the hunger to take what they don't have? The more brains a zombie eats, the more memories and sentience they have ingested, though this doesn't satisfy their cravings. Can they replay memories and experiences from their dinner? What if they acted out scenes and conversations from a victim's past? A bit like R2-D2 regurgitating a message from Princess Leia, but after eating her head first.
- Zombies are made. Haitian zombie myth originates in witchcraft, and talks of souls severed from or trapped in bodies creating unwilling servants. The 1980s theory that real-world zombies are made by a combination of drugs and gruesome ritual components has been largely disproven, and it would seem that the root of the myth instead lies in people who have taken leave of their senses rather than wide-spread occult practice. Still, zombies remain symbols of exploitation and control.
- There are no shortage of ways a zombie might be made other than malign sorcery: the myth of walking corpses dates back to the Mesopotamian Descent of Ishtar, where the titular goddess throws around the divine punishment of a numberless horde of the undead. More modern interpretations skew towards scientific explanations such as a virus. Whether it's foreigners, gods, heedless progress or infectious diseases, zombies remain a good barometer for what the general populace are scared of.
- Zombies were people, once. They are living, feeling beings locked into a terrible state of mindless hunger and undeath. Maybe they can be unmade. Maybe, if their bodies are not too fatally damaged, they can be brought back to who they once were. Be kind: someone, somewhere is missing the zombie you're about to put down with a headshot.
- Zombies are fast until they're not. Once of the greatest divides in popular culture is whether zombies run or shamble. Both are true. Young zombies, having sustained little damage to their bodies, are as fast as they were in life—possibly faster, since they don't have to worry about the sensations of pain or fatigue that might plague a human. As they sustain damage they cannot heal, zombies get slower and slower because the broken bones and missing muscle tissue can no longer support them or generate proper force.
- Zombies can be any creature. The popular conception of zombies is that they are human, and this is certainly the most recognisable form they take. However, any living animal can be turned into a zombie; dogs, bears, cats, beloved childhood pets, you name it. It's unclear how this might work with magical and mythical animals, but Games Workshop sells zombie dragon minis for a reason.



9. CAMPAIGN



There's a lot of rules in this section which are exceptions to what we describe in Rituals. For ease of understanding, rather than say "Instead of what is described in the Rituals chapter" we're going to say "DIE Rituals." If we don't say otherwise, follow the guidelines in Rituals.

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME CAMPAIGN?

A campaign is a string of sessions of a role-playing game (RPG). A campaign can be played over a handful of sessions, or it can be played indefinitely. When people think of RPGs in culture, they are likely thinking of an RPG campaign: a group of people who get together regularly and follow an alternate life of a group of imaginary people over weeks, months or even years.

WHAT IS A DIE CAMPAIGN?

While what we describe in Rituals is a short campaign, in terms of running a more traditional ongoing game, you have to tweak that structure a little.

In a *DIE* Campaign, a group of players are dragged to a fantasy world and have to work out whether to go home or stay. However, once the way to get home (or not) is discovered, there's no time limit on making the decision of whether to leave or stay—at least initially. You have all the time in the world to play and explore.

In *DIE*, we get to make up a group of people and a world together, and live with them for a while.

And then work out how on Earth you're going to say goodbye.

WHAT IS DIE: THE CAMPAIGN?

You can play an indefinite campaign in *DIE* in the same way that people have been running RPGs forever—exploring a much larger world, and using the advancement rules to allow the characters to gain in power.

DIE: The Campaign offers something different. It's a specific way of doing a *DIE* Campaign. The rules that follow give a more elaborate structure, where the world consists of 20 regions, each of which is informed directly by the personality of one (or more) of the Persona, arranged into your own unique map of the world. Those regions will start to interact with one another, and this interaction will likely escalate into war.

This is *DIE* at its most epic.

DIE: THE CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

DIE: The Campaign features consists of:

- **Changes to the core game:** We describe the necessary tweaks you need to use the standard *DIE* scenario to launch this full campaign.
- **Making a map of your Die:** The Campaign takes place on a D20, with each region being able to be explored and revealed as the game progresses. Each of the regions externalises an aspect of a Persona, and is a chance to explore their nature. We show how to start with just a simple map with a few squiggles on, and extend to a living world.
- **Campaign structure:** a way to arrange your adventures to turn *DIE*'s structure from a short burst of sessions to an indefinite campaign—moving from an initial exploring of this world, to all these regions going to war around you and climaxing in a final apocalypse as you decide whether to stay or leave.
- **Developing regions:** how to turn core ideas for a region into a place where you can have adventures, including region specific rules.
- **The Great Game:** a boardgame-inspired structure for the GM to ensure this world feels like a living backdrop to the players' adventures.
- **More campaign-specific rules:** Guidance on secondary characters, splitting the party and much more.
- **Extended epilogue:** After a long campaign, you need it.

You'll find a lot of these rules useful for running any kind of campaign of *DIE*.



THE FIRST TWO SESSIONS

DIE: The Campaign starts the same way as a standard game of *DIE*, as described in Rituals (page 107). However, in each section there's a few additional things to consider.

PRE-GAME CHAT

Discuss the length of the campaign. Is it a classic, open-ended RPG where we play as long as the story makes sense, or is this a campaign that's designed to last a certain number of sessions? How big a commitment are we interested in?

PERSONA GENERATION

Use any set (or combination) of questions to generate the Personas. It's likely that Persona generation is shorter for a campaign than it is in a one-off. As the principles say, Persona generation never stops. As the whole game is longer, we'll be defining things about the Personas through the whole campaign.


What's more, these questions have a different goal. *DIE* Rituals is designed to reach an emotional boiling point within 2-4 sessions. We know what's wrong with the Persona's life at the start and the game is about exploring that. Can they end up overcoming their need for it? Do they grow as a person? Will they die for it? Will they kill for it?

A campaign is open-ended, and so the Persona generation process should be more open-ended. Fewer cut-and-dried problems and more questions. Look for things you'd like to know more about, down the line. In a one-off, if someone said they're distant with their parents, you'd likely immediately ask a clarifying question. In a campaign, rather than asking, remember to explore the subject in the future.

These questions (and other questions which emerge) make the backbone of the *DIE* Campaign. Each one can be the core of an adventure down the line. The more unanswered questions you're interested in hearing the answer to, the better.

As we're planning to live with these Personas for a long time, here's some other things to aim for:

- **Shared history**
Almost all the question sets help create a shared history, but encouraging strong emotional bonds between the players will help.
- **Creative Personas with a vivid inner imaginary life**
Creatives (frustrated or otherwise) are great. People with dream worlds. Obsessives. Anyone who cares about something a lot. All of this lets you mine it for things to populate *DIE* with.
- **Familiar obsessions**
The antagonist should have obsessions that you, the person reading this, know a lot about. Don't make them a *Lord of the Rings* obsessive unless you know enough to fake it.



If a player provides a lot of details up front, consider asking them to keep their ideas in mind and save them for later.

DURING THE BREAK

As well as deciding which Persona will receive which Paragon as usual, you should spend a moment to consider your antagonist. While in DIE Rituals you go to a self-contained world, in DIE: The Campaign, you arrive in one region. The players believe it's the whole world until the end of the second session. As such, the first region can have a stronger flavour, personalised to the Master.

Ask yourself: is there an obsession which the antagonist has which could be used as the backbone for the initial region?

If there's not anything which strikes you, follow DIE Rituals and have the first region inspired by their old role playing game.

Iain was the backstage drama tech when he was at school—a job he still does as an adult. He's always been into immersive theatre and complicated theatrical special effects. A region using that imagery seems perfect: a realm of curtains, infinite backstages, spotlights and gothic artifice seems fun. "Life is a stage" as Shakespeare put it... and the players are playing badly.



INTO DIE

The first encounter of a *DIE* Campaign is the same as *DIE* Rituals. The Paragons fight Fallen and emerge into a fantasy world.

If you managed to work out a theme for the Master's region, you reveal this image as the cliffhanger. If you didn't, you end the first session as per *DIE* Rituals—with an arrival in the old role-playing game, in the fantasy pub.

PREPARING FOR THE SECOND SESSION

While *DIE* Rituals' adventures are made to fit in 2-3 sessions, you should aim to have this first adventure fit in a single session, ending with the climactic confrontation with the antagonist. The first mission is about the antagonist, and why they dragged these Personas to this fantasy world.

To prepare, collate useful information from all the Personas, but the main focus is on the antagonist. In this first adventure, the Master's obsessions should be most visible.

The big change with a *DIE* Campaign is the antagonist's motivation. At this point, that antagonist shouldn't be sympathetic. There's ways to win back sympathy before the end of the game.

Now: while looking at the group's Personas, work out why the antagonist would dislike them. It need not have been established during Persona generation; it is just an element of possible dislike. Create a question to ask during the session to establish this:

- Iain was in love with Alistair as a teen. How did Iain let it slip once and how did you respond?
- Mel had a crush on everyone in the group except Iain. How did he know that?
- Alex was disruptive during the sessions played on stage at the Drama society. What was the most extravagant piece of scenery that he destroyed?
- Morgan runs away from their commitments. Was there a commitment that you had to Iain which you left him hanging? If so, what?
- Iain turned up Hestia's food bank recently. What well-meaning thing did you say to him that he took badly?

Next, consider how it was worse for the antagonist than the Persona knew:

- Alistair's popular friend noticed and made Iain's life a living hell.
- Mel's dismissal of Iain was used by Iain's partner repeatedly in their relationship together.
- That destruction of property led to the drama teacher having a grudge against Iain. Years down the line, Iain discovers that the drama teacher's terrible recommendation got him turned down from all the courses he wanted to do.
- Whether or not Morgan thought there was, there was, and it was absolutely important to him.
- Whatever Hestia's advice or kindness was, it couldn't be worse timed.

This fact (or another that occurs in game) should be revealed to the Personas at a point in this first adventure. They make excellent inspiration for an encounter as you prepare environments.

How can you win back sympathy if they're such a monster to begin with? You can use Aspects (see pages 187 and 267). The antagonist is just a part of the Persona's personality. The bad part.

The Personas are going to define later adventures much more clearly. In the same way the Master defines this region, the other Personas' obsessions will define others.

PREPARE ENVIRONMENTS

Next, it's time to prepare the environments used in the second session. If you are using DIE Ritual's old roleplaying game environment, compose a list of elements of role-playing games specifically relevant to the Master's obsessions. If you are using a region defined by a Master's obsession, make a list of elements and settings to use as your palette of ideas.

Iain's world is theatre obsessed, so I write a list of elements to integrate: curtains. stages. Crowds. Ticket-booths. Banks of lights. Smoke machines. Orchestras—especially bad school ones. Bored parents watching. Teachers' favourite students being given the best parts. Masks. The Phantom of the Opera. Any Shakespeare. Panto. It's Behind You! Standing Ovations. Half-hearted clapping. Solos. Monologues. Spotlights.

Then consider the grudges the antagonist has for the other Persona. Work out how the nature of the grudges could be explained in your setting, in the form of encounters.

Iain's school stage setting makes things easy. Each encounter will take on a warped version of the school stage displaying a pantomime-esque recreation of Iain's secret grudges, performed by horrific manikins.

Think of this first adventure as the explanation of the Master's grudge against the players and an environment to traverse by doing so. You are showing what the GM's Persona is like, and why they're angry, as well as showing what their obsessions are.

The adventure is an externalisation of the Antagonist's personality. By travelling through this world, we learn about them.

PREPARE YOUR MAP

This is something needed for DIE: the Campaign that's not in DIE Rituals. After the confrontation with the antagonist with the Master, the Persona realise the world is more than just a single region. You present a map of the world of Die, and ask the players which direction they want to go next. As such, you need to make that map—with the three initial destinations.

That's a topic big enough for a section of its own.



You can find it and all other *DIE* resources with the QR Code below.



DIE Online Resources

MAPPING YOUR DIE

In the comic, *Die* is a meta fantasy. It takes place on a D20. There's 20 regions. Each region has its character defined as a certain slice of the elements which metabolised into RPGs. There's a region that is inspired by the classic RPG worlds, sure, but there's also regions inspired by the Brontë's childhood shared fantasies, the early war-games (called *kriegspiel*) of the 19th century Prussian military and the melancholy of Tolkien.

However, each region isn't just playing out the tropes—it's a hard twist on that genre. The D&D region is a hyper-compressed mash up of a million D&D worlds. The *kriegspiel* is Prussian robots driven by pure mechanics. The Tolkien region is about WW1 and bringing to the fore all the things in his work which were shaped by his time in the Somme.

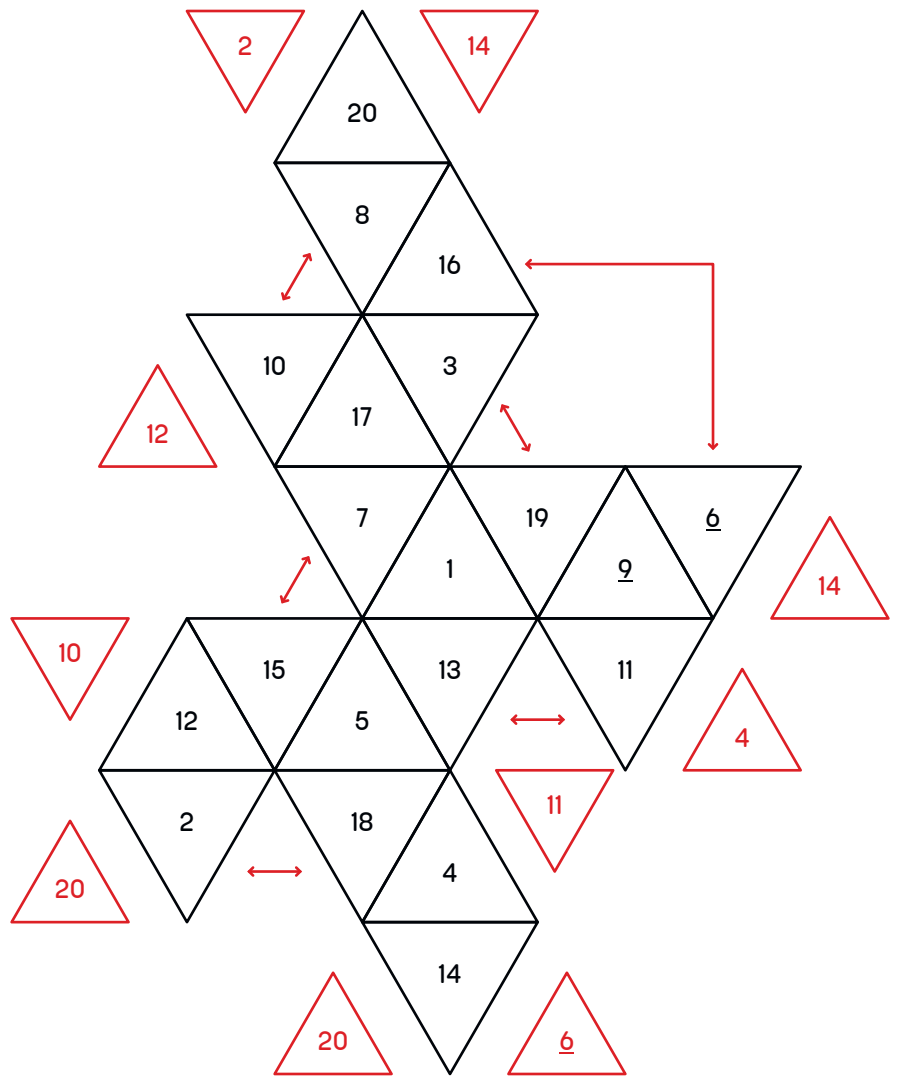
There's a secondary level to all this too. While these 20 regions are also individual areas, they also interact with one another—a living argument about what makes up an RPG. Some regions merge into Great Powers—players in the Great Game, with motives and plans of their own—which share values. Others get dominated by others, and have their ideas stomped under foot.

That's the sort of world you're going to create as you play *DIE Campaign*: a series of regions, each embodying an aspect of the Persona's hopes and fears and fantasies and obsessions, all with a firm genre twist.

Thankfully, you don't need to do it all now.

This is a blank map of *Die* (page opposite)—it's an exploded D20, as your world is the shape of a D20. The smaller triangles at the side show where it loops around to the other side. As you play your *DIE Campaign*, you will fill in this map. To begin with, most of it will be blank. It is unlikely all of it will be filled in by the time the game is over. (How much of Middle Earth did Frodo see? How much had he even heard of?)





Region 1 is the region where the players arrived. It's the one dominated by the antagonist—the first Great Power. At the end of the second, they escape region 1. Draw a symbol to represent the region in 1.

Now: decide upon the first three regions on the map. These realms exist to explore a part of a Persona's backgrounds and/or obsessions, so use your notes from Persona generation.

You don't need to know too much about these regions; you'll be able to develop them out more later on. All you need is a core idea (see more on page 262).

If you want to do a shorter campaign (sub-12 episodes), draw a symbol representing a Persona in regions 7, 19 and 13. This means that regions will be able to go to war with one another quicker, because they're neighbours.

You'll need to draw a symbol representing the nature of this region in 5, 9 and 17. If your core idea is "dungeon full of a player's regrets" you may draw a cave. If your idea is "crashed spaceship from Persona's fanfic" you may draw a broken USS Enterprise. Anything suggestive or evocative will do.

How much of a coherent world is your Die? Perhaps it's all a single fantasy world, with regions shaped softly by each Persona's obsessions. Perhaps the regions are radically different, with children's toys bordering Warhammer-esque body-horror monstrosities. Perhaps it's a single fantasy world until you hit the region that isn't.

Strictly speaking, as you don't actually explain what the symbols on the map mean, you can absolutely change your mind about the nature of the area before the players arrive there too.

WHAT'S A CORE IDEA?

Each of the first few regions are designed to give a single Persona a spotlight. Review each Persona's details and see what can support a region. What inspires you? What interests you? What are the big unanswered questions and how could a region dramatise them? For any even vaguely creative Persona, a region which is a warped version of their own work almost always works.

Look at your notes on the Persona and consider questions you'd like answers to.

- What's more important to Hestia's messiah syndrome: altruism or ego?
- How does Alistair really feel towards his family who sent him to prison?
- Alex is easily distracted—what sort of harm can that cause?
- What does Morgan do when their backstabbing catches up with them?
- Mel's competitive streak. Is it about winning, or striving to win? And what about collateral?

Our GM now merges these questions with all the Persona's obsessions to get a core idea for the region.

- Hestia: The Eternal Church of Hestia, waiting for the messiah to return.
- Alistair: WW2 vampire dynasty
- Alex: An AI-sphinx annihilating things which are boring.
- Morgan: A guild of bounty-hunters hunting Morgan down.
- Mel: A colosseum the size of a city, with a Gladiator Monarch.

Our GM narrows this down to three, saving two to be discovered later in the game.

Add a symbol of your choice to the map, and put it aside for the end of the second session.



SESSION TWO CHANGES

In DIE Rituals, you progress to the climax when the players have had all their necessary encounters and each has been tempted by Die. Here, you progress to the climax when all the Persona each realise why the antagonist is so pissed off.

When informing the players about the ritual to go home, do not include the rule about the world ending. There is no time pressure in DIE Campaign—at least to begin with.

THE CLIMAX

As always, the Persona confront the antagonist—or the antagonist finds them.

As per the usual game, this can go in many ways. The Antagonist may try to just kill the other Persona, or seduce them into saying. It can go in ways which are entirely impossible in a normal game—for example, the players or the antagonists deciding to run away. The most likely outcome is that the players will defeat the Master and then perform the ritual to go home.

However, if they do that, the campaign would end. You don't want the campaign to end and neither do they. So: the ritual doesn't work, and the details of why it doesn't work will be a mystery to the players at the moment. You don't need to decide yet either; when you do decide, see page 266 for some suggestions.

No matter how the climax ends, at this point, you have left DIE Ritual's story structure. There, we had a plot driver of "Get to the antagonist and try to get home." Now, you need something else to drive the Persona's actions.

How the session ends determines the initial thrust of the campaign, and the Paragons' overarching mission.

- They try the Ritual to go home, but it doesn't work.
How do they get home now?
- The players go on the run from the Master.
How can they escape the Master's rage?
- The Master goes on the run.
How can they find the Master?
- The Master is taken, and that's terrible.
How can they get their friend back, and then get home?
- The Master is killed.
How do they get home? How long until they find out about Fallen, and that the Master is merely undead?
- They don't even know about the Ritual.
How do they get home?
- They don't want to go home.
Where are we, and what can we do here?
- The party disagrees.
Each Persona should want to get the rest of the party to agree with them. How do they reach a compromise?

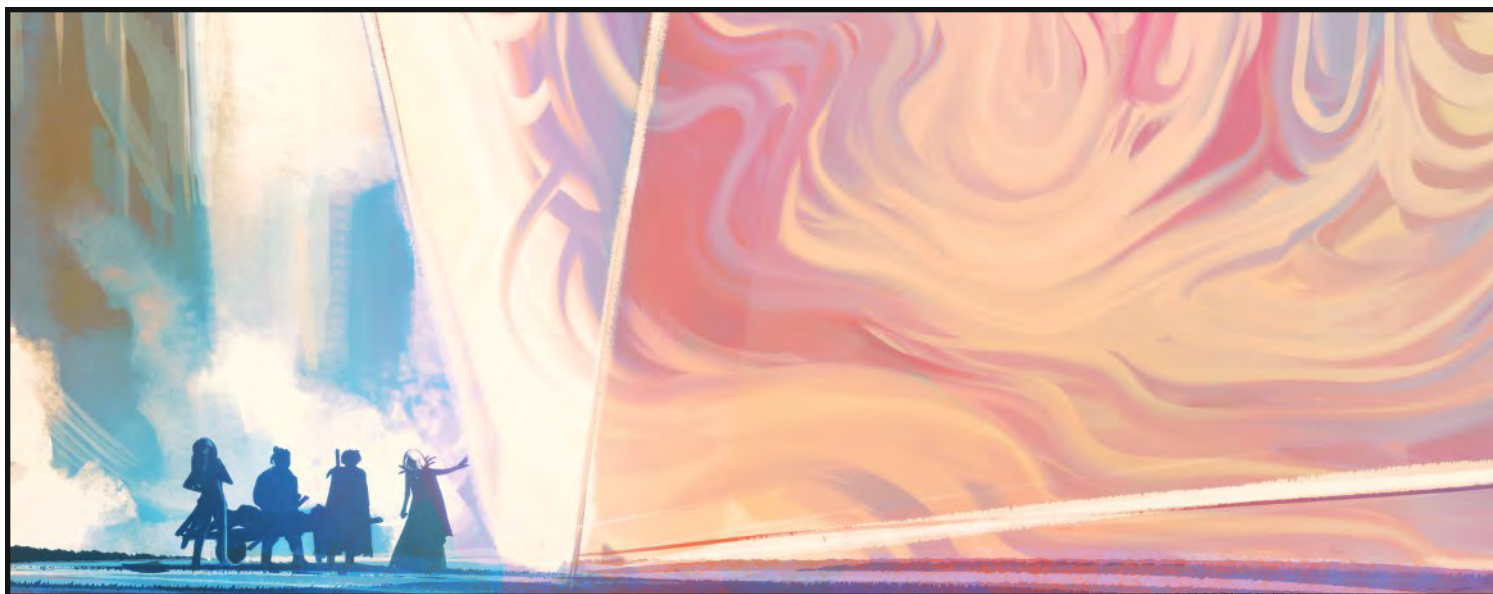
If the antagonist is killed in the final encounter, don't reveal **yet** they return as Fallen (see the "Campaign Fallen" rules, page 275). Leave that as a twist for later on.

ENDING THE SESSION

At the end of the session, if the Master is defeated in some way (which can be running away from, or befriending), the adventure ends as described in the next session:

At The End Of An Adventure. This means that you ascertain whether the Paragons have levelled up or not (they have!) and present the initial map of Die you prepared then ask where they're going next time.

Congratulations. Your first *DIE* Campaign adventure is over. Onwards!



AT THE END OF AN ADVENTURE

An Adventure is the narrative unit in the *DIE* Campaign. At the end of an adventure, we take stock and ask two things:

1. HAVE THE PARAGONS ADVANCED?

A Paragon gains a **level** any time they attune to a region. To attune to a region you defeat, befriend or otherwise come to terms with whoever is the dominant power (or threat) to that region. Normally this is identical to “they have completed the adventure in this region.”

Players can only gain a level from each region once. Further adventures in the same region, no matter how successful, do not increase the Paragon’s level.

It’s possible (in fact, likely) for adventures to span many regions, and you can even have multiple adventures happening at once, or have adventures which are nested inside one another. Each of these regions can be attuned.

The Persona have visited the Eternal Church of Hestia in an adventure where the eponymous Godbinder had to prove she really was the mythical Hestia. To do so, the Persona leave the realm of the Eternal Church and travel to the City-colosseum, where Hestia (with a little help from Mel) fulfils the prophecy that the Gladiator-Monarch will be beaten in the ring. This adventure spans two regions, and so attunes to both.

Depending on the length of a session, this means the Paragons level-up every 1-3 sessions.

The longer a campaign continues, the less likely the Paragons are to gain a level due to the reduction of unattuned regions and other demands on their time.

The antagonist levels-up whenever all the Paragons do.

2. WHAT DO THEY WANT TO DO NEXT?

In this campaign structure, the party has a lot of freedom. At the end of the first adventure, they're presented with a map which has three symbols on. Where do they want to go next?

The next adventure will take place in the region the players have selected. You then have the time between sessions to follow the steps in Developing A Region (page 270) to work out what's happening there. Further adventures will add other symbols and regions to the map, suggesting other avenues of travel and situations for adventures.

The *DIE* Campaign structure (see page 268) helps you plan prompts for adventures. Near the opening of the campaign, players will mostly be travelling to new experiences and building the world. As you progress towards the middle of your story, the world's regions will interacting in some way, prompting other adventures and presenting hard choices to the players. Do the Paragons want to go and explore a new region, or move to help their allies who are being invaded?

Sometimes there's no choice at all—the end of one adventure leads directly into another. Sometimes there is a choice, but players don't even think of turning away from the compelling situation they're in. This is especially true when there's been a call to action—ending an adventure with a fascinating new element in the fiction is a great way to both excite and direct players.

No matter what, end the Adventure with a moment to take stock and decide “What next?”

SO... WHY DIDN'T THE RITUAL WORK?

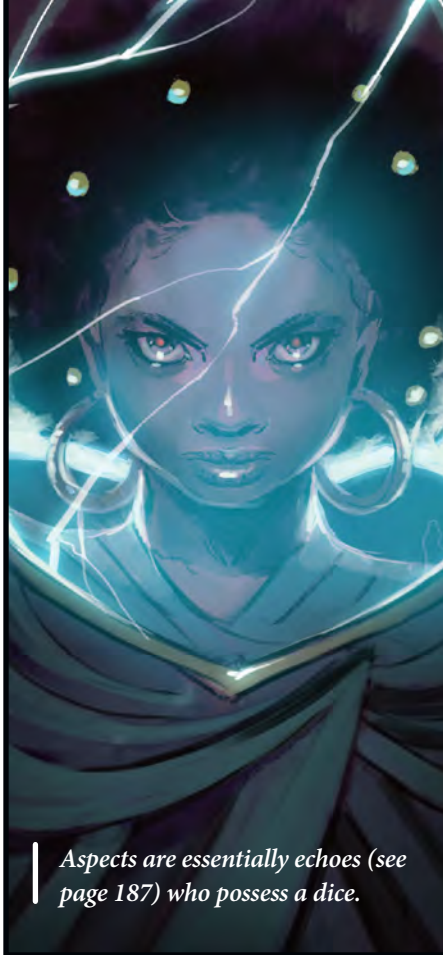
Here's some options. As the GM, you may have ideas of which of these are true, but it's important to note **you don't have to decide at the start**. That said, make sure at least one of them **could** be true. When the players discover which is true, the campaign will start to move towards its end-game, as described in the Campaign Structure section on page 268.

THERE ARE OTHER PLAYERS

The ritual didn't work because somehow other people, likely drawn from the other Persona's backstories, have ended up here. Friends, rivals, enemies, lovers. This is ideal if there are some leftover dice. Any Persona's history could contain someone who could take this role. If it doesn't, ask a few questions to establish one.

Are they innocents dragged into this, or manipulators who arranged all this? How did this happen when they weren't in the circle? Perhaps they were in the next room. Perhaps they were performing the same ritual elsewhere. Perhaps they were playing another role-playing game.

You can ask players to decide between sessions, but it's generally better to get an answer when you're all at the table. Life has a tendency to get in the way, and the GM may be left with no time for any prep whatsoever. If this happens, don't worry—remember DIE is a very low prep game. Especially further into the campaign, where the map has been explored, there's even less to do.



Aspects are essentially echoes (see page 187) who possess a dice.

THERE ARE OTHER VERSIONS OF YOU

The ritual didn't work because somehow the process has shattered the Personas coming to Die and created distinct individuals who embody different parts of a person.

A Persona cannot vote on whether or not to return to the real world until only a single aspect of them remains. All the other aspects must die, or recombine via arcane methods. Carefully consider what happens to a Persona who comes back without part of their personality.

Each of the aspects will have a copy of the original dice. Metaphysically speaking, it's the same dice, held by one person in multiple bodies.

This reason is especially useful for antagonists. If the antagonist in the first adventures was an absolute monster, this could be because they embodied all the angry, monstrous traits of the Persona, with their better aspects in a different body elsewhere. This can be especially useful when a player is a Master. There can be an evil version of themselves out there, or multiple evil versions, each more evil than the last.

Note: if a Fallen kills an Aspect, they return to life. If a Fallen aspect merges with a living aspect, the resulting aspect is alive.

THERE ARE OTHER DICE

The ritual didn't work because there's more than one dice of a given type active in the world. As the Paragons explore the world, they'll find that other dice-wielders are in charge of factions in the great game and must be placated, defeated, or bargained with to escape.

For the purposes of the ritual, everyone with the same dice must vote as a bloc. If anyone differs, the vote is not cast, and the group cannot either leave or stay. People who are dead (like the Fallen) do not get to vote in the bloc, and so the remaining people decide the group's vote.

SOMETHING ELSE IS BLOCKING THE RITUAL

The ritual didn't work because there's some external force stopping it from working. This external force needs to be circumvented for the ritual to work. This is what happened in *DIE* the comic when they first ventured to Die as teenagers—the Grandmaster was blocking the party's route, and had to be defeated for them to escape to let them go.

A similar powerful being could be preventing the group's escape. The Dragon, from the World's Favourite Roleplaying game with the twenty-sided dice, is collecting worlds for its metaphysical hoard and traps players within them. A Gatekeeper guards the boundaries between True Art and Mere Entertainment and refuses to let some chancers from what is essentially jumped-up Snakes and Ladders claim they've created something profound. The three goddesses of Fate claim that all events should be predetermined by them and that the random nature of the magical dice is abhorrent. That kind of thing.

Before you add something else of your own, think carefully about anything which removes the fundamental stay-or-leave voting dynamic of the game, as it's a useful driver for leading to the climax.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

Before we go into the specifics of developing a region for an adventure, let's step back and look at the big picture.

While a little campaign meandering is part of the joy of a longer game, *DIE*: Campaign has a larger structure for you to bear in mind. Knowing where you are in the big picture allows you to pace things as we build towards a climax.

Campaign comprises an indefinite number of adventures arranged in three stages: exploration, interaction and destruction.

First, the Paragons will investigate the world and meet people who hold power there. Then, the powers of the world will interact and come into conflict with one another. Finally, whether the players like it or not, the power factions of the world will move against each other in a cataclysmic frenzy that threatens to destroy the entire world of *Die*.

EXPLORATION

The Paragons arrive in *Die* and try to work out what the hell's going on—and maybe how to get home.

In this stage, most adventures are prompted by a question about a Persona that you want to explore. Each adventure defines a new region, designed to dramatise that question and perhaps introduce more regions along the way as the narrative dictates. In television terms, these adventures in the exploration phase are character-focus episodes.

By the end of each adventure in this stage we start to answer one of the unanswered questions about a Persona from Persona generation, even if the answer is "I don't want to answer this yet!" Some big questions won't get answers until much later in the campaign. Some answers lead to other questions.

Exploration isn't just of the Persona's inner life—this section defines and generates a whole cast of characters to populate your game. The campaign will draw on these elements as the game progresses.

In the exploration phase, the larger world is mostly static. Regions which are connected thematically interact with one another but only in the context of an adventure. Ignore regions that aren't in play until they're introduced as part of the narrative. This portion of the campaign is about setting the stage.

Exploration continues until every player gets a region devoted to them. Once that's handled, we move to interaction.

INTERACTION

In this stage of a *DIE* Campaign, two things happen:

- The Great Powers encroach on other regions
- The players start piecing together what's going on

That first session is the Antagonist's focus episode, and it explains why they hate the rest of the cast enough to bring them to Die. When we know the antagonist, we move to the cast and work through them.

*Don't take this to mean that each region is solely about one player—that's just the primary inspiration. Always look for places to integrate elements of all the Persona's backgrounds wherever appropriate, just as you would in a game of *DIE* Rituals. As this stage tends to centre one Persona in each adventure, looking for places to pay attention to other Persona is key. There is the implicit promise that everyone will get their spotlight adventure eventually. You may find it useful to make this explicit. There's some advice on this on page 270 in *Developing a Regios*.*

Interaction encourages you to think about what the elements that you've introduced to Die are up to. What do they want? How do they go about getting it? How does that impact the players' lives?

"The Great Powers" is our way of describing any large scale political entity active in the world, and our way of making sure the world feels alive. The Great Game is a framework for large-scale events and conflicts between The Great Powers (which we'll dive into later this chapter on page 282). All this will be useful for creating prompts for adventures. How do players respond to this political situation while trying to pursue their own goals?

Interaction likely starts with a big status quo change in the world. The antagonist (defeated in the first session) recovering strength to go on the offensive is the classic.

The Personas start getting firm leads to answer the question of "Why can't they go home?". In this stage, Personas investigate this world to work out what's going on. The Personas uncover entirely new regions, further into the map, perhaps inaccessible or unknown until now. All of these are useful prompts for scenarios.

It's entirely possible that these are both combined. The reveal of an extra player leading forces off the edge of the map could imply why the Personas can't go home *and* also shakes up the world.

This stage ends when the Personas discover the full truth of their situation: why they can't go home, and what they have to do to get there (or stay in Die forever).

DESTRUCTION

The destruction stage is about putting the knowledge learned into practice—or not.

This stage is likely shorter than the other two. The Personas may have a method of returning home, but requires doing something they are unwilling to do. For example, the Personas can leave Die if they just decide to leave one of their number behind. Or, they could leave, but it would mean the world would be destroyed or left in ruins, and the friends they've met would suffer horribly, and even die.

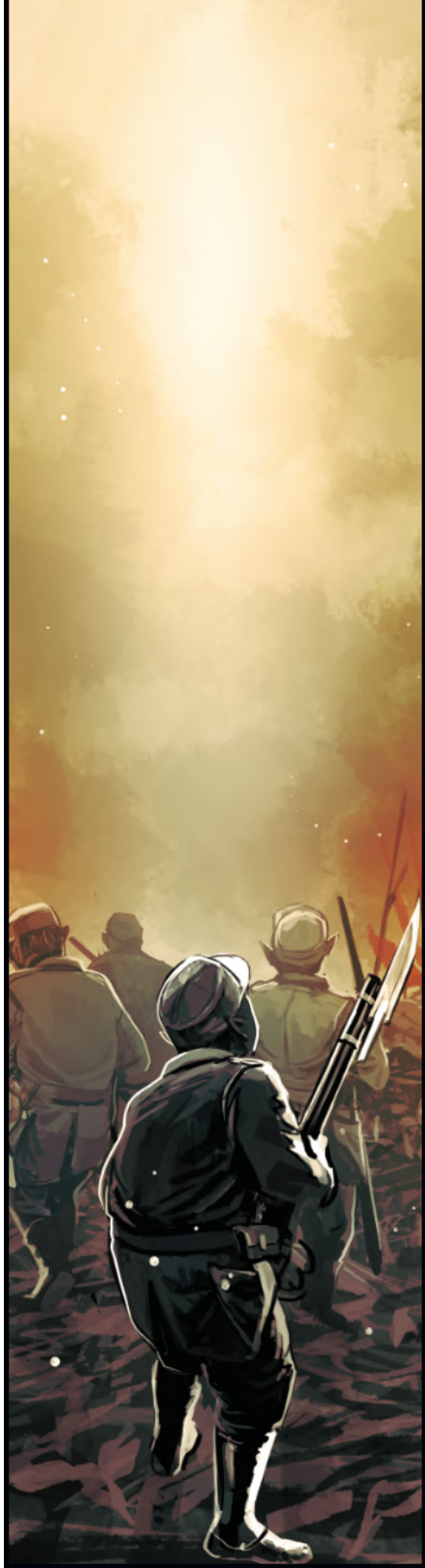
At this stage, the route home is clear, but the party may start to have more divisive opinions on what to do. It is here where a party split is most likely, which can turn the wars between regions into something much more personal and have the players shape the large-scale conflict themselves. In this case, Personas may end up controlling Great Powers. Either way, the conflict between the Great Powers worsens.

Above all else, at this stage, we introduce the threat of the world's complete destruction, as we saw in DIE Rituals. This can be foreshadowed earlier, but bringing it in during the last few adventures is sufficient. This adds a ticking-clock to the game where the Personas are pushed to make a final decision. Whether they want to stay or go, they have to all come together.

The section ends with the final decision—or the destruction of Die.

EPILOGUE

There is a significant end game when players get home (or choose to stay). See Ending the Game: The Wake on page 288, and really take your time with it. How has their time in Die changed the Persona, and how has the world outside changed? Who's waiting for them to return, and who stopped waiting a long time ago? You've achieved something amazing together. Give it the send-off it deserves.



When I'm running a DIE Campaign Adventure, I rarely have more than an A4 sheet of notes, and likely a whole lot less. I'd print a few of them in this manual, but you'd point and laugh.

DEVELOPING A REGION

All the opening adventures in *DIE* the Campaign and significant numbers later involve travelling to a new region and discovering what's there. As such, the GM needs to work that out.

In this section, we'll review how to develop a region. This is the equivalent of the prep in *DIE* Rituals and should take no longer than an hour, and hopefully less.

Avoid designing the whole world at once. While it's helpful to know what lives in each area, leave gaps to be filled in later. Save room for players' choices and questions to change things, especially when some regions are based on the Personas' life or fantasies. We want to learn about these over time.

Remember: *DIE* is not a game of worldbuilding for its own sake. The point of a region is to support an adventure there. The point of a *DIE* adventure is to externalise a Persona's personality and allow us to explore it.

Let's take a look at a checklist of things to think about when generating a region for an adventure:

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS REGION? WHAT'S IT FOR?

Look at the state of the game and ask "Why are we going here?" and "What do we know about the region?"

Early on, in interaction, these are realms prompted by a core idea born of a question you want to pose to a Persona.

Later on, a region may be born of necessity posed by the narrative. What is to the east of the land of the blue crayons? What is in the empty region between two warring empires? Look to the narrative and the Persona's backgrounds for inspiration.

Either way, take a few minutes to just think. Note down an initial bunch of ideas. Don't try and constrain yourself. Give yourself space to generate material (like assembling a palette in *Rituals*).

It's possible if you have enough things written down, you don't even need to go further in this section. Everything after this point is tactics you may wish to pursue rather than necessities.

Mel has a competitive streak. Why does she like to win? Does she like to be treated like a hero, or actually earn it? Also, what about her self destructive streak? Why? This led to the core idea of a colosseum the size of a city, with a Gladiator Monarch. I start by listing things I could imagine a Gladiator-Colosseum City could have. Merch sellers... crowds... fans... weird sports...

DOES THE REGION HAVE A GENRE?

DIE is not a game that requires all regions to be the same tone. Is this a grim and gritty region where injuries are deadly and people are awful? Is this a cheery and happy realm of fairies and joy? Is this a region where people come at each other with an axe, or do they ruin people's lives with a few whispers?

The hero-and-triumph obsessed Mel's region is The City-Colosseum. It's a high adventure, violent and sport-focused place. Everything should feel like it's about to be a Wrestling bout, ultra-competitive. "Sports" is a fun genre to play with, rarely seen in games. Let's do that.

HOW ARE TO GENERATE THE ADVENTURE IN THE REGION?

Which of the methods in Building *DIE* (page 171) are you going to use to generate the adventure? Look at the core idea and the Persona background. Does any possibility stand out?

Mel's background was being an Olympic hopeful—the 2012 Olympics in London. Using the map of the 2012 Olympics to generate the locale seems perfect. Lots of things to twist into fantasy archetypes.

WHAT ARE THE PARAGONS DOING HERE?

If it's a region born of the necessity of the narrative, that will also likely define it (i.e., if a region is being invaded, and you go there to stop that invasion, the adventure will be about stopping the invasion).

If it's a region born of trying to answer a question about the Persona, the question will likely be the prompt for the adventure. How can you dramatise the question and serve the larger narrative demands of the Campaign Structure?

The Paragons are trying to work out how to get home. Perhaps the Gladiator-Monarch might have a clue? However, they will need to prove themselves in the games to do so. We can use the competitions to explore bits of Mel's personality—after all, they don't have to just be fighting, right?

If the adventure's aim is to focus on a single Persona, now look for ways to explore aspects of the other Persona.

Hestia has a Messiah complex. Perhaps there's a competition of who can be most holy? Alex is relatively chill now... but as a teenager he got into fights online as part of his activism. Perhaps echoes of those online foes could turn up as Gladiators? For the other Persona, I can simply ask "who was your biggest rival?" and then integrate the answer.

In DIE the comic, Masters define the regions they're Master of, depending on what they're interested in. That's a useful aspect to bring into DIE Campaign. Remember that not all Masters are active leaders in the world—others like a quiet life, out the way, simply setting the tone for their domain.

Who's in charge and what do they want?

Which normally means “What do they want with the Personas?”

The regions are meant to dramatise the Personas' internal life, giving them a chance to either overcome or submit to the parts of themselves they'd rather avoid. If you don't know, don't worry either. You can explore the region with the players and see what you discover.

If these people are hungry for power, they normally become Great Powers in the Great Game (see page 282).

Heading to the City-Colosseum, the party discovers the reigning champion is an embittered echo of Mel, frustrated that she blew the chance to be at the Olympics.

Does the region have neighbours?

It is possible that your region implies the nature of regions nearby. If so, you can write down their core concept now and allocate them to a space on the map. Those spaces are yours, and you get to fill them as and when you need.

The regions around the City-Colosseum are presently empty... and I can see no immediate reason to fill them in yet. It can wait.

Are the rules different in this region?

DIE is a somewhat Meta game—as in, it's a game that's aware it's a game, and often talks about what games are and what they can do. As such, you can choose to alter the rules from region to region to better express its themes. Some of these are expressed in forms of in-universe weird magic (for example, it's a region where no-one can actually die, not just the player characters) and some are actually just quirks in the rules (for example, a polite social region where all forms of combat suffer a disadvantage).

Mel broke her legs jumping off a roof—an act which prevented her from being an Olympian. As the region is meant to speak to Mel, perhaps this is a region where that could never happen? In The City-Colosseum the healing rules are different. Anyone can heal from any non-fatal injury if they sleep overnight. A long rest, and everything's better.

This is an element which you should adjust according to your own tastes. It does mean there's more to remember for any given region—but it can also have a great impact in exchange for very little effort on your part.

There's two elements which can be especially useful. **Region Specials** and **Region Custom Rolls**.

The ability to change rules on a region-by-region basis allows us to examine what rules do to change behaviour, and think about how we relate with games. It's also fun. Hopefully this taste inspires you to play with the concept.

REGION SPECIALS

One way to add genre flavour to a region is via the Specials system; generate a list of Specials which can only be used in the region.

Present the new Specials to the group when they enter the region. This both reveals what's interesting and unusual about a region and encourages a style of play that meshes with the locale.

For example, here's a list of Specials which may be useful for a swashbuckling realm:

SPECIAL

- Make someone gasp at what you've just done.
- Add a piece of unlikely acrobatics to your action.
- A sudden gust of wind makes your clothes look dramatic
- In an attack following one an opponent has failed to hit—disarm target
- Kick your target back into something embarrassing (not painful). The target suffers a disadvantage until they remove themselves from it.
- Target reveals something of their plans when you taunt them

DOUBLE-SPECIAL

- Once an encounter, find hidden treasure.
- Once a session, attract a pet parrot who follows you whenever you're in this region, spouting semi-useful phrases.

These are derived from the concept of moves from Powered by the Apocalypse games. For more on PbtA's influence on DIE, see the Gameography on page 390 in the appendix.

REGION CUSTOM ROLLS

In DIE Rituals we describe how all the various aspects of the system can be combined together into a custom roll. Rather than a simple success or fail, you can set multiple success thresholds, rewarding (or punishing) characters depending on how well they roll.

Giving a region a custom roll is a great way to give the area some flavour and encourages thematic role-playing from the group.

For example, in a cosmic horror mystery region where investigators are risking their very selves to undercover awful truths:

When you try to investigate a mystery, roll the relevant dice pool. On a success, you get the information to progress. Each further success, allows you to ask another question. If you roll no successes, you get the information to progress and uncover something that shakes you to your very core. You suffer a disadvantage on all tasks relating to what you uncovered until the adventure is over.

*The roll has the compulsory **Double-Special**: the knowledge you uncover is so absolutely disturbing that you lose all sense of yourself. You can either fall comatose to the floor or run, run as far away as you can.*

Alternatively, in a region driven by pirate tropes and swashbuckling, where you can get a crew of scurvy dogs together and set sail for the horizon:

When you are in port with a ship and gather a crew, roll a Charisma pool to determine the qualities they possess. For each success, you can choose one from the following to describe the crew. If you don't select the trait, the crew does not possess it. You may select each one repeatedly, for greater effect.

They're loyal.

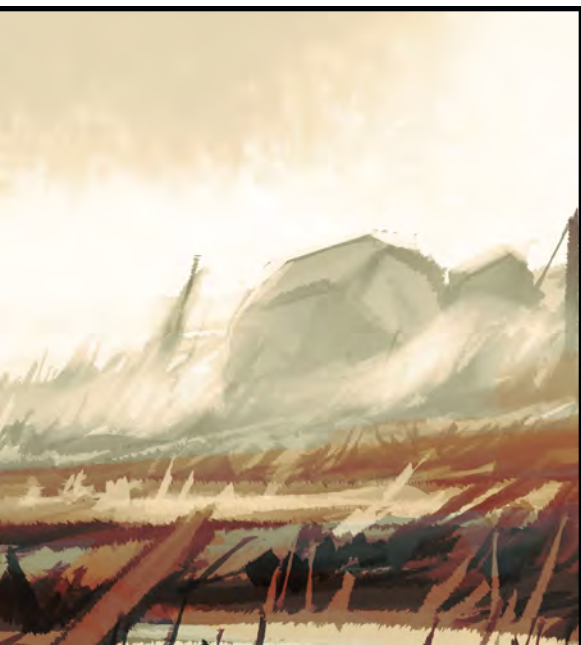
They're skilled.

They're sober.

On a critical fail, you gather a crew but they mutiny the second you're out of port or they're dangerously incompetent and lead you to disaster.

If you want to keep Fallen identical to DIE Rituals, you'll likely want to add more ways for someone to resurrect without murdering their peers. Removing these options as you head towards the end game can add back the spice.

Being a Fallen should feel strange. Ask questions about what it's like to be an undead monster, and sometimes call for Wisdom rolls to resist trying to feed on people at inopportune moments.



CAMPAIGN DEATH

Swing enough swords and blast enough holy fire and sooner or later someone's going to get killed. Given the larger scale of *DIE* Campaign, character death is handled slightly differently from *DIE* Rituals.

CAMPAIGN FALLEN

When a Persona is killed, they keep all their Paragon powers, and they gain the abilities of the Fallen on page 120.

When the group votes to stay or go home, Fallen characters do not get to vote.

Fallen remain in the party and stay competent (keeping their abilities), but becoming a Fallen is a long-term problem (they cannot vote to stay or leave).

If a Fallen is killed *again* they lose their class abilities as per *DIE* Rituals.

CAMPAIGN RESURRECTION

How can a Fallen character return to life by a means other than killing another Paragon with a dice? The answer to this question defines a campaign.

1) NO OTHER METHOD.

The death of any Persona is a big moment. It means that when someone dies it means that one person is not going home.

The potential for alternate, incomplete versions of the Personas (called Aspects), shifts the consideration of resurrection. If they can kill or merge with one another to become alive, think about using aspects for your antagonists in campaigns.

2) OTHER METHODS

Perhaps gods will do it as a certain Miracle? Perhaps the Neo can talk the Fair into helping? Perhaps something else. This is your world, and it's a good prompt for adventures. The quest of the Holy Grail is a classic, right?

The easier it is to resurrect someone, the less focus there is on Persona death. It reduces pressure on the endgame significantly, as they no longer need to make these tough decisions.

Alternatively, consider making the ways to raise the Fallen be as demanding and awful as killing other Personas. For example, a god demanding you kill the most beloved NPC in the game.

For a different take on resurrection, consider allowing relatively easy necromancy for the early parts of the campaign that becomes increasingly difficult as you progress. Remove or make scarce this option as the endgame approaches. Perhaps when reality is collapsing, pushing towards the final choice, all the options you've learned to rely on fail.

The Fallen mechanic is one of the purest parts of *DIE*—a simple rule which has powerful implications towards players' behaviour ("If I die, I need to kill another Persona to live again"). Be conscious about how you're tweaking it and towards what goals.

ECHOES AND FALLEN

Do echoes become Fallen when they are killed? That's a good question. Logically, no. The Fallen are people from the real world who die on Earth. If they're a creation of Die, they can't have a Fallen.

Perhaps your world is different, and all echoes have Fallen. Perhaps certain sorts of echoes have Fallen—ones which are closer to the “real.” Perhaps everyone in the whole world has Fallen.

Alternatively (in keeping with the to the standard rules), if there's doubt to whether or not someone is an echo, killing them will reveal it. In that world, someone thought to be an echo that gets up as a Fallen may trigger an awful realisation for the group.



SPLITTING THE PARTY

Personas have powerful feelings. Sometimes they've had enough of each other. *DIE* is a game of grand emotion, petty squabbles writ large, vicious disagreements and high stakes.

Sometimes, you can't talk things out no matter how hard you try.

Sometimes, you have to split the party.

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO DO THIS?

Splitting the party on a permanent or semi-permanent basis—for more than a few scenes—is a major undertaking. While it can act as the focus for some exciting roleplay, it means everyone at the table will have to focus on two stories rather than one.

As such, don't enter into it lightly. Discuss it with your players and ask if they're interested to explore that side of play—and make your own feelings clear, too. Talk through everyone's intent and expectations from the game.

If you decide against a full party split, here are a few alternative options to play out the conflict:

GO BE EVIL ON YOUR OWN

Maybe a Persona has made some terrible decisions and walked a dark path, and now their inclusion as part of the group just doesn't ring true anymore. (Or: maybe they're the only one left with a conscience.) At this point, consider turning them into an NPC, and have them operate in the background of the narrative like anyone else who isn't a player character. Their player can still chip in and describe their actions if and when they crop up in the narrative, but for the most part, they'll play a replacement character (see page 287) from now on.

... ARE WE THE BADDIES?

Further to the example above, it might become apparent that one side of the group isn't interested in playing their characters full-time any more. Maybe one side has gone evil, or at least had to resort to evil means to achieve good ends which some philosophers would argue is the same thing, and the players don't want to play through that; maybe one side has just ended up in a more interesting part of the story, and the other feels unsatisfying in comparison.

In this instance, shelve the side of the party that's making people bored or uncomfortable and sort out replacement characters (page 287) for their players. You can return to them later on, if you'd like, or have them act as an additional antagonist for the remainder of the campaign.

EFFICIENT MONTAGE SEQUENCE

Sometimes, a Paragon's gotta do what they gotta do, and no amount of good-natured cajoling or bargaining can dissuade them. Rather than engineer a full party split, you can use the rules for Compressed Adventures (page opposite) to resolve the situation in a matter of minutes, rather than playing through with the same level of detail that you'd give to a scene involving the whole group. Once that's done, the lone wolf can return to the party and play can continue as normal.

SPLITTING THE PARTY FOR REAL

You're sure about this? Okay!

Each player now has two characters—their Paragon, and a secondary supporting character generated using the method on page 280. They can adopt an existing NPC and take control of them or make a new character and slot them into the story appropriately.

Play is split between the two groups of opposed Paragons and their hangers-on (the supporting characters). Run alternate adventures between the groups—one adventure with the first group, then an adventure with the second, and repeat.

These adventures aren't happening simultaneously. At the end of each adventure, the other party can say what they've been doing while this adventure has been happening.

If it's something that sounds particularly tricky, you can use the compressed adventure rules (discussed in the following section) to determine how successful the off-screen activity was.

If the groups ever get too close together, you can run it as you would any role-playing group, cutting between the two parties between scenes.

If the group wants to prompt a party split early in the campaign, you can encourage it with certain questions during Persona generation. For example...

The world has disappointed you, fundamentally. You've always wanted more. What's your secret hope you'd do anything for?

What huge responsibility do you have that you'd never turn away from?

The implicit conflict between the two will likely split the party as soon as they get asked to try the ritual to go home. As long as you've offered the former a taste of their wish, they'll want to stay, and the latter is unlikely to ever compromise.

COMPRESSED ADVENTURES

To ascertain the outcome of an adventure that happened off-camera you can use a single dice pool to determine it. Assemble and roll the applicable dice pool as per any core mechanic roll in the party. As usual, the GM can also set a difficulty if the task is particularly onerous.

The dice pool you use depends on the situation. If it's a heroic adventure, you could use one character's most applicable combat stat. If it's trying to convince a religious order to vote your Godbinder to supreme leader, it could be Charisma. If you're trying to find a certain manual in the infinite library of Every Game Ever, it could be Intelligence.

As per the core mechanic, each person who can assist adds a dice to the roll. However, in this case, if the Paragon's special abilities could be use to the task, you can add your class dice instead of a D6.

4+ Successes:	You succeed in the goal far better than you could have hoped.
3 Successes:	You succeed in the goal.
2 Successes:	You succeed in the goal. Someone on the adventure suffers a negative consequence, determined by the GM.
1 success:	You succeed in the goal. Two individuals on the adventure suffer a consequence as above.
0 successes:	You fail. Everyone on the adventure suffers a consequence as above.
Critical Fail:	The adventure goes disastrously wrong. Everyone on the adventure suffers a consequence. Whatever the mission's goal was, the opposite occurred.

Here are some example consequences:

- Start the next session with one less Health
- Expend resources
- Alienate an ally
- Collateral damage
- Give up useful information to your enemies

Make the compressed adventure rolls more interesting by discussing the possible consequences up front so a group knows what they're risking.

SECONDARY CHARACTERS

In *DIE*, non-player characters are deliberately left with loosely-defined abilities. There might come times when these characters need to be defined more clearly, such as:

1. The party is split and you want to give players alternate characters
2. You want someone to join the game for a one off
3. You find yourself desperately wanting to know what the actual stats of your local equivalent of Aragorn are, and aren't happy with winging it anymore

Secondary characters need stats, Defence, a background, and what makes them special.

STATS

Count how many points of stat increases each character in the group has. A starting character has 2, and gains an extra one at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12. If the character is less competent than the group, they have one less. If they are more competent, they have one more. If they're just as competent, an equal amount.

WHAT IS THEIR DEFENCE?

If they're especially hard to hurt they have Defence 1. If they're not, they have Defence 0.

WHAT ARE THEY?

Decide what this character's job is. Is this character one of the six Paragons, are they a broader fantasy archetype, or something else?

If they're like a Paragon, generate the rest of their abilities from the rules of non-player Paragons in the Bestiary (see page 183).

If the character is a fighter or a magic user, use the process in the following section to generate their abilities.

If they're none of the above, they get an advantage on anything directly related to their career. They get a disadvantage on anything outside their areas of knowledge.

WHAT MAKES THEM SPECIAL?

Everyone's got something special about them. You can define it as a fantasy archetype broadly ("They're a wizard") or much more specifically ("They're the bearer of the lost ring of Asfjgh'thax).

Special things cover a broad category of abilities in-fiction, much in the same way that a Neo's gifts allow them to perform certain actions without directly stating it in the rules. A wizard, for example, can read magic runes, take part in occult rituals and pontificate about the ineffable nature of the universe at length.

Pro tip. X-Card the name "Asfjgh'thax" just to save your vocal cords.

THE ARCHETYPES

Pick one of the two classic options below to round out the character. Feel free to expand upon these and make up your own rules. I mean, we're not going to come around to your house and stop you.

FIGHTING MAN PERSON

- Pick one set of equipment from any of the Paragons.
- Choose one stance from the Emotion Knight.
- Choose one vent ability from the Emotion Knight. This ability can be used once per combat.
- Choose a special talent or magic weapon. What is it and how was it acquired? Gain an advantage when using it.
- Decide the character's reputation: what is it?

MAGIC USER

- Pick 3 scriptures from the Godbinder sheets. For each extra character point above the standard 2, choose an additional scripture. These are all considered spells. To cast a spell, choose a stat that governs your magic and roll a success. (Intelligence and Charisma are both classic options, but don't feel tied down by tradition.)
- The magic user starts with magic points equal to the total of two stats of their choice. If the magic user fails to roll a success when casting a spell, one magic point is consumed. When their magic points are exhausted, a magic user may take Wounds instead to power their spells.
- A magic user may also spend magic points to create an effect akin to a Godbinder's miracles in the same manner as God Debt.
- Determine the magic user's field of magic, its limits and how they recover magic points.



Factions are abstracted bits of fiction. If the fiction dictates a faction changes its nature, simply change its name. A faction of loyal population moves into another region? Perhaps it's a recruited militia.

THE GREAT GAME

As the players explore Die, assuming they survive the process, they'll make plenty of allies and enemies. Before they know it, they'll be major figures in the ongoing conflicts and tensions that mar the landscape, and might be able to twist that discord to further their own ends. This mess of allegiances, wars and fraught diplomacy is known as the Great Game.

The Great Game is a way of thinking about world events, and making sure all the major players are active. While it is using the conventions of the board games—units, moves, maps and so on—it isn't a board game. It's a way of organising your thinking as a GM.

If at any point the narrative supersedes what the Great Game suggests, the narrative takes precedence. Even if it looks like a boardgame, the GM is very much allowed to flip the table and hide some of the pieces.

EXPLORATION PHASE

During the Exploration phase of the campaign structure, the party discovers the nature of the world they're in. As they discover fictional elements, you should arrange them into lists of **Great Powers** and **Factions**:

- A **Great Power** is any force which controls a region (or more) of Die.
- A **Faction** is any force which could control (or stop someone else controlling) a region of Die. A Faction is most likely controlled by a Great Power.

Each Great Power will likely have multiple factions, representing their sphere of influence.

Factions don't have to be armies or troops. Powerful fortresses or quirks of the landscape could count as Factions. Powerful Merchant Guilds or a Bureaucracy of Priests could work as one too. In almost all games, the antagonist will be a **Great Power**, as they control a region of Die. Any of the individual armies of the antagonist would be a **Faction**.

INTERACTION STAGE

At this point, with the stage set, the world springs to life. If the party does nothing, the world should change. If the party does something, everyone in the world will change their plans based upon their impact.

During the Interaction stage, think about what each of the Great Powers are doing. What's everyone's goal? What do they want? What are they doing to get it? Fundamentally, if the players don't intervene, what will happen?

Most Factions are controlled by a Great Power, so don't need to be considered as closely, but if they are not, consider that too.

Take these events, and fold them into your adventures, if only as news from off-stage. If an event is big enough, be sure that your players hear about it—especially if it's something they would want to get involved with. Alternatively, it's a great twist for players to turn to a much loved region to discover while they've been off having adventures, the antagonist invaded it and wreaked havoc.

If you realise something that you noted as a Faction isn't really a Faction? Just delete it. Something big in the world which definitely is a Faction? Add it to the list. The narrative comes first.

The actions of a Great Power elsewhere make great cliff-hangers for completed adventures. They did WHAT?

This is something which looks a lot like a board game embedded inside a role-playing game about people trapped in a role-playing game. That's my kind of nonsense, right?

If you're feeling fancy, printing out your map of Die and putting tokens on it to represent factions certainly is a fun prop to cackle and pore over.

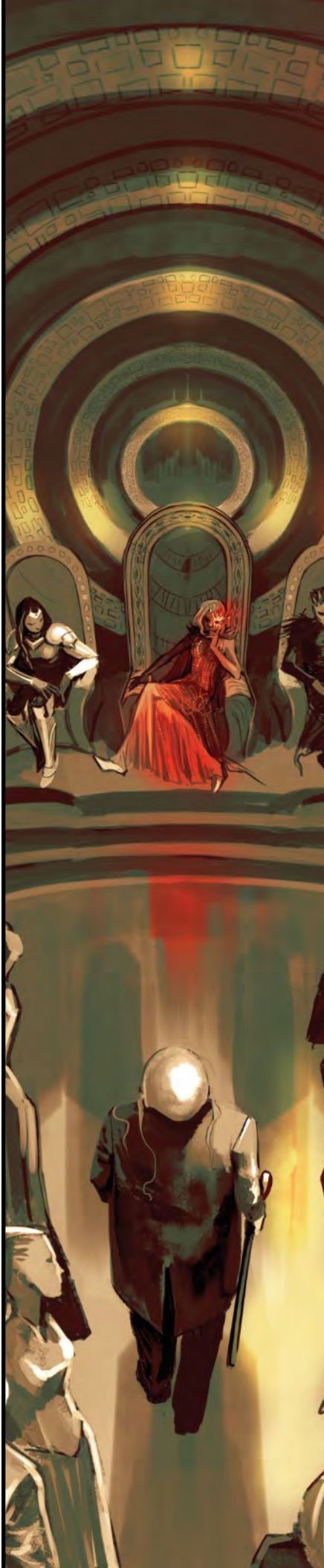
Remember: the various Great Powers are likely reflections of the Persona. As such, a war is really a dirty great metaphor, and the players getting involved is chance to move towards a Persona's growth or catharsis. At the start of the Campaign, adventures are asking questions to the Persona. It's likely during the Great Game, we'll find answers by seeing how the Persona act in these extreme conditions.

PLAYING THE GREAT GAME

While you can get a lot from just looking at the list of Great Powers and working out what they'll be doing, it can sharpen your thinking to use a board game structure to organise this. While this isn't a true balanced board game in any way, giving one "Move" to each Great Power between each adventure ensures that the world is fluid.

Take your map of Die and note which factions are located in which region. There's no limit to how many friendly factions that can be placed in the same region. If at this point you realise an organisation is especially powerful, you can just divide it into multiple Factions.

Iain's Army of spotlight-eyed backstagers marches across the realms. Rather than one Faction, the GM decides it should be represented by six factions, which can be distributed appropriately across the conquered regions.



GREAT POWER MOVES

Once you've reached the interaction stage of the campaign, take a second between each adventure and choose which move each Great Power is going to perform. These are ways to conceptualise most things a Great Power could do. No matter how many regions a Great Power controls, they still only get one move.

- ◆ Create Faction (Make more factions!)
- ◆ Move Factions (Move your factions about!)
- ◆ Trade (Swap factions!)
- ◆ Something New (Something big and new in the narrative!)
- ◆ Conquer (Start taking over a region!)

Remember—this is an abstraction of their main thrust of behaviour. Narrowing it to a big single choice means that the narrative thrust is clear.

Let's take a look at each move in detail.

Create Faction

Create a new faction and add it to one region under the Great Power's control. Define what that faction is, and define its limitations and what it can do.

Try to ground this in the fiction. Do they invent a new weapon, construct a castle or recruit a new army? Do they found an order of elite Grief Knights or a horde of ravening tamed Fallen? Do they reinforce the power of the merchant's Fair Gold guild or encourage the rule-crafting mage universities?

Move Factions

With this move, a Great Power can move any of their factions to any other region they control. This is limited by the narrative—if the Faction represents a mighty castle, that's not moving anywhere. However, Factions can also be transformed by the narrative—you could say the Great Power stripped a castle of its defences, and turned it into a last ditch army to march forth. In which case, the castle is renamed into an army. Follow the narrative.

Trade

You use this move to give any number of Factions to another Great Power. This can also give away regions or anything else that would seem to involve a lot of work to do.

Something New

A Great Power wants to do something which feels big enough to be their move but can't be mechanised via Faction creation? This is the one to choose.

If a Great Power wants to invent flying crafts to attack a distant region or open a gateway to hell, pick this.

While you're playing the Great Game between sessions, you likely will start thinking about the next move for a Great Power earlier. In other words, if you know a Great Power's next move would be to try to conquer a region, it's a great piece of information to give the players at the end of a session—this allows them to decide whether to go and try and stop the attack, or just ignore it.

It doesn't matter how many Factions you have if the other side has a Master or at least one of the dice, they will win. The dice are unique magical artefacts in DIE. This is at least one reason why the players are such a big deal... and unless the players get involved, a Master on the rampage is going to flatten whoever they confront.

Conquer

A Great Power attempts to gain control of a region. At least one Faction moves from a region a Great Power controls to one they do not. The fiction must conceptually allow this attack.

“Conquer” can be defined broadly. A cadre of spies moving in to assassinate the leaders of an army and take control is conquering. Magicians hiding the sun to cause the people to submit to their rule is Conquering. Merchants flooding a land with cheap merchandise can be conquering.

When an attack is declared, its results don't happen until the end of the *next* adventure. The players have a whole adventure to try and intervene if they wish, via heroic adventure and/or backstabbing. Let them know what's at stake.

If nothing in the fiction prevents the war, you use the battle rules below to see who wins.

BATTLES IN THE GREAT GAME

Note these Battle rules only work if you're abstracting a conquest attempt. If the players are actually doing it as an adventure, go with the adventure.

For each side in the war, calculate a score.

+ 1	Supported by at least one Master or a non-Master with comparable power.
-----	---

+ 1	Supported by at least one dice-wielder.
-----	---

If one score is higher than the other, the higher side wins.

If the number of Factions are equal, each side rolls a dice pool the size of the number of Factions they control. The side with the most successes wins. If the number of successes are equal, it's a stalemate and the battle will continue during the next adventures. For every six in the dice pool, a side can destroy an opposing Faction.

The losing side must leave the region. If a Faction can't—either because it's immobile or there's nowhere in the fiction for it to go—the Faction is destroyed.

WHAT ABOUT ADVENTURERS?

What isn't included in the above is the possibility of groups of other brave and daring adventurers going forth and trying to change the world, possibly to help out a great power.

If there's something in the narrative which doesn't fit any of the above options, especially if you've established powerful and active NPC characters, you can instead use the rules for Compressed Adventures (page 279) to decide whether or not it work—and what consequences there could be. The consequences should include “the death and imprisonment of a character.”

This is in addition to the Great Power's action. The people of the West were Creating Factions at the same time they were trying to get some hairy old hobbits into Mordor. Remember: the narrative comes first.

Note that the above Great Power actions cover a lot of situations. Your all powerful archmage summoning a legion of demons from the pit is covered by Create Faction. Your all powerful archmage summoning a bridge to a distant kingdom is covered by Something New. However, your All powerful Archmage going to Iain the Master and begging him not to invade her peaceful kingdom isn't covered by any of that, and its success or failure can be determined with a Compressed Adventure roll.

THE GREAT GAME DURING SESSIONS

Adventures normally focus around a relatively small period of time. As you approach the end of a campaign, this may no longer be true. Persona may rule Great Factions, either directly or indirectly, and are fighting an actual military campaign.

This is where the Great Game rules can shine. Rather than using it between sessions, you now use it as the backbone of the session, essentially playing multiple adventure-lengths of time in a single session. All Great Powers get a move, they're played out, and then they do another, until you reach a status quo you want to zoom in on.

When a significant action is taken:

- ◆ Ask provocative questions about the fallouts of actions. What does a conquering action look like? How did it make the character feel?
- ◆ The active player should get at least one short scene to focus on a moment during the action.
- ◆ Call for specific rolls to define parts of the fiction. For example, when conquering a region, set a difficulty to avoid excess civilian casualties, or prevent the destruction of an ancient citadel.

Players are much better at this kind of stuff than the NPCs, which is one reason why they're in such demand. Don't hate the player, hate the game.

REPLACING PLAYER CHARACTERS

As a DIE Campaign involves endlessly exploring its core cast, adding a new player later on can be as tricky as adding a new cast member to a long-running sitcom.

If it's just for a session or two, use the secondary character (page 280) rules to generate someone native to the fantasy world to accompany the party.

To add a new Persona, there are two options: choosing a pre-existing non-player character from the real world and elevating them to a Persona, or creating a brand-new Persona.

If choosing and elevating an NPC, work with the new player to see if there's an existing character in another Persona's backstory that could be fun to play. If so, use that as a core of a Persona and introduce them to the group. During their first session, ask them Persona generation questions.

To create a brand-new Persona, ask the new player how this Persona knows the group, and then ask the relevant questions from the sheet. Introduce them to the group, either with one of the missing dice (if there is a dice not aligned to the player) or carrying an unexplained copy of one of the existing dice.

Either way, introduce them to the group early in the session, either with one of the missing dice (if there is a dice not aligned to the player) or carrying an unexplained copy of one of the existing dice. They have no memory of how they got to Die. They have a lot of real-world memories, but they have trouble working out which is "last."

It's possible that this missing player is the reason that the group's ritual didn't work earlier. It's possible people may not think this person is real. It's possible they're right.

At the end of the session, they join the closing ritual and play continues as normal.

You know what's nice at the end of a campaign? Extended chilling time together. Have a meal. Get each other presents. Send folks souvenirs. I made a DIE playlist for them all.

ENDING THE GAME: THE WAKE

The players have explored, conquered, adventured, loved, lost, and probably been shot at a few times in the bargain. Perhaps someone died along the way, too. At the climax of the game, the rules are the same as DIE Rituals—they must all vote on whether to go home or stay in Die.

When the final decision is made—whether stay or leave—it's time for an epilogue for each player. In this part of the game, the wake, we'll talk about how their lives continue and how they're changed by the experience.

If you're playing an extended campaign, it's likely that everyone will be looking for more closure than a quick five minutes. There's a reason why *Lord of the Rings* ended with the party spending an hour hugging and going "I FUCKING LOVE YOU, SAMWISE GAMGEE. YOU FUCKING ROCK."

At the end of the game, ask the group these questions the following questions. As the GM, feel free to answer any relevant ones for your Persona, as well as adding notes to what people say.

IF THEY LEAVE DIE

The party returns to the same room they disappeared from. Anyone who didn't return from Die is dead, for some reason. No time has passed. Not a single second.

Ask everyone these questions:

- What do you do immediately when returning to the world?
- What do you do on the first day when returning to the world?
- (If Persona(s) never returned from Die) Did you go to [X's funeral]? What was it like?
- (To Personas who didn't get home from Die) Was anyone left anything in your Will?
- How does your life change in the short term in after returning from Die?
- One night, each of you had an intense dream about somebody you knew on Die. Who did you dream about? What was the dream?
- Did you ever tell anyone about your experiences on Die? Why didn't they believe you?
- How does your life change in the longer term after leaving Die?

IF THEY STAY IN DIE...

- What do you start to do in Die? What's your life like?
- To any Fallen: how long does it take for your nature to erode and you become a simple monster? What's your last sapient memory?
- One night, each of you had an intense dream about somebody you knew back on Earth. Who did you dream about? What was the dream?
- What do you miss?
- Do you think you'll be happy in Die?

WHETHER THEY STAY OR LEAVE...

- Is there anything anyone wants to know about any of the other Personas? Now's the time to ask questions.
- What will you remember about this campaign, players?
- What have you learned about games or yourself by playing this campaign?
- Is there anything else you'd like to say to your fellow players before we end the game?
- Now, we're going to collect the dice, one last time. I want you to pass each dice to me, and say "The game is over."

Note—not Persona, player. We are ceremonially moving out of the magic circle now, and for most of these questions, they're asking the player, not the Persona.

One last ceremonial circuit, passing each person the dice. Take this as solemnly as you can. The GM should be the last player.

Is there a final image you wish to present to the players? This is a good chance to provide closure to anything character who's been left behind. What's the last thing you'd like to see on the screen in the movie?

Hold up your dice and say... **"The game is..."**

Then pause, and start describing your final image. Describe that final image, then stop, let it sink in and start again...

"The game is over. Thank you for playing."


Put the dice away and applaud everyone.

You did something magical. I'm so proud of you all.





10. SCENARIOS & SOCIAL GROUPS



In Rituals we describe a way of playing *DIE* that cuts to the chase, but sometimes you want to get to the table even faster, or to run it as a one-off. This chapter has you sorted. Equally, the other chapters of the book give you ways to change Rituals to something else incrementally. Rather than that, you may be looking for a big, simple twist to change the game entirely. This chapter has you sorted for that too.

As well as different social groups to the standard “old friends” one presented in Rituals, we also include a selection of scenarios which do the heavy lifting for you, provide specific Persona questions, Master motivation, how to distribute the dice and a way to generate encounters.

All of which, of course, is designed as inspiration for you to build upon. Have fun.

HINTS ON RUNNING DIE AS A ONE OFF

1. Persona generation, even with a set list of questions, can balloon in length. Aim to have the Personas in *DIE* at the end of the first hour.
2. Fill in character sheets before you hand them out. (Do it before the session starts.) Leave the Persona’s look choices up to each player—that’s a choice you don’t want to ever lose. *DIE: Total Party Kill* (page 307) includes some stripped to the bone Paragon sheets, which just reduce it to just two choices—one key Paragon class choice and the look.
3. Consider following Paragon Generation rules from *DIE: Total Party Kill* (page 307) where rather than actually role-playing out being at the table, you simply give a little contextual description of where the game is, fill in the sheets and then do the dice ritual.
4. Keep in mind *DIE*’s backbone: the party arrives in Die, goes on an adventure, and then reaches a climactic confrontation with the Master. The shorter the time available, the shorter the adventure portion is. One encounter as the party travels may be sufficient; you may not need an encounter at all.
5. If you have an hour left to play, move to the final encounter as quickly as possible.
6. No matter what, call for the final vote on whether the group stays in Die or travels home fifteen minutes before the end of the game. You need time for the epilogue and debrief.

ALTERNATE SOCIAL GROUPS

The simplest way to change a game of *DIE* is to throw a different group of Persona into it. In Rituals, we use friends who played at school as a default group; if you change the group, you change the nature of the world. This chapter includes sets of other social groups to generate your Persona. These work great as making different groups with different tensions, but also demonstrate how different questions can lead to radically different groups.

The following groups slot into Persona Generation in Rituals.

THE DRIVEN CIRCLE

CONCEPT

You all gathered together as part of an intense, formative period of your life. The period ended... but while you were together, between all the adventures and work, you took some time to kick back and play a role-playing game. The only problem? The group fell apart, its goals unachieved. Now, years down the line, you're reunited and someone suggests playing one more game...

All players should feel free to ask each other further questions inspired by the following questions.

PERSONA GENERATION

GM chooses one player answers A question, but the group can and should chime in...

- What was the real life activity which bound you all together?
 - ◆ You were a writers' group at university
 - ◆ You were in a band
 - ◆ You were in a start-up
 - ◆ You were political activists
 - ◆ Something else
- What was the group trying to achieve?
- Where did you play the game?
- The GM's Persona ran the game. What was the name of the fantasy world where our game was set?
 - ◆ The Molten Depths
 - ◆ The Forbidden Borderlands
 - ◆ The Twilight of the Neon Epoch
 - ◆ Something else
- How many years has it been since you worked together?
 - ◆ 1 year
 - ◆ 5 years
 - ◆ 10 years
 - ◆ 20 years
 - ◆ Something else

At any point, A player can decide upon their Persona's name. If so, write it down and tell everyone.

Each player answers:

- At the most basic level, what was your role in the group...
 - ◆ **The Organiser.** Without you, nothing would get done.
 - ◆ **The Talent.** In terms of raw ability, you were above everyone else.
 - ◆ **The Dilettante.** You were the least committed, this was one of several interests.
 - ◆ **The Chancer.** You knew absolutely nothing and had somehow fluked your way into it.
 - ◆ **The Smartest Person In The Room.** You knew it, too.
 - ◆ **The Slacker.** You worked significantly less hard than anyone else.
 - ◆ **The Party Animal.** You pushed it a bit too hard sometimes and paid the price the next day.
 - ◆ **The Flirt.** Sometimes significantly more than a flirt.
 - ◆ **The Hanger-on.** You weren't even really in the group at all.
 - ◆ Something else
- That's the stereotype of you. In what way are you different from the stereotype?
- What was your life like before joining the group?
- What did you love and hate about playing the game?
- What were your interests? Sports? TV shows? Books? Games? Comics? Name your faves. Why did you like them?

Ask each player one of the big questions. Note which big question you ask each player, as each has a second big question later.

- A. You had a firm goal of what you wanted this group to achieve—or at least where you wanted to be. What was it?
- B. At the time you showed contempt towards the endeavour. What was your biggest complaint?
- C. When you were living through it, you thought it was the happiest time of your life up to that point. Why?
- D. You threw everything into the project. What did you sacrifice to give everything to the project?
- E. You have one incredibly awesome idea you added to the project. What was it?
- F. You considered someone in the project your mentor. You felt you were learning so much from them. Who were they, and what did you learn from them?

GM chooses one player to answer any of these questions, but the group can and should chime in:

- Who was the smartest of you?
- Who was the best looking of you?
- Who did people most pick on?
- Did any of you ever have a crush on anyone in the group? And if so, did it ever go anywhere?
- Did the group have any enemies?
- Who among the group is most commonly blamed for the failure of the group?

To the selected player:

- What did you do?

To another player:

- But why do you think it's actually your fault... and why haven't you told anyone?

To another player:

- And how do you know what this person did... and why didn't you tell anyone?

Each player answers:

- Who was your favourite and least favourite person in the group? Why?
- How did you feel about the end of the project?

Time passes. You've moved on.

To each player, ask the corresponding second part to their big question.

- A. While the group fell apart, you personally got what you wanted. You're the success story, but something core wasn't achieved. Something you hoped for. What is it?
- B. Now, in retrospect, you think the project really could have made an impact. What's your biggest regret about the time you spent on it?
- C. Your time on the project was the happiest time in your life. Why haven't things been as good since?
- D. So... the project just didn't work out, and you think of the thing you sacrificed constantly. What is it about giving it up which hurts more now?
- E. That great idea went on to become a huge success... but you got nothing from it. Why not, and how do you feel about it?
- F. You now hate your mentor. You absolutely view that devotion as a mistake. What happened?

Each player answers:


- Tell me about your life. What do you do now? Married, dating or single? Divorced? Kids?
- How do you feel about the time you spent together, all those years ago?

GM chooses one player to answer the question, but the group can and should chime in...

- The group are getting together for a reason...
 - ◆ The funeral of someone attached to the group.
 - ◆ The marriage of someone attached to the group.
 - ◆ The anniversary of the group's biggest achievement.
 - ◆ Something else

Each player answers:

- Why did you come?
- What did you think when the GM's Persona suggested one last game?



This set tries to cover a wide selection of social groups which primarily form when the group are adults—it's really about dynamics in a shared endeavour. As this is broader, you may wish to add more additional questions specific to the group's identity. However, it also makes a good basis if you want to make a playset for a specific group. How would you change or add to these questions if you only wanted to generate a band, or activists, for example?

As this question set is covering a much wider array of groups than the one in DIE Ritual, there's more open ended questions than Rituals. It's definitely one for players who need fewer prompts.



THE LAST GAME BEFORE GRADUATION

CONCEPT

You're all teenagers playing in a fantasy role-playing game. You've been through a lot, in game and out of game. As the final school year ends, and you're about to enter the real world, the GM has talked the group getting together for one last game...

PERSONA GENERATION

Ask each of the following questions in order to the respective Persona if they're in the game. If there's no specific direction for the question, ask it to anyone you like.

Everyone should feel free to ask each other further questions inspired by the following questions.

- ◆ What year is it?
 - ◆ Now
 - ◆ 2011
 - ◆ 2001
 - ◆ 1991
 - ◆ Another year?
- ◆ Why couldn't you play the game at school?
 - ◆ Are you serious? We'd have been bullied to shit.
 - ◆ You really didn't want certain other kids asking to play.
 - ◆ Role-playing games are banned due to being a bad influence and/or satanism.
 - ◆ We'd been barred from the role-playing society for causing trouble.
 - ◆ Something else
- ◆ Where did the group play instead?
 - ◆ At the richest friend's house.
 - ◆ In the back of a local comic shop.
 - ◆ In the one sleazy bar in town that doesn't check ID.
 - ◆ Somewhere else?
- ◆ What was the name of the fantasy world where your game was set?
 - ◆ The Sepulchre of the Lost Gods
 - ◆ Diaspora of the Free People
 - ◆ Hellwar IV
 - ◆ Something else

At any point, a player can decide upon their Persona's name. If so, write it down and tell everyone.

Ask the whole group—including the GM—who wants to be peers and who wants to be outsiders? The outsiders should be outnumbered by the peers.

For each peer, ask that player:

- ◆ At the most basic level, in a word, how would people think of you at school:
 - ◆ Academic
 - ◆ Funny
 - ◆ Creepy
 - ◆ Mean
 - ◆ Quiet
 - ◆ Tough
 - ◆ Nerdy
 - ◆ Freaky

For every outsider, ask that player:

- ◆ You are a significant outsider to the group. How are you different?
 - ◆ You're another Persona's older or younger sibling. Who?
 - ◆ You're another Persona's parent. Who?
 - ◆ You're a sort-of responsible adult. Who? (Teacher, shop owner, something else?)
 - ◆ You never actually played the game. You just know them. Why didn't you play?
 - ◆ You went to a different school entirely.
 - ◆ Something else





Ask the group:

Each of you pick one of these roles from the following: **SMARTEST**, **SCARIEST**, **MOST ATTRACTIVE**, **PITIED** and **ENVIED**.

THE SMARTEST ANSWERS:

- Why do people think you're smart?
 - ◆ You turn up top of the class enough, and everyone realises.
 - ◆ You take joy in making everyone else feel dumb, even if they are smart.
 - ◆ Less smart, more smart-arse. You get the best of most people, especially teachers.
 - ◆ Something else

THE SCARIEST ANSWERS:

- Why are you scary?
 - ◆ You're quiet, but everyone remembers that time you snapped.
 - ◆ You know everyone's secrets.
 - ◆ You're less Edgelord, more Edge-emperor.
 - ◆ Something else

THE MOST ATTRACTIVE ANSWERS:

- Why are you attractive?
 - ◆ You're funny, charming and make everyone you talk to feel special.
 - ◆ You're hot and you don't know it.
 - ◆ You're hot and, oh god, you know it.
 - ◆ Something else

THE ENVIED ANSWERS:

- Why are you envied?
 - ◆ You're incredibly popular with everyone at school.
 - ◆ Your family is rich, or at least, what counts as rich around here.
 - ◆ You have a genuine talent and lots of potential. What's your talent?
 - ◆ Something else

THE PITIED:

- Why are you pitied?
 - ◆ You've been constantly sick.
 - ◆ You're disfigured in a way which draws negative attention.
 - ◆ You're dirt poor.
 - ◆ Something else

ASK ANY PLAYER:

- I'm the person who ran the game. But why did I run the game?
 - ◆ I was the biggest nerd, whose enthusiasm dragged everyone along.
 - ◆ I'm a people pleaser who just wants to entertain their friends.
 - ◆ I'm a control freak who organises everything.
 - ◆ Something else

TO EACH STUDENT, ASK:

- What makes you dread going to school?
 - ◆ Some other kids just have it in for me.
 - ◆ It's school. It's just so boring.
 - ◆ Having to put on a brave face and pretend it's not a war zone at home.
 - ◆ Something else

TO EACH ADULT ASK:

- What makes you wish you were still back at school?
 - ◆ I realise I peaked there.
 - ◆ I would actually pass those fucking exams this time.
 - ◆ If I was back at school, I'd have a do-over for all my later mistakes.
 - ◆ To be anywhere other than where I am now.
 - ◆ Something else

ASK EACH PLAYER:

- What were your interests? Sports? TV shows? Books? Games? Comics? Name your faves. Why did you like them?
- What are your best and worst classes at school?
- When you filled in the form in Careers Guidance at school, what job did the computer say you should do when you leave school? How do you feel about that?
- What do you want to be when you graduate—or in the case of adults, what did you want to do?
 - ◆ Be famous. For what?
 - ◆ Get out of this town. To do what?
 - ◆ Get started on a career. What?
 - ◆ Finally come out. Why haven't you?
 - ◆ Settle down with someone you love. Do you have a who?
 - ◆ Something else
- Why don't you think it's unlikely you'll get it. Or, if you're older, why didn't you get it?
 - ◆ I've failed all my exams.
 - ◆ I'm not talented enough. The dream's too big.
 - ◆ I've not got enough resources.
 - ◆ I have dependents I can't abandon.
 - ◆ I'm too scared.
 - ◆ Something else
- And, finally, how do you feel about graduation?

Rather than a big question directed to each player specifically, here we go more general and give the same big question to everyone. It's reliant on players having a better idea of their nature due to more detailed earlier questions.

Rather than being broad, Distant Fans give firm roles and forges specific drama. Many of the scenarios follow this route—look at Con Quest and Video Nasty for other examples.

Rather than visiting their RPG world, that this group has such a strong shared bond, it can be useful for prompting a different adventure, as described in Alternate Worlds (page 172). They're Star Wars fans? Set the adventure on the Death Star, or something. Equally, being set at a con means any Con Map can be used as an environment.

I repeat: choose something which you all at least have some familiarity with. The game won't run as smoothly if one or more of you have to fake it.

DISTANT FANS

CONCEPT

You're all met in a fandom. Along the way, as well as sharing your love (and often hate) for your love, you started playing an online role-playing game together. It's been fun. You've never met, until now. You're at a major con you're all there... and you decide actually have a game in the flesh...

PERSONA GENERATION

Ask each of the following questions in order to the respective Persona if they're in the game. If there's no specific direction for the question, ask it to anyone you like.

Everyone should feel free to ask each other further questions inspired by the following questions.

Ask the group:

- What were you all fans of? Choose something you all have at least some familiarity with.
 - ◆ A TV or a movie show? Which one?
 - ◆ An author? Who?
 - ◆ Comics? Do you mean a company, a book or a specific character?
 - ◆ Music? What band?
 - ◆ Something else

GM chooses one player answers A question, but the group can and should chime in:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| ● How did you all meet? | ● What year is it? |
| ◆ Posting zines to each other. | ◆ Now |
| ◆ A old, decrepit forum. | ◆ 2011 |
| ◆ A twitter hashtag. | ◆ 2001 |
| ◆ A quiet, private discord. | ◆ 1991 |
| ◆ Something else | ◆ Another year |





Each of us pick one of these roles from the following. The GM automatically gets the Moderator.

Moderator:	Responsible figure in the community
Old Guard:	Has been around since the start
Obsessive:	Cares about one thing in the fandom specifically
Troll:	Trouble with a capital troll
Newbie:	New and boundless in enthusiasm
Burned Out:	Love has curdled to hate

At any point, a player can decide upon their Persona's name, gender, age and other biographical details. When you do so, write it down and tell everyone.

If a role isn't in the game, skip the questions. Ask one question from each section, and then move to another player, until all player's questions have been answered.

Ask any player a question about the moderator:

- ◆ How did I come to be an authority in the community?
 - ◆ I set up the fan culture infrastructure.
 - ◆ I'm the authoritative and most definitive voice.
 - ◆ I'm the loudest and most persistent voice.
 - ◆ Something else
- ◆ What do people say about me behind my back?
 - ◆ I don't even like the Fandom any more.
 - ◆ I've alienated all my real world friends.
 - ◆ I'm sweetness and light, but my mean streak is brutal.
 - ◆ Something else
- ◆ People say that one of the group is my favourite. Who is it?

Ask that player:

- ◆ Why do you think that is?



ASK THE OLD GUARD:

- You were in the fandom right at the beginning. What's your origin story?
- Why have you stayed in the fandom so long?
 - ◆ In real life I'm isolated and have no social capital. Here, I'm someone.
 - ◆ It's a safe place away from the horror of my real life.
 - ◆ It's comfortable. I don't like change, even if it's inevitable.
 - ◆ Something else
- You have a story that you tell to cement your early fan cred. What is it?

ASK ANOTHER PLAYER:

- Why do you know that story isn't entirely true.

ASK THE OBSESSIVE:

- Which character in the fandom do you love monomaniacally?
- Why are you so engaged with this character specifically?
 - ◆ They are me. If you insult them, you insult me.
 - ◆ They're my ideal self.
 - ◆ They're my ideal other.
 - ◆ Something else
- You got into a long running fight with another player for not showing sufficient love to your fave. Who is it?

ASK THAT PLAYER:

- What did you say to get the Obsessive's goat up?
- And, obsessive—what did you do to retaliate?

ASK THE TROLL:

- Which edgy, provocative and (mostly) bad-faith take are you famous for holding in the fandom?
- Why do you enjoy being an irritant to people?
 - ◆ I feel powerless in my real life.
 - ◆ I'm scared to confess what the property really provokes in me.
 - ◆ I just enjoy hurting people in a deniable fashion. Sorry, not sorry.
 - ◆ Something else.
- You actively upset another member of the party with your trolling. It definitely went too far. Who was it?

TO THAT PLAYER:

- What happened?

ASK THE NEWBIE:

- You're new to the fandom. What was the recent event that brought you in?
- What brought you into the fandom so hard?
 - ◆ I had no idea something could make me feel like this.
 - ◆ I had a bad break up and needed something new.
 - ◆ I've never been into a fandom before. I wasn't allowed.
 - ◆ Something else

-
- What's the most embarrassing, enthusiastic thing you've said in the fandom, and who did you say it too.

ASK THAT PLAYER:

- And what did you do then?

ASK THE BURNED OUT:

- What was your braking point with the fandom?
- Why do you stay in a fandom of something you now hate?
 - ◆ I like the people. They're the only real friends I've ever had.
 - ◆ I need to bring it all crashing down. It's another disappointment.
 - ◆ It was the only thing which gave me joy. I secretly hope the joy will come back.
 - ◆ Something else
- You used to be really tight with another Persona. You fell out, and only have just started talking again. Who?

ASK THAT PLAYER:

- What have you done which would break the friendship if they ever found out.

ASK ANY PLAYER:

- What was the name of the fantasy world where your game was set?
 - ◆ The Mirrorworlds
 - ◆ Dungeon of the **[obscure fandom reference]**
 - ◆ Shadowlife
 - ◆ Something else

ASK EVERYONE:

- This is the first con you've all been at all together. What sacrifices have you had to made to be here?
 - ◆ Little sacrifice at all, to be honest. I've a good, boring job.
 - ◆ I had to save for two years for this. Even so, I'm sleeping on someone's floor.
 - ◆ A lot of favours and baby-sitting money to keep the kids safe.
 - ◆ I had to quit my job. Yeah, I know.
 - ◆ I'm sharing a room with someone I absolutely despise.
 - ◆ Something else

This is one tight group, and others follow. Want some inspiration for making your own sets of questions? A university gaming society. A family game. A LGBT club. A corporate retreat. An OAP home. A band on tour. Lifelong gaming buddies. Activists. Interns in the West Wing. Soldiers deployed. Prisoners.



Once you've stepped into the world of freeform generation you may think to go for increasingly quirky groups of Personas getting together. If old school friends are good, perhaps Mad-Max-style survivors in the ruins of civilization or Roman centurions on Hadrian's Wall circa 100 AD playing DIE will be better. As a general rule, the more fictional and less real you make the "real" world the less juice you're going to get from taking them to a fantasy world. Unusual yet grounded groups are your best bets for fun.

A fun idea for a one off: play with the Persona being the characters from your regular role-playing game. If you're really brave, make it in continuity.

Different types of players will respond well to different types of questions. Some players will respond well to "You hate someone in the group. Who and why?" and others will reject it. A first question like "Okay—anyone up for hating someone in the group?" can be useful, and get the player most excited about that idea early. Get buy-in, at every stage.

FREEFORM PERSONA GENERATION

In the Rituals chapter, the reunited option presents a set social group, gives a set of questions that will generate an interesting group of people with powerful drives and connections. However, you can also go entirely freeform in your questions. Before doing so, remember the goals of Persona generation:

1. The players learn who their own Personas are.
2. The other players learn who each Persona is.
3. To provide the GM with the raw material for generating the adventure.

If you wish to ask freeform questions, these are the areas the questions cover. This is a good order to go in, but one darts back and forth as ideas emerge.

- Who is this group of people and what connects them?
- What was the RPG like?
- At the core, what was each of your Personas like?
- What random stuff did your Persona like?
- What was the group like back in the day?
- How did the Personas get on?
- What are the Personas like now?
- Why are you playing another game now?

Further details to the Personas can (and will) be added during play, but these kind of questions can help you get the basics down.

When do you finish? A gut feeling that "This seems like a fun, developed, messy and believable social group!" is your tell. Messy is key. Once you get a character to a point of messiness, asking further questions may actually resolve their issues. That's counter-productive. Facing their issues is what this game is about.

If a group seems a little dull, you should consider asking a **leading question**. In Rituals, the one where you ask a player about a goal and then reveal later that the goal went desperately awry is a leading question. A leading question gives a player a prompt to create an active flaw, but gives them more freedom to define the specifics.

The best all-purpose general leading question is "Why does your Persona hate their life?" This will either give a powerful answer, or give a hard no to having a dramatic character. Remember: not everyone ends up with powerful drives. Those who are more chill will have to deal with the extremes brought by the rest of the group.

Freeform method can really balloon in time, but you can significantly narrow it down if you fill in the first step yourself. If you're short on time, don't leave it entirely open how the group know each other. Say they were kids at school, or an office-work group or a cult. The second players have one jigsaw piece, it's much easier to proceed.

PRE-GENERATED SCENARIOS

Each pre-generated scenario has the following format:

Overview:	a summary of the adventure, including content warnings
Extra Preparation:	anything else the scenario needs above a standard <i>DIE</i> game
Persona Generation:	a specific set of questions to generate the social group for the adventure
Paragon Generation:	how to distribute the dice to the Persona and pre-generated characters
The Master's Motivation:	background as to why the Master is doing this
Into DIE:	how you generate the adventure once you're in there
The Final Encounter:	notes on the climax
Epilogue:	anything additional required at the end of the game
Bestiary:	a selection of relevant monsters' statistics which may be of use in the game





DIE: TOTAL PARTY KILL

OVERVIEW

You all used to play fantasy RPGs together as teenagers, until an awful session where the GM threw you into a killer dungeon and slaughtered the party. Now years down the line, you're all back in town and the GM suggested a game. With mutual recrimination, both in and out of game, you're surprised they asked. You're perhaps even more surprised you all said yes.

Content Warning: *Murder, torture, food, hospitals, teenage drama, animal abuse, terrible GM practices.*

EXTRA PREPARATION

Print out the Fastgen sheets from the DIE Online Resources. These are virtually pre-generated *DIE* characters, with each Paragon only having to make two final choices to complete the character—their look and selecting a single core class ability.

Total Party Kill is designed to be played in a single session of at least three hours—it's the shortest scenario in the book, and optimised for one shot play. Before starting play, calculate your total length of play and make a note of when the following times will occur.

- 🕒 1 hour into your time: first encounter.
- 🕒 Halfway through your time: second encounter.
- 🕒 1 hour before the end of your time: third encounter.
- ⌚ 15 minutes before the end of your time: end the game and debrief.

So if you have 3 hours to play, note down 1 hour, 1.5 hours, 2 hours, and 2:45. The end of the game is before the strict end of the time slot to allow time for the final vote, epilogues and decompression.

You will also need something to keep time and paper to draw a map with.



DIE Online Resources

PERSONA GENERATION

This game involves you having a fraught relationship with the GM of your old game group. The GM will play the Persona of the GM. Each player gets to decide the details of this relationship.

Each player should select a role:

The Friend:	The GM's best friend
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The Loved:	The one the GM loved
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The Bully:	The one who bullied the GM
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The Bullied:	The one the GM bullied
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The Pitied:	The one the GM looked down on
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Total Party Kill is DIE cut to the core. The Persona generation is designed to give just enough to start play. As always, You should always ask more questions when you enter DIE.

Ask each of the following questions in order to the respective Persona if they're in the game. If there's no specific direction for the question, ask it to anyone you like. All players should feel free to ask further questions inspired by these.

- I ran the game. I was the biggest fantasy nerd in the group, and perhaps the universe. This is a classic group of nerdy kids playing a normal RPG at school.
- How long has it been since we played together?
 - ◆ 5 years
 - ◆ 10 years
 - ◆ 20 years
 - ◆ Something else
- What was the name of the killer dungeon?
 - ◆ The Dominion of Tharlan Thrice-Blooded
 - ◆ The Blade-Glades of the Everchild
 - ◆ The Abyss
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE FRIEND:

- You were the GM's friend. You were their confidant. What bonded you together?
 - ◆ You both loved the same geek stuff. What especially did you love?
 - ◆ You kind of hero-worshipped them and hung off their every word.
 - ◆ You were the first two queer kids out at school.
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE LOVED:

- The GM loved you most, whatever that means. Why did the GM love you?
 - ◆ You were their wise older sibling. What did you know better?
 - ◆ You were their out of control crush. How did you respond?
 - ◆ You had the best taste and knew everything. What were you an expert in?
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE BULLY:

- How did you bully the GM?
 - ◆ You were physically powerful. How did everyone know you were tough?
 - ◆ You were wickedly socially manipulative. How did you hurt them?
 - ◆ You were smarter by them, and made them feel dumb. What did you excel in?
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE BULLIED:

- You're someone the GM treated badly, repeatedly. Why?
 - ◆ You were a younger sibling. How annoying were you?
 - ◆ You weren't as bright as the GM, and the GM mocked your every mistake. Was the GM right?
 - ◆ You were the hang-along friend of someone cooler in the group. Who?
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE PITIED:

- Many people treated you badly. The GM seemed to take sympathy for you.
 - ◆ You were poorer than anyone else. Why?
 - ◆ You were targeted by bullies at school for something. What?
 - ◆ You were the younger sibling of another player. Who?
 - ◆ Something else

ASK EACH PLAYER:

- At school, what was your hope for the future?
 - ◆ Be famous. For what?
 - ◆ Get out of this town. To do what?
 - ◆ Get started on a career. Which?
 - ◆ Finally come out. Why haven't you?
 - ◆ Settle down with someone you love. Do you have a who?
 - ◆ Something else
- Around the time of that fatal game—maybe before, maybe after—you did something which torched the relationship with the GM. What was it?
 - ◆ You turned up to a party drunk and caused a huge scene.
 - ◆ You stole something precious. What?
 - ◆ You made out with my partner—or at least someone I was extremely into.
 - ◆ You snapped and told me exactly what you thought of me. What was it?
 - ◆ You spread rumours about me behind my back. What were they?
 - ◆ I needed you to do something for me, and you just didn't. What was it?
 - ◆ Something else

Time passes. You're older.

ASK EACH PLAYER...

- The thing which torched your relationship with the GM? Similar behaviour has been a recurring in your life. How do we see this character trait in your life?
- The hope for your future hasn't worked out. You didn't get what you want—or at least, it didn't make you happy. Why?
- Tell me about your life. What do you do now? Married, dating or single? Divorced? Kids?
- With the bad blood in the room, why did you decide to come to anyway?
 - ◆ This weird sense of guilt. How common is this for you?
 - ◆ You have unresolved emotions for someone else in the group. Who?
 - ◆ Morbid curiosity about the group. What do you want to know?
 - ◆ Something else

CHARACTER GENERATION

The dice are distributed as normal. If in doubt, distribute them as follows:

Friend:	Godbiner
Loved:	Neo
Bully:	Dictator
Bullied:	Emotion Knight
Pitied:	Fool

Rather than using the full character creation, pass the players the Fastgen sheets.

THE MASTER'S MOTIVATION

The Master is desperately unhappy with their life. It's not what they wanted. More so the Master has nursed a grudge against all the other Personas. Kill them, and stay in this fantasy world? That sounds great to them.

INTO DIE

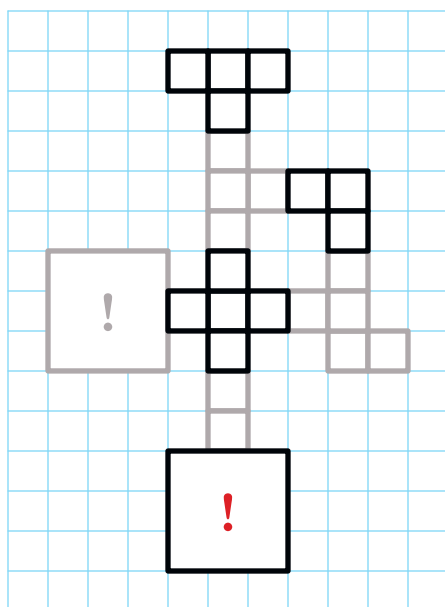
The party find themselves in in a large cave, with a single exit—a closed gate. On it, written in blood, the name of the killer dungeon with a "II" after it. As in, this is the sequel to that killer dungeon. The dice float before them.

The Fallen emerge from the ground. They each with a warped, leering face of the Master. They whisper about the Persona's betrayals and how they're going to get what they deserve.

After the battle, and the doors swing open. On the nearest wall, the rules are carved. They are:

- There are two exits to the dungeon. One leads back to Earth. The other doesn't.
- All living members of the party must leave together.
- If an exit is not chosen, reality will collapse, and everyone will die.

...and written with blood: **THIS TIME YOU DIE FOR REAL.**



EXPLORING THE DUNGEON

Rather than having a pre-generated map, we generate the dungeon as we explore. You should draw a rough map to show how the elements connect.

Start with a T junction, and then build from there. Each passage will end with either another junction (either a T, a corner or a crossroads) or a room (with 0-4 exits). Each room features an encounter. Encounters are organised by time elapsed, as shown in the section: The Set Encounters.

When the time has passed the number you wrote down in preparation, the next encounter will be the relevant **Set Encounter**. If not, and you don't want to do an antagonist encounter you have a **random encounter**.

As elements of the dungeon are discovered, they remain in play. Perhaps elements they have been discovered can be used to solve problems they face later?

Throughout this, the Master can bait the players verbally. How much can they see? *How* can they see? Can the players circumvent this?

OMENS OF DOOM

After every major encounter, there's an earthquake, and reality starts to crumble a little more. Check how long there is left before the end of the game (⊖ 15 minutes before the end of your available time). A disembodied, robotic voice will state that's how long you've got until reality collapses.



THE SET ENCOUNTERS

🕒 **MEET YOUR ENEMIES: The First Encounter** (1 hour into your time)

If the party is still fighting the Fallen, spend a cheat token and have all the Fallen all be annihilated by a burst of lightning. The Master's voice baits: "No—you're too slow. You'll never see my dungeon at this rate."

The party enters a large chamber, with a balcony looking down on them. On the balcony there's the same number of portals as there are players in the party. From each, steps a figure.

Ask each player someone who was hurt, betrayed or generally disappointed by their Persona's fatal, repeating flaw. For example, if someone stole, their disappointed mother may be a useful answer. For a cheat, one of their betrayed partners. Take this echo and merge it with what feels the best fantasy archetype—see the Bestiary list on page 183 for a full selection. These are five good classics: a wizard, a warrior, a gorgon, a minotaur and a demon.

This warped echo of each Persona past steps from the portal and says, simultaneously, "*You never change and you never learn. But you will pay.*" They disappear back into the closing portals.

From now on, these echoes are the antagonists, hunting the Personas and lying in wait. They can be added to any encounter, or used as a basis for one.

What does an encounter look like? Ask the Persona questions to define details. What places, events, and people are important to the Persona? These don't have to be real-world elements—works of fiction they're passionate about function just as well. Take the answer, warp it, and use it as a setting.

Where did your ex find out you were cheating? That cafe on the Thames? Great. You open the door and find a jet-black replica of a cafe on the Thames, and your ex, standing behind a table with a knife. He smiles."

Encounters should speak to the nature of their relationship. They are likely hostile, but it equally likely that emotional reconciliation is possible in a way which doesn't involve stabbing.

If they are encountered two at once, use the stats for **Tricky To Kill**. If they are encountered alone, use the stats for **Need Help To Kill**.

🕒 **WITNESS YOUR DREAMS: The Second Encounter** (1/2 into your time)

Ask a player how they have spotted a secret door nearby. It opens. The Master baits them angrily—*they're not to go in there! That's not for them.*

Inside, they find a strange vault, with as many crystal balls as there are players (including the Master). Each is labelled with one of the Persona's names. The one with the Master's is already lit up, and shows a vision of the fantasy world outside the dungeon... where an empire awaits their Wizard King to return. The Master.

If each Persona approaches their globe, it lights, and they see a vision of the fantasy world which shows how whatever they wanted for their life can be satisfied here. They just have to make it through the dungeon and stay...

🕒 **CONFRONT THE MASTER: The Third Encounter** (1 hour before the end)

This is the **Final Encounter**, and as such it's important enough to get its own section on page 315.



RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

When the players enter a room and you aren't running one of the timed encounters above, you should use a random encounter instead. These are designed to let you explore the characters' shared past without necessarily relating to the central conflict versus the Master and their main enemies. Roll your D20 and consult the list below, or select from the list. The questions can be used as a rhetorical prompt to inspire an encounter or asked to any player.

1. A rusted, bloody trap, with a fresh corpse in it. You recognise the body. Who is it?
2. A chasm crossed the room, with lava far, far below. Can you make out someone burning, far below?
3. A torture chamber, full of awful devices. Who is the other enemy of the Master who has been broken here?
4. A storage room, full of boxes, hosted by a seemingly friendly elf. Which of your old teachers does it remind you of?
5. A banquet hall, with a banquet in progress. What does this meal remind you of? What are they eating which disturbs you?
6. Noxious fumes fill the room. The smell... wait, which hospital trip does it make you recall?
7. A locked door on the far side. A large key in the centre. Why don't you want to do the obvious thing and pick it up?
8. A mirror maze. When you look at yourself in one, how is it distorted and why does it scare you?
9. Coated in beeswax like a hive. Eyeless human drones work, gathering honey. Who are they?
10. Lots of cobwebs. What item from a Persona's childhood is visible, emerging from a tangle of threads?
11. A heavily trapped room. What gave away there are traps here?
12. A dark crypt with an open casket. Which seemingly-dead person you know is in there?
13. A chapel, of a church to the Master, with three chanting priests. Why is what they're chanting familiar?
14. The room has been prepared for an awful ritual, a bloody symbol on the floor. What word is missing from the centre? What share secret does it mean to you?
15. A laboratory—which resembles your old science class. What disaster happened there?
16. An underwater river runs through the room, barring easy progress. Why wouldn't you just want to swim?
17. A prison, with small cells lining the room. What shared pet hate did you have with the Master? Because those people are imprisoned here...
18. The room is a hellish inferno, with lava covering the floor, and islands of rock. It burns ambition. What hope will it take from you if you fall in?
19. A huge statue looks over the room, stern, judging. Whose parent is it? Why are they disappointed in you?
20. A well in the centre room, surrounded by skeletons. You recognise them. Which of your favourite heroes are dead here?

If you need stats for anything, see the **Bestiary** (page 183).

THE FINAL ENCOUNTER

Ask a player where in the original dungeon where they all died. The room is a dark mirror of that, with two main additions: two open doors. Through one we can see the fantasy world of their teenage game, and a hint at its promises. The other shows the Personas in the real world, playing the game.

The Master is trying to get through the door to the fantasy world, and failing. The Master is worried about reality collapsing too—this is not what they expected.

The Master will be accompanied by any of the remaining echoes. If there is only one of them, use the stats for **Tricky To Kill**. If there's more, use stats for **Easy To Kill**. Yes, the stats change depending on context.

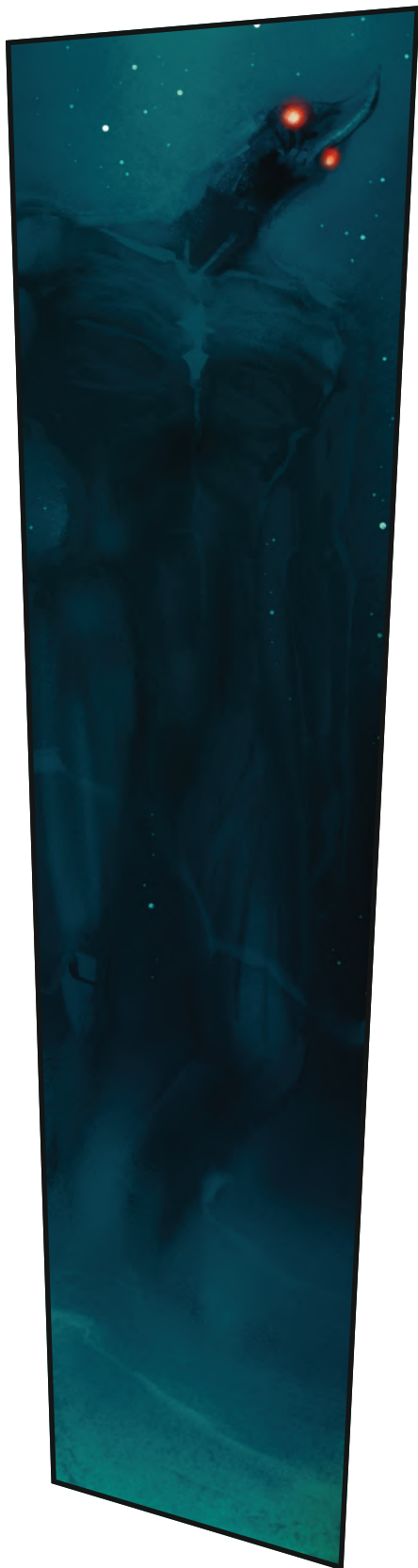
The Master would clearly kill the party, but will try and suggest a compromise. Why not just stay and then we can fight later? What have we to go home for?

Ask the player what is waiting for them back in reality, and who will miss them?

We play as a climax in DIE Ritual. The encounter continues until the **End of the World** time limit, when a final vote can be called for. Stay or go. If not, the world ends.

EPILOGUE

Works as per Rituals Endgame (page 136). As in, ask how the experience changed them (or what their life in the fantasy world would be like) then add an extra detail.



BESTIARY

Normally, we use the Bestiary to describe all the different monsters the players can meet and kill on their journey. Because we're keen to make Total Party Kill as quick and easy as possible, this works a little differently. Instead of defined stats, we've come up with three versions of enemies that you can select depending on how much of a challenge you think the opponent should be (and how long you want the fight to go on for).

EASY TO KILL

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	1	4	0		

Abilities

Frenzied: Advantage on hand-to-hand attacks but they can never have *any* Guard.

TRICKY TO KILL

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	3	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	1		

Abilities

Tricky: Whatever stat they attack with, make it a 3.

Elite: Attacks have **Special:** if this hit Wounds, cause two hits and **Special:** recover one Guard.

NEED HELP TO KILL

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	*	4	1		

Abilities

Whatever they could fictionally do. *Has one Health for every persona in the game.

Very Tricky: Whatever stat they attack with, make it a 4.

One-Monster Army: Attacks have **Special:** this attack also is applied to another nearby target.



DIE: VIDEO NASTY

by Grant Howitt

OVERVIEW

You were all part of an independent videomaker collective, but things went south and your project—a low-budget horror movie—never came to fruition. Now, after agreeing to play a strange game with an old colleague, you find yourselves trapped in the world of the film playing the monstrous antagonists. Will you fight your way back to reality, or reign in hell as kings?

Content Warning: *Body horror, cruel/uncaring management, and murder (in self-defence).*

PERSONA GENERATION

The GM plays the Master—they funded the film, and it was clearly important to them that it succeeded. Each player should select a role:

3 Players: The Director, the Writer, the Lead Actor

4 Players: Add the Producer

5 Players: Add the Intern

Ask each of the following questions in order to the respective Persona if they're in the game. If there's no specific direction for the question, ask it to anyone you like. If the question refers to someone in the first person, that's the GM speaking about themselves—the person who funded the project.

PERSONA GENERATION QUESTIONS

- I provided the funding for the film, but even though I sank almost everything I had into it, it never saw release. How did I make my money?
 - ◆ Invented a popular kitchen appliance
 - ◆ Trust fund from wealthy parents
 - ◆ It was never particularly clear, but probably something illegal
 - ◆ Something else
- What was the tone of our movie?
 - ◆ Gory slasher-horror, veering on camp
 - ◆ Brutal, unrelenting found-footage
 - ◆ Inscrutable, allegorical
 - ◆ Phantasmagorical supernatural thriller
 - ◆ Something else
- What antagonists did the protagonist face?
 - ◆ Personifications of their own fears and desires
 - ◆ Fierce supernatural creatures
 - ◆ Vengeful revenants
 - ◆ Masked home invaders
 - ◆ Something else

-
- What was the name of our movie?
 - ◆ The Conclave
 - ◆ Fingernail Row
 - ◆ The Sin-Eaters
 - ◆ Meat Grinder 2
 - ◆ Something else
 - What did I insist we included at the end of the first act?
 - ◆ A sexy party
 - ◆ An overwrought dream sequence
 - ◆ Some egregious product placement
 - ◆ Something else
 - What did I believe was the absolute lynchpin of the second act?
 - ◆ A musical number
 - ◆ An extended drowning scene
 - ◆ An expensive war flashback
 - ◆ Something else
 - And where did I set the final confrontation?
 - ◆ In an art gallery owned by a friend of mine
 - ◆ In two rental cars (we lost the deposit on both)
 - ◆ In disused hospital on the outskirts of town
 - ◆ Somewhere else?
 - How long has it been since the project collapsed?
 - ◆ Only a month or so
 - ◆ A year today
 - ◆ A decade
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE DIRECTOR:

- I put you in charge of the film. What did I like about you?
 - ◆ Bold artistic vision
 - ◆ Loyalty and tenacity
 - ◆ Lack of a spine
 - ◆ Something else
- What were you looking to get out of the project?
 - ◆ Your name in lights
 - ◆ An easy paycheck
 - ◆ The chance to work with an old flame
 - ◆ Something else
- When things were going wrong, what did you do?
 - ◆ You cut your losses and ran
 - ◆ You tried, and failed, to get it running again
 - ◆ You held it against me
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE WRITER:

- Why did I hire you to write on this film?
 - ◆ Calmness and patience
 - ◆ Passion and drive
 - ◆ Sense of humour
 - ◆ Something else
- What was the most egregious rewrite I demanded?
 - ◆ Removal of a crucial romantic element
 - ◆ Cut your favourite antagonist entirely
 - ◆ That my extensive worldbuilding was incorporated more often
 - ◆ Something else
- What was the twist that you fought to keep in the film?
 - ◆ The main character dies
 - ◆ The villain survives
 - ◆ Time loops back around to the beginning
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE LEAD ACTOR:

- I saw something in you the moment we first met. Why did I want you to be my star?
 - ◆ Envious good looks
 - ◆ Dedication to method-acting
 - ◆ You charmed me, despite a lack of talent
 - ◆ Something else
- What scene did you insist we worked into the plot?
 - ◆ An expensive action scene
 - ◆ Some ill-advised character work
 - ◆ Mirror scene where you play an evil version of yourself
 - ◆ Something else
- What made you walk off the set and not come back?
 - ◆ Punishing shooting schedule
 - ◆ Nonsensical, stitched-together plot
 - ◆ You felt creatively stifled
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE PRODUCER:

- Why did I get you on board to make this all happen?
 - ◆ Uncompromising attention to detail
 - ◆ Lax approach to labour laws
 - ◆ Forceful personality
 - ◆ Something else
- What was the biggest difficulty you faced?
 - ◆ I was impossible to please
 - ◆ There wasn't enough money to go around
 - ◆ You hated working with someone else on the project
 - ◆ Something else
- What's the thing you regret most about working on the project?
 - ◆ Word of our failure spread and I couldn't get work
 - ◆ The stress snapped you in half and you're still recovering
 - ◆ It ruined an important relationship
 - ◆ Something else

ASK THE INTERN:

- You were an unpaid assistant to almost everyone on the staff. Why did I hire you?
 - ◆ Boundless drive and enthusiasm
 - ◆ I owed your dad a favour
 - ◆ I saw a lot of myself in you
 - ◆ Something else
- What's the most important thing you learned during the project?
 - ◆ How to go without sleep for several days in a row
 - ◆ Creative accountancy and lying to the authorities
 - ◆ Never to trust anyone in this business
 - ◆ Something else
- You saw everyone else for who they were. For each other player, tell us why one of the answers to their questions is their own deluded opinion and not the truth.

ASK EACH PLAYER:

- We moved on. What have things been like for you since the project folded?
 - ◆ Unsuccessful—it was your last film
 - ◆ Unsuccessful, and it took multiple failures for you to realise it
 - ◆ Successful, but success didn't give you what you wanted
 - ◆ You feel terrible about what happened on the project
 - ◆ Something else
- Why did you decide to attend the game?
 - ◆ You felt sorry for someone. Who?
 - ◆ You have unresolved emotions for someone. Who?
 - ◆ Morbid curiosity
 - ◆ Something else

CHARACTER GENERATION

Distribute the Paragons as follows:

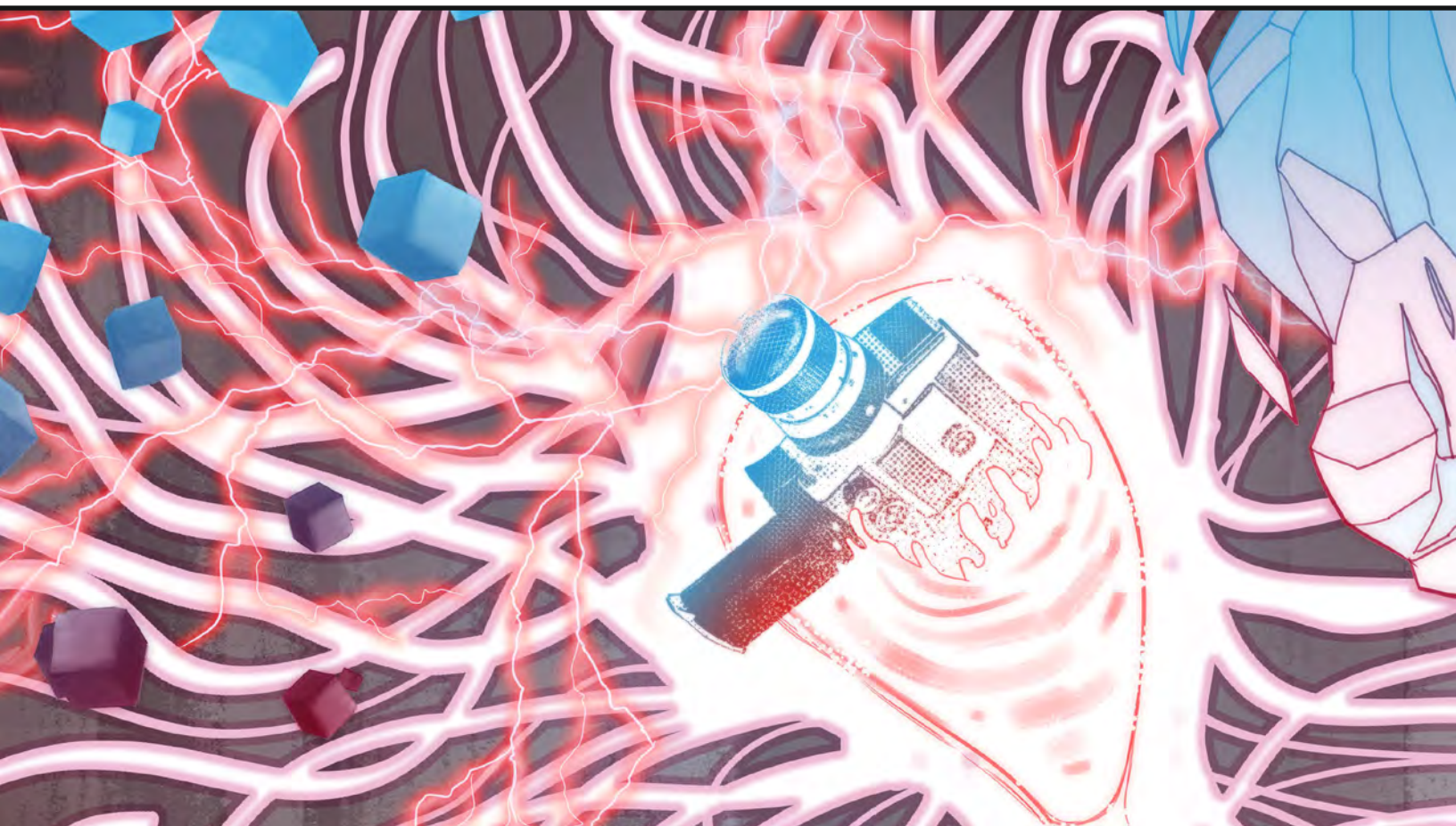
Director:	Neo
Producer:	Godbinder
Writer:	Emotion Knight
Lead Actor:	Fool
Intern:	Dictator

THE MASTER'S MOTIVATION

After a long career of artistic failures, the Master has become bitter and cruel. They want to live in the world they've dreamed of (and attempted several times to recreate on film) and inflict righteous pain and judgement on people. The Master's goals are simple:

- Trap the Personas in their horror universe
- Have the film's protagonists kill them off (or do it themselves)
- Live the rest of their life as a nightmare ruler

If it proves easier, then they'll try to talk the Personas around to their side, but it's just as easy to discard the Personas' lives in search of glory.



INTO DIE

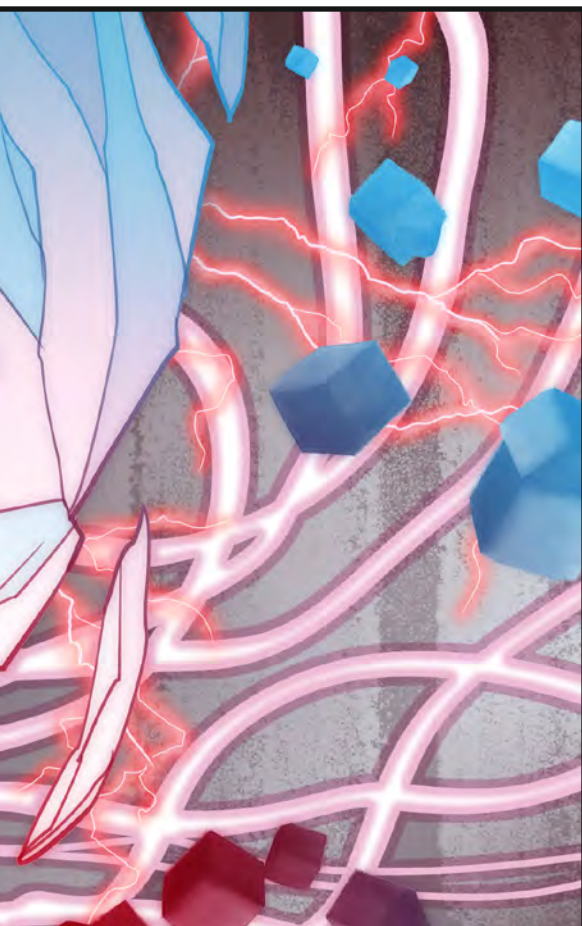
The party awakens in a room that looks like sets used in their film, but not exactly the same. The Personas are off-camera—the film is happening elsewhere—and their dice hover in front of them. After a few seconds, something starts hammering on the door. It's not long before it breaks open and in bursts a blood-soaked guy with a fireaxe followed by a handful of people wielding improvised weapons. These are our Fallen. Their eyes flicker like projector units and they speak in what is clearly snippets of film dialogue.

The guy at the front shouts: "I'm not scared of you anymore!" and attacks.

When a Persona grabs their dice, they transform into their Paragon as usual—but there's something sinister about them. They look like the antagonists from their film (or twisted versions of them, at least). Look toward horror movies for inspiration, but here are some ideas for free:

- High-contrast lighting
- Always badly lit
- Bestial features
- Sharp screeching noise
- Signature brutal weapon
- Leather vampire
- High-frequency buzzing
- Low-frequency drone
- Shadows curl around you
- Possessed by a spirit
- Coiling chains
- Spectral cowl
- Something else

If it fits, they resemble a particular antagonist from the film; otherwise, they look like rejected concept art or an amalgam of the threats shown and alluded to in the plot. The special effects are certainly better than anything you could afford when you worked on the project.





THE RULES

The Personas find a torn page of a script nailed to the exit door. It reads:

INT. ARRIVAL ROOM—NIGHT

The players wake up in a strange room and are accosted by several SUPPORTING CHARACTERS led by a bloodthirsty PROTAGONIST.

PROTAGONIST

I'm not scared of you any more!

They fight; the players are killed. The players survive and defeat their attackers.

At this point, the voice of the Master rings out as if it's being projected directly into the Personas' heads.

MASTER (OFF-CAMERA)

This is a world I have dreamed into being. I alone control what happens here. You have a choice: find me and convince me to give it up and go home to your dull little lives, or join me here and rule the night as monsters. All surviving players must agree on the outcome. I am waiting at the climax at the end of the film. If some of you should die before then... so much the better.

THE WORLD THROUGH A LENS

The world is a stitched-together amalgam of all the previous drafts of the film, the Master's dreams and ambitions, the Personas' fears, your favourite horror movies and some really run-of-the-mill set-dressing to fill in the gaps. Here are some general ideas for locations you can mash together:

- Creepy dark woods
- Junkyard filled with jagged metal
- Big decrepit mansion
- Abandoned mental hospital
- Operational mental hospital
- Cave, with strange paintings on the walls
- Perfectly white chamber with humming fluorescent lights
- Run-down shack in the middle of nowhere
- A ship at sea caught in a storm

Throughout the world, gangs of Fallen (usually one Protagonist and a few Supporting Characters) attempt to murder their way out of the plot. In their eyes, they're brave heroes fighting horrible monsters in a world that barely makes sense—and that's pretty much exactly what's happening.

If the Personas explore the world around them beyond a cursory glance, they'll discover that everything is only real as far as the surface level. Books are full of blank pages, or if they're open on camera but out-of-focus, nothing but Lorem Ipsum; the view through windows is painted-on or projected; walls are built of plywood and glue and there's not really a ceiling, per se, more a studio roof in the darkness above; NPCs wait offscreen until their cue to arrive and so on. Pushing further reveals an endless void of static, flickering blank film reel or choppy digital noise (depending on when your game is set). Reality is only as real as it needs to be on camera.

REMAKING THE FILM

To reach the climax at the end of the film (and therefore the Master, and the real world), the players will need to recreate key scenes from the plot. Remember those questions about the first, second and third acts in the set-up phase? Those will form the basis of your adventure structure.

The scenes don't have to follow a shot-for-shot remake, or even end in the same way, but as long as they carry across the film's ethos they should work just fine. As the Paragons are dressed as the villains of the piece, they'll need to lure or pressgang suitable Protagonists and Supporting Characters into their recreated scenes—or come up with a convincing disguise.

You'll have at least two scenes to play through before the finale, but if you've alluded to any more during Persona Generation, feel free to mix those in too. (Two scenes should be great for a one-shot game, given how long you'll have.) As with a standard game of *DIE* described in Rituals, try to give the Persona what they want—a measure of power, control and respect that they just can't find in the real world—and incorporate their answers and suggestions into the setting as you go.

When a scene is complete, the world cuts to black and the Paragons find themselves in a new environment.

THE FINAL ENCOUNTER

The Master welcomes them to the end of the film (in the location specified in the opening questions) and lays out their offer.

The world as it is now is disjointed and strange—with the Persona on board, everything would slot into place. No longer would disoriented loose protagonists stumble through the broken world in search of resolution; instead, it would all tick along neatly, and in the shadows the Master and their cabal of killers would reign supreme. All they need is to agree.

If the Persona can't agree with them, they unleash the Video Nasty (see Bestiary). The Video Nasty is a swarming gestalt mess of fear and shadows and, unlike everything else in the world, it doesn't look like a cheap effect. It doesn't look real, because nothing like that could be real, but it certainly doesn't look fake.

EPILOGUE

Everyone wakes up in the room where they sat down to play the game; dead players are dead, and they're dead in some sort of hard-to-explain gruesome way rather than something simple and quiet like an aneurysm or heart attack.

How does the experience change the lives of the people who were trapped inside it? If the Master survived, can they forgive them for what they did? (And if the Master didn't survive, can they forgive themselves?)

Alternatively—if the players decide to stay in Die, what aspect of terror do they rule over? Do they finally get what they were looking for?



BESTIARY

FALLEN PROTAGONIST

A lantern-jawed dude in a varsity jacket; a dark-haired girl with several older brothers; an obsessed researcher caught up in problems beyond their paygrade; a young mother looking for her two children; someone else?

FALLEN PROTAGONIST

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	3	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	3	4	0		

Abilities

Revenge Frenzy: Gains advantage on hand-to-hand attacks, but can never have any Guard.

Choose either:

- Shotgun, pistol or rifle (can attack from range)
- Fireaxe, machete or fire poker (gains **Special:** this hit causes 2 Wounds)

FALLEN SUPPORTING CHARACTER

The hot one; the weird one; the strong one; the dangerous one; the pretentious one; the vapid one; the influencer in a badly-acted cameo role; someone else?

FALLEN SUPPORTING CHARACTER

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	2	4	0		

Abilities

Revenge Frenzy: Gains advantage on hand-to-hand attacks, but can never have any Guard.

Ironic Comeuppance: If your attack uses the Supporting Character's shtick against them, it gains **Special:** the Supporting Character is killed.

THE MASTER

Desperate to see their dreams come to fruition, they have resorted to black magic and contraband roleplaying games to make their vision a reality.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	3	3	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	6	0		

Abilities

Slow-Motion: When you approach within arm's reach of the Master, all physical actions (such as fighting) are at disadvantage as your movements slow while theirs stay at regular speed.

Coward: The Master is uninterested in doing anything themselves, especially when it comes to violence. They'll attempt to flee confrontations rather than resolve them.

VIDEO NASTY

An amalgam of your fears jury-rigged into a nightmare gestalt; it doesn't move, but it exists in many different places at once. It is shadow and noise and wires and teeth and flicker and broken glass. It wants your blood. It wants to show you that you don't have control.

Stats: All stats are 1 point higher than the highest stat rating amongst the Paragons (or *N*) So if the highest Constitution in the party is 4, the Video Nasty has Constitution 5, and so on.

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
<i>N</i> +1	<i>N</i> +1	<i>N</i> +1	<i>N</i> +1	<i>N</i> +1	<i>N</i> +1
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
<i>N</i> +1	<i>N</i> +1	<i>N</i> +1	<i>N</i> +1		

Abilities

Know Your Place: The Video Nasty's attacks gain the **Double-Special:** sever, destroy or otherwise neutralise a Paragon's supernatural ability (for example, the Neo's Gift of the Fair, the Dictator's Voice, the Emotion Knight's weapon and so on—use your judgement, GM, and really put the hurt on them). The Paragon can regain the ability by confessing a fear of theirs that they've hidden from the other characters, and are ashamed to disclose.

Bound Demon: The Video Nasty is under the thrall of the Master, but only just. It has no loyalty towards them, and should they lose control of it, it will happily attack them as well.





DIE: CON QUEST

OVERVIEW

We all used to work together and created a successful indie comic. It got optioned by a film studio, but never made. With bitterness and estrangement between us, we gather together at a comic convention to play a role-playing game for old time's sake...

Content Warning: *Corporate exploitation, undead, cannibalism, body horror, plagiarism, zombies, obsession/parasocial relationships, workplace disagreements and body modification.*

EXTRA PREPARATION

Gather a convention map. Use any con map you can find and/or download. It tends to work best with a con you've attended, so you can easily visualise and describe. If you're running this scenario at a con, use the map of the con you're at.

PERSONA GENERATION

Each Persona should select a role (with the Master playing the Editor):

2 players:	Comic Publisher and Writer (feel free to change Writer to Cartoonist in a two-player game).
3 players:	add Artist.
4 players:	add Fan.
5 players:	add Journalist.

Ask the following questions, in order. Skip all questions related to a Persona who isn't in the game. For example, in a two-player game, only ask the Publisher and Writer questions. (Where these questions refer to "me," that's the Editor.)

ASK THE WRITER:

- ◆ Congratulations! You're the creator of a very successful book. What's it called? What is the genre?
- ◆ What's your greatest strength as a writer?
- ◆ What was the worst thing about working with me?
- ◆ Why do you sneakily respect this journalist?
- ◆ The book is your big hit. Your only hit. Why?

ASK THE PUBLISHER:

- You're the publisher. What's the name of your company?
- How come you own the rights to the book, not the Writer?
- Do you care about comics?
- What's the writer's greatest weakness they just can't admit?
- Why did you fire me?
- So what's the reason we're still in social contact and friendly?
- Why do you hold a grudge against journalist?

ASK THE ARTIST:

- Who was your best friend and why did you stop talking?
 - ◆ Do you miss them? (Referring to the person the artist has called out.)
- You're the co-creator of the book.
- When did you quit working on the book, and why?
- When did your art start getting worse?
- Why have you come back for another run?

ASK THE FAN:

- You're a fan of the book. Why are professionals cool with you hanging with them?
- You want to work in the industry. What job do you want to do?
 - ◆ Does the fan have any talent in your field whatsoever? (To whomever has that job.)
- Who do you think is most important to the success of the book?
- Regarding the writer's new work with the artist—why is it not as good as the old stuff?
- Why have you leaked rumours to the journalist?

ASK THE JOURNALIST:

- What sort of sites do you work for? Why have you been invited to hang out with this bunch?
- Why do you think the writer is actually just bad?

ASK EVERYONE:

- Who is your hero figure?
- Why do you think the TV show of the comic didn't happen?

PARAGON GENERATION

If you're playing at a con, the Personas get together to play a game in the room you're actually sitting in. If you're not at a con, choose a room that's a good distance away from the biggest hall in the con.

Distribute the dice as so:

Editor:	Master
Writer:	Godbinder
Publisher:	Neo
Artist:	Emotion Knight
Fan:	Fool
Journalist:	Dictator

THE MASTER'S MOTIVATION

Since being sacked, the editor has had a terrible time. The comic was the highlight of their life, and this is an attempt to get the band back together. While the world they end up in is hellish, the editor believes when everyone has agreed to stay, they'll be able to solve the problem, and create a world where they'd be appreciated like true artists.

If you're looking for something more sympathetic, lean into the cry-for-help aspect of this setup. The Editor is sure they can make this work if they just stay here—they made such a mess of it in the real world. This leaves room for the other Persona convincing the Master that they can maybe turn it around in the real world.

INTO DIE

The party arrives in a warped mirror-dimension version of the room they're playing the game in. No one else is there. The windows are opaque. The colours are just off. Textures are rough. Look too long at something and you start to feel vertigo.

As the Master, grab the D20, and then use a Cheat Token to teleport away saying "It worked. Meet you in **[Whatever the main hall is]**."

In a few moments, a group of Fallen enter the room. They're the big name creator and a group of wannabe hacks—writers with blades for hands (one for each player)—stats are in the Bestiary at the end of this adventure.

If a rival creator has not turned up in the world generation, use one (or more!) of the Personas' hero figures as the inspiration for the big-name creator. If no other motivation has presented itself, the big-name creator is angry at them for plagiarising them.

REACHING THE MAIN HALL

The Personas are free to explore the rest of the con. Use the con map to chart the exploration. Bar being in a warped-hell dimension, the biggest difference is what's being advertised. All the exhibitions are for the film version of your book.

The main problem in navigating areas is that the con (and the streets around it) are filled with devoted, dead-eyed zombie-fans of the book. If left to their own devices, they try to cram their way into the main hall, forming huge crushes of bodies. If they become aware of the players, those in the locality will attempt to collect souvenirs such as signatures, or fingernails (see Bestiary for details). They are not actively hostile—they deeply, intensely love the Personas. Can the players reach the main hall intact?

For a longer game, you use the con map as inspiration for encounters in any given area, merging it with a detail from the Personas' backgrounds to link to make it specific. Always feel free to ask further questions to get more information during play. Asking questions about specific characters from the hit book, and then immediately including it in the world, is a useful approach.

For example:

"You enter the cosplay area. Writer—who's the most popular character in the comic?"

"Oh, Captain Stardust."

"The area is full of near perfect Captain Stardusts. Each one has a single, uncanny error. One has no eyelashes. One casts no shadow. One has fingers at the end of their tongue. They turn to you with angry, demanding eyes and say: which of us is the best?"

THE FINAL ENCOUNTER

When they reach the main hall, the party finds the editor holding off a horde of desperate fans who the editor can't quite control.

If a Persona assists the Master, the Master will attempt to convince the players to stay. Given the state of the hell-world, this is likely tricky. In which case, the Master will ask the other Persona for what aspect of their fantasy world they'd like to see and then use a Cheat Token to create it. This shows that he can change things for the better (and also shows that he really needs help from the other Persona.) However, these changes should also remind the player of the real world. The two questions you need to ask the Persona are...

What does this look like?

What element of it reminds you of something back in the real world?

If the Persona attack, the Master will use a cheat token to get rid of any remaining attackers, and turn his attention to the group.

EPILOGUE

The epilogue follows the same structure as Rituals Endgame on page 136. Ask how the experience changed them (or what their life in the fantasy world would be like) then build on that with some unsettling details.

If the Personas decide to leave, it's likely the supernatural experience may creep into the book's growing success in the real world.

If they stay, dwell on what they've left behind—perhaps most useful is the idea that in the real world the book becomes something no one cares about. Or, even worse, perhaps they make a terrible movie version. Shudder.

BESTIARY

WANNABE HACK

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	0	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	2	4	0		

Abilities

Slicing Arms, Painful Prose: Advantage on close combat attacks.

BIG-NAME CREATOR

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4	0	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	4	2	1		

Abilities

Every second round, vomit a flood of inky blood, which can hit anyone directly in front of them **Special:** if Wounded, target misses a turn.

Thanks to playtesters: Jody Houser, Amy Dallen, Sam De Leve, Jim Zub, Shaun Manning.



DESPERATE FANS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	0	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	0	2	0		

Abilities

Aggressive Hug: Hits can only reduce guards, not health. **Special:** the Fan holds onto the player, causing a disadvantage on all actions until they're beaten away. If a target has a number of fans equal to their Strength holding on, the target suffers one wound per turn as the fans start to affectionately tear them apart.

DIE: DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME (WE KILLED A KOBOLD AND TOOK ITS STUFF)

OVERVIEW

This is essentially a Hack of the game as presented by Rituals, and an example of how you can easily change up even the standard game just by adding a few good hard tweaks.

You all used to play fantasy role-playing games together as teenagers at school. Now, years down the line, you're all back in town for a school reunion and have decided to get together to play a game for old time's sake... but do you really remember what happened back then?

Content Warning: *Loss of control, gaslighting/false memories, pleas for euthanasia and unreality.*

EXTRA PREPARATION

As well as keeping notes in Persona Generation, you should be prepared to take notes for an Encounter List: a collection of things which are in the fantasy world which the players have yet to encounter.

PERSONA GENERATION

Ask the questions in DIE Rituals, or any other social group from this chapter.

PARAGON GENERATION

Distribute the dice to the players, as per DIE Rituals.

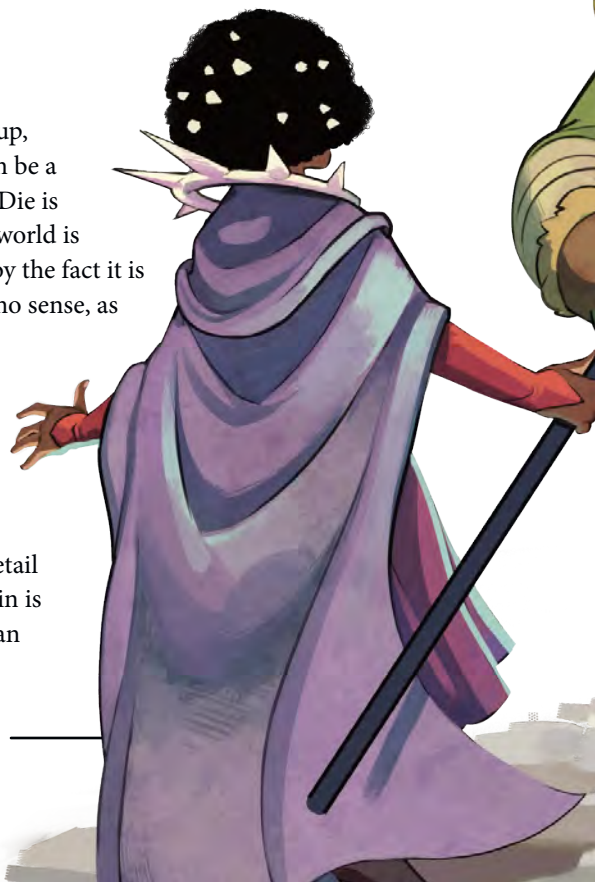
MASTER'S MOTIVATION

Worked out from the Persona Generation questions, as per DIE Rituals.

GM ADVICE ON ATMOSPHERE

DIE is always at least a little meta—this set-up, especially with how the adventure starts, can be a lot meta. The cold open when you arrive in *Die* is straight deconstructionary and the fact the world is mashed together and confusing is justified by the fact it is based on someone's first scenario. It makes no sense, as they rarely do.

The target tone is black comedy inching into horror. Players will likely laugh to start with. Dig past the laughs to get to something bleaker. Orcs begging you to kill them and take their stuff can be funny. Continuing to do it while you describe in detail (Lines and Veils withstanding) how their skin is sloughing off after they've been set on fire can perhaps reach another place.



INTO DIE

The party emerges into the centre of a 20 foot by 20 foot room, with a 10 foot high ceiling. Exactly. A dungeon room. That's the only way to explain it.

Their dice float before them. In the middle of the north wall is a wooden door. The players do not know why this wall is to the north—they just do. The players may realise that they can't identify the sort of wood the door is made of, any more than "it's wood." It's platonic wood. Its woodiness cannot be denied. The walls and ceiling are made of dungeon. Do not explain what that means. It means dungeon.

The Master grabs the D20, spends a Cheat Token, and teleports away. Before disappearing, the master says, "Oh, I need to set up!"

THE ORCS, BECAUSE OF COURSE IT'S ORCS

Shortly after, once the party has had a look around and grabbed their dice, the door to the north opens up. An orc from Orc Central Casting—green skin, teeth, brutal weapons, brutal attitude—sticks their head around the door, sighs, and then shouts back. "Oh, adventurers, guys! They're here to kill us and take our stuff!"

The orcs enter. The orcs are **Fallen**. Their stats are in the Bestiary at the end of this section. All the orcs want is to fight the party, or be killed by them, so the party can take their stuff. They are fatalistically resigned to this, going as far as encouraging it: "Take our stuff! Look—it's self-defence. I'm attacking you. If you kill me, you can take our stuff."

THAT AFOREMENTIONED STUFF

The next room is another 20 foot by 20 foot room with a chest in the centre. There are no other exits. There is no way to sense what's beyond these walls—the void goes on forever.

Reality is these two rooms.

On the chest, there is a small note that reads, "Our Stuff." Inside the chest is 372 copper pieces, a key and a 10 foot pole. The party can automatically intuit there are 372 pieces and that the pole is exactly 10 feet long. There is no logical way that a 10 foot pole could fit in this chest.

If the key is touched, reality starts falling apart.

The aimed tone for this is particularly creepy black comedy. You know the thought experiment about whether it's ethical to eat a pig that wants to be eaten? This is that.





REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME

Players arrive in the bar where their first adventure started, as per normal for **DIE Ritual** (page 107). The encounter here continues as normal (i.e. establish how to get home to the real world) except that no-one can quite remember where the final encounter actually is. (It was a long time ago.) Instead, give the Persona a general direction to head.

The second the players leave the bar, things change. Normally, you'd ask the players what is outside, and use their answers to establish the nature of the world.

You still ask them what's outside... but then ask them to roll a D6, and look up the results on the following secret table. Do this any time you ask a question to the players to establish what happens next.

1. **Correct.**

The encounter is entirely as they remember. (Yes, there was a path to a fantasy town.)

2. **Wrong.**

Their memory is 100% off in one large and crucial fashion. (Yes, there was a path, but it leads to a dark castle.)

3. **Exactly as they remember, with one other element.**

Ask another player what's missing here. Incorporate their answer. (Yes, there was a path to a fantasy town, and it had a rickety bridge across a chasm halfway along.)

4. **Exactly as they remember, with one other element... but off.**

Ask another player what's missing here. The opposite of their answer is what's missing. (Yes, there was a path to a fantasy town, but the bridge halfway along that crossed the chasm is missing.)

5-6. **The Encounter List**

Add the answer to the Encounter List. If there's already things written on the Encounter List, the GM chooses one, crosses it out and it happens now. If the list was empty, ask another player what happens next and then re-roll. If that re-roll turns up 5-6 again, also add it to the list, and ask another player. Continue until something other than 5-6 is rolled. (The thing which the Persona remembers absolutely is in the game... but not here. It will turn up at a random point in the future.)

As always, the GM should take the encounter you've generated and integrate material from the Personas' backgrounds and desires to colour the experience.

Continue the process until you have time for one more encounter. Then proceed to the Final Encounter.



Sprinkle in encounter elements from the list that didn't turn up before the final encounter. ("Oh—here come the river elves. I knew there were river elves here somewhere!")

GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK

As there's no prep here, your questions of "what happens next" should include fairly driven questions that actively generate encounters. You're essentially asking the players what's the next problem they're going to face. Here's a list of useful questions...

- Why was it a bad idea to take that path through the forest?
- What did you find in the middle of the forest?
- What pursued every step of the way out of the forest?
- What natural boundary did you have to cross to get into the castle?
- Who was that belligerent thing which lived in the castle?
- Wait—wasn't there a trap here?
- What was the thing which made you realise a Dragon was ahead?

THE FINAL ENCOUNTER

If there's something on the Encounter List you think works well for a climax, pick that one and use it. If there's nothing suitable, tell a player that they think they remember where the final encounter was—ask and then roll on the above table, ignoring steps 5 and 6.

Otherwise, run like the end of DIE Ritual.

EPILOGUE

Works entirely as described in Rituals Endgame (page 136). If players return to the real world, ask what they've learned and give a specific detail. If they stay, ask about their life here, and add a beat from the real world.

BESTIARY

KOBOLDS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	1	0	0		

Does whatever a Kobold does and looks like whatever a party remembers a Kobold to look like. Ask the players, find out. I have no idea.

For additional stats from this adventure, see the full Bestiary beginning on page 183.

Thanks to playtesters: Jim Rossignol, James Hewitt, Chris Gardiner.





DIE: DEVELOPMENT HELL

OVERVIEW

You're all on an indie game team working on the creative director's masterwork. The project has been in progress for years, and the company has been in crunch (punishing overtime) for most of the last year. It's running out of money. Many people have left the team. It's sort of becoming an industry joke. Many people think the game won't come out. There's at least another year of development ahead.

Today, you're having a video conference meeting to do a team exercise to try and increase morale. You're playing some old nineties role-playing game.

| Content Warning: *Abusive managers, stress and deadlines.*

EXTRA PREPARATION

This scenario is designed to be played online, and the Personas gathered on a work video chat. This game is likely best in multiple sessions, but we close with some advice on how to narrow it down.

THE SINGLE GAME SESSION

To play this scenario in a single game session, decide what single game the creative lead is obsessed with during prep (there's some advice on making interesting challenges in the Into Die section). That means you can prep assets in advance. The first encounter is now a single crash bug, to introduce the mechanics and allow the players to get to the trip into the creative lead's inspiration game as quickly as possible. Then just ensure there's time for the final confrontation.



PERSONA GENERATION

Each Persona takes a set role within the company. The GM plays the creative lead, who'll end up as the Master.

2 Players: design lead and quality assurance (QA)

3 Players: Add star coder.

4 Players: Add marketing.

5 Players: Add intern.

Ask each of the following questions in order to the respective Persona if they're in the game. If there's no specific direction for the question, ask it to anyone you like. As always, players and GM should ask further questions as they wish.

ASK EVERYONE:

- What's the genre of the game?
- What some of the big bugs in the game?
- What's the hold up in development?
- Whose fault do you think it is?
- Why did you take this job?
- You're a fan of the creative lead. Why do people like their games?
- You think the creative lead is over-rated. Why do people hate their games?
- What classic game does the creative lead always go on about, in terms of capturing its essence, its soul?

Try to get as much detail as you can.

- This endless crunch is brutal. How has it negatively affected your home life?
- Everyone gets profit share on this. If the game launches and is a success, how do you see the future?
- Do you think the game has any chance of launching?

ASK THE DESIGN LEAD:

- What are your influences as a designer?
- Design lead is your job title. You're not actually doing much design work. You're really just getting people to do stuff for you. How do you feel about this?

ASK THE CODER:

- You solved a huge technical problem that was holding up the game. What was it?
- Recently, your work has fallen apart. What in your personal life has distracted you from making more progress?

ASK THE STAR CODER:

- You are highly skilled—who do you have a tendency to condescend to?
 - ◆ Why do you let them get away with that? (To the person who they look down on.)

ASK THE QA:

- Many people in QA get into it to try and move to a different part of the company. What job has the creative lead promised you can move onto soon?
- You personally found a major problem in the game, and arguably saved the company. What was it?
- How did you feel when your excellence in finding this problem was rewarded by keeping you in QA?
- Who causes most of your problems?

ASK MARKETING:

- What's the worst thing you've done to get good coverage for the game? Are you ashamed by it?
- Do you care about games at all?
- You have a secret about another team member. Who?
 - ◆ What's the secret? (To that person.)

ASK THE INTERN:

- How did you get a job at the company? Are you qualified for it?
- There's a reason why you shouldn't be working at this company, and if it was revealed you'd be in big trouble. What is it?
- Who got blamed for your biggest fuck up? What was it? Why didn't you come clean?

ASK THE DESIGNER:

- Who are you jealous of on the team?

PARAGON GENERATION

The creative lead has a morale-building exercise he wants everyone to be involved with. We're months behind schedule, so no-one's very enthusiastic about it, but attendance is compulsory. The creative lead has got everyone into the group conferencing software to have this game.

The roles are distributed as so:

Design Lead:	Godbinder
QA:	Emotion Knight—specifically a Vigilance Knight
Star Coder:	Neo
Marketing:	Dictator
Intern:	Fool

If the design lead is particularly (ahem) dictatorial and the marketing player is a little friendlier, you can swap their roles.

THE MASTER'S MOTIVATION

The creative lead wants to finish the game, and doesn't want to live in a world where they can't. They're desperate enough to look for investors everywhere, and hit upon the possibility of *DIE* deep in the archives of a mysterious and long-defunct web forum. They're aware that this seems lunacy, but they'll have to try it. They have come to think of the people who provided *DIE* as Angel Investors. (Or something like angels, anyway.)

They believe that by defeating the challenges that confront the game in the fantasy, they can create and live in a world where the game is finished. They are correct. This is "let's pivot into VR" gone diabolical.

Tweak the level of sympathy you'd like the Master to have to taste. Perhaps they have a very real reason to want to finish the game quickly. However, there is megalomania at the core of it all, and their actions are deeply abusive to the staff.

Depending on the players' answers and your instincts, there are many paths. You can play this as a genuine visionary who has lost track of the world. You can play this as a shallow parasite with no care for other humans. You can play it as Colonel Kurtz. Have fun.

INTO DIE

The party arrives in a blank wireframe—a mesh of untextured grids that make up the skeleton of a digital 3D world. The dice are the only solid objects in the universe. The Master grabs the D20 and uses a Cheat Token to teleport away. From then on, the Master interacts with the group as the voice of god from the sky, or pop-up text in the top right of a player's vision.

The world starts to flicker into existence, and it appears to resemble a 21st century Earth reality. It gets almost all the way—and then starts to crash and fail. The bugs arrive, attacking the party. Have one bug for each of the players, plus one crash bug.

The Bugs stats are the Bestiary.

Use the nature of the bugs mentioned from the QA's answers in character generation to personalise them. These bugs are our Fallen.

After the bugs are defeated, reality collapses back to the wireframe. A whiteboard appears, with a message from the Master. In their handwriting is written the phrase:

! *"Genius Steals. We need to find the essence."*

On the whiteboard is a list of each one of the Master's inspirations—the ones the players generated in the Persona Generation section.

Present the party with a digital menu hovering in front of their eyes which gives them the option of which of the tasks to attempt. Whenever anyone selects one, they are all transported to a warped version of the location.

At which point, end the first session.

BETWEEN SESSIONS

As well as the usual preparation, spend some time briefly researching the classic games that players mentioned in answer to the “What classic game does the creative lead always go on about, in terms of capturing its essence, its soul?” question. The rest of the game primary consists of performing one mission in each of the areas. In the second and later sessions, you will use the games as inspiration for an encounter or a series of encounters. Read *The Hunt For Inspiration* to see how these will be used, and look for what you need.

Think of ways the games could be used to echo individual Persona's backstories.

SECOND SESSION AND LATER

All the inspirations must be acquired to finish the mission. When a mission is completed, it is erased from the board.



THE HUNT FOR INSPIRATION

For each mission, the party is transported to a world based on the game in question. If it's a game with maps, pick a popular one and use it as the inspiration for the environment they're exploring. Their mission is to secure "the essence."

The best tactic is to give an open-ended objective inspired by the nature of the game they're dropped into, and then leaving the party to work out a way to achieve the goal. If they're dropped into Super Mario, locating which castle the "Princess" is in may work, or if dropped into Tetris, finding a way to make the blocks "disappear." Here's some examples of ways games can be turned into specific missions:...

Sonic the Hedgehog:	Navigate precipitous and often impossible terrain to seize the Master Emerald.
Half-Life 2:	Grasp the Crowbar from the Combine forces that seek to capture it and use it to break through to freedom.
GTA III:	Attract the attention of, and then steal, a tank.
Pac-Man:	Evade neon-bright murderous ghosts in a subterranean maze whilst consuming every single pill you find on the map.
Duolingo:	Try to speak a language badly while being harassed by a huge, relentless green bird.

Each mission can be of variable length depending on your needs. For a multiple-session game, you can devote one session to each source of inspiration; for two linked games, spend the second session rattling between quick objectives en route to the final confrontation; for a speedy one-shot, as mentioned elsewhere, have a single objective and skip that part of Persona gen entirely.

To make a mission longer, you can make the objective more open-ended and let the players come up with multiple solutions as to what the Essence might be, with one of them proving to be correct. You can also put more obstacles in their path to extend the adventure—an arduous list of minor quests can take a whole session, whereas clear and simple objectives that are immediately achievable lets you rocket through them like **Warioware**.

Unless the group is familiar with the game in question, specific riffs may not land. Lean into the general ideas of the world. Explain the vibe of the world. If other players are familiar with the world, allow them to chime in.

Either have each world echo the original game's aesthetic (as in, weird pixelated 16-bit people walking around for an early 90's classic) or present it as if it's actually real. Or both, using glitch aesthetics.

Most of all, work echoes of a Persona's real life in to the game, as per a usual game of *DIE*.

Inserting more bugs as antagonists or a lurking threat is also useful if the pace is starting to drop. If you want things to feel a bit more urgent, have digital predators hunting the party through successive game worlds.

Sometimes your players will choose a game which has a perfect in-game objective—for example, if the game was Monkey Island—whose opening segment is about proving yourself to be a pirate. Drop the party into the game's opening island and let them convince everyone they're a crew of pirates.

DIE is not necessarily a combat game. Dropping the players into Halo does not mean fighting every single inch of the game map. Make the goal clear when the party is dropped into the world. The Neo's AI is likely a useful source of info, or the Godbinder's gods—and you can always give them sub-objectives via a mission overlay.



THE FINAL ENCOUNTER

After the checklist is completed, reality tries to launch again... and works. It's a 99% accurate mirror of reality. They may see an occasional glitch, but it's *near* perfect. They are outside the headquarters of their company... which is considerably fancier than in real life.

The Master is inside, who explains everything. Everyone has equity in the company, so everyone needs to vote to stay in this perfect recreation of Earth. The party can see that this world is not "perfect." The Master explains away any glitches are just teething problems. He clearly doesn't quite understand how this all works, but in this new universe, the game is complete. They can all move on with their lives and bask in the glow of this huge creative success.

Of course, if they don't all come to an agreement, the universe will crash and they'll all die. They could all agree to go back to reality, but then the game wouldn't be finished.

This plays out like a standard *DIE* game, in terms of reaching agreement, one way or another. The Master is reluctant to escalate to violence, but certainly will if it looks like agreement is impossible and reality starts to fall apart. It's likely that some Personas will want to tweak the world in a significant way. Assume "enormous riches from the success of our game" is a given. Use Cheat Tokens to offer one "wish" to each Persona. Unless the Master is especially sympathetic, the Master will not accept anything which stops the world being recognisably Earth—art is only appreciated in its original context, so if we turn the world into a techno-utopia it misses the whole point of the endeavour.

EPILOGUE

If the players return to reality, it's the same as *DIE* Ritual, but ask a couple more questions. Specifically, the fate of the game—was it finished? What compromises did they come to?

If the Personas choose to stay, it's a little unusual in that the world they're on is seemingly identical to Earth, bar the things which aren't quite... right. Underline that it's a perfect life, and the Personas barely even notice the world slows down when you're in a crowd any more. Barely.



BESTIARY

BUGS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	0	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	2	4	0		

Abilities

Blasts of Bad Data: Advantage on ranged attacks.

CRASH BUGS

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
4	0	4	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
0	4	4	1		

Abilities

Every second round, as well as its usual attack, it creates a fissure in reality attacking anyone in close range. **Special:** target suffers disadvantage on all actions for one round.

Thanks to Playtesters: *David Walker, Puckett, Matt Phillips*





11. APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1: PLAYER MASTERS

These are the rules for playing a Master as a player character, rather than their usual role as an antagonist controlled by the GM.

This is a role-playing game. Yes, you see a world around you... but you know there's rules behind it. And someone running it. Ideally, one day it's going to be you. Until then, you're creeping around the edges of the game, seeing what you can get away with.

Most people look at you and think "wizard." Pfft! Wizards cast spells. You mess with the rules to get what's possible and outright cheat when you need the impossible. The world is a game. That means it's your plaything.

Until someone notices you.

PLAY THE MASTER IF YOU WANT TO....

- ◆ Re-arrange rules to create your own custom magic spells.
- ◆ Outright cheat when you need something literally impossible.
- ◆ Beg for your life from judgemental extradimensional beings when you get caught.



MASTER CREATION

STATS

Assign your stats. All stats start at 2. You have 2 points to increase any stat(s) you wish. Masters benefit from a high Intelligence and Constitution score.

EQUIPMENT

Choose one of the following options:

- ◆ Quarterstaff (**Special:** recover 1 Guard)
- ◆ An elegant handgun (**Special:** if a hit Wounds, it does 2 Wounds against unarmoured opponents)
- ◆ A huge tome (Advantage on tasks involving research, heavy enough to be an improvised club)

YOUR LOOK

You are wearing (Defence 0):

- ◆ Wizard robes straight out of a 1980s kids fantasy cartoon.
- ◆ Killer suits straight off a 1980s corporate bad guy.
- ◆ Fetish-wear straight out of a 1990s vampire LARP
- ◆ Something else

MY GAME, MY RULES

Select three Rules from the Rules section—elements of reality that you can manipulate with magic. You have power over these rules, and you do not suffer risk when you add them to spells that you have crafted.

RULES MASTERY

The Master starts every session with Mastery. You keep this until otherwise stated. If a Master has Mastery, they're allowed to add their D20 when casting spells. If the D20 is added to the pool, the dice roll includes the 20-Special which is activated on the result of a 20. **20-Special:** this success counts as two successes.

If you lose it, it will return at the start of the next session.

RULES LAWYERING

Wizards learn spells from books. Amateurs. A Master gets to manufacture their own spells by imaginatively combining rules. Want to throw a fireball? Easy. Combine the Range, Area and Damage Duration rules and get chucking. Want that fireball to chain between targets and immolate the ground around you? Put Damage Chain and Create Obstacle in there. The sky's the limit—but the more audacious you get, the more you risk retribution from the Powers That Be.

Masters aren't limited by the rules they've selected, or the limits they describe. They have access to all of the rules—but not safe access to them.

THE RULES IN FULL

There's two sorts of rules. Ones which change who is targeted and ones that change what happens. If you don't include any rules that change who is targeted the spell will happen instantaneously at touch range (as in, they will affect yourself or what you're touching).

With each selection, the Master defines what these Rules look like in the narrative when they're incorporated in a spell. For example, if you choose Damage (Duration) you can describe it as fire and its narrative effect would be to set things alight.

You can choose the same Rule multiple times, changing its description each time. In addition to Damage (Duration) as fire, you could also select toxic sludge and rat swarm as Damage (Duration) Rules.

Some Rules require the Master to choose a specific target to affect. This can be a stat or a type of action (ranged attacks, personal interaction and more). This will come into play for Rules like Enhance and Hinder.

Rules do the effect they describe. An Area ("melee range") could be limited to any area smaller than arms reach. A Fire Damage effect could be used to light a match.

There's a lot of rules. Don't be overwhelmed. If you're in a rush, pick Range, Area and Damage—Duration and define it as fire. That'll let you reliably throw a fireball. What's a wizard who can't throw a fireball, right?

RULES THAT CHANGE WHO IS TARGETED

Range	The effect is able to reach as far as medium range.
Area	Affect all within melee range of the target area.
Duration	Lasts for the duration of an encounter.
Selectivity	Allows you to remove yourself from the effects of a spell.

RULES THAT CHANGE WHAT HAPPENS

Damage Duration	Damages target. Special: ignite opponent, doing 1 hit per round until extinguished.
Damage Debilitate	Damages target. Special: target suffers a disadvantage on next action.
Heal	Target heals 1 Health. Special: heals an additional Health.
Enhance (___)	Adds advantage on the defined task/stat.
Hinder (___)	Adds disadvantage on the defined task/stat.
Damage Chain (___)	Damages target. Special: this attack can hit another target in the vicinity.
Damage Curse (___)	Damages target. Special: target suffers a disadvantage on their next action.
Damage Barrage (___)	Damages target. Double-Special: this hit inflicts 2 hits.
Illusion	Causes a single human-sized object to appear as something other than it is.



Invisibility	The target becomes invisible. The spell ends if the target makes hostile actions.
Counterspell	An ongoing temporary magical effect or spell is cancelled.
Manipulate Mechanism	Make a single mechanism perform a single desired action.
Detect ()	You notice the presence of a single noun—magic, death, gold, sadness—though uncanny means.
Create Wall	Create an object that must be destroyed before it can be passed over. The Health of the object is equal to twice the number of successes rolled when creating it. It crumbles to nothingness within an hour.
Create Obstacle	Create a patch of difficult ground or awkward terrain. Those who wish to traverse must succeed in a stat roll of the caster's choice.
Sleep	Make an attack which does no damage, but has the capacity to send targets to sleep until awoken by jostling or a loud noise. Has the following Specials : if the target has 4 Willpower or less, they fall asleep. Double-Special : if the target has 6 Willpower or less, they fall asleep. 20-Special : The target falls asleep.
Damage Paralyse ()	Attack. Has Special : If Willpower is 4 or below, immobilize target. Requires a Constitution test to break free. Adds Double-Special : if Willpower is 6 or below, immobilize target. Requires a Constitution test to break free.
Understand ()	Choose a single noun: a specific language, animal, the dead or something else. You can comprehend the target.
Create Creature	Summon a being with actual physicality. It can either follow limited, simple commands of two words or fewer ("Get him!" "Shield me!" "Eat this!") or act autonomously according to its own instincts (but is out of your control).

(CREATE CREATURE STATS)

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	0		

Create Intelligence	Add an active intelligence to your creation—it's sapient now. It is capable of acting on its own discernment, and it's about as smart as a person is, but not necessarily in exactly the same way. It has its own personality. Without Create Creature, this rule creates a disembodied intelligence which you could probably keep in a jar.
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Exchange __ to __	Select two stats. Move one point from the first stat to the second. For example, Exchange Intelligence to Strength would move 1 point from Intelligence to Strength.
Damage—__ Bane	Select a category of creature, like undead, demons or cops. Damages target and adds Special: this hit causes two hits to [category].
Damage—Precise	Damages target and adds Special: this hit bypasses Guard.
Intangibility	Allows the target to move through objects.
Levitation	Allows an object to move freely in all directions.
Speed	Allows an object to move at the speed of a horse.
Telepathy	A target can communicate their thoughts, vision and similar sensory information with caster.

NEGATIVE RULES

These are a selection of rules which can be used to make an ability more powerful, at a cost.

For each Negative Rule added to the spell, you either:

1. Add a **Special:** this success counts as two successes.
2. Reduce the risk by 5.

Component	The spell requires a hard-to-come-by, thematically-relevant component to work.
Blood Cost	Causes one Wound to the caster, or a bound and prepared target, when cast.
Taint of Damnation	Suffer at least one disadvantage on any social check for the rest of the adventure.
Secrets	You must share one secret with someone who doesn't know it. This secret must be meaningful to them, or cause a significant cost to you.

SPELLCASTING, RISK, AND YOU

Once you've worked out what you're doing and what rules you're using, it's time to work out how dangerous it's going to be to cast. When building a spell, calculate risk like so:

- If you don't have this rule, add 5 risk.
- Is this effect slightly more than the standard rule? If so, add 1 risk.
- Is this effect massively more than the standard rule? If so, add 5 risk.

For example, a Master wants to fill a room with a blast of cold to attack an army of fire imps. They have the ranged and area rules, but not a cold blast. The room is close by, so no rules lawyering required on range. A room is bigger than arms reach, but not massively more, so 1 is added to the risk. However, as they do not have cold damage, 5 is added to the risk. The total risk is 6.

Calculating risk is an art, not a science, and something you'll need to adjudicate as you go. Broadly: is the player taking the piss? Add 5 risk. Are they being creative and doing something interesting? Add 1 risk. Let the player know the total risk of a spell before they cast it and negotiate to reduce the risk if appropriate.

If a spell has more than 20 risk, it cannot be cast. When casting a spell with risk, the Master must add the Mastery D20 to the dice pool when rolling. If the result on the D20 is greater than the level of risk, you suffer no consequences for casting the spell. If the result on the D20 is equal to or less than the Master's risk, the Master is caught in their Rules Lawyering by The Powers That Be (see page 368).

When caught, the Master loses their Mastery, and they can no longer add a D20 to rolls. If the Master has already lost Mastery this session, they attract the Powers That Be for punishment—bodily harm, vile curses, ironic undoings, instant death, and worse. See the following Hardcore Cheating for more details on suitable retribution.

HARDCORE CHEATING

Rules can be bent, stretched and manipulated into achieving all kinds of effects, but there's a greater magic at your control. You can break the laws of the universe entirely; you can cheat. But such blatant disregard for the underlying forces of reality comes with a steep cost if discovered by the Powers That Be.

Every Master has a style or a preference. What's yours? Choose one.

Gamist Master: You're into messing with the rules written in this book.

Simulationist Master: You're into messing with the physical laws of the world.

Narrativist Master: You're into messing with the story.

Cheats can be anything in the area of your style. A Gamist Master's cheats will be bending and breaking rules, so maybe players don't die when their Health reach zero. A Simulationist Master will be twisting the physical laws of reality, causing gravity to change or storms to fall in deserts. A Narrativist Master will be twisting the story, having exactly the right stranger turn up at the right time.

To cheat, describe what you want to achieve, and the GM describes a punishment (if you're caught). If you wish to continue, take two containers (a hand would be standard) and secretly hide the D20 in one of them.

A player-controlled master Master does not get cheat tokens like a GM-controlled Master does. Life is unfair, but so is being outnumbered 5 to 1.

Who are the judges of reality? The standard one is the Fair (page 193) but you can never be sure. See Running the Master (page 368) for GM guidance on this.

There's nothing stopping you running the GM-controlled Master with these rules, but you've got enough to worry about as a GM. The change is that, as in the game described in Rituals, they are Realm Master of the world where the game takes place so have access to Realm Master cheats (see page 359).

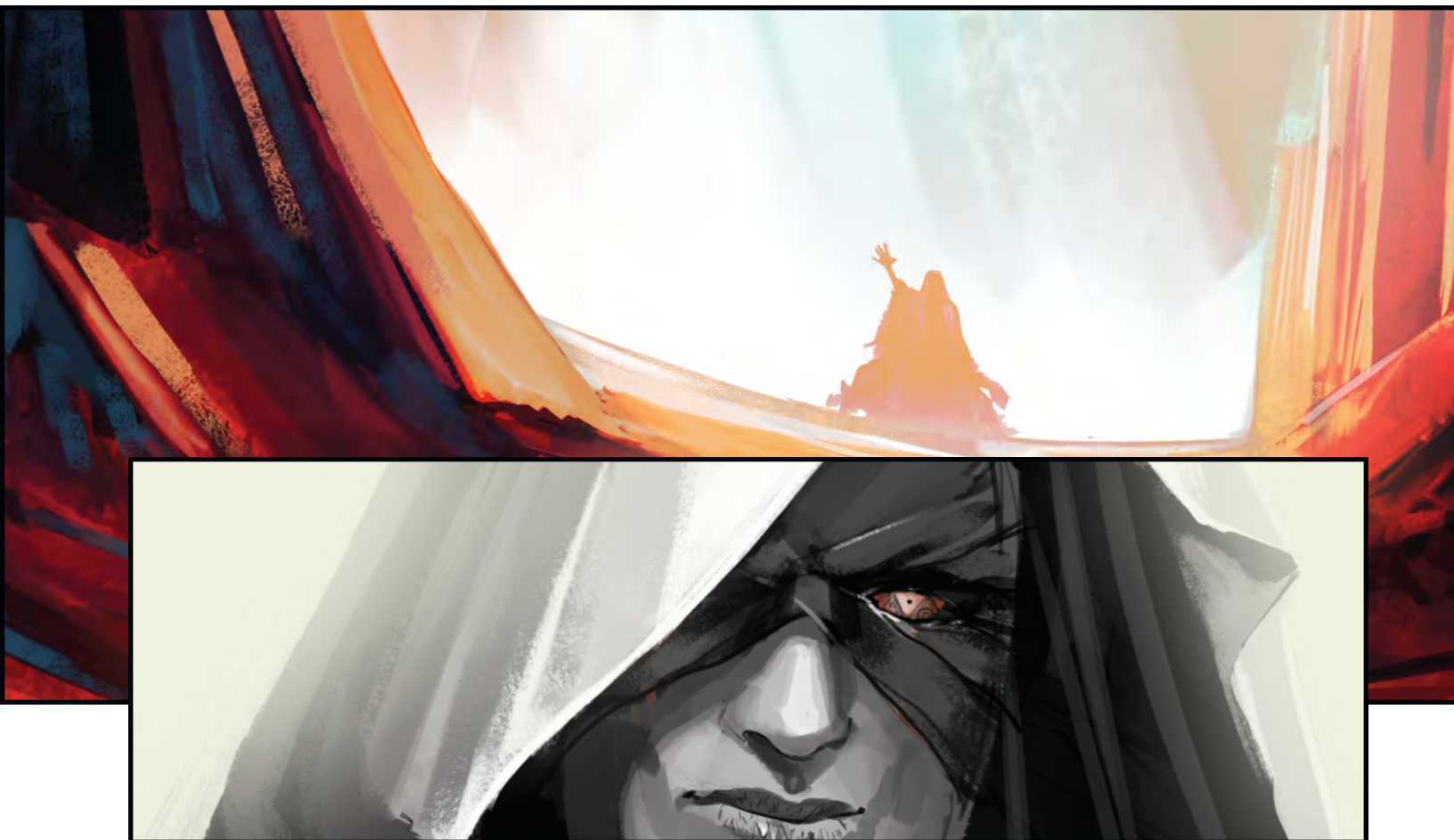
The GM guesses which container the D20 is in:

- If they miss the D20, you get away with it and the effect happens.
- If they find it, the Powers That Be notice you. A trial will begin.

A Trial is a short role-played scene. The Powers That Be appear before you, fully aware of the bad thing you've done. Prepare to beg for your life, make excuses or justify yourself quickly. Good luck.

Whether a Cheat is caught or not, if a cheat has an ongoing effect and the Powers That Be become aware of the cheat, then they can and will act.

It is possible some extremely ambitious cheats will be so complicated as to require significant in-game preparation. "Extremely ambitious" cheats are when a GM knows it's side-stepping the whole scenario rather than a present problem. Look at the guidance on Godbinder's Miracles here—when something is too big, it is likely to need a quest before it works.



Worth stressing that these are the standard punishments. A Master's goal in a Trial to convince the judges of reality to show leniency. It was your first offence! It was for a good cause! It's likely you'll get a lesser, and possibly significantly weirder punishment.



EXAMPLE CHEATS AND PUNISHMENTS

GAMIST CHEATS

MINOR	Change a minor game rule for the duration of an encounter.
For example:	Players can choose to inflict non-fatal injury with no consequences. You can use a Heal rule multiple times in a battle.
Punishment:	Lose Mastery, community service.
MAJOR	Change a major game rule for the duration of the encounter.
For example:	Players don't die at the end of a fight if they're on zero Health. You can regain Mastery at a time other than the start of a session.
Punishment:	1-2 Wounds, ongoing curses until task completed.
OUTRAGEOUS	Overturn or create a temporary exception to a major existing game rule, especially those used by an Archetype.
For example:	Dictators cannot use their voice. Advantages no longer add a dice to the dice pool.
Punishment:	Death.

NARRATIVIST CHEATS

MINOR	Summon an established element into narrative.
For example:	The famous thief everyone's been talking about arrives on the scene.
Punishment:	Lose Mastery, community service.
MAJOR	Establish a new fact about something in the existing narrative.
For example:	For example; the famous thief arrives on the scene... and loves helping out dimension-skipping adventurers.
Punishment:	1-2 Wounds, ongoing curses until task completed.
OUTRAGEOUS	Introduce a whole new element to the fiction of your own design.
For example:	"Hey—there's this awesome thief in this world, and they love helping out dimension-skipping adventurers. And they're standing just over there!"
Punishment:	Death.

The Narrativist, Simulationist and Gamist division is lifting terminology from the old threefold-model theory by Ron Edwards. Go nose at it, but know that the conversation's moved on since Edwards thought it up.

These can basically do almost anything the other cheats can do but at greater risk. You may recognise them from the GM facing master. As the GM Master is the Master of the realm they're in, we simplified the game so these are the only cheats accessible to the Master.

SIMULATIONIST CHEATS

MINOR	Highly unlikely events happen.
For example:	A once-in-a-decade storm hits a coastal town. You find an oasis in a desert.
Punishment:	Lose Mastery, community service.
MAJOR	Extremely unlikely events happen.
For example:	A record-breaking tidal wave hits a coastal town. A rainstorm in a desert.
Punishment:	1-2 Wounds, ongoing curses until task completed.
OUTRAGEOUS	Break fundamental laws of physics.
For example:	A record-breaking tidal wave hits an inland town. Sand is edible.
Punishment:	Death.

REALM MASTER CHEATS

Most Masters wish to gain magical dominion over a portion of the world they're in—a dungeon, a realm or even the whole world for those who would wish to be Grandmaster. Only one Master can have Mastery over any given area, so it's a regular cause of battles between them. If a Master achieve mastery of an area—via earning the Realm Mastery advance—they gain some significant power whilst cheating.

If so, they gain access to the following cheats when in that area, in addition to any other cheats they know...

CHEAT	A miraculous event.
For example:	Create a temptation that fulfils a desire. Summon a monster. Create a fortress. Regain your Mastery. Bend a rule.
Punishment:	Death.
CHEAT	Prevent any single event that has just happened. Uniquely, this can be done as an instant response to an action that's happened.
For example:	Stop your own death. Twist things so that you didn't fall asleep at the wheel and kill them. Change an RPG manuscript to include significant meta-textual references even after several editors tried to remove most of them.
Punishment:	Compulsory instant death, no exceptions.

A LIST OF PUNISHMENTS

What follows is an array of punishments, of broadly increasing severity, you may have to suffer:

Losing Mastery:	The basic punishment.
Community Service:	A specific task a player must complete or face further punishment. Deal with a problem. Confess your secret evils to an unknowing friend. Wear a sign saying that you have messed with reality and promise never to do it again.
Suffering Wounds:	Don't just consider this an annoyance. Remember: pain is pain.
Curses:	Some in-game disadvantage, either mechanical or a narrative, or both. Temporary reduction of stats or loss of access to powers, accompanied by suitably uncanny visual effects. You see a Master with a forked tongue, and you know what happened to them.
The Cheat Not Happening:	Making whatever they were going for simply not happen too. Very much insult to injury.
An Ironic Inversion or Expansion of the Cheat:	The Sorcerer's Apprentice is a classic for a reason. You want a fireball to fill a room? The fireball fills the whole city. Return your friend to life? Now your nemesis crawls from the grave. You wished to hear the Specials play one more gig? You're dealing with a Ska revival.
Quests:	Like Community Service, but more long-term. A big, difficult-to-achieve thing.
Instant Death:	Anything which is active 100% game-breaking cheating will likely get this. Of course, death is part of the game in DIE too.
Death and Collateral Damage:	Some cheats are so loathsome the Powers That Be will not allow it to stand. Cheating which attempts to bring down the whole structure of Die is likely to reach this level. At this point, expect those around you and your friends to be hit too, especially if they were going to gain from your cheating.
Hell:	Trapping you in an eternal hellish pain which destroys them mentally and physically and leaves no room for resurrection or escape. Death is a mercy. Sometimes, if a Master is bad enough, there's no mercy.



If you want, instead of using the simplified GM-Master advancement (page 105), you can use this full system. A lot of advances are less useful (or not at all useful) for the GM Master, but the advances which change the narrative may be useful inspiration for adventures.

This is essentially a cheat token, but accessible to players, with some limitations.

MASTER ADVANCES

NEW RULE

Your understanding of the fundamental forces that underpin reality grows ever-deeper. Pick a new rule.

READING THE RULES

When you enter an environment that is under the power of another Master (or similar reality-controlling force), you're aware of it.

To understand the nature of the realm you're in, roll an Intelligence dice pool. Each success allows you to ask one question to the GM.

To understand the nature of the Master of this realm, roll a Wisdom dice pool. Each success allows you to ask the GM one question about the nature of the master.

A fail on either roll alerts the Master to your presence. A critical fail means you hit a trap, allowing the Master in question to attack you with the spell of their choice.

SLOW AND STEADY

Between adventures, the Master may perform a Hardcore Cheat without being caught. This cannot be a hardcore cheat of Outrageous level.

FURTHER MASTERY

Pick one of the below abilities or a New Rule.

A GREAT RULE

Choose one of your existing Rules. You can now use it as "slightly more than the rule" as if it were the normal definition of the rule—you can push your luck just a little and not gain the +1 Risk that would normally be incurred.

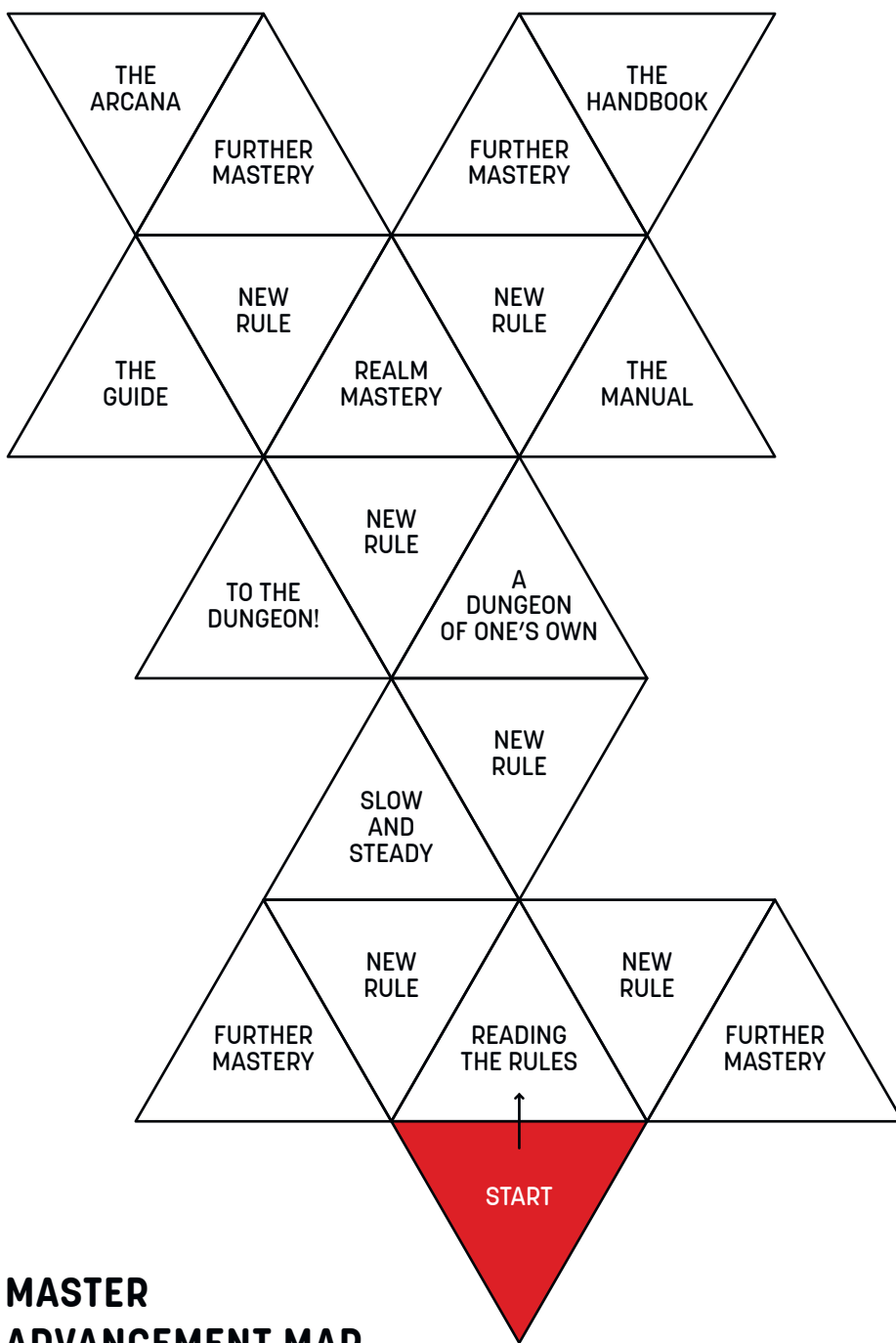
EXTRA MASTERY (PICK ONCE)

You have another use of Mastery. If you lose Mastery once, you can still use your Mastery abilities. It's only when you would lose Mastery a second time that you have to do without it. Extra Mastery refreshes at the start of each session, just like Mastery. If you lose both your Masteries and get caught cheating, you're in trouble as per usual.

MULTIMASTER

You are now less limited by the petty restrictions of GNS theory. The first time you select this advancement, pick one of the two Master types (Gamist, Narrativist or Simulationist) that you did not select when you created your character; you may now perform the lowest tier of Hardcore Cheating related to that domain.

Subsequent selections of this advancement allow you to increase the tier of Hardcore Cheats you can undertake in a domain by one step or unlock access to a new domain.



MASTER ADVANCEMENT MAP

Gain one level in a stat (max 4) on each of the following:

Level 3

Level 6

Level 9

Level 12

At Level 20: Grandmaster





A DUNGEON OF ONE'S OWN

The Master gains access to their own dungeon that exists in a pocket dimension.

Choose how it's accessed:

- Via a real doorway (Pro: creatures can't enter unless invited. Con: doesn't move around)
- Via a small magical object (lamp, coin). (Pro: Portable. Con: Can be taken from you)
- Via a series of magical words or methods (Pro, Con: Can be used at any time by anyone who knows the method)

You are free to design the layout of the dungeon. It can take up no more space than can be drawn on a physical sheet of graph paper, with each square forming a 10 foot by 10 foot by 10 foot cube. You can use any size of graph paper you wish. (You can make a digital version of your dungeon but you must have a piece of physical graph paper to show how big it can be.)

Your dungeon can consist of as many rooms as your level. Every time you go up a level, you can add rooms. Between every adventure, you can delete a room, and draw up to your level total.

The Master has Mastery over the dungeon, so is able to use Realm Master cheats herein such as triggering miraculous events or undoing things that have just happened.

TO THE DUNGEON!

The Master is able to teleport to any place in any Realm they have mastery of—or to any place which a Master who does have mastery of the area has given you permission to go to.

Define what your teleportation looks like. You can bring a party-worth of people with you.

REALM MASTERY

A Master can now become Master of a region of Die. If an area has no Master, simply claim it. If an area has a Master, you must force them to surrender it. They can expand their dominion indefinitely if they're able to claim more terrains.

As in all areas where you are Master, you gain access to the Realm Master Hardcore Cheats when inside a region.

Also choose an advance from Further Mastery.



WRITING THE RULES

These four high level abilities all share a similar ability to fundamentally change the world: handbook, manual, guide and arcana.

To take any of these abilities, you must be a Realm Master. This can be either one you have gained via Realm Mastery or the dungeon from a Dungeon of One's Own.

The nature of the realm you own should be worked into whatever you create using this ability.

THE HANDBOOK

Collaborate with the GM to add a whole new sort of adventurer to the world. What do they do? What is their reputation? To whom do they owe allegiance? And, most importantly, why are they thought of as heroic?

Roll your Intelligence pool, including the D20, when you create it. That's how large its greatest band of heroes are. They can be sent to perform missions separate to the party as per the Compressed Adventure Rules in the Campaign section (page 279).

THE MANUAL

Collaborate with the GM to add a whole new monstrous species to the world. What do they look like? What do they want? To whom do they owe allegiance? And, most importantly, why are they thought of as monsters?

If there is an empty region in the map of Die, this is their homeland. If not, they emerge into the realm where the Master has created them.

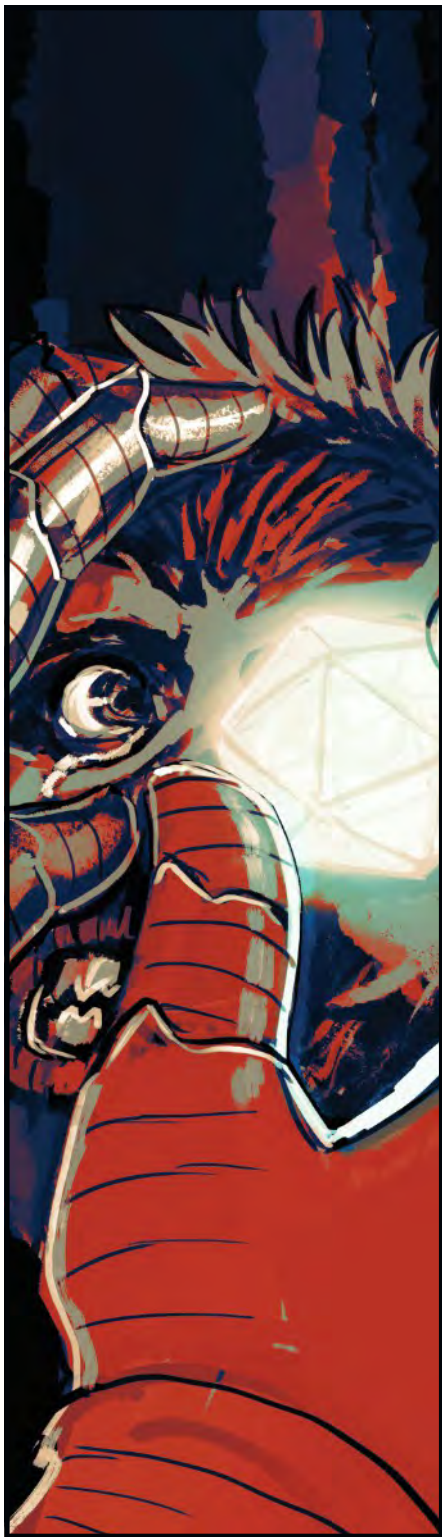
They are a Great Power. Roll your Intelligence pool, including the D20, when you create it. You have as many factions within the Great Power as you have rolled successes—define them.

THE GUIDE

Collaborate with the GM to add a whole new realm to this world. What is it known for? What are the landmarks? What can be found there? And most importantly, why do people never go there?

Select an empty region on the map of Die to be where this is.

Roll an Intelligence pool, including the D20. For each success, define one thing which can be found in this realm. When you define it, also define what prevents people taking it.



THE ARCANA

Collaborate with the GM to add a whole new form of magic to the world. What is this source of power? How do people access it? What can it do? Does it have any iconic magical creatures? And, most importantly, what has prevented its discovery until now?

If you wish, collaborate with the GM to create a new Rule which is definitive of this new form of magic. You now possess this rule.

Roll your Intelligence pool, including the D20, when you create it. Select that many rules you possess. Your rules lawyering on all these rules are at one level less than previously for Rules Lawyering—so “massively more than the standard rule” counts as “slightly more than the standard rule” and slightly more than the standard rule” counts as the normal rule.

CLASS DICE ADVANCE: GRANDMASTER

DIE advancement assumes to end a campaign well before the Paragons reach level 20... but if you do, this is the monster lurking there for a Master.

When you reach level 20:

- You become all powerful for exactly one second. What do you do?
- You are then consumed by Die, forever.



RUNNING THE MASTER

WHO TO GIVE THE MASTER TO

This is the GM advice for running a Player Master, akin to the advice for the other Paragons you find in Running DIE (page 139). This takes the same format.

Keep the Master as your own character for at least your first few sessions of *DIE*. The basic rules all assume a Master as the antagonist, and it's going to require some heavy thinking on your part to play anyone else. The core experience of the GM playing the "evil GM" character class is part of the game's meta thrill.

The Master is a tricky class to set. It's less flexible in terms of the types of classic character types it matches: it is a magic-user. There are different flavours, but they're flavours, not different meats.

It's also a class that demands a lot from the player: freeform inspiration (Hardcore Cheating), quick role-playing (in the trials, detailed below) and a grasp of rules (in the—er—Rules). Any of these can overwhelm a player.

THE POWERS THAT BE

See more about the Fair and how to roleplay them on page 193.

When the Master cheats and their D20 is discovered, the Powers That Be arrive. You may note that these aren't defined for the Master player. The Master is unlikely to know who the Powers That Be are until they turn up, unless they specifically go and try and find out (and maybe not even then).

If there is something in your game which seems to be ideal for policing reality, use it. If not, the judges are The Fair. The Fair exist as a higher level force across all the pocket dimensions of Die, so are very into this.

It should be noted that, as standard, the cheat still happens even if the Master is caught. They've done the crime. Now to do the time. It is possible that some punishments could include undoing it, of course.

HOW DOES A TRIAL WORK?

The Fair exist across all games of DIE. As such, they likely know excuses the same player (not Persona or character, player) has used in another game.

For a GM-controlled Master, unless it's something which adds to the plot, it's unlikely you'll want to show the trial. The Master maybe has a moment of begging for forgiveness to thin air, before the punishment hits them. More likely a moment of panic before the punishment hits is enough.

If it's a player-controlled Master, the Powers That Be appear, describe the crime and punishment, and then ask if there's anything for the court to consider. This is a short role-played scene.

The Master then says whatever they wish in their defence, or at least get them to be lenient. It's not a bad tactic—getting a punishment dialled-down is more likely than being forgiven entirely. The Powers That Be are also not cruel—it is likely a "This was my first offence!" will lead to a punishment being reduced.

For players who are not exactly good at this sort of thing, you may wish to allow a Charisma roll with the number of successes determining whether they can argue the crime down.

It's worth stressing the difference between this and a Godbinder bartering with a god. A Godbinder is a conversation between equals, trying to find a deal. Here, the Master is a supplicant to a court. This should be made clear to the Master. Contempt of court could lead to the Fair hitting them with a punishment more than is suggested. A warning would be polite, of course.

BREAKING THE GAME WITH hardcore CHEATING

A smart Master will try something neither you nor I will have thought of. Well done them.

Cheating has an enormously high chance of failure. The penalty of failure is in proportion to how large-scale a cheat it is. And any ongoing cheating (as in, cheating that is still present, including spells created from Rules) can be included in that punishment. In other words, if a crime is ongoing, if the Powers That Be turn up at any point, you'll be in trouble.

However, a Master can and should absolutely go for it.

To choose one example, a Gamist Master has the ability to "Overturn or create an exception to a major existing Rule in an archetype." A Master could choose the Rule to be "the cheating-detection Rules" and the limited context to be "in this room."

Surely that will mean a Master can throw off indefinite cheats in this room? Is that allowed? Yeah, why not. Let's see what happens.

Firstly, it's still a 50% chance of failing and having to go before the judgement of the Powers That Be. This is an extreme cheat—this is a worse evasion of the Rules than "make something that has just happened not happen." That has a compulsory punishment of death. What could a worse compulsory punishment be? That's what they're risking.

Secondly, they need to specify which cheating detection Rule. Major or minor? They're two different Rules. If they don't specify, the cheat would be exactly what they say. If not, the other one will be in action. Same as the area.

What are the boundaries of "this room?" Can they be manipulated? Smart opponents can fuck with the Rules. Foolhardy Masters can fail to see their limitations. The caveat here is not playing "gotcha" with a player—they are risking a lot whenever they try to cheat. Giving them something, even if they don't get everything, is a way to sweeten the pill.

Thirdly, if at any point this is brought to the attention of the Powers That Be, via any kind of cheat roll or any other method (Neo contacting the Fair, Godbinders using a miracle to get them there and so on), we return to point one. An ongoing cheat is ongoing evidence, and we get whatever awful punishment this terrible cheat gets.

Generally speaking, if a player jams their fingers in the socket to see what happens, don't disappoint them. Have fun thinking of the unexpected consequences of cheating. Perhaps turning off "the ability for anyone to be hurt" has no awful side-effects... or perhaps the whole world starves to death as all animals, plants and fungi can no longer be eaten.

I GUESS I WAS FRANKENSTEIN ALL ALONG

Die reads all the Personas' subconscious and throws it back at them. However, for the Master this is especially true. Look for the Master's wishes and desires, take them, tweak them and throw it back. The Master is a reality-warper. They do not always know when they're using their power.

We've all seen the Magician's Apprentice fucking up in Fantasia. Players know the difference between a clever cheat and trying to avoid playing the game, and the latter absolutely is going to end up with an army of mops destroying civilization. That said, warning a player that they're stepping into significantly dangerous areas is the absolute minimum.



APPENDIX 2: A STARTER GRIMOIRE

The Player Facing Master in Appendix 1’s magic operates by creatively combining elements (“Rules”) into spells. The process of combining Rules is mostly left as a creative act for the Master. However, you may be looking for quick ways to do the classic fantasy spells—especially if you’re a GM running the game. This section is a quick shopping list, drawn largely from the World’s Most Popular Role-Playing Game.

It’s also used as a resource for other classes, such as Fools, Godbinders and even Dictators who get access to occasional spells.

Each of the spells contains the following:

- A name
- The rules it needs (and how far the Master needs to push those rules to cast the spell)
- Risk: the Risk for a Master—the odds of them being punished by the Powers That Be—assuming they know none of the rules used. For each rule they do know, you can subtract 5.
- A description of its mechanic effects.

FIRE TOUCH	Risk	5
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Rules	Damage Duration (fire)
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Hit someone at within arm’s reach. **Special:** ignite opponent, doing 1 Hit per round until extinguished.

HEALING TOUCH	Risk	5
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Rules	Heal
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Target heals 1 Health. **Special:** heals an additional Health.

WIZARD ARMOUR	Risk	10
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Rules	Hinder (physical attacks), Duration.
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All physical attacks on the spell caster for a combat suffer one disadvantage.

HEALING TOUCH (GREATER)	Risk	10
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Rules	Heal (massively more)
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Target heals 3 Health to the target. Has **Special:** heals an additional Health, three times.

FIRE BLAST	Risk	10
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Rules	Damage Duration (fire), Ranged
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Throw a blast of fire at someone in a fiery attack. **Special:** ignite opponent, doing 1 hit per round until extinguished.

MAGIC MISSILE	Risk	11
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Rules	Damage Barrage (twinkly magical light), Ranged (slightly more)
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Sends an barrage of magical lights to hit a single target at bow range.

Double-Special: this hit causes 2 hits.

FIREBALL	Risk	17
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Rules	Damage Duration (fire), Ranged (slightly more), Area (slightly more)
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Throw a ball of fire to bow range which explodes into an area big enough to hit anyone in a room-sized space. The attack has **Special:** ignite opponent, doing 1 hit per round until extinguished.

LIGHTNING BOLT	Risk	12
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Rules	Damage Chain (lightning, slightly more), Ranged (slightly more)
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Throw a bolt of lightning at a target up to bow range. It has the **Special:** this attack can hit another target in the vicinity. You can use this Special up to three times.

FIRE AURA	Risk	15
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Rules	Damage Duration (fire), Area, Selectivity
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A burst of fire which hits anyone near to you, but not hurting you at all. **Special:** ignite opponent, doing 1 hit per round until extinguished.

IGNITE WEAPON	Risk	10
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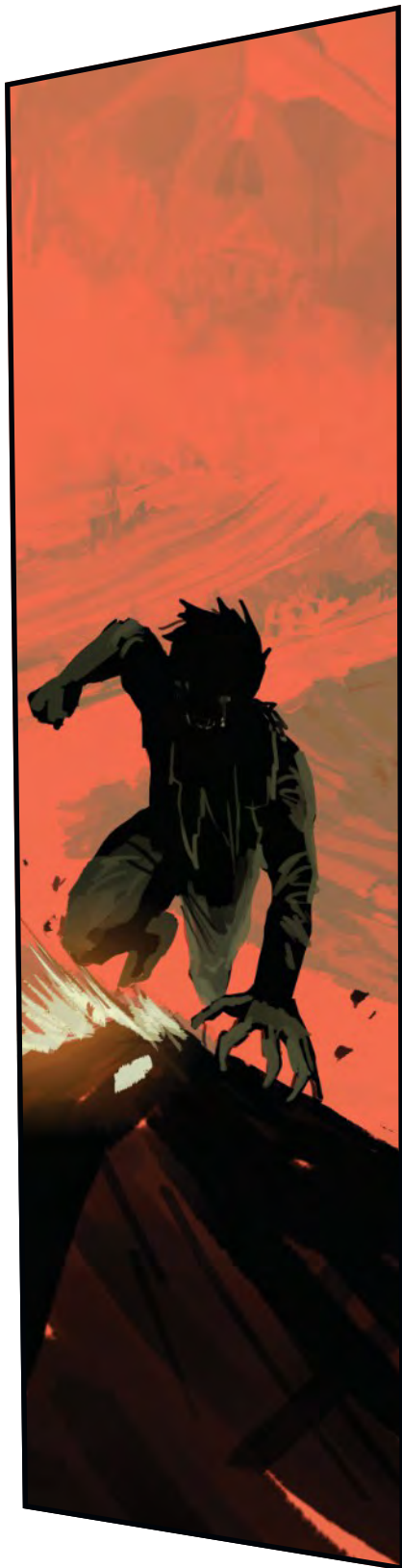
Rules	Damage Duration (fire), Duration
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Any one weapon can be set on fire until the end of the combat, and its attack will deliver **Special:** ignite opponent, doing 1 hit per round until extinguished.

DETECT MAGIC	Risk	5
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Rules	Detect (magic)
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Lets you know if an object you're touching is magical.



DETECT MAGIC (AREA)**Risk** 11

Rules Detect (magic), Area (slightly more)

Lets you know what is magical in the immediate area around you.

DETECT EVIL**Risk** 5

Rules Detect (evil)

Let's you know if an object you're touching is evil. Who knows what "evil" means, right? You'll note this is identical to the Detect Magic Spells above, so anything like a "Detect" spell works like this.

DISPELL MAGIC**Risk** 10

Rules Counterspell, Range

Dispels any transitory magical spell within a short range. As in: if someone cast it recently, you can undo it. If it's a permanent uncanny effect, like a flying castle's ability to hover, you can't switch it off with this.

POISONED BLADE**Risk** 10

Rules Damage Duration (poison), Duration

Any one weapon can be covered with a poison for one combat, it gains the **Special:** poisons opponent, doing 1 hit per round until removed.

BATTLE BLESSING**Risk** 15

Rules Area, Enhance (attack), Duration

Everyone near the caster when they cast the spell gets an advantage on attacks for the duration of one combat.

FEAR AURA**Risk** 20

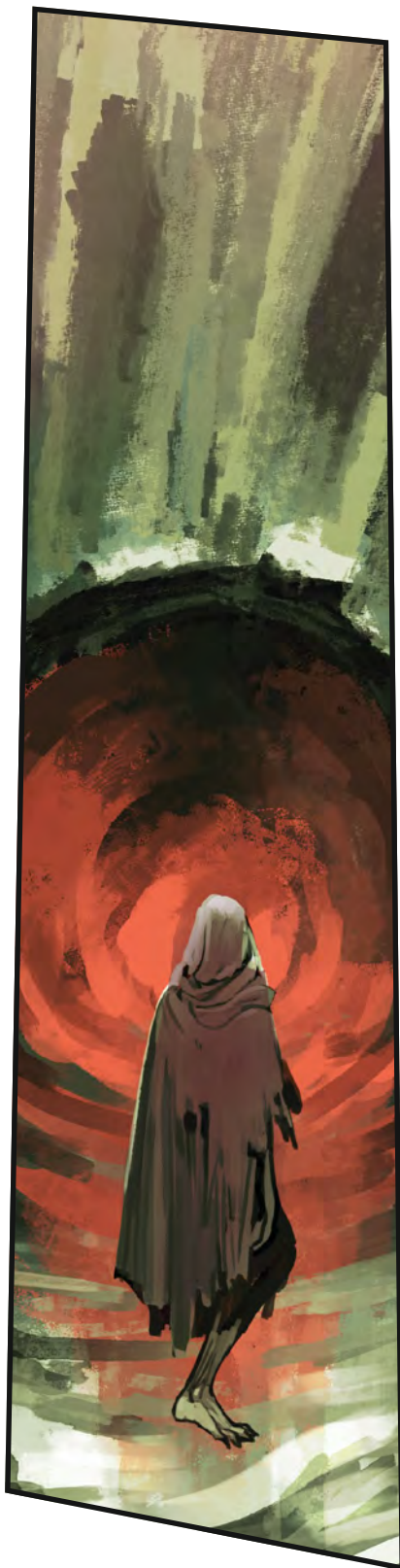
Rules Area, Hinder (Attacks), Duration, Selectivity

Any foes near the caster (except the caster) will receive a disadvantage any attacks made.

LEVITATE**Risk** 10

Rules Levitation, Duration

The caster can levitate for the length of a combat.



LEVITATE

Risk 10

Rules Levitation, Duration

The caster can levitate for the length of a combat.

FEATHERFALL

Risk 5

Rules Levitation

When cast, the caster can fall safely from any height.

FEATHERFALL

Risk 15

Rules Duration, Levitation, Speed

The caster can fly as fast as a horse can run for the length of a combat.

HORSELEGS

Risk 10

Rules Speed, Duration

For the length of an encounter, the caster can run at the speed of a horse

TELEKINESIS

Risk 10

Rules Levitation, Ranged

The caster can move a nearby object with the power of their mind.

TELEPORT

Risk 16

Rules Speed (massively more), Ranged (slightly more)

The caster can teleport themselves instantly at a spot within bow-range visible to line of sight.

DIMENSION DOOR

Risk 20

Rules Speed (massively more), Duration, Ranged (massively more)

Creates a door in space which lasts for the length of an encounter. Anyone who walks through it can appear in any location.

CHARM**Risk**

10

Rules Enhance (Charisma), Duration

The caster gains an advantage on any attempts to persuade a target for the length of an encounter.

INVISIBILITY**Risk**

10

Rules Invisibility, Duration

For the length of one encounter, the target becomes shadowy and barely seen. The spell ends if the target makes hostile actions.

POLYMORPH**Risk**

11

Rules Illusion (slightly more), Duration

For the length of an encounter, the caster can change the shape of any human-sized creature within touch range. This does not include any special abilities or changing stats.

ILLUSION**Risk**

16

Rules Illusion, Duration, Area (slightly more)

The caster can change the area around themselves to appear entirely as they wish.

LIGHT**Risk**

10

Rules Damage Duration (fire), Duration

Caster can create a magical fire which burns for the length of one encounter.

UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE**Risk**

10

Rules Understand (mortal language), Duration

Comprehend any language spoken to you, for the length of an encounter.

SPEAK TO ANIMAL**Risk**

10

Rules Understand (animal), Duration

Animals can understand your speech and you can understand their responses, for the length of an encounter.

Worth noting, Light is an example of the “Damage” being used at its lower level. You could use a bunch of other rules for this too—Illusion would work.

Designer's note: There is no rule for just increasing one of the main stats. As such, this Haste selects a bunch of things which increasing Dexterity would do and replicates them.

Hold Person is another example of a spell which is using damage Rules to create an effect that doesn't cause damage. In this case, not doing damage, in hope of getting a Special.

Prismatic Spray is clearly really pushing the Rules systems hard. The Specials are all derived from the various Damage. The Extra two advantages are from the Enhance Attack.

KNOCK		Risk	5
Rules	Manipulate Mechanism		
Open any single non-magically sealed lock.			
HASTE		Risk	20
Rules	Enhance (Dexterity tasks), Enhance (initiative), Enhance (increase Guard), Duration.		
Pick a target, and for the length of an encounter:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Add 1 to Guard◆ When determining initiative, add 1 to Dexterity◆ When rolling a Dexterity dice pool, roll with Advantage			
HOLD PERSON		Risk	10
Rules	Damage (paralyse), Ranged		
Attack, but does no damage. Has Special : if Willpower is 4 or below, immobilise target. Requires a Constitution test to break free.			
Adds Double-Special : if Willpower is 6 or below, immobilise target. Requires a Constitution test to break free.			
SLEEP		Risk	21
Rules	Ranged, Duration, Sleep, Area (slightly more)		
Several individuals nearby to the caster may be put to sleep. The attack does no damage, and has the following Specials : if the character has 4 Willpower or less, they fall asleep. Double-Special : if the character has 6 Willpower or less, they fall asleep. 20-Special : the character falls asleep.			
PRISMATIC SPRAY		Risk	37
Rules	Enhance (attack, slightly more), Range, Area (slightly more), Damage—Duration, Damage Curse (Disorientation), Damage Barrage (Swarm of Colours), Damage Chain		
Fill the area in front of the caster with a dangerous spray of colours and attack all targets in the area with multi-coloured beams. The attack has:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Double-Special: this hit causes 2 hits.◆ Special: this attack can hit another target outside of the original group.◆ Special: sets opponent on fire, doing 1 Hit per round until removed.◆ Special: target suffers a disadvantage on next action.◆ The attack has two advantages.			

Flesh To Stone spell is a good example of how the narrative specifics of a rule can alter how it actually operates in play.

CONE OF COLD		Risk	11
Rules	Area (slightly more), Damage—Curse (freeze)		
Fill the area in front of the caster with a blast of hypercold, risking freezing any individual inside it. The attack has Special: as their limbs freeze, target suffers a disadvantage on next action.			
FLESH TO STONE		Risk	10
Rules	Damage—Curse (turn to stone), Ranged		
A single nearby target is attacked begins to turn into stone. The attack has Special: target suffers a disadvantage on next action. If they are killed by this attack, they become a stone statue. If they are transformed back, they return to life.			
WALL OF WOOD		Risk	16
Rules	Create Wall, Duration (slightly more), Area		
Create a wooden wall which has a Health equivalent to twice as many successes rolled in its creation. It must be destroyed before it can be passed. If not, it crumbles in an hour.			
WALL OF STONE		Risk	17
Rules	Create Wall (slightly more), Duration (slightly more), Area		
Create a stone wall which has a Health equivalent to four times as many successes rolled in its creation. It must be destroyed before it can be passed. If not, it crumbles in an hour.			
VICIOUS MOCKERY		Risk	10
Rules	Range, Damage Curse (really cutting insults)		
Caster shouts magically-charged words at the target's subconscious with such vitriol as to cause physical harm. Attack has Special: target suffers a disadvantage on next action due to crushing existential questions about how they are just useless, and no-one will ever love them.			



SUMMON LIVING SERVANT

Risk 5

Rules Create Creature

You create an automaton which will obey your direct commands. It has no mind of its own.

LIVING SERVANT

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	0		

SUMMON SINISTER DOLL

Risk 11

Rules Create Creature, Telepathy (slightly more)

Craft a creepy doll (stats as **Living Servant**) that can follow your direct orders but lacks the means to act under its own initiative. You can be in telepathic contact with it at will, over any distance.

SUMMON IMP

Risk 20

Rules Damage Duration (fire), Duration, Ranged, Create Creature

Create a violent, aggressive creature you can control at short range. It lasts for about the length of a combat. It can only attack and harm.

IMP

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	0		

Abilities

Its attacks have **Special**: ignite opponent, doing 1 hit per round until extinguished.



SUMMON GHOUL

Risk 20

Rules Damage Curse (necrotic touch), Duration, Create Intelligence, Create Creature

Summon a parasitic monster under your control for the length of an encounter.

GHOUL

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	2	4	0		
Abilities					

The ghoul's attacks have **Special**: the target's next action suffers a disadvantage.

SUMMON GREATER GHOUL

Risk 26

Rules Damage Curse (Necrotic Touch), Duration, Ranged, Create Intelligence, Create Creature (slightly more)

Summon a parasitic monster under your control for the length of an encounter.

GHOUL

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
3	2	3	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	3	4	0		
Abilities					

The ghoul's attacks have **Special**: The target's next action suffers a disadvantage.



Creating monsters is one of the areas where Rules are most open to interpretation. The GM will decide whether something is too much or not. In practise, if you want something a bit meatier, the Hardcore Cheating rules are likely a better bet.

STICKS TO SNAKES

Risk 10

Rules Create Creature (slightly more), Damage Duration (poison) 1, Component (stick)

You can transform a stick into a snake.

SNAKE

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
2	2	2	2	2	2
Guard	Health	Willpower	Defence		
2	3	4	0		

Abilities

The snake's attacks have **Special:** poison opponent, doing 1 hit per round until purged. You have no control over the snake.



APPENDIX 3:

SECOND SESSION PREP EXAMPLE

In *Rituals*, we present a step-by-step guide for how to harvest details from the *Persona*'s lives to turn into material that one can use to create an adventure. While it's a case of following the steps, it's possible you may like to see how someone else actually does it.

You'll have noticed through the comic there's six *DIE* characters who we follow through the art and examples (iconics, as they're called in the biz). You likely don't know that we (as in, Kieron, Stephanie, Rowan, Rook & Decard and a chum) sat down and played the first session of *DIE*, as described in *Rituals*, using the *Personas* we generated as the characters. These aren't hypothetical characters—these are 100% the sort of people that you make if you play *DIE*.

So, I'm going to take the notes I took from that first session, and show how I would do the prep for the second session. Two key things here:

- Firstly, it's how I would do the prep. I'm going to be writing a lot about my thinking, but this is just my brain. You have your brain. Actively read this. Ask questions about all my decisions. How would you do it? Are there alternates which appeal?
- Secondly, as I'm explaining my thinking, it looks much longer than it is. In terms of what I'd write down as prep, it's stuff that I've explicitly written in italics. Also, running for a full six character game is always more work. If you're running for 3-4 people, this scales down proportionally.

PERSONA GENERATION NOTES

Here's what I wrote down for each of the Persona during the first session.

THE GROUP

*Well... it isn't exactly what I wrote down.
What I wrote down was intelligible only
to me, consisting of random key words.
This is what my notes meant. Don't
expect yours to look clean like this either.*

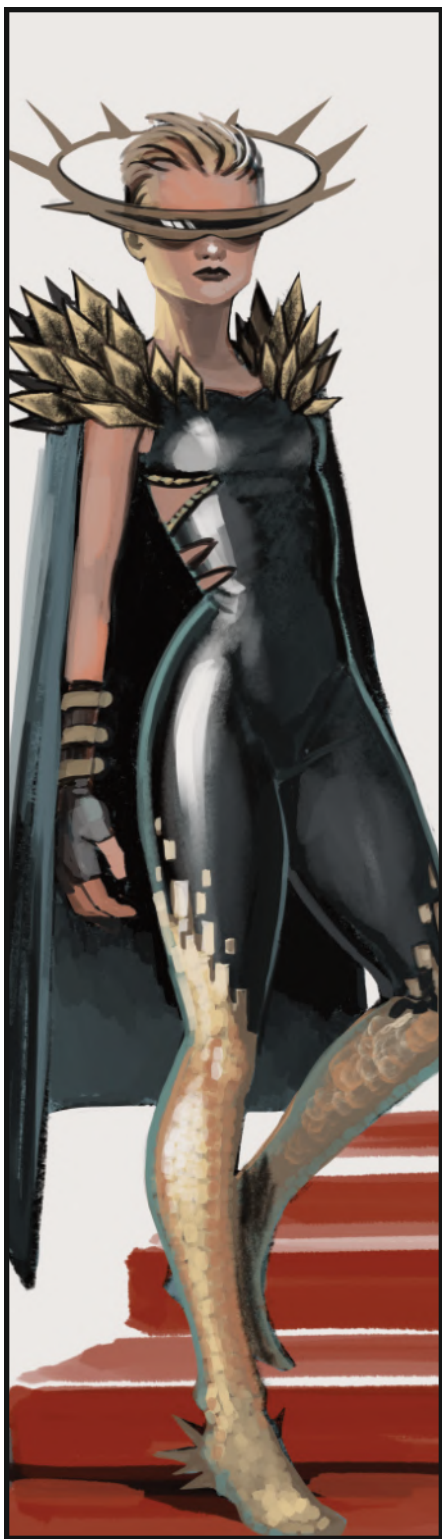
- The game was 10 years ago.
- The Players were part of Drama society at a (mainly sporty) selective school.
- The game was literally played on stage.

ALISTAIR (DICTATOR-DISGUST, HE/HIM)-CHRIS

- Richest person in school. Military family. Everyone wondered why he was here, rather than Eton. He didn't know the reason, then.
- Elitist snob. Played with the group in secret.... Because he actually likes it, and he likes drama. He lied to his posh friends about it.
- He enjoyed the challenge—life was easy. This was hard.
- Disliked people being better than him at the game.
- Extremely popular in the mainstream school (hence hiding this nerd stuff).
- Comes across smarter than he actually is.
- Likes Caroline for her lack of giving a fuck. Disliked Mel for her star quality... was kinda grateful when she broke her legs.
- Loves WW2 films, and the aesthetic.
- Spent years in prison in his 20s, due to being unknowingly part of his Dad's insider trading scheme (signed some papers, didn't realise). Lost everything.
- Mundane life. Grey suit. Office job. Not allowed to work in a bank or finance. Lives in suburbia. Drudgery. Kids.
- Cares for partner, but worries about ability to provide.
- Dreading going back to reunion—he was popular. Now he's... this.
- Drinks a lot.

MEL (FOOL, SHE/HER)-SAXEY

- Spectacular jock. Captain of the women's football team. Olympic prospect.
- Broke her leg from jumping off a roof, so joined Drama society to kill time and have company.
- In the game, she could excel when she couldn't physically. Exhilaration of being able to constantly improve. She wanted to be a hero! The game let her be.
- Wasn't into the collaboration or negotiation.
- Smarter than you'd realise—just doesn't really apply it.
- Likes Hestia as she is impressed by Mel—but Morgan is mean! So counter-culture! She hates those people who don't buy in.
- Mel has a crush on Alex! For their rich inner life, which confuses Mel.
- Reads Jack Reacher novels—stuff you can pick up and put down.
- Knee injury never got better. Instead, went to military. Officer class. Actually really into looking after people under her. Will always jump in to protect people.
- Single, bisexual, regular in queer bars, drug habit.
- Family nice, but not dependent on her.
- Coming back primarily as she's considering acting on those teenage crushes. The thirst is real.



ALEX (VIGILANCE KNIGHT, HE/HIM)–MINA

- Quiet IRL. Online, he's an activist. Writing and blogging under pseudonyms. Livejournal. Gets interested, gets obsessed, moves on.
- Always wanted to play RPGs since middle school, but never had a chance. Grabbed it with both hands.
- Alex liked making characters. Like robots. Or boys. Or robot boys.
- For Alex, mechanics are really hard. How does flanking work again?
- Had to go to hospital every few weeks for chemotherapy. Before that, he was very good at sports—rivalling Mel.
- Arguably the smartest in the group—and Hestia was aware of it.
- Was scared of the group, as they all seem so cool (except Iain). Crushed on them all, hard, silently.
- Rest of group kind of looked at him in awe: “A Rich Inner Life.”
- Loved Sci-fi novels. Iain M Banks stuff. High-falutin, socialist stuff.
- Transitioned when he left school.
- Degree took six years, due to due to disability (and perpetual intellectual itchy feet). Doing a literary PhD. It's hard going. Supportive partner Rowan (They/Them, research biochemist), who understands. It helps. Met at university.
- Dante's inferno is his PhD. “Use of speculative fiction as political points scoring.”
- Very poor. Sells crochet patterns to get income.
- Reluctant to come, but Rowan talked him into it.

MORGAN (NEO, THEY/THEM)–STEPHANIE

- German parents in UK. Outsider. No interest in rest of group. Quiet, as they're judging.
- Joined to get out the house for 5 hours. Hates parents, as they were just boring.
- Likes pretending she's somewhere else. Pure escapism.
- Life goals: get out of this town and back to Germany and retire by 35.
- Kinda Veronica to Hestia's Betty. The group's Wolverine—but mocked behind their back. They're glad she's hated—will make it easier to leave.
- No time for crushes—but likes Alistair, as he's a fellow lone wolf and less clingy.
- Plays the ukulele. Are they Amanda Palmer?
- Went to Germany after graduation, and finds it just as boring.
- Engaged, and has made a successful start-up. Far too much responsibility.
- They've come to game as excuse to disappear—embezzle a trunk load of cash, ghost their boyfriend, etc. Time to move on again.

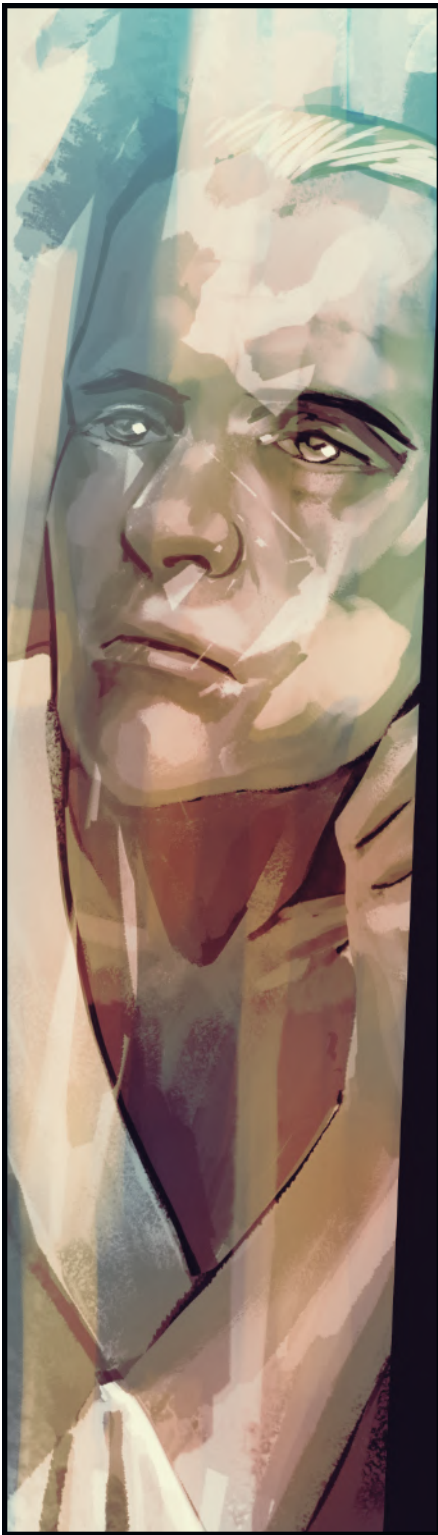


HESTIA (GODBINDER—GOD OF LIGHT, SHE/HER)—GRANT

- Parents new professional middle-class—one doctor, one lawyer.
- Academic A-Student. Organises many groups. Almost Queen Bee-y—but not Mean Girls. Universal cheerleader.
- Not actually that smart. People think she's an A* student, but is actually a B-.
- Joined group because she pitied the GM. Like the RPG as it was so possible to plan there. Highly organised. Likes XP—work steadily, get a reward, plans her character 10 levels ahead.
- She wanted to set up a successful charity and do good works: Landmines, Famines, Dolphins & Donkeys.
- Most attractive in group: “good girl” energy. You can easily imagine her in Glee.
- Supportive friend to Mel, in game and out. The healer to Mel's fighter.
- Hated Alistair, as he treated her badly as she was nouveau riche.
- Loves Maroon 5. Went to an Ellie Goulding gig. Pop-indie-dance stuff.
- Failed to make a large charity. Runs a local food bank.
- Married rich. Kid (4)—Lily. Doesn't work too hard. Aware that she's in a comfortable place and may just stay here.
- Aware she has underperformed compared to her star-girl status.

IAIN (MASTER, HE/HIM)—KIERON

- GM. Literally played on stage.
- AV club guy—back stage, lights, smoke effects.
- Liked showing off. Workaholic, but resents the work he does for people.
- Loved alternate-reality-games, loved Punch Drunk (the immersive theatre group).
- Biggest nerd.
- I get picked on as I'm the biggest nerd.
- Iain likes everyone on some level. Big crush on Alistair, but also hates him (for bullying him)
- Had a kid early, then married, became an electrician. Divorced, lost access to kid.
- Still works at school—creepy tech guy. Essentially same thing he did at school.
- Cramped flat. Boxes, just moved in.



EACH PERSONA'S CORE LACK

I look at this hot mess of a group and smile. These are an interesting bunch. Some are nicer than usual (Alex) and some are much worse (Morgan—who is also significantly more genre than the slice of life most *DIE* characters gravitate towards) but there's a lot of material to work with.

I can see that the big question has done its job and provide a big core lack for most of the cast.

Alistair was rich and popular and his life is now boring and small. He went to prison (so losing years of his life, as well as his fortune). This is an easy one to nail down.

| *Alistair would like the popularity, money and life that his father's betrayal stole from him.*

Mel was going to be an Olympian, and then her own recklessness lost that. She lacks that adulation—and also the chance to really prove herself great.

| *Mel would like a chance to be a hero, with all that entails.*

Alex is an interesting one, especially in terms of what it illustrates. He's a trans character who suffers a disability which impacts his life in a serious way... however, there was nothing in Mina's answers which implies it's a form of angst. It admits it's difficult but resilience is very much what Mina is foregrounding (Alex's Knight's armour works by just ignoring wounds). Perhaps Mina would bring these elements more out in play, but there's nothing here to imply it's the core that she's interested in exploring with Alex.

Instead, there's something else—the Vigilance Knight aspect. Alex is interested in things. He gets obsessed. He also gets bored. This isn't a particularly strong urge for Alex, but it's enough for our purposes—other characters have very strong urges.

| *Alex wants to be endlessly fascinated by novelty.*

Ironically, despite one Persona being sweet and one being a bit of a monster, at heart Morgan is close to Alex... but perhaps more so. It's also a good example of characters who have similar desires... but different intensities of desire. Morgan is almost an arrow of a *DIE* character. Almost every answer says what they want (and implies why they won't get it).

| *Morgan wants to finally escape to a place that's not so bloody boring.*

Hestia's goal was to create a big charity. Instead, she helps on a smaller scale. This is key, right? The foodbank is a great way to spend your life... but she wants to do more. Hestia's got a bit of a messiah complex.

| *Hestia wants to save people and make the world a better place.*



THE PERSONA'S TEMPTATIONS

Looking at the core lack, we can identify what about the Die world which could tempt each person. Here's what I come up with to satisfy them.

Alistair is offered the power, money and status which he was denied on Earth.

Mel is given a chance to prove her heroism and be treated like a hero.

Alex discovers this world has potentially endless novelty.

Morgan discovers this world is less boring.

Hestia has a chance to become a messiah.

NECESSARY ENCOUNTERS

Okay—now how to show this in the game, and work out how to give it. Which combination of a passive lack (something which is fulfilled by being on Die), absence lack (something which is fulfilled only by staying on Die) or an active lack (something which they actively do on Die—so needing a necessary encounter in the adventure).

I note that for the five characters, there's actually two pairs who have similar sorts of goals... just very different spins. For me, that's a useful example of how one can decide what necessary encounters are needed.

Alistair is about regaining his fortune. I'd say this is best as an absence lack—he gets to have this status and money if he stays, and not before. I also think it's an active lack—it's most interesting if Alistair actively has a chance to reclaim this fortune in the world. Who doesn't want a big confrontation with an echo of the Dad who screwed them over, right? As an active lack, we need a necessary encounter for that.

Mel is about being a hero. In this case, while Mel does like earning the credit, I think she's such a glory hound, she'll want to be treated as a hero every second she's here. As such, it's a passive lack. People should be hailing her the second she turns up. However, she also wants a chance to prove her mettle—which makes it an active lack. We add a second necessary encounter.

Alex wants a world which is endlessly fascinating. That's a passive need—we simply need to stress how interesting the world is at every point. However, for Alex's academic bent, I think this is also an active need. There needs to be a specific encounter when he realises how big this world is, and how endless the fascination could be. We add a third necessary encounter.

Morgan is similar to Alex—they just need to be in a more interesting place. As such, it's a passive urge. However, I don't think Morgan needs a specific moment to stress that this is an endlessly novel world... Morgan just wants it to be less boring than Earth. We can show that as we travel. No need for a necessary encounter.

Hestia wants to be a messiah? Like Mel, this could be a passive lack, her immediately being treated as a saviour... but Hestia is about getting credit for helping people. As such, it's an active lack, and we need an encounter where Hestia gets to save a lot of people. We add a necessary encounter to the list. I also think it's an absence lack—we need to stress that this world needs Hestia to deal with other similar problems.

I also get the fun idea that Hestia is perhaps prophesied. Perhaps there's a messiah called Hestia in this world, who prophesied to return. As said in Rituals, you should start writing down ideas to use as they occur. I'm going to put these in square brackets with a question mark [like so?].

Anyway—we have four necessary encounters. Which are:

- Alistair reclaims his fortune in Die. [Confrontation with father figure?]
- Mel proves herself a hero. [Olympics analogue?]
- Alex realises that this world is endlessly interesting [University?]
- Hestia proves herself a Messiah [Prophesied?]

DECIDE UPON THE ANTAGONIST'S MOTIVATION

Iain is almost from Die central casting as an antagonist—he's someone who life has gone desperately astray. Divorced, with a kid he doesn't have access to. His hobby is basically helping out at school, doing what he did as a teenager.

In short: his life is crap. He has a chance to live the fantasy for once. He grabs it. While there's clearly some enmity between Iain and the other Persona, we don't even need hate. He wants a better life, or at least different, life. He's going for it.

However, there's one key thing which attracts my attention: his son. This seems absolutely key in terms of what I'd do with Iain. Two ideas occur:

- If Iain is going to be a pure antagonist, he simply regrets having a child that young. It's another burden he's trying to escape, another reason why his life is bad.
- If I wanted Iain to be more sympathetic, losing his child is the final straw. He's escaping to a life here... and Die will provide a copy of his son to raise here, the thing that he's denied in the real world. This would be revealed in the final encounter: if he stays, his Die-son lives...

The latter excites me more, but It creates moral complexities which may not suit the game. The best thing? I don't need to decide until I'm into the session, and perhaps not even until the climax. I write both down and decide later.

Master Motivation: *He wants a better life as his real life turned out so badly. If sympathetic, Die gives a magical son to replace the one he's lost access to in real life.*



PREPARING YOUR PALETTE

That's the hard stuff done. From now on, it's just gathering elements and scribbling any initial ideas. I like to break them down into lists, so similar things are together. You'll note that some of these are extrapolations from the answers—that Hestia runs a food bank implies there's people she knows from there, right?

REAL WORLD PEOPLE

- Alistair's dad [WW2 Vampire?]
- Alistair's elitist friends at school [Judgmental nobles?]
- Alistair's wife
- Alistair's kids
- Mel's soldiers
- Mel's hook-ups
- People Alex argued with online
- Rowan (Alex's partner, a biochemist) [Alchemist?]
- Morgan's German parents
- Morgan's fiancé [Vengeful, surely? Hunting Morgan down?]
- People at Morgan's work [Also vengeful?]
- Hestia's parents [One doctor, one lawyer—disappointed?]
- People at Hestia's foodbank [People she helps?]
- Hestia's husband
- Lily, Hestia's 4-year-old
- Iain's wife [Why did they divorce?]
- Iain's kid

REAL WORLD LOCATIONS

- The stage where the game was played [Broad theme of world being stage?]
- Their school
- Alistair's prison
- The 2012 London Olympics [Gladiatorial games?]
- Alistair's grey crap job
- Roof Mel jumped off to break leg
- Mel's queer bars
- Alex's Livejournal
- Alex's hospital—chemotherapy
- Alex's university [Some kind of magic university?]
- Morgan's start-up
- Hestia's foodbank
- Iain's cramped flat full of boxes [Weird setting for final climax. Which box is his kid in?]

OBSESSION PEOPLE

- Jack Reacher novels
- Alex's many RPG characters—robot boys
- Dante
- Virgil [The guide from Dante's Inferno]
- Amanda Palmer
- Maroon 5
- Ellie Goulding [Hestia's god!]
- People who really like flanking

OBSESSION SETTINGS

- WW2
- Alistair's drinks [He wants to drink expensive stuff]
- Football (soccer) [Adventuring as team sports]
- Mel's drugs
- The culture novels of Iain M. Banks
- Dante's Inferno [Amazing map for a dungeon?]
- Crochet patterns [Another amazing map for a dungeon?]
- Ukulele [Annoyingly quirky bards?]
- Morgan's idea of what Germany was like as a teenager
- A trunk full of cash
- The Ellie Goulding gig venue
- Landmines [threats buried in the ground? Like dungeons? Hell?]
- Famines
- Dolphins
- Donkeys
- Smoke machines
- Back stage lights
- Theatre
- Alternate reality games
- Punch Drunk, the theatre company

QUESTIONS

The secret of the questions phase is that just because of you having done all the above, your mind will be chewing over these imaginary people, and you'll likely have now germinated some key questions you're interested in. Here's some which occurred when I was doing this:

Alistair	What things did you have when you were rich that you miss now?
	What was it like in Prison?
Mel	Come on. Details. Why <i>did</i> you jump off the roof?
	Where have you been stationed as a soldier?
Alex	You were a teenage activist. What were your causes?
	You have trouble maintaining interest. What things have you burned out on?
Hestia	You settled on your career. Did you settle on your husband?
	Your parents were very practical. You've gone idealistic. When asked what do you say about that? How true is it?
Morgan	Why does anyone hang out with you when you're so unremittingly hostile?
	What's the company? How did you form a company and make people follow you? Why do people follow you?

DON'T OVER PREPARE

That's a good idea. I'll stop.



APPENDIX 4: GAMEOGRAPHY

I played a lot of games in the last few years, for the writing of *DIE*—both the comic and the game. Frankly, all of them influenced this RPG, indirectly or directly. At the absolute least, doing it brought a sharp focus on how I play a game, what I like and what I don't. Here's a quick guided tour of things I was especially aware of being in conversation with when working:

PARANOIA

The first RPG I ever played as a teenager which made me realise that game design, in all its parts, could be art. Also, that art includes slapstick. The idea that intra-party aggression and player death, if framed correctly to serve a higher aesthetic purpose, could be a feature not a bug starts here.

DUNGEON WORLD/APOCALYPSE WORLD

Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker's *Apocalypse World* is the single most influential RPG of the 2010s, creating its own narrative indie sub-genre (Powered by the Apocalypse aka PbtA). In terms of direct influence, Sage LaTorra and Adam Koebel's *Dungeon World*—a narrative RPG that tries to capture the idea of how *D&D* feels to play—is the one you can see most fingerprints on. *DIE* has little mechanically in common with either game, but *DIE* owes a huge amount to its grammar, visual design and especially how the Powered by the Apocalypse games use playbooks. Once you start creating complex dice pools with multiple results you start seeing some influence of how PbtA constructs moves too.

MONSTERHEARTS 2

Speaking of *Apocalypse World*, Avery Adler's *Monsterhearts 2* is a game of sexy queer teenage angsty monsters, and a metaphor run gloriously rampant. It's *Ginger Snaps* the RPG. *DIE* doesn't mechanise relationships like *Monsterhearts* does for aesthetic reasons, but I can't say I wasn't tempted. If you're thinking of questions like "How to play responsibly," this slim, elegant and brilliant tome is just wonderful. For the record, if you were to try and run a *WicDiv* RPG, this is your choice.

WHEN THE DARK IS GONE

Not actually an influence on *DIE* itself, but working an interesting parallel evolution. Becky Annison's game (collected in Pelgrane Press' *Seven Wonders* anthology) has all the players as a therapy group of adults, looking back at their time as teenagers who went to a fantasy world. If you're interested in the emotional terrain that *DIE* explores, and want to try something that's away from traditional *D&D*, you really should look at this.

LEGEND/LORDS OF CHAOS

Two RPG/strategy games with spell construction systems which are the clear influence for how the player Master assembles rules. I'll bet classic RPG *Ars Magica* does exactly the same thing, but I've never read it. Oops.

M.E.R.P.S.

The ICE Middle-earth RPG, and the first game I ever played, as a very confused 10-year-old. Generally speaking, whenever I made a dumb, instinctive decision when designing *DIE*, it's harked back to some formative thing I picked up from this. I would never play this game in 2019, but simultaneously I can't escape it. How can I not mention it?

ALAS VEGAS

James Wallis' Lynchean game of memory loss was an influence especially in *DIE*'s beta. It's such a pugnacious manual that I leaned into the strong argumentative, conspiratorial voice in response. That's been pruned significantly in the final release (which helped cut the manuscript from its original getting-on-for-300,000 words) but when I get a bit punchy, I'm thinking of James.

FIASCO

Jason Morningstar's seminal narrative storytelling game is, to use the idiom of the 1980s games press, a Coen-brothers-'em-up. I've played a lot of narrative games since, but *Fiasco* is what made me realise I could start a game like I start *DIE*. The Persona generation in the form you see in *Rituals* owes more than a little to this.

FOR THE QUEEN

Brilliant narrative card driven game of asking and answering questions, by Alex Roberts. At the start, all you know is you love the Queen. You know at the end, you'll choose whether to defend her or not. Between then, you build a world through the answers. Of all the games, this is the one I'm most likely to suggest playing in the pub. *DIE* runs off asking questions, but this is that taken to the ultimate degree: nothing but questions, conjuring palaces in the air.

HALO

Invented the "shield and health" dual-health system in videogames which is a clear influence on the damage system in *DIE*. The mechanic meant that rather than fights either being entirely safe (when your health is high) or entirely deadly (when your health is low) it pushed all fights towards that razor edge. I say invented, but I bet it was in *Marathon*, and I just can't be bothered to Google to find out.

The audacity, I know.

BLADES IN THE DARK

John Harper's excellent game of magic-punk Peaky Blinders gang warfare. While there's a lot of steak, its sizzle is its flashback mechanism, which allows you to generate Ocean-11's heists on the fly. So rather than planning in advance, you spend a resource to establish something which turns the current situation on the head. Trapped? Lucky you put explosives here to blow a hole in it. Guards cornered you? Lucky you paid them off earlier, and they're here to escort you out. It's a wonderful tool for generating Masterminds, and clearly got worked into the Dictator's high level abilities.



WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY (3RD EDITION)

The system which grew into the Genesys started here. I always knew that *DIE* would run off a dice pool system (not least because dice pools were the new hotness in 1991 when Sol would have abstractly made the game) but “reading” a pool of dice for more information than “success/not success” led to the Special rules in *DIE*. One of the symbols being a resource which can activate certain abilities is also something I love.

THE MOUNTAIN WITCH

Narrative RPG which describes itself as *Seven Samurai* meets *Reservoir Dogs*, which gives you an idea of how the inter-party relations end up. As an example of how a final scene can turn on the party turning on itself (or not), it was something I studied closely.

HEART/SPIRE

Our publisher’s other games do seem to file under the “in conversation with” part of *DIE*. Heart especially seems to be walking a parallel path—adventurers moving through a dungeon which externalises their internal horrors and tempts them. However, the Resistance system which both runs off—where challenges are given essentially “hit points” to overcome—is increasingly an obvious influence on *DIE* when you start using the core mechanic to abstract challenges. That I saw it work so well in *Spire* and *Heart* meant I knew it could land here too.

To be fair, lots of PbtA games use clocks and other abstraction techniques. The Resistance System just skipping the clock aspect and giving it a score is key to me. Essentially, on a technical level, *DIE*’s core system runs on a success economy (with a secondary Specials economy). But I digress. This is nerdy math stuff. That’s not why you play either *Heart* or *Spire*.

LEGACY: LIFE AMONG THE RUINS

Also now from Rowan, Rook & Decard, *Legacy* is basically a post-apocalypse generational civilization game. Most influential was seeing how Minerva simulated strategic-scale movements. The Great Game is much more abstracted and soft-edged than what is in *Legacy*, but seeing what could be done was definitely inspirational.

THE GUMSHOE SYSTEM

Robin D. Laws’ system behind a bunch of great detective RPGs. Had the insight that why should you roll to find a clue when not finding a clue derails the whole plot? Any time when I avoid a boring failure, I’m thinking of *Gumshoe*.

THE GAUNTLET

Not a game, but a play community that I spent years watching before finally joining, and where I got first-hand experience about a lot of what I consider the sort of play culture I want to help propagate with *DIE*. Gauntlet Publishing also does a bunch of great games, none of which I think are a direct reference. Closest to *DIE* is *Trophy Dark*, which is a game of doomed adventurers going into an environment that tortures them, but you want to nose at *Hearts of Wulin* (Wuxia PbtA melodrama) and *Brindlewood Bay* (Murder She Wrote vs cosmic horror).



APPENDIX 5: FURTHER CULTURE

When working on the manuscript, I kept a list of stuff that crossed my path and made me think “This resonates in interesting ways with *DIE*.”

Here it is.

COMICS

- *DIE*, volumes 1-4, by Kieron Gillen and Stephanie Hans
- *Young Avengers*, volumes 1-3, by Gillen, McKelvie and Wilson
- “Murder Park” *Phonogram: Rue Britannia*, episode 4, by Gillen, McKelvie and Wilson
- *Horde*, by Bennett and Leiz

FILMS

- *Labyrinth* (1986)
- *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946)
- *Hellraiser* (1987)
- *Jumanji* (2017)
- *Jumanji: The Next Level* (2019)
- *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3* (1987)
- *Groundhog Day* (1993)
- *The World’s End* (2013)
- *Palm Springs* (2020)
- *Time Bandits* (1981)

TV

- *Loki* (2021)
- *WandaVision* (2021)
- “Abed’s Uncontrollable Christmas” *Community*, season 2, episode 11
- “I am” *Lovecraft Country*, season 1, episode 7
- “Better than Life” *Red Dwarf*, season 2, episode 8
- “Angels & Demons” *Red Dwarf*, season 5, episode 5
- *Dungeons & Dragons* (1983)

GAMES

- *Life is Strange* (2015)
- *The Longest Journey* (1999)
- *Bioshock Infinite* (2013)

BOOKS

- *The Wayward Children Novellas* by Seanan McGuire
- *It* by Stephen King
- *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- *The Mirror of Galadriel*, *The Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien
- *Rabbits* by Terry Miles

MUSIC & MUSIC VIDEOS

- “The Riddle” by Nick Kershaw
- “I Disagree” by Poppy
- “Little Fluffy Cloud” by The Orb
- “Going to Hell” by The Long Blondes
- *The Hounds of Love* by Kate Bush (especially “Cloudbusting”)
- “There She Goes, My Beautiful World” by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds
- “Immaterial” by SOPHIE

POEMS

- *Archaic Torso of Apollo* by Rainer Maria Rilke

INTERNET HOLES TO FALL DOWN

- Search for “Silverwolf games.”

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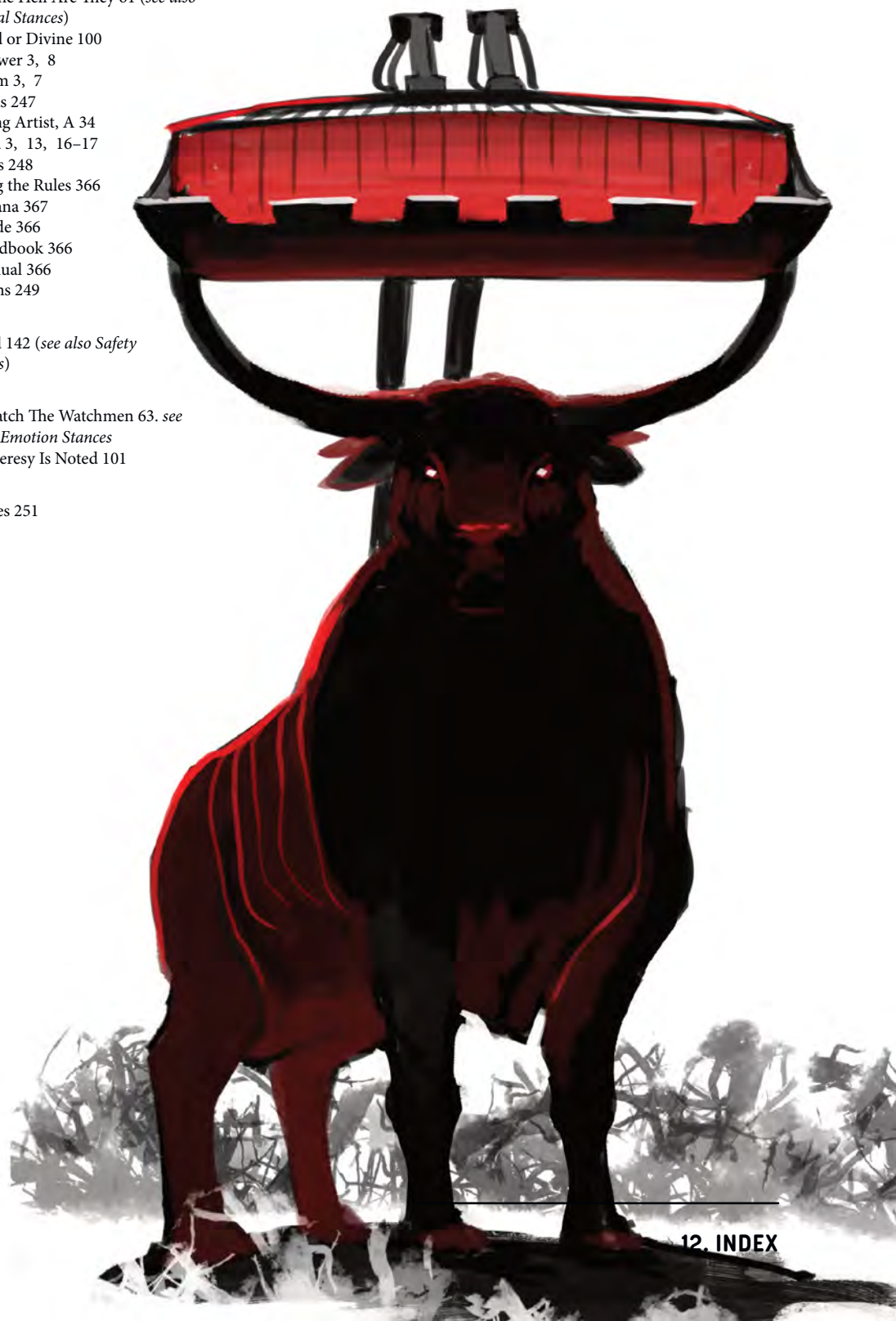
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