

Hey! This doc is very outdated! I'll leave it up so ya'll can still play it for free, but if you want to see what this game is like now, please head over here:

<https://ironsparksyris.itch.io/ascendancy-beta>

Ascendancy - Beta 2.1

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Welcome

Hey! Everything in this section is only here while the game is a doc! In the final version, all of this stuff is going to be gone, in favor of a snappy intro!

Changelog - Version 2.1

- **Big Stuff**

- **PLAYSHEETS!**

- These were created by the amazing Autumn, @knifesquared on Twitter. She is a wizard with Google Docs and has genuinely made something rad as shit right here.

- **Playbook Changes**

- Added the Shadow-Type 3.0

- This is a *complete* rework of the S-Type, making it no longer one of the Fun IDs, but instead one of the Sad IDs. It's probably my favorite playbook I've ever made, to be quite honest.

- Added the Artificial-Type 2.0

- I initially wanted to avoid the idea of the A-Type being about slowly becoming more human, but once the Laws were created the idea just got progressively more and more appealing, so the A-Type is now a very blatant coming out metaphor.
 - While this one isn't 100% finished yet (it's not even 50% finished yet), I figured I'd get it out now, since it's better to have a slightly made playbook out rather than what's out there now.

- Reworked the D-Type into D-Type 3.0

- This one is a long time coming. The D-Type's always been the black sheep of the playbooks, but I think the new copy-print mechanic is quite interesting and can lead to some rad character concepts.

- P-Type changes:

- Moved Potentials and Possibilities to a High advance from a Medium advance.

- **Moves and Advances Changes**

- Added the Dreamer advances.

- **Expectation and Title Changes**

- Rewrote the entire Expectation and Title section to make it a little clearer, as well as fix a few problems that came up during play, as well as incorporate some changes from feedback.
- **Factions and Organizations**
 - Added Bio-LOGIC Biotech, and their rivals, Homebrew.
 - No points for guessing what webcomic I've been reading for this one.
 - Added the Moonheart.
 - No points for guessing what FFXIV boss this is based on.
- **Stress, Fallout, and Resistance Changes**
 - Stress is now seen by all players, and not just the GM.
 - I'm gonna be honest, I'm not happy about this one, since it's losing an element I feel made me love the original Spire, but overwhelmingly, people wanted it to happen, so I did it. Don't let it be said that I never did anything for anyone else.
 - Changes to armor
 - Made it so that armor can be more than simply just body resistance - to allow for things such as having a small locket with a photo of a friend in it increasing your Hope resist.
- **Lore Changes**
 - **Created the Locations sheet!**
 - This is the first step into really truly fleshing out Mooncore like how I always imagined it. And it starts with a long list of alcoholic beverages.
 - Added a new opening monologue to clarify numerous Lore Problems created when I went from Alpha's infodump to Beta's environmental summary. The one I had before has been moved to Locations - since it's the best monologue I've ever written, I couldn't just cut it, now could I?
 - Added numerous small lore blurbs here and there and rewrote a few passages. I wish I could more accurately pin down what I changed but it's been a long time.
- **Minor Changes**
 - Filled out the rest of the contacts, since I forgot I never finished those. Whoops.
 - Numerous small formatting changes.
 - Minor text fixes.

Documents and reference sheets

- [IDs \(Playbooks\)](#)
- [Playsheets \(Courtesy of Autumn - @knifesquared on Twitter\)](#)
- [Alternate Advancements and Moves](#)
- [Factions and Organizations of Mooncore](#)
- [Locations in Mooncore](#)
- [Gear Tags](#)
- [Suggestion Fallouts](#)
- [Link to the Official Ascendancy Mood Playlist](#)

Letter from Ruby

Hey, everyone, I'm Ruby, the developer of Ascendancy, and I must say, thank you from the bottom of my heart for having interest in this strange game of mine. I won't give my whole life's story, because gods know I can, but I will say this. Ascendancy has been my proudest accomplishment, and these last few months have been amazing as I've learned and grown and changed. I've poured my heart and soul into this game, and I hope it shows.

As this *is* a beta, still, the game's going to have a few kinks to work out - quite a few, actually. If you find any, please, tell me! The game can't get any better if I never hear about how it could be better, and any feedback I can get is precious to me, even if it's something as small as "I loved the text for ____" or "Oh, we had a short argument over ____ move because..." can be monumentally helpful in the long run, and I'd be happy to hear you out.

Also, if you do a playthrough, podcast, or stream of Ascendancy, please, please, please, tell me about it! I absolutely love seeing people play my work, and hearing it in action, or hearing your stories from your adventures can absolutely help me, and it's always really touching to hear. If you have any art of your Ascendancy characters, please tag me in it, too! I love art, and I love hearing about my own stuff, and there's this perfect bit on the venn diagram that just makes me so happy. Is that narcissistic? It sounds a little narcissistic. Well, who cares.

Getting in Touch

You can find Ruby at:

- @ironsparksyris on Twitter, my DMs are open if you want to get in touch!
- magicalresolve@gmail.com, if you need to get in touch in a fancier way!

And you can find the game at:

- Discuss and play the game in the official Gemworks Discord: <https://discord.gg/9sg8cfF>

If you want to help her out, you can donate a few dollars to her Ko-fi at:

- <https://ko-fi.com/ironsparksyris>
-

Introduction

Alright, since you lost your memories again, let's get you up to speed.

A long time ago, the Uplift reared their ugly heads. It's hard to say when, since after they showed up, time stopped making much sense. They immediately started their conquest of the world - putting everything under their heel. We couldn't do anything about it. They had... Powers. Strength beyond anything we could understand, and that defied everything we thought we knew. It wasn't long before they took over. No one knows why they started marching, and honestly, at this point, no one cares. Because they destroyed everything and then rebuilt it with them on top. Anything that didn't benefit them was killed or intimidated into finding a way to profit them.

It went like that for a long time. Like I said, time stopped making sense. But it was a while.

There were a few half-hearted attempts to revolt over the years, of course. A skirmish here or there, an arson occasionally. But none of them even came close to what the Dawn Revolution became. Everyone laughed at them, said they were doomed - and then they destroyed Divine, the space elevator the Uplift were so proud of. And we suddenly started taking them seriously.

And the Uplift did too. And when the war began, things became... Dangerous. People started to kill, and the stories the Uplift spread about them being unkillable were immediately proven to be the lies they were. They decided that Uplift lives were too "valuable" to risk in combat anymore. They needed disposable soldiers that had their level of power. So they made some.

They created us.

They called us Ascended. Humans that they "lifted up". They gave us the powers the Uplift had, through... Well, you can see the metal in your arms, can't you? Feel the strange blood in your veins? Feel the weight of what the trauma they forced you to experience? I don't need to explain what you are. You already know that. I can see it in your eyes.

All the while, the Dawn got closer. And eventually they marched on Mooncore, the capital city of their empire - our home. They struck hard and struck fast, and destroyed the Tower, a 6 mile tall Uplift research facility. During the attack, we broke out, killed the people who made us, and, well...

Let's just say the Uplift are no more. And Mooncore... Mooncore's on fire right now. Metaphorically. And occasionally literally.

We lived our entire lives under the Uplift - and I don't just mean literally, I mean metaphorically, as Ascended. We were made to be their weapons, made to kill for other people. Some of the other Ascended didn't know anything else, and fell right back into line - obedient pets, made to kill for their new masters. But we... We're not their pets. We're us. Whoever that is.

We're not their pets. And we're not going to obey their orders anymore. We're going to save the other Ascended, and we're going to change the world. We'll make things better for everyone.

I know we will.

Sparked by Resistance

Sparked by Resistance is the name for systems created using the Resistance Toolkit as a base. The Resistance Toolkit was created by Grant Howitt and Chris Taylor, and published by Rowan, Rook, and Deckard, based on their game *Spire: The City Must Fall*.

Grant Howitt can be found on Twitter at @gshowitt, and Chris Taylor can be found on Twitter at @themaddigan. The Resistance Toolkit can be found for free on their website, <https://rowanrookanddecard.com>.

It is not required to have knowledge of other Sparked by Resistance systems in order to understand *Ascendancy*, but it may help.

As well, many of the mechanics were inspired by the amazing changes and touches made by Nora Blake's amazing Facade, which can be found here: <https://neithernora.itch.io/facade>. You can find zin on Twitter @neithernora.

Content Warnings, Safety and Inclusivity

As written, *Ascendancy* deals with many complicated and difficult themes, which it attempts to explore. Themes of abuse, body horror involving technological augmentation, identity, trauma, political upheaval, and imperialism are all either explicitly intended or heavily implied through the text and the mechanics. The core conceit of *Ascendancy* is exploring how expectations of those around you can shape you into a different person, and how identity is changed and shaped by others, but the explicit attention to the abusive and manipulative nature of the Ascended's relationship to the Uplift, as well as the Ascended's relationship to their own powers may be difficult and traumatic to some.

While *Ascendancy* does try to address and confront many of these themes, simply having them in the game may be an issue, and play can bring up uncomfortable memories, histories, or fears, making players uncomfortable and unwilling to keep going. *Ascendancy* is an attempt to look at the impact of power structures, but at the end of the day, it is also made to be a game, and if you are uncomfortable or not enjoying yourself, then action should be taken to prevent it.

In order to facilitate this, there are support tools. Support tools often can create a safety net, making players feel more at ease, and can let others know what themes are not appropriate to explore. They are not perfect, and support tools can and do fail, so it is always important to make sure that your group is always on the same page.

There is an incredible list of support tools, written up by @rpgnatalie on Twitter - [you can find the list here](#). It's a great resource, and a recommended read, as it goes more into depth on what support tools are, and what their role in play is, and if you should decide to use them as a group, what ones may be best for you.

The dev (that's me~!) personally recommends Lines and Veils and Script Change, but as always, you should pick your tools depending on your group, since what works for me could be problematic or triggering for someone else.

Core Rules

Principles To Remember

The City Moves

Mooncore is in turmoil. Gunfights break out in the streets, corporate heads scheme behind closed doors, and revolutionary leaders cry for freedom to cheering crowds. Nothing is the same, and nothing will ever be the same again - and for the people who were hurt by the past, that's for the best. Now isn't the time to determine who's going to come out on top again, now is a time to make a better world.

The City Sees You as a Gun

When you were created, it was to be a weapon, the perfect tool of the Uplift. And there are still those who believe that. It's a war, and you have enough power that a single Ascended could change the tide of the battle forever. The Ascended are treated as guns. They are imprisoned, manipulated, and pointed at the enemy to be tossed aside the second victory is theirs. But they're wrong. You're not a gun. You're a something greater - a hero, a savior, a revolutionary. You're not just a gun. You're you.

People Need Help

The Ascended are displaced, left directionless, many without their memories and without understanding of their new powers. With no one to turn to, they have been chewed up by the war, manipulated and used as weapons. You have the power to help them, to fight back the forces who would hurt you and your kind, the power to save them - and to possibly save the city in the process.

Things Are Going to Change

Nothing will ever stay the same, but considering what it's changing from, that's for the best. This fight that you've chosen won't be easy. You will lose things. Things will break, people will die, and you will not come out the same. But when the sun comes up, you'll be someone you'll rather be, and you'll know that you've fought for something greater.

The World is Strange

The Ascended are anything but normal - and that is what makes them who they are. They defy logic as if it was a suggestion, their powers push on things in ways impossible to describe, and their dreams and reality combine in unusual ways. In Mooncore, things may quickly become abstract and strange - embrace it.

You Are Incredible

You're not just helpless pawns, you're not disposable weapons of a revolution or anyone's personal army - you're heroes, liberators, saviors. You wield powers that are impossible to understand, you jump the border between dream and reality as if it was just a suggestion, and the fabric of reality itself is bent to your power. You'll be hurt, yes. You'll lose things and sacrifice a lot - but in the end, you're making a difference in people's lives.

Rolling

Generally, play is a conversation between the players and GM, with both parties describing the world, actions, and contributing to the fiction. When a player has their character perform an action that could fail in an interesting way, or where there is something important at stake, they can ask the player to make a roll to determine if their action succeeds.

There's no need to roll if there's nothing at stake. If there's no doubt that the character can succeed, then they succeed. If they can't, then they don't. Only roll if there is potential for interesting failure.

When rolling, you roll a specific amount of six sided dice (or d6), and consult the following chart.

What you roll corresponds to a result:

- 1: Failure at a cost
- 2: Failure
- 3: Failure with an advantage
- 4: Success at a cost
- 5: Success
- 6: Success with an advantage

When you roll, start with 1d6, representing traditional skill (or just dumb luck.)

If you have a relevant Skill, add another d6.

If you have a relevant Domain, add another 1d6.

If you have Mastery from any source, add another 1d6. Mastery doesn't stack, and you can only have 1 die from Mastery, no matter how many sources you receive it from. You don't need a Skill or Domain to take Mastery on an action, but you usually will.

Once your pool is totalled up, you account for difficulty (detailed below), and then roll all the dice in your pool and take the highest result.

Partial Stress

Sometimes, instead of rolling to perform an action, you're instead just trying to avoid taking harm. You dash through a wall of flame, you try to make sure a blade doesn't hit you in a vital spot, you slice the enemy's bullet out of the air. On these rolls, if you get a 3, you still take Stress, but one dice size lower than it would be otherwise.

Difficulty

Not all actions are the same - some are significantly harder to perform. When an action is particularly difficult, the GM will subtract dice from your pool before you roll. The difficulty of an action ranges from 0 (a standard action) to 2 (incredibly challenging).

No matter how difficult the task, if it's even slightly possible, you will always roll at least 1 die. If difficulty would bring your pool below 1, the result is reduced by steps on the table - one step for each difficulty below 1.

Eg. A player with a pool of 1 attempts a difficulty 2 action. This would leave them with a pool of -1. They roll 1 die. Once they roll, a 5 counts as a 4 or an 4 counts as a 3.

Group Actions

You're never truly alone - you have your friends by your side. When you are making an action and an ally tries to assist, describe how. If the ally has a relevant Skill or Domain, add 1 to your dice pool - but anyone helping will take Stress as if they were rolling themselves.

For actions where the entire group is participating, choose one player who leads the group, and they roll for the action first. If they succeed, every other player rolls with Mastery on their roll to follow.

Skills and Domains

Skills

Skills are a representation of your ability to perform a certain task or action - if you possess a skill, when you do an action associated to that skill, add 1d6 to the dice pool. Think of Skills as "do I know how to perform this?"

- **Fight**
 - When things get dangerous, you can handle yourself. Fight is the ability to control weaponry, defeat opponents, and engage in combat.
- **Learn**
 - You're not just good at getting information, you're good at understanding what you're seeing. Learn is to research, investigate, or extrapolate information.
- **Rig**
 - Sometimes you don't just need a gun - you need people who can make them. Rig is to build, modify, destroy, or create something.
- **Communicate**
 - War isn't just fought with guns, it's fought with words first. Communicate is to pressure, sway, or to get away with a lie.
- **Stealth**
 - A knife in the dark is often more true than a blade in the light. Stealth is the ability to sneak, assassinate, or steal.

- **Move**
 - They can't kill what they can't hit. Move is to dodge, chase, or maneuver yourself through a physical space.
- **Operate**
 - Metal is the body of the city, what gives it form and strength. Operate is to control, pilot, or understand physical machines and mechanisms.
- **Interface**
 - Code is the soul of the city, what gives it thought and life. Interface is to hack, pilot, or manipulate digital mechanisms or spaces.

Domains

Domains represent a field in which you are experienced and have a knowledge of. A domain doesn't represent only the field itself, but also the people who engage in it and the culture around it. Generally, these are the knowledge bases that are going to be informing a skill, but when rolling, you don't need a skill to take the extra die from a domain.

- **Uplift**
 - The Uplift are still largely mysterious, and people who understand them are more valuable than ever. The Uplift domain covers their technology, their culture, and what little is known of their history. Your augments, as Uplift tech, falls under this domain.
- **Engineering**
 - Gears and wires make the city move and breathe. Engineering is machinery, mechanisms, and the people who build and work them.
- **Software**
 - Code and computers make the city think and shift. Software is programs, digital spaces and environments, AI, and the people who make them.
- **Mooncore**
 - Mooncore's not just a city, it's people's lives, people's struggles, and people's cultures. The Mooncore domain covers the layout, landmarks, history, and people of the city.
- **Corporation**

- As companies grew, they began to exert their influence in the name of profit. The Corporation domain applies to the corporations themselves, as well as their bureaucracy, systems, and employees.
- **Revolution**
 - With the Uplift gone, a power vacuum lead to groups forming and arriving to take control of what was once the capital of an empire. The Revolution domain applies to them, their technology, their strategies, and their people.
- **Shadow**
 - Mooncore has always had a thriving underbelly, but now that there's nothing to hide from, the shadows have stepped into the light. The Shadow domain applies to criminal gangs, underground activity, and underground organizations.

Specialties

If you already have a skill or domain, and then through advancement, gain it a second time, you instead take a specialty. A specialty represents exceptional proficiency of a specific aspect of the broad field covered by the domain. If you make a roll you have a specialty in, you are able to take mastery.

- Examples:
 - Fight specialties
 - Firearms
 - One on one combat
 - Vehicle combat
 - Operate specialties
 - Motorbikes
 - Construction equipment
 - Drones
 - Mooncore specialties
 - The Ravages
 - Bars and clubs
 - Shortcuts and alleyways

Stress and Fallout

Stress

As characters perform actions in the story, push themselves, or fail, they take stress in their stress trackers. Stress is a representation of how much they've been hurt or how much they've been pushed in a specific way. The more stress you gain, the more likely it becomes that it turns into Fallout, a serious consequence of being pushed that hard and that continually.

In a divergence from Resistance Toolkit as written (and earlier versions of Ascendancy), every player sees and keeps track of how much stress they have themselves, as opposed to only the GM having access to that information.

The stresses are as follows:

- **Body**
 - Represents your physical wellbeing - damage, exhaustion, harm, or exerting yourself.
- **Augment**
 - Represents your powers, your augments, and your mental ability to use them.
- **Heat**
 - Represents the opposition's awareness of your current location, capabilities, or plan.
- **Hope**
 - Represents your morale and determination in the face of adversity.

Often, moves will tell you to push yourself to take stress, but more often, you'll take stress as the result of a failed roll. If it's not clear which stress tracker to mark, the GM chooses, but if they aren't sure, work it out with the player, and don't be afraid to pick something wild and out there.

The amount of stress taken to a tracker when an action fails depends on the action taken - or the weapon held by the opponent when they strike you. When you take stress, the GM weighs

the difficulty of the action, the danger involved, and the potential risk to yourself or others, and then chooses the die they roll.

- D3 - Failure while breaking into someone's house.
- D6 - Failure while breaking into a weapons storehouse.
- D8 - Failure while breaking into a top-secret laboratory.

Team Stress

As well as the per-player stresses, there are two stress trackers that are shared across the entire team - anyone is able to take stress to or push these trackers, and any fallout from them is shared, as well.

The two team stresses are:

- **Resource**
 - Represents how many resources you have at your disposal, how much gear, how much money, and how much loot your team has.
- **Faction**
 - Represents the city moving without you, other factions scheming behind closed doors, the war progressing, or people becoming more and more aware of your team's capabilities or existence.

Resistance and Armor

Each character will have additional stress slots granted to them by their ID and abilities. Any stress marked in these extra stress slots, called resistances, don't count towards fallout - effectively representing your durability to that type of stress.

Resistance slots are described in moves as "+X [Stress]" at the beginning. A move that gives you +2 Augment grants 2 augment resistance, meaning that two stress is ignored when rolling for Augment fallout.

Armor or items you hold may actually increase resistance in stress trackers, and can be anything from a kevlar vest granting body resistance or a personal memento increasing hope resistance.

Restoring Stress

There are three major ways to restore stress:

- Perform a fictional action that would restore it, such as going to a doctor to restore your Body stress, quickly repairing your mechanical parts to restore Augment stress, staying in the shadows until suspicion dies down to restore Heat stress, or going drinking to restore your Hope stress. The amount of stress restored is either d3, d6, or d8, depending on the severity of the action taken.
- Act on or according to your beliefs, or perform an action that counts as a refresh. The amount of stress restored is d3, d6, or d8, depending on the action taken, and/or the extent of which it expresses your belief.
- Suffer fallout. This method is generally not recommended.

NPC Resistance

NPCs, instead of having multiple stress trackers, instead simply have one resistance tracker, and when their resistance is depleted, they are rendered unable to keep going, whether that is through being killed, disarmed, knocked out, demoralized, or something else.

Fallout

There's always a limit to how much of a beating you can take before things start to break. Each time a player character takes stress, the GM will check for fallout - ongoing, serious, problems that arise from taking stress. When you take stress from a failed move or a push, the GM rolls a d10, and compares the result of the roll to the stress the player has marked in the current tracker. If the result of the d10 is less than the amount of stress, the character suffers fallout. The level of fallout depends on the amount of stress in the tracker when the fallout was triggered:

- 2-4 stress - Suffer a minor fallout and restore 3 stress.
- 5-8 stress - Suffer a moderate fallout and restore 5 stress.
- 9+ stress - Suffer a severe fallout and restore 7 stress.

If you'd like, you are able to take two fallouts from a level lower, rather than one from the current level. (So instead of going *Alarms Blaring*, they can deploy *Countermeasures*, which forces a *Change of Plans*.) You may also combine two fallouts from the previous level to one of the higher level. (When you're *Backed Against a Wall* and *Exhausted*, you become *Overwhelmed* and give in.)

When a player takes fallout, let them know that they have taken fallout, and say in no uncertain terms what the fallout is and any and all effects of the fallout - if not the name of the fallout itself. This is especially true for Hope fallout, which is entirely emotional, character-based effects, and the player should be aware and have input on the emotion their character is experiencing.

If you want a more difficult experience, you may choose to play an alternate ruleset. Instead of using only one stress tracker when rolling for fallout, instead add up all the stress in every stress tracker and compare that to the rolled number.

Fallout Suggestions

ADD THE LINK FOR THE SUGGESTED FALLOUTS HERE.

Pushing

Sometimes, when you're up against incredible odds, you have to push a little harder in order to even the playing field. At any time, you are able to push your capabilities, and take d3, d6, or d8 stress in any tracker in order to create a positive narrative effect. Describe what you are trying to accomplish through pushing yourself, and then decide which dice size you take based on how much you're pushing yourself.

Pushing does not mean that you do not have to roll, it only means that when you do, you're at a better narrative position, so that you are able to perform tasks that would normally be impossible, reduce the difficulty of something tough, increase the damage you deal, or simply have a stronger effect. Pushing will never grant you mastery, but it may lower difficulty.

When you push, the GM will roll for fallout as you would any other form of taking stress.

Example Pushes

Body

- Perform a feat of strength or dexterity that would normally be impossible.
- Use non-functioning augments at detriment to your body.

Augment

- Push your powers beyond their limits.
- Use your augments for an unintended purpose.

Heat

- Cause a distraction, raising your own Heat to reduce an ally's.
- Reveal yourself to draw out a target.

Hope

- Perform a nearly impossible feat of strength powered by sheer desperation.
- In the depths of despair, your power flares as you glow with rage.

Resource

- Declare a non-unique piece of equipment that you have on you. Even if you didn't have it on your character sheet before, in fiction, you had it all along.
- Bribe a guard to look the other way.
- Purchase an expensive piece of gear.

Faction

- Retroactively declare that you know a piece of information a faction was trying to keep hidden.
- Call a friendly (or at least enemy of your enemy) faction for backup.

Equipment and Tags

Equipment is the things you need to accomplish a job. A ticket gets you into a club, a USB drive lets you save data, and spare clothing lets you disguise yourself. Generally, most equipment falls into this category - items with no mechanical effect, but purely a narrative purpose. (Of course, the right tool for the job may reduce the difficulty of a task - a lockpick generally makes picking locks easier.)

However, sometimes you get attached to a piece of equipment, or it's important or signature to you. If you intend to keep it around for a while, define two things that make it different from the many others like it - one positive thing and one negative. When you take advantage of the positive aspect, you take Mastery, but if you're forced to rely on its negative, the difficulty increases by 1.

Weapons, Armor, and Vehicles

Weapons, armor, and vehicles have Tags, which are short descriptors that describe an attribute that that piece of gear has, and how that attribute changes how it mechanically functions. Some tags only apply when a player uses it, namely if a tag changes how you roll, NPCs use it only narratively, and don't get any mechanical benefits from it - unless of course, it changes how much their weapon hurts.

Weapons will start with a tag representing how much damage they deal. For general reference, the damage levels are:

- 1 Stress - A normal person, unarmed
- 1d3 Stress - Standard weaponry - Knives, batons, improvised or civilian arms.
- 1d6 Stress - Dangerous weapons - Swords, pistols, stun batons.
- 1d8 Stress - Heavy or exotic weaponry - Greatswords, sniper rifles, shotguns, hitting someone with a car.

For ranged weapons, unless a weapons tags say otherwise, just assume you have all the ammo you'll need. You're professionals, you don't run out of ammo unless something goes very wrong.

Armor will start with a tag describing how much body resistance they grant when worn. For general reference, the protection levels are:

- 1 Resistance - Heavy leather, a psychic ward
- 2 Resistance - A Kevlar vest
- 3 Resistance - Riot gear.
- 4 Resistance - A full-body hard light shield.

Vehicles, much like NPCs, have their own resistance tracker, representing the vehicle's current engine function, outer hull status, or just how close it is to being a smoldering pile of metal.

Characters and Teams

Character Creation and Playbooks

When you create your character, there's a few basic pieces of information you should make, such as:

- Your character name and pronouns. Your name can be a name your character took for themselves, the name given to them during the projects, or something else.
- Your appearance, look, outfit, etc.
- Your backstory, history, and where you came from.

Aside from those, you also need all of the following info from each section.

Augments and Core

The Ascendancy Project experiments grafted uplift metal and machinery to you, and these augments grant you your powers in turn. Describe what your augments look like, what part of your body they're on, and how they interact with your powers. Feel free to be as creative as you wish with your augments.

But your augments aren't for show - they grant you strange and psychic powers. Describe in a sentence or two what your powers are - this is called your "core". Your core can be anything as vague as "fire control" to as specific as "Ability to create and manipulate digital environments". As long as you and the GM are both able to cleanly define what you are and aren't capable of, it should be good, but make sure to run it by the GM to be sure.

IDs / Playbooks

When creating your character, you choose two IDs, and take all the skills, domains, resistances, and core moves associated with them. Make sure you write down what your IDs are on your character sheet, as well.

[Link to the IDs](#)

Beliefs

Your character's beliefs are something your character firmly believes - three ideas that you hold at the very core of your being. That doesn't mean they can't change, but for the time being, they are how you see the world and yourself. You may change them at any time when you feel as if your belief doesn't apply to or reflect who you are anymore.

When your beliefs are pushed, acted upon, tested, explicitly defined, or changed, you restore stress - the amount of stress restored depending on the severity of the action or severity of how much it tested your belief.

During character creation, create three beliefs. Make sure that your beliefs are vague enough to be applicable and actionable, but not so specific that acting on them can only reasonably happen in certain situations:

- A belief about yourself.
- A belief about the world and/or your place in it.
- A belief of your own make.

Starting Gear

When you start off the game, you start with the following gear:

- A basic weapon
- Your augments, granting you your core.
- Two small pieces of equipment that fits your character and skills.

And then choose two of the following:

- A signature, upgraded, unique, or special weapon.
- A personal vehicle - a car, a motorcycle, hoverboard, etc.
- Choose a second room or feature during team base creation.
- A small pet or personal drone.

- Two more small pieces of gear that fits your character / skills.
- Something else that the GM approves.

Contacts

Mooncore is full of people - people trying to make it to the next day, people trying to make a better future, and people trying to make a name for themselves. And it also it pays to know the right people - to have friends in low places, in high places, and anywhere in between.

During character creation, pick two contacts, and take their associated skill, domain, or resistance. Describe who they are, give them a name, explain how you know them - make them a real person, just as much as you are.

Skill Contacts

- **Fight** - A friendly rival that you regularly do “friendly” sparring matches with.
- **Learn** - A scholar and researcher, describe what their discipline is.
- **Rig** - A brilliant and incredibly overworked mech designer, secretly working on their own project under the cover of night.
- **Communicate** - A writer and vocal activist whose writings have made them a few uncomfortable enemies.
- **Stealth** - A skilled and notorious serial larcenist.
- **Move** - A member of the Crashrunners, a group of anti-corporate rebels.
- **Operate** - A hotshot driver, always looking for adrenaline and risky jobs.
- **Interface** - A professional hacker, currently trying to stay underground after they went a bit too far.

Domain Contacts

- **Uplift** - A Vulture, trading and dealing in Uplift artifacts.
- **Engineering** - An engineer, either poorly resourced and working independently, or well-funded but working under a corporation.
- **Digital** - A programmer and engineer who specializes in advanced AI and artificial life.
- **City** - A bartender who’s heard every story from everyone who comes through their doors.

- **Corporations** - A mid-level bureaucrat from a company of your choice. They'll help you out, but they've got a lot of eyes on them right now.
- **Revolution** - A firebrand leader of a small revolutionary group.
- **Shadow** - An underground informant who's got all the good information on any given underground activity - for a price.

Resistance Contacts

- **+2 Augment** - An engineer, specializing in Uplift tech who is more than excited to do maintenance on your augments.
- **+2 Body** - A member of Homebrew, a group of bio-hackers made to spite a corporation.
- **+2 Hope** - A best friend who has been by your side through thick and thin.
- **+2 Heat** - A hitman and assassin who's definitely willing to give you a few tips here and there.
- **+2 Faction** - A mole, working for one group, but planted inside another, but also willing to give you a few pieces of info or pull a few strings for you.
- **+2 Resource** - A black market arms dealer, definitely selling highly illegal stuff and definitely with a few bounties on their head.

Titles, Expectation, and Advancement

Titles

Every character has a title - a short, two to three word name that represents a combination of you who are as a person, and who you think you are as a person. This title is the sort of thing that would appear on that character's splash screen during their introduction or moment of truth. For example, a character who actively goes out of their way to save others, even if they are trying to hurt her, would have a title of "The Angel" or similar. Someone who was once a hero and a beacon of hope, but who has now turned, might have the title "The Turned Star".

When you start out, your Title will be your ID, but it changes over time from expectations or moves.

Expectation

When you develop a relationship with another person, NPC or player, you may choose to give them an expectation. An expectation is a title that you give to someone else, representing who you believe they are, or who they could be. It represents an expectation for how they act, what they represent, and what they might become.

When someone gives you an expectation, mark it down on either your character sheet or an index card on the table where everyone can see it, and then put down 9 boxes next to it. This expectation effectively acts as another stress tracker, representing how much you believe that this expectation is or could be you.

When you give someone an expectation, make sure to write down what your expectation for them is, and keep it in mind when you interact with them.

Pushing Expectations

When you encourage someone to act more in line with either their title or an expectation, you are pushing that expectation, much as you would any other stress tracker. When a character, whether PC or NPC, performs an action that pushes an expectation on you, the GM will ask if you, as a character accept or reject the push they are putting on you.

If you accept the push, fill that expectation's weight. If you reject it, instead choose another expectation that you are embracing, and push that one instead. Regardless of what you choose, you must then perform an action to confirm the expectation you filled up as part of you, whether it's verbally confirming it, or physically striking an opponent in direct spite to their "We're not so different, you and I" speech.

When an expectation's weight tracker reaches 10 or higher, next time someone pushes on it, you remove all weight from all expectations, and you are asked if you accept or reject this title. If you accept it, take the expectation as your new title. If you reject it, If you are not comfortable in having that be your title, or are not interested in where that would narratively lead, or if simply your character rejects it, then reject the title they are giving you, and instead

take a title you do embrace as “you”. The title you embrace can be your current one, but doing so does not count as an advance.

Advancement

When an expectation changes your title, you take an advancement. The level of advancement changes based on the severity of the change - “The Aegis” changing to “The Shield” isn’t much of a difference, thus would be a low advance, while “The Aegis” changing to “Threat To The World” is a significant change and would be a high advance.

You may take an advance from either of your playbooks, or any other playbook or alternative advance set as long as you have enough narrative reason to possibly learn that move - such as your new title reflecting that skill.

Team Mechanics

Team Titles and Expectations

When you create your characters, choose a title for your entire team, reflecting what your team’s ideals and goals are, as well as everything they stand for. People may push expectations on your team’s title as normal, but it will generally be rarer. As well, anyone may push you using your team’s title instead of an expectation - and remember that rejecting it is explicitly rejecting what your team stands for.

During character creation, give at least two other members of your team an expectation.

Team Base

After character creation, go around the table and discuss where your team’s base is, what it looks like, and what sort of resources you have there. Each person, including the GM may contribute one feature to the base, but that rule can be broken and bent if you have a really good idea you’re excited about.

Team Stresses

The two team stresses, Faction and Resource, are shared among your entire team, and when one person suffers a hit to it, you all do. Starting out, you have 1 resistance in Faction, and 2 resistance Resource.

Other Advances

There are many other advances and specializations that are not tied to your nature as an Ascended - and those are all found in this document:

[Link to the Alternate Advances Document](#)

The City of Mooncore

No matter how many times you see Mooncore from up high, you always feel something stir inside of you.

From up here, it all seems so distant - everything you've fought for, everything that was lost. The banners of revolution are meaningless - simply specks of color, if they're visible at all. The people who live their lives in fear are just colors as they turn on their lights in their homes, and the ever-present purring of your mechanical arm is quieted against the wind's noise.

You wait, knowing that it's only a matter of time before you see the city's true colors.

And as the sun begins to set, the dying sunlight strikes the buildings, and a breath escapes your lungs as you feel a smile grow across your face. All at once, the sky lights up in brilliant colors, and the city lights up to meet it. In that moment, the vehicles below and the drones above you turn their lights on in a staggered pattern, flickering into life to replace the stars. The pinks and

yellows and oranges of the sky are met by the artificial blues, yellows and reds of the city coming to life.

What you see below you is what Mooncore truly is. Not a battleground, not the rubble an empire left behind. It's not just an opportunity, it's not just a conflict. From up on top of these buildings, you see Mooncore for what you know it to be. For what each person who is shining a light into the sunset knows it to be. For what it is.

Your home.

Factions and Organizations

In the interest of space, as well as making this document take less than 5 hours to load, the factions and organizations sheet is separate, and can be found here:

[*Link to the Factions and Organizations Document*](#)

Locations of Mooncore

In the interest of space, as well as making it easier to edit for myself, I've separated the document detailing the layout of Mooncore here:

[*Link to the Locations Document*](#)

The Nature of Ascended

Your augment abilities aren't concrete powers - they're nebulous, psychic abilities, channelled and awoken and given form through your augments. They are likely to change and shift, becoming something different from your original core, especially as you advance, discover new things, and become a different person.

Ascended's powers can change through significant trauma, training, or even having a dream about receiving a new gift, and then waking to find that you actually were granted that strength.

In short, don't be afraid to be a bit arbitrary with your powers, they're nebulous anyway.

Psychic Dreamspaces

It is unknown why the Uplift had what are now known as "Psychic dreams". Some speculate, based on journals left behind, that it was a way for the Uplift to subconsciously communicate while asleep. Some speculate it's a side effect of unlocking their powers. Others say it's just how they dreamed.

But whatever it is, the Ascended have them, too. During the experiments, they created a way for the Ascended to have the dreams, as well, but not truly. The dreams they dream are simply digital projections of a dream, created by their augments. A fake copy of the real thing, created by those who only want to remind them of what they live in the shadow of.

But they feel real.

Those who have these dreams are forced to endure strange, surreal environments, reflections of current mental states, ideas, abstract concepts and traumas. Things that are impossible in physical spaces. Sometimes others appear in the dreams to communicate with them - sometimes they are connected with their sleeping allies, sometimes they see recreations of fallen allies, or spectres of people they killed.

Many Ascended see their dreams as a curse - a symbol of something they cannot escape, of a person that they don't want to be, but still live in the shadow of. Some see them as a lasting scar from the experiments, another thing preventing them from living a normal life. Some see them as a gift - a power and opportunity that no others can claim. How you treat them, well, that's up to you, isn't it?

As a GM, make sure that players have dreams often. Dreams are there to explore who the characters are inside, mentally, or as an individual. Sometimes they can have a powerful effect on who a person is. They're a chance to directly confront an aspect of a character that they're insecure about, that they fear, or to create something new within them. Not all dreams are nightmares, as well. It may give them a chance to speak with a fallen friend one last time, have a quiet conversation with a lover sleeping next to them, or help them discover a new power they never knew they had.

Names in Mooncore

One of the only things known about Uplift culture is their use of names as a status symbol. Those who accomplish great deeds are given new syllables to add to their names, their last names themselves acting as a medal.

Currently, the longest known Uplift name was the name of an ancient ruler, Opaque Thalta May Thyran Synthos Est Ert Est Maliean Thaltia. The shortest current name is Are, a name only found in a record of people executed in disgrace.

As of now, there are ten types of known titlenames, determined by the power the Uplift held, instead of being passed down. These were used as the basis upon which syllables were added when they accomplished something. In this way, each Uplift's titlename came from the same source, but became their own as they literally made a name for themselves.

- -era or Are-
- -reme or Emer-
- -am or Ma-
- -ome or Tal-
- -li or Lull-
- -ral or Ral-
- -ent or Ent-
- -her or Er-
- -en or For-
- -alt or Thal-

When the Uplift arrived, one of their ways of establishing their superiority was through this tradition. They demanded that all humans removed their last name, so that even the shortest Uplift name would be longer than human names. Now that their rule is no longer true, people have begun to take their own names again, but this time as an act of rebellion and showing their identity and self. As such, names in Mooncore are no longer beholden to any tradition, being varied, unique, self-chosen, and sometimes deeply terrible. Anything from old world names, to objects and words, to even Uplift names, although the latter is generally frowned upon for obvious reasons.

Resources and Advice

Division of Meta Time

There are some moves that include language that means you can only use them certain amounts of times within a time period. However, since a single game can be anywhere from minutes to months worth of narrative time, we instead use a metatextual form of time to measure moves like that.

There are 3 levels of time you will generally see in these moves:

- A situation, a single storytelling beat with a problem that is being solved or made worse, generally referred to as a scene, but the author dislikes using film framing.
- A session is from when you sit down with your friends to play this game of Ascendancy today, to when you decide to stop there for the day.
- An arc is a single story, or narrative act. This is generally 1-3 Sessions, all tied into the same incident, same job, or same organization.
- Ever is exactly as it sounds. This can only be used a certain amount of times, and when you use it up, it's gone forever.

Touchstones and Suggested Media

Multimedia Series

Kagerou Project by JIN

- A story of children given supernatural power by a force trying to control them, the Kagerou Project's concepts of kindness and identity inform *Ascendancy's* Ascended. As well, Ene and Konoha were the inspirations for the Ascended, and the Heat Haze is a great reference for Psychic Dreams.

Music

Unofficial OP of Ascendancy: Kire Carry On by Police Picadilly

Unofficial ED of Ascendancy: Fictional World by Papiyon-P

Books and Comics

Goodbye to Halos by Valerie Halla

- The inspiration for the title and expectation mechanic, identity and self is core to the themes of *Goodbye to Halos*, and it inspired and informed how to handle it in *Ascendancy*. Also there's like, 500 references to this comic in this game and even I've lost track of them all.

Games

The World Ends With You

- Aesthetically, thematically, and narratively, *The World Ends With You* is a story about identity, rebellion against power structures, and our relationships to others.

Warframe - The Second Dream storyline

- In a surprisingly emotional story, The Second Dream and all subsequent quests tear down the facade of the Tenno warriors to tell a story of search for identity and development while under the weight of history and the people around you.

Xenoblade Chronicles 2

Mother 3

Jet Set Radio

Shows and Movies

RWBY

- *RWBY*'s sheer creativity with its characters, powers, weapons, and action scenes is always an inspiration to keep moving forward and create something new. While not directly an inspiration for *Ascendancy*, with everything I do, I owe at least something to Monty Oum.