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Introduction

The Core Mechanic

{front intro} To that end, the following system is included as an extension of the *Milestones* section from the DMG (page 261).

The basic idea is simple; To level-up, each character has to complete Milestones. This includes one Destiny milestone and at least one Agenda milestone. As they go up in levels characters must resolve additional Agenda Milestones. Agenda Milestones represent goals the character has for themselves, while Destiny Milestones represent events the player wants the character to experience. As players assign what their characters want, ultimately both forms of Milestones are assigned by the player, but the distinction is that the character knows about their Agenda, and usually doesn't know about their Destiny. When a character has resolved their current Destiny and Agenda(s), they progress to the next level.

Each level requires one Destiny to be fulfilled, and one Agenda per tier. Thus a character has one Agenda at each level for levels 1-5, two at levels 6-10, three at levels 11-15, and four at levels 16+. A player can fill these out at any time and change them at any time with their DM's permission, but cannot fulfill an Agenda or Destiny unless it was filled out before the start of play that session. This restriction is to keep players from being overly opportunistic about their milestones, like assigning a milestone to finish the encounter they are currently in.

This system encourages players and Dungeon Master's work together to craft at least a portion of the plot of the story. As a DM, if you've ever had one or more players at your table seem just disinterested with the premise of the current adventure, this can be a good way to avoid that problem. Since players help craft the story premise with Narrative Milestones, they tend to be invested in it. If you ever sat down to write an adventure and found that you had a mental block, having noted down the characters Agendas and Destinies can help tell you where events should lead next.

Agenda

Characters in Dungeons & Dragons are adventurers, and adventures are supposed to be proactive, so characters should have goals. An Agenda is a stated goal a character has. Once an Agenda is resolved replace it with another before next session. In order to complete an Agenda it must have been chosen prior to the beginning of the current session.

If the Agenda would take more than three or four sessions to complete, it's probably better to break the goal up into smaller parts and make the most immediate step the next Agenda.

Example; Jake is playing the Myky Leadleg, an orc who is out to take down the Winding Sun Triad for the murder of her brother. Jake's looking to make this a long-term goal, so rather than putting '*Avenge my brother*' or '*Take down the Winding Sun Triad*' he phrases her first level Agenda '*Identify a Winding Sun Lieutenant*'. As a second level Agenda he puts down '*Get the Lieutenant to tell me who killed my brother*'.

It's perfectly alright to have an Agenda as simple as "Survive a serious fight", but no more than one Agenda per level should be something so simple as to be resolved in a single encounter.

Often, and especially when using published adventures, the DM has in mind a goal for the group. While it's alright to pick the group's goal for the adventure as an Agenda, it's often more interesting if the party members all have variations on this goal. You might all be out to topple the lich-king, but it can make for a better story when one party member is there to liberate the kingdom, one wants vengeance, one is quietly gathering clues on how to become a lich and one just wants the amulet the lich-king is wearing.

When coming up with Agendas make sure it's specific enough that you know when it's been achieved. '*Be a good friend*', is probably too broad. When have you finished? '*Find the perfect birthday gift.*' is better.

Manipulation

An Agenda, by its nature, is something someone *wants*, and people are naturally partisan to their wants. This means characters who know a subject's Agenda can use it as a tool to influence them. Should a character use their target's Agenda in a social check to encourage a course of action in-line with the Agenda, or even threaten their Agenda as part of an Intimidation check, they gain Advantage on that check. The opposite is true as well; Any social check to convince a target to take a course of action that opposes or threatens their Agenda gains Disadvantage.

Identifying an Agenda

The most typical way to learn a subject's Agenda is to be told it, but sometimes someone observes enough to put things together themselves. This is particularly useful if the Agenda is one the target takes pains to hide. Keep in mind that an Agenda is a particularly important goal to the character, not a passing whim. Discerning an Agenda from a character's more casual wants takes a careful eye.

If the DM agrees that the character has seen enough to warrant the conclusion that something is an Agenda, the player makes an Insight check, with a default difficulty of 12 plus the target's Intelligence Modifier. The target has the option of adding their Deception Modifier to this difficulty, if they interpret the character as being generally guarded about the subject. They do not have to be aware someone is trying to identify the Agenda to be so guarded.

Destiny

It's been said that some people seek adventure and others have adventure thrust upon them. This system makes use of destiny as a tool for directing the plot. While an Agenda is what your character wants to have happen for themselves, Destiny is what you, the player, want to have happen for your character.

When people hear the word destiny they tend to think of grandiose events. While Destiny, as this system uses the term, can describe fate's epic turning points, this tends to be the case at higher levels of play (tier 4). Early on it tends to describe much smaller events.

Destiny serves several purposes. First, it acts as a note to your DM as to what you want to have happen in the plot (*'Duel an opponent in a burning building'*). Second, it can be used to force your character to grow and face things they don't want (*'Be cheated on'*). Third, it can be used to showcase parts of your character they may not want to bring attention to, but that you, the player, do (*'Have my drinking problem be discovered'*). Fourth, it can be used to bring prophecy into a game (*'Die a martyr'*).

DMs, remember that by accepting the Destiny a player assigns to their character, you're telling the player that you are going to put a situation into the plot where that Destiny is at least likely to happen. If it's an event you think you just can't have happen in your campaign, ask the player to revise it.

Like Agendas, make sure that a Destiny is specific enough that you know when it's been achieved. *'Be the Chosen One'*, is probably too broad. When have you finished? *'Be revealed as the Chosen One.'* is better.

If a Destiny is too similar to an Agenda (on the same character) the Dungeon Master should ask you to revise it. Similarly, DMs should veto a Destiny that seems boring, or just hands the character a win (unless it's somehow a win that the character wants to avoid and would thus be entertaining).

Avoid using the same Destiny repeatedly. An example would be *'Solve a case.'* for a character that styles themselves a private eye. Presumably a character like that is going to try to solve a lot of cases. An alternative could be to vary the details of the Destiny, aiming for greater challenges or characterization. Using the example above, the next Destiny could be, *'Solve a murder'*, *'Solve a case without threatening anyone.'* or *'Solve a case of personal significance.'*, etc.

Dials

Number

The number of milestones and what type are required to progress in level can be adjusted to fit different styles of play. A group might prefer to dismiss the idea of Destiny entirely, working with the idea that a person makes their own destiny. In this case replace the Destiny Milestone for each level with an additional Agenda. Alternatively, if fighting the whims of fate is a theme the group wants to work with, you could replace some or all of the Agenda Milestones with Destiny Milestones. Adjust as you see fit for your group's preferred style of play.

Group Milestones

Some DMs, especially new ones, or ones with a lot of players at one table, may find keeping track of multiple Milestones frustrating. In that case, a better option can be for players and the DM to assign Milestones to the group. This also means the group will level up in unison. Assume as a default a group should have at least 2 Milestones, per level, per tier of play. It's also a good idea to let characters take turns as to who Milestones pertain to if they don't pertain to the whole group. A lot of TV shows take on this pattern, with different episodes focusing on different characters.

By Class

Artificer

Barbarian

Bard

Cleric

Druid

Fighter

Monk

Paladin

Ranger

Rogue

Sorcerer Bloodlines

Warlock Patrons

{break up by class} Warlocks, in particular, usually are given their power specifically because their patron wants something from them. Tiefling and Aasimar characters may likewise have been born due to the machinations of their parents, as could Sorcerers of magical bloodlines. Any of these could cause a character to pick up an interesting Agenda or Destiny.

Don't think you have to have magic in your blood for that to happen either. Politically active nobles often have plans for their children before they're born, and nothing stops a commoner from doing the same thing.

Wizard

Paths of Destiny

The Hero's Journey

The Fool's Journey

Chosen Ones

The Doomed

Progressive Agendas

The 5 Stages of Grief

The 5 stages of grief, the Kübler-Ross model, is recognized as occurring when a person faces the death of a loved one, or experiences some other drastic loss. A person may experience all or some of these stages, in any order, while processing grief.

Characters die in rpgs, and other losses happen with regularity, either in-play or as part of the character's backstory. Often, it can be hard to model these losses in an emotionally deep way without losing track of the plot or defaulting to two-dimensional melodrama (not to say that melodrama is entirely out of place in fantasy). In particular this can be hard when the player isn't experiencing those emotions, or, when the player has long periods acting in a totally different context (real life) in between sessions. Using the stages of grief as milestones allows a player to display this effect in a way that is intuitive and distinct.

What follows is a brief description of each of the Kübler-Ross stages and some ideas about how to use them as a Destiny or an Agenda.

Although a common enough reference in pop culture to be recognizable, science hasn't conclusively demonstrated that these stages exist. For our purposes though, that's about as important as pointing out that dragons aren't real, and players can still use this system as a way of inspiring roleplay. We just felt it important to mention that this might be better thought of as pseudoscience, as opposed to science.

Denial

[description needed]

'Ignore the goblin problem enough to make it a real problem.' (Destiny)

'Tell no one I suspect Coltrand until he actually betrays us.' (Destiny)

'Find a way to get plastered for a good long while.' (Agenda)

Anger

[description needed]

'Get the Baron to embarrass himself to the point he loses his title.' (Agenda)

'Break something we seriously needed.' (Destiny)

'Alienate an ally.' (Destiny)

Bargaining

Your character attempts to compromise away the sense of tragedy. Offer up a significant, dramatic sacrifice or a means to mitigate the severity of the loss. Experience a significant loss or disadvantage by choice for the purpose of symbolically rectifying or mitigating the loss.

[examples needed]

Depression

Your character is beginning to face the truth of the loss, and it hurts. Accept the tragedy. It can be reflected by any significant action that shows your character has moved on.

[examples needed]

Acceptance

Your character is moving on, and coming to terms with the tragedy. This doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. They draw inward, and have a time of stark acceptance.

[examples needed]

Abusing the System

Destiny-Empowerment

If a player suggests a Destiny like 'find a +2 Longsword', 'Find a scroll bearing X spell.', or something along those lines, this isn't automatically a bad thing. Gaining loot is part of the fun of the game, and a lot of times people want to try specific items they have read or heard about. A DM should probably time the fulfillment of this Destiny with other treasures that will go to the rest of the group. Also remember that strings may be attached to these things, and that can keep this sort of Destiny from being a no-cost power grab.

What can be an issue is when players choose a Destiny that sounds like being handed a win. "Slay a dragon" might be an example. DMs, be advised that what the player is asking by

putting down that Destiny on their sheet is ‘Could we fight a dragon at some point (that we have some chance of beating)?’ This doesn’t mean that the DM has to make it easy, and it doesn’t mean that beating the dragon is a forgone conclusion. A Destiny *can* fail. DMs should make sure to let their players know that accepting a proposed Destiny is not a promise to make an event happen, just a promise to make it a possibility.

Similarly, a player may put down something that directly grants them power as a Destiny. A DM should make sure they are comfortable with a destiny like ‘Rule the land’ before allowing it. That kind of destiny can change the kind of game you are running. That’s not a bad thing, unless it would move things out of the kind of game your table wants to focus on. It’s a good idea to make sure that these kinds of Destinies are discussed with the whole group, and if accepted, that everyone still has a place in where the game is going.

Trove (rename?)

New Spells

Discern Destiny ®

2nd-level divination

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M*

Duration: Instant

Learning of a creature’s Destiny can be empowering, but also makes the knower subject to that Destiny. The caster clears their mind, opening it to the currents of fate. The caster learns the current unfulfilled Destiny of one sentient creature, in the form of a single sentence. From then on, once per encounter the caster may apply Advantage to one attack, skill check or saving throw, provided doing so would likely help that Destiny come to pass.

As an unavoidable side effect of this spell, any attack, skill check or saving throw which would impede that same Destiny from coming to pass gains Disadvantage. This penalty will not apply more than once per encounter.

Note that the mechanical effect of this spell remains until that Destiny is fulfilled or thwarted, and thus may remain for considerable time. Individuals casting this spell are advised to do so cautiously, lest they mire themselves in a web of prophecy. Many mentors who teach this spell warn their students against casting it on themselves.

Remember that Destiny is not magic, and effects which cancel or suspend magical effects do not affect the mechanical effect of Discern Destiny once it has been successfully cast.

This spell cannot target aberrations, fey lords, gods or similar beings of power. Many legends suggest that attempting to do so may sometimes get the attention of such beings however, for good or ill.

* A portion of the target’s body (traditionally a lock of hair or drought of blood), or an object they own and care about.

Heart's Desire ®

2nd-level divination

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M*

Duration: Instant

Upon casting this spell on a target, the caster learns one Agenda the target possesses which they did not know before, should one exist. The mechanical benefits of knowing a subject's Agenda (see pgXX) apply to the caster and anyone else they share the information with.

If cast using a 4th level spell slot or higher, the range increment is removed from this spell, permitting it to target anyone known to the caster, on the same plane of existence, provided they are not a god or a creature of similar power.

* 100gp worth of any precious metal or gem, powdered and sprinkled across at least one of the caster's eyes.

Shadowheart ®

3rd-level Illusion

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 8 hours

Weaving a subtle filigree of false emotion and laying it over a heart, feelings and goals can be occluded. The caster names a fake Agenda. Should someone try to discern the Agenda of the subject of this spell by mundane means (see pageXX), they will receive this false impression instead of the real one. Someone trying to read an Agenda by magical means (such as Heart's Desire, above), will prompt a Wisdom saving throw from the bearer of this spell, at a difficulty of the opponent's spell save DC. Failure still means the interloper doesn't learn the Agenda, but does learn that there is a magical defense preventing the spell from working. Success delivers the false Agenda as intended.

Shadowheart is a common spell in cultures where arcane education, money and politics combine. In such places, use of the spell isn't considered suspicious, and may even receive legal protections. There are, after all, plenty of legitimate, private, agendas. It's also a favorite plot device for playwrights in both comedies and dramas, such that the name and general function of the spell is well-known outside of magically educated circles.

New Magic Items

Shadowheart Jewelry

Common, varies, unattuned

Shadowheart Jewelry is a name given to any of a number of magical items incorporating the Shadowheart spell into them (see page XX). The item need not actually be jewelry, and small clothing items, such as scarves, fans and ascots, likewise see the enchantment. Such items carry no social stigma, and are commonly associated with the romantic milieu of the young and rich. For this reason many of these items are haute couture, and may bear motifs that announce the presence of their enchantment. Thus while these are considered common magic items, they typically sell for double the local rate associated with their level of magic.

Though a permanent magic item, the spell still only functions for eight hours at a time, and each object has its own method of activation (typically a stylish recitation). The item can be activated twice during any 24 hour period.

Fate Eaters

Many people can't let go of their aims in life, their goals, ambitions or values. It's part of what makes us want to endure past death. It's part of how we choose to rear our children, or in some cases, why we have them at all. A sinister expression of this are those magic items which seek to shape a bearer's Destiny.

Strangely, while there are few magics available to mortal arcanists which can shape a fate intentionally, it seems many crafters of mirabilia are able to enact their own long-term obsessions into contagious physical form.

Mechanically, these items differ from other cursed items in only one way; They offer a second-hand Destiny to the bearer. Should the bearer experience the Destiny generated by the item, it will replace the one they currently have. This counts as having completed that milestone. Savants of fate hold out that this is one of the only known ways to escape a horrific Destiny known to an individual. If only they didn't always offer one that was so drastic...

Fate Eaters are an epic creation, each a dark miracle hewn from horrific materials and bearing the pathos of lost lives bound into its form.

{further detail, examples}