The Setting

Path of Most Resistance: Mallus Descending

Alkali and Vetallo

You are an Alkali, a being made of organic steel, neither man nor machine. You live on the planet Vetallo, a place where the trees, wildlife, soil, and even the water, to an extent, are made from the same living steel. The planet itself is as alive as you are.

According to legend, at the center of the planet is a complex mechanism, acting as both the housing for Vetallo's consciousness, as well as the birthplace of all Alkali. Once assembled, they are kept in a comatose state in a steel pod, sent up and out into the sea to drift until they reach land. Some sages further claim that Vetallo controls the ocean's currents, and chooses where and when each Alkali will awaken.

Your first memory is awakening in a pod on the shore of one of Vetallo's continents. Where that pod came from and why it washed up here are a mystery to you for now, but you have a sense of purpose that you now seek to fulfill.

Vetallo's Continents

The planet is composed of multiple land masses separated by vast rivers, as though the planet were cracking and water flowed through the gaps. One notable exception being the Moku Ocean, which has no land masses whatsoever, and is said to be so deep that one could swim to the very core of the planet.

Valli is Vetallo's largest continent, bordering the Moku Ocean. On its shore is Ohko village, a spot where many newly awakened Alkali congregate. Its wave-like hills and valleys dotted with simple stone structures make for a cozy place to call home. The Elders there are accustomed to guiding and welcoming newly awakened Alkali as one of their own.

Further inland is Vetruva City, where access to superior resources made it ideal for the construction of its complex towers and bridges. This stability and verticality makes it far safer from Mallus' attacks. As a result, it is considered to be Valli's capital city and greatest stronghold.

The further away from the Moku Ocean you wander, the more wild the world seems to become. Many small civilizations dot the land beyond Vetruva, but few remain standing for long.

Amongst that chaos is an outpost called Sicuro, a sort of adventurer's guild where the bravest Alkali gather to exchange information and venture into Valli's uncharted areas.

The continent on the polar opposite side of the Moku Ocean, Mortestro, is completely unexplored. Wild storms that surround it make sailing there almost impossible. Even if you made it there, who knows what kinds of creatures call it home. If you dare make the journey yourself, be prepared to spend the rest of your life there.

Mallus

Vetallo's moon, just like Vetallo himself, is a living planet. Sentient and aware of everything on its surface, and to an extent, beyond even that. Not much is known of how these two entities came to be, but one thing is certain; Mallus hates Vetallo, and seeks to destroy him by any means necessary. He sends his troops, soldiers, and all manner of monsters to Vetallo's surface, killing and destroying all in their path.

The Secret Origin of Vetallo

Long ago, before Vetallo was the planet's name, it was inhabited by organic beings whose name has been lost to time. These beings constructed the first seven Alkali; Terrus, Reklus, Firnus, Arkus, Bellus, Kalus, and Mallus. These seven organic machines were meant to be the next step in their evolution as a species. Instead, they became their replacement. The Alkali watched as their creators slowly destroyed each other, and killed their planet. Mournful, but full of hope, they devised a way to breathe life back into the planet. They descended deep below the surface, and became one with the planet. Slowly, over the following centuries, the planet was entirely reformed with their own DNA. However, one of them, Mallus, disagreed with the others on how to proceed. In a fit of rage, he broke free from the planet, taking much of it with him. This is how Mallus, the moon, and how the Moku Ocean and its rivers came to be. All this occurred before the first, or rather, the eighth Alkali had awakened, and so, there is not a soul on Vetallo's surface who knows the truth.

Possible Story Hooks

1) Entrance Exam Arc

You and most Alkali in your village only have Null Cores. Every few months, the village elders host a contest, where the victors are awarded their own Empowered Cores. You will have to work together to overcome a variety of obstacles and challenges created by the village elders, all while being sabotaged by other Alkali that are after the same prize.

2) Road Trip!

You and a small band of misfits have agreed to travel together, leaving Ohko village, and heading towards Sicuro in search of greater purpose.

3) Light vs. Dark

Mallus' forces have begun advancing, organizing strikes on small towns and villages, eventually arriving at your doorstep to unleash their devastation. After witnessing them firsthand, the threat of Mallus can no longer be ignored. The survivors gather to formulate a plan to fight back, a gathering you are present for.

Send word to surrounding territories and call for their aid, infiltrate the enemy camp and sabotage them, or rebuild what was lost and be ready for their next strike.

4) Journey to the Center of Vetallo

A mining crew stumbled upon an entrance to an ancient ruin stretching deep below the planet's surface. Someone heading an expedition to explore it is asking for volunteers. Either due to personal interest in the planet's history, the promise of treasure to be found, or simply a desire to break from your routine life, you have answered the call.

The further inward you travel through these tunnels, the more bizarre things become. Dangerous creatures unlike anything seen on the surface dwell here. Twisting labyrinths that shift and disorient. Almost as if the planet itself doesn't want you here. What secret is it so desperately fighting to keep hidden here?

5) Queen of the Pirates

Someone has planned a voyage to Mortestro, a dangerous continent whose name means "uncertain death". A one-way trip in the name of discovery and a spot in the history books. Sailing into the wild and chaotic unknown, fighting dangerous creatures and Vetallo knows what else. Whatever the obstacle, whatever the odds, Captain Tali is confident she can handle it. But she can't go in alone, and that's where you come in.

Rules

Introduction

Path of Most Resistance is a rules-light narrative TTRPG with a goal of being easy to learn and quick to pick up. This system puts more emphasis on teamwork, communication, and collaboration with your party, as well as being creative with each choice you make.

Rolling

Whenever you perform an action that might pose a challenge, you will be prompted to roll 2d8 and add the stat that best fits the situation, and the result determines success or failure. 1-8 being a failure, which means that you don't get the desired result, and in some cases, you give the opposition an opportunity to act or an advantage over you, 9-12 being a mixed success, meaning you might get what you want, but there's either a catch, or you fall short in some way, and 13+ being a Critical Success, meaning you achieve the best possible outcome.

Rolling isn't required for every single thing your character might do. Only when the outcome is uncertain, and failure serves the narrative in a way beyond making a character look foolish. If your GM tries to make you roll for something absurd like Brawn to open an unlocked, unjammed door, or Mind to remember someone's name, please point them to this blurb here, and carry on.

Moments (Action Economy/Combat Rules)

During time-sensitive events within a scene, characters and NPCs will enter a Moment. This will be visually represented by everyone's tokens being placed in view. Each character may make one Move/Action of their choice, after which, their token is turned over, indicating that they have already used their Move for this Moment. Once everyone has taken their Move, all tokens are turned back over, and the next Moment starts. There is no strict turn-order, so be civil and patient, and communicate with your party to make the most of each Moment.

Powerful foes, however, may not fully adhere to these rules. While they only have one action of their own in each Moment, they can still counterattack in response to certain actions.

Possible Actions (And Other Things You'll Roll For)

Describe your action with some level of detail before rolling, as your approach will impact the outcome.

Attacking
When engaging an enemy with your Weapon or Elemental Powers, roll using whatever stat fits your approach. On a 9-12 you can either injure them, displace them, restrain them, or disarm them. However, this exchange will give them an opportunity to counterattack. On a 13+ you deliver a clean hit, and suffer no penalty.
[ ] Injure - Inflict 1 Injury.
[ ] Displace - Move the target to a different location within the scene.
[ ] Restrain - Prevent the target from moving or Dodging.*
[ ] Disarm - Force them to drop whatever they're holding.
On a 1-8 in addition to failing to make an impact, the enemy can take the opportunity to counterattack.

*If you are Restrained, you can use your Action to break free. Roll either Brawn, Speed, or Elemental depending on your method. On a 1-8 you remain trapped, on a 9-12 you escape, on a 13+ you escape and may use another Action immediately within the same Moment.
If an enemy is physically restraining you, you can instead choose to Attack the one restraining you, and choose the Displace option to force them to let go.

Smashing
When breaking through an obstacle or destroying a durable object, roll +Brawn. On a 9-12 you break through, but also either draw additional

attention to yourself, or break more than you intended to. On a 13+ you use the exact amount of strength required to only damage what you intended to. On a 1-8 you fail to impact the target in any meaningful way, and Injure yourself in the process.

Chasing/Fleeing

When pursuing a fleeing enemy, or are fleeing and being pursued, simply compare Speed stats to determine who is faster. If obstacles or difficult terrain are involved, roll +Speed.
Fleeing: On a 1-8 you crash and burn, and the enemy catches you. On a 9-12 you pull through, but so do they, and must compare Speed to determine if escape is still possible. On a 13+ they crash instead, and you escape.
Chasing: On a 1-8 they pull ahead, and you lose them. On a 9-12 you keep pace, and must compare Speed to see if capture is still possible. On a 13+ they crash and burn, and you catch them.

Dodging/Blocking

When you are targeted by an enemy attack, you may use your Action to Dodge, reducing their roll by your Speed stat, or Block, reducing their roll by your Brawn stat. You may use this either before or after the GM announces what the enemy rolled. You can also use your Action to Block an attack that was targeting someone else.

Stealth

When you try to move quietly or avoid being seen, roll +Speed or +Elemental if appropriate. On a 9-12 something gives you away, and they're on alert looking for you. On a 13+ you move without being noticed. On a 1-8 they spot you.

Defusing

When you attempt to reduce the tension of a dangerous situation, either through peaceful diplomacy or threatening them into submission, roll +Social. On a 9-12 the opposition will hear you out, but they have yet to fully change their mind. On a 13+ they find sense with your words and back

down… for now.
On a 1-8 they don't care what you say, and tensions rise instead.

Distracting/Provoking

When using your words to distract or provoke an opponent that has yet to act this Moment, roll +Social. On a 9-12 you successfully draw their fire onto yourself, granting an ally +2 to their Attack against that opponent once. On a 13+ you may Block or Dodge that enemy's attack against you. On a 1-8 they're not falling for your tricks, and instead target the weakest link.

Deception

When you attempt to deceive or mislead someone, roll +Social. On a 9-12 they suspect you're not telling the whole truth, but wait until they are able to prove it before acting. On a 13+ they believe you completely.
On a 1-8 they see through your deception, and will respond accordingly.

Observing

When attempting to gather more information on your opponent or the environment, roll +Mind. On a 9-12 you may ask the GM any one question about your surroundings, and they must answer honestly. On a 13+ you may ask two. (Clarifying questions do not count as a second question)
On a 1-8 you focus on the wrong details or misinterpret something. You may ask one question, but the GM may try to deceive or mislead you.
Example Questions (Use one from the list, or ask your own)
Is this person lying?
What is their greatest strength/weakness?
Who here needs our help?
What's the safest escape route?
How can I gain this person's trust?
Where can we find ____?

Lending Aid

When you see an ally roll short of a success, you can use your Action to Lend Aid, increasing their roll by +1 if you can describe how you assist them. Any number of allies can Lend Aid on a single roll.

Wounds, Recovery, and Rest

When you are damaged by an enemy attack or an unfortunate accident, you will receive 1 Injury. These are generally minor and superficial, but add up. When you reach 3 Injuries, the tracker is reset and you gain 1 Wound. These are more serious and impact your performance. Each Wound imposes -1 on all rolls. When you reach a 4th Wound, you will instead be knocked Out of Commission, either leaving you unconscious for the rest of the scene, or being killed outright depending on the situation. After regaining consciousness, you will remain at 3 Wounds, and your Core will be Damaged.

Your natural regeneration from your Core allows you to recover from 1 Wound and all Injuries after taking a Night's Rest (8 hours of uninterrupted rest) however, you lose this benefit if your Core is Damaged. You can dedicate 4 hours of time to repairing your Core and restoring its regenerative properties. If this process is interrupted, take note of the amount of time elapsed. (If an interruption occurs after 1 hour of work, it will require 3 more hours to complete.) Some situations may prevent you from completing repairs in one instance of downtime, be it a surprise attack from Mallus' forces, or a time-sensitive mission that simply can't afford any major delays.

Should you go longer than 24 hours without taking a Night's Rest, you will receive 1 Glitch, imposing a -1 to all rolls until you complete a Night's Rest. This stacks up to a total of 3 Glitches, upon receiving a fourth, you will shut down from exhaustion, forced into a state of rest. After 24 hours pass, you will awaken with all Glitches cleared.

Character Creation

Building Your Alkali

Each Alkali is made distinct through different combinations of Cores, their Marks and Elements, Weapons, and Callings, and their array of stats of course. There is no set class giving you a set of features, nor a linear leveling system, but instead combining different traits and abilities to make something unique.

Appearance

While the description of "organic machines" is fun and cryptic, it's not very helpful at conveying what on ~~Earth~~ Vetallo an Alkali actually looks like. Your body is made up of cells that come together to form components that resemble machinery. Metal plates, gears, and wires, all very much alive. Humanoid in shape, but visually it's hard to describe you as anything other than what you are; an alien robot.

While there is no set-in-stone design for what the Alkali look like, some points of inspiration I've used in my own imagination are the Toa from BIONICLE, the Cybertronians from Transformers, and the Warframes from Warframe. Whichever interpretation of the phrase "alien robot" suits you best, go for it. Not all Alkali will look exactly the same, and that's good. You are the product of Vetallo's creativity, and he doesn't just make one kind.

Stats

You have Four main Stats that you will use.
Brawn, which refers to your ability to lift, push, pull, restrain, crush, or punch something or someone.
Speed, which refers to your running speed, reaction time, and ability to do things quickly and discreetly.
Mind, which refers to your knowledge, wisdom, intuition, and creativity.
Social-skills, or just Social, which refers to your ability to influence others with your words, be it persuasion, deception, or intimidation.

These stats will start with a standard array of [-1] [0] [+1] [+2] which you assign to each stat when you build your character.

Your Elemental stat always starts at [+1], and applies to your Elemental Powers as their own skills.

You may spend 1 Skill Point to increase any of these stats by +1, however, you may only do this a maximum of 3 times total, so choose wisely.

There are some cases where multiple skills are at work, and multiple stats might apply. In which case, the player may try to justify whichever stat they feel is most applicable according to how they describe their action. For example, if the player is using Flight from their Core's Element to chase a fleeing enemy, they might rather apply Elemental instead of Speed. So long as the player can logically describe how they're doing what they're doing, any stat *could* apply to any roll. (It's incredibly unlikely you'll be using Brawn for stealth, though… like I said, *logical* description comes first)

Progress and Skill Points

You make progress by learning from your mistakes. Whenever you roll a 1-8 on any skill check, you gain 1 Progress. At 5 Progress you gain 1 Skill Point, which you can spend on different features.

Successfully defeating a powerful foe, or hoard of foes, awards 1 Progress to each team member.

Managing to talk your way out of a fight, or otherwise resolving conflict with a non-violent solution also awards 1 Progress to each team member.

GMs are also encouraged to grant a Skill Point after a significant story beat or the completion of a chapter in the campaign.

Cores (Marks)

Your Powers and most of your Life Force comes from your Core, a small mechanical polyhedron in your chest. Should it be badly damaged or destroyed, your body will begin to shut down.

There are many different types of Cores, and different Marks signify its benefits. Choose which Mark your Core will bear, and one ability from its list. Some abilities may alter your Alkali's appearance. Describe what those changes might be if you think the chosen ability is applicable. Additional abilities can be unlocked by spending 1 Skill Point each.

Terrus (Strength)
        [ ] Rolling a 13+ on a Heavy Melee Weapon Attack allows you to inflict 1 additional Injury.
        [ ] If you are physically restraining an enemy, their roll to Break Free is reduced by your Brawn stat.
        [ ] When rolling a 1-8 on a Heavy Melee Weapon Attack, you can instead treat the roll as a 9-12, however, the enemy gets +2 to their counterattack against you.
        [ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.
        [ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

Reklus (Speed)
        [ ] When comparing Speed for Chasing or Fleeing, your Speed stat is doubled.
        [ ] Successfully Dodging an incoming attack (reducing their roll to a 1-8) allows you to immediately counterattack within the same Moment.
        [ ] Rolling a 13+ on a Light Melee Weapon Attack allows you to Disarm them in addition to your chosen option from the list.
        [ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.
        [ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

Arkus (Mind)

[ ] Whenever you Lend Aid by providing additional information or instruction to the one acting, you add your Mind stat instead of the standard +1. (Up to a maximum of +3)

[ ] You can use Mind as your Weapon Stat when using a Ranged Weapon.

[ ] Rolling a 13+ to Observe allows you to ask an additional question.

[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

Bellus (Social)

[ ] Rolling a 13+ to Distract/Provoke causes the enemy's attack against you to result in a 1-8.

[ ] Rolling a 1-8 to Defuse will be treated as a 9-12 if you have not attacked yet in this scene.

[ ] Whenever you Lend Aid by providing words of encouragement, you add your Social stat instead of the standard +1. (Up to a maximum of +3)

[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

Firnus (Elemental)

[ ] Rolling a 13+ on Elemental Attacks allows you to select an additional option from the list.

[ ] Increase your Elemental Stat by +1, ignoring the limit of 3 stat increases for your character.

[ ] Choose one Elemental Power from a different Color.

[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

Kalus (Defence)

[ ] You now heal 2 Wounds during a Night's Rest.

[ ] You receive a Wound after being injured 4 times instead of 3.

[ ] Successfully Blocking an incoming attack (reducing their roll to a 1-8) allows you to immediately counterattack within the same Moment.

[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

Cores (Elements)

Your Core also provides an Elemental affinity based on the color of the crystal in its center. Choose one power from the list under your chosen Element, and describe how your character uses that power. You can unlock the remaining powers of your chosen Element by spending 1 Skill Point for each power.

Red - Fire
       [ ] Flame Emission   [ ] Molten Form
       [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Smoke Cloud

Blue - Water
       [ ] Water Control   [ ] Dense Fog
       [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Create Water

Cyan - Ice
       [ ] Ice Structures (Walls, Bridges, Cages, etc.)   [ ] Icy Terrain
       [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Freezing Mist

Grey - Stone
       [ ] Stone Structures (Walls, Bridges, Cages, etc.)   [ ] Tremor Sense
       [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Burrow

White - Wind
       [ ] Air Burst   [ ] Flight
       [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Zone of Silence

Purple - Lightning
       [ ] Electric Blasts   [ ] Teleport
       [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Electromagnetism (Telekinesis)

Yellow - Light

      [ ] Bioluminescence   [ ] Photon Beam

      [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Invisibility

There are also Null Cores, which provide no benefits or powers, but Life Force and your ability to recover. Think of it like a spare tire for your soul. Your adventure may start with you bearing only a Null core, and have you discovering a more powerful one later.

Weapons

Your Weapons can be nearly anything, but they will be unique to your character, and must fit into one of the following categories, applying the corresponding stat when used. You may have up to 2 weapons. Describe what they look like and how your character will use them in combat.

[ ] Heavy Melee, such as large hammers and axes, use Brawn
[ ] Light Melee, such as daggers and sabers, use Speed
[ ] Ranged, such as crossbows and blasters, use Speed
[ ] Shield, such as kite shields or tower shields, use Brawn*

Arm/Leg enhancements can count as Heavy Melee or Light Melee weapons depending on your fighting style.

Using a Ranged Weapon makes it more difficult for enemies to Counterattack, unless they also wield a ranged weapon, have ranged elemental attacks, or otherwise possess a means of quickly closing the gap.

A Weapon Imbued with your Element allows you to roll using your Elemental stat instead.

*If your weapon is a Shield, instead of using it to attack, you further reduce an enemy's attack by 2 when using your Action to Block. [Enemy Attack - (Brawn + 2)]
A shield imbued with your Element instead further reduces an enemy's attack roll by your Elemental stat when using your Action to Block. [Enemy Attack - (Brawn + Elemental)]

Callings

Your Calling is a skill or talent that partially determines your role on the team. Choose one from the list, and describe how your character performs their Calling. You can not Lend Aid on a Calling skill check unless you are of the same Calling as them. You can only use your Calling skill once per Night's Rest.

Leader
Either by your inspiring words or strategic mind, you're the one calling the shots, and the team trusts you. When you give your team orders, roll either +Social or +Mind. On a 9-12 your team members each get 1 Strategy Point, which they can spend to add +2 to their roll if what they are doing aligns with your orders. On a 13+ each team member gains 2 Strategy Points. On a 1-8, your team is either unmoved by your words, or point out a fatal flaw in your plan.

Chef
Even Alkali need to eat. When you dedicate 1 hour to prepare a meal for the team, roll +Mind or +Elemental if appropriate. On a 9-12 you and your teammates each gain 1 Motivation Point, which can be spent to add +2 to any roll. On a 13+ you each gain 2 Motivation Points. On a 1-8 it tastes… not great. You feel underwhelmed and unmotivated. Unspent Motivation Points are lost after completing a Night's Rest.

Medic

You know how to mend the body better than most. When you dedicate 2 hours to performing maintenance on yourself or teammates, roll +Mind. On a 1-8 you provide a healing factor of 1, which can be used to heal 2 Wounds or repair 1 Damaged Core. On a 9-12 you provide a healing factor of 2. On a 13+ you provide a healing factor of 3. Patients can not participate in other activities during those 2 hours.

Scout

You know how to gather information stealthily and efficiently. When you scout ahead, roll +Speed or +Elemental if appropriate. On a 9-12 you may ask the GM any 2 questions about the environment ahead, and they must answer honestly. On a 13+ you may ask 3. (Clarifying questions do not count as an additional question) On a 1-8 you are spotted, and are forced to retreat before learning anything valuable. So much for the element of surprise…

Alchemist

You brew potions that provide different benefits, so long as nobody asks what's in them. When you dedicate 2 hours to brewing a potion, roll +Mind, +Speed, or +Elemental if appropriate. On a 9-12 you brew one potion, with one of the effects listed below. On a 13+ you brew three potions, either of the same effect, or of three different effects. On a 1-8 you've made a terrible mistake, and have no clue what this potion does. When someone drinks the potion, they must roll 1d8, and the corresponding effect will apply.

[1] Strength - Increases Brawn by 1 for the rest of the scene.
[2] Swiftness - Increases Speed by 1 for the rest of the scene.
[3] Intellect - Increases Mind by 1 for the rest of the scene.
[4] Silver-Tongue - Increases Social by 1 for the rest of the scene.
[5] Tempest - Increases Elemental by 1 for the rest of the scene.
[6] Growth - Grants 1 Progress instantly.
[7] Healing - Recover 1 Wound instantly.
[8] Poison - Inflicts 1 Wound instantly.

Brawler

Every problem looks like a nail to you. When you initiate a fight against an unsuspecting enemy, roll your attack as normal, and apply one of the following additional effects based on the result. On a 9-12 you take them by surprise, and your allies get to act before any of the enemies do in this Moment. On a 13+ all enemy tokens are turned over as if they had already acted within this Moment. On a 1-8 they were ready, and get the jump on you instead. Up to three enemies present may make a Counterattack against you.

Prodigy
You're a fast learner, but not much of a team-player. When you gain 1 Progress, roll 2d8 with no modifier. On a 1-8 you gain 1 Progress as normal, on a 9-12 you gain 2 Progress, on a 13+ you gain 3 Progress.

Inventory

Another benefit to having a Core is that it grants you access to a personal pocket dimension where all of your items are kept safe and accessible. (It just works. Don't overthink it.) Living things or anything larger than what you can lift and carry can not be stored this way. So, no, you can not store a whole fridge in your inventory, but you could carry its contents this way.

When it comes to using your Calling, you either happen to have the necessary items already, or spend the required time gathering the necessary resources.

Assembling the Party

Once everyone has built their characters, take some time to discuss their personality traits, ideals, quirks, any details you think are noteworthy and share them with the table. Establish what common goal has them working together, or if their goals differ, why they choose to help each other.

<u>Optional Relationship Questions</u>
(Seriously, these are just conversation starters, so you probably won't need these)

Choose one statement from each category, and fill in the blank with the name of a party member to establish how you perceive them.

Positive:
You look up to _____ and value what they have to say.
_____ helped you out of a jam once, and you want to repay their kindness somehow.
You and _____ worked together on a special project that helped a lot of people.
You work extra hard trying to impress _____.
You and _____ have been good friends for years.

Negative:
You have a hard time trusting _____ with anything of importance.
You bitterly see _____ as superior, and make it your mission to surpass them.
_____ got you in serious trouble once, and you never got over it.
You think _____ is hiding something, and you're keeping a close eye on them.
You and _____ have always been at odds with each other.

Character Sheet

Blank Sheet

Name:

Calling:

Brawn: [ ]
Speed: [ ]
Mind: [ ]
Social: [ ]
Elemental: [+1]
Injuries: { } { } { }
Wounds: { } { } { }

Core:

Mark Abilities:

Elemental Abilities:

Weapons:

Inventory:

Spent Skill Points:

Example Sheet

Name: Kano

Calling: Leader
Either by your inspiring words or strategic mind, you're the one calling the shots. When you give your team orders, roll either +Social or +Mind. On a 9-12 your team members each get 1 Strategy Point, which they can spend to add +2 to their roll if it aligns with your orders. On a 13+ each team member gains 2 Strategy Points. On a 1-8, your team is either unmoved by your words, or point out a fatal flaw in your plan.

Brawn: [+1]
Speed: [-1]
Mind: [+2]
Social: [0]
Elemental: [+2]
Injuries: { } { } { }
Wounds: { } { } { }

Core: Red Firnus

Mark Abilities:
        [ ] Rolling a 13+ on Elemental Attacks allows you to select an additional option from the list.
        [+] Increase your Elemental Stat by +1, not counting towards the limit of 3 stat increases.
        [ ] Choose one Elemental Power from a different Color.
        [ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.
        [ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.

Elemental Abilities:
        [+] Flame Emission   [ ] Molten Form
        [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Smoke Cloud

Weapons:

Kite Shield [Enemy Attack - (Brawn + 2)]

Inventory:

1 Shield

Spent Skill Points:

Enemies

Soldiers of Mallus

Mallus will send down his soldiers to the surface of Vetallo to do as much damage as possible. Occasionally they have more sophisticated plans carried out by his Generals, though these are less frequent. These enemies wield Black Mallus Cores, granting them unique powers, in addition to some of Vetallo's own.

When building a Villain character sheet, use the following abilities and powers.

Mallus
        [ ] You receive +1 to all Weapon Attacks and Elemental Attacks.
        [ ] The benefits of all Mark abilities are doubled when possible.
        [ ] All stats increase by +1 during the night.
        [ ] You can use your Action to instantly Heal 1 Wound.
        [ ] Choose one Elemental Power from a different Color.
        L[ ] Choose another Elemental Power from the same Color.
        [ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.
        [ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark.
        [ ] Make something up. (Seriously, get creative with this one.)

Black - Shadows
        [ ] Shadow Walking   [ ] Darksight
        [ ] Zone of Darkness   [ ] Shadow Minion
        [ ] Imbue Weapon   [ ] Form of Shadow

The number of Skill Points to spend creating a Villain will depend on the number of players, and the intended level of difficulty. For an easier encounter, spend a number of Skill Points equal to or less than the number of players.

The number of Wounds a Villain can take before being knocked Out of Commission will also vary, especially if there are multiple enemies. For an easy encounter, give the opposition a combined Wound capacity equal to or less than the number of players.

The Stats that a villain uses should use the same array as the players' characters.

Obviously, take these numbers with a grain of salt, as this is being written with exactly 0 actual playtesting done.

An attacking villain is definitely more dangerous than an attacking player, as players can't counterattack on a villain's 9-12. Instead, a 9-12 will be a normal hit, while a 13+ will allow a villain to apply an additional effect from the list, and may inflict 2 Injuries at the same time.

A villain also can't read the player's minds, and may need to take the Observe action to properly gain an advantage if the players are being particularly clever.

Devlog

4/21/2025

Shifted the way Attacking results work, from 9-12 feeling like a weak hit and 13+ feeling like a strong hit, to 9-12 feeling like a mixed success and 13+ feeling like a full success, better reflecting the way numbers are described in the Rolling section of the rules.

Changed the outcome of rolling 1-8 on Resisting Mallus' Influence, instead of being directly beneficial to be rolled, it instead delays further punishment.

Shifted the way Active Repairing works, from 1 hour for 1 Wound and 2 hours for 1 Core, to 2 hours for 1 Wound and 4 hours for 1 Core. This increases the value of a Medic while still avoiding making them essential.

Added Glitches for refusing to take a Night's Rest.

4/22/2025

Changed the description of what a Core physically is, from a pseudo-crystal to a mechanical polyhedron containing a crystal. The main reason being that repairing a damaged crystal is hard to explain using logical words. The mechanical housing being damaged and repaired is a lot easier to wrap one's head around.

Changed the penalty for rolling a 1-8 on Attacking, removing the +2 to the enemy's counterattack.

Reworked the Terrus Core's third ability, better aligning with the new Attacking rules.

Changed the Bellus Core's second ability, now only requiring that the user had not yet attacked this scene to activate, as the user has no control over what their enemies (or allies) do.

Changed the description of the Medic calling, previously implying they were the only ones capable of healing, which they were before active repairing was added.

4/23/2025

Thinking about changing the way Core swapping works. It sounds cool in my head, being able to swap to a different set of powers according to what the situation demands, but swapping Marks becomes very goofy very quickly, especially when they're fully upgraded. Switching from wielding Fire to wielding Ice is easy to digest, but going from a diplomat to a weapons expert, while incapable of being both at the same time, feels really dumb.
(40 minutes later)
Added an optional rule that you can only equip Cores of your chosen Mark.

Changed how Wounds work, each one now imposing a condition that causes any 13+ on a chosen roll to be treated as a 9-12 instead.

Redefined Glitches to be a -1 to all rolls until cleared instead of choosing a condition from a list.

Changed wound maximum from 4 to 5, one for each stat.

Changed the Kallus Core's second ability to allow its additional Wounds to impose further penalties. But, hey, at least you're still alive, right?

4/25/2025

Started putting more sarcasm in the rules. Might as well make it an entertaining read. It's over 4k words at this point.

Added a reference for what Alkali might look like.

Added an Introduction tab to the Rules section.

Added a bit about GMs not making players roll for every. single. thing.

4/26/2025

Thinking about removing the core-swapping mechanic entirely, as it undermines the significance of choosing a combination of Mark and Color in the first place by being able to swap it out later.
This would also mean either repurposing or removing the Craftsman Calling.

4/27/2025

Removed the core-swapping mechanic.

Changed the Firnus Core's second ability, as it directly interacted with the core-swapping mechanic.

Null Cores still exist for campaign hook purposes.

Removed the Craftsman Calling, as it no longer serves a purpose.

Removed references to the core-swapping mechanic from the Inventory section.

Calling abilities can now only be used once per Night's Rest to avoid being spammed for their benefits.

Added the Brawler and Alchemist callings.

Added more rolling options for the Callings (Except Medic, that one only gets +Mind, because I said so)

Added a Character Sheet tab.

5/3/2025

Re-worded the Brawler Calling to better convey how it works.

Added blank and example character sheets.

5/7/2025

Changed the Prodigy Calling, no longer grants 1 Skill Point at character creation, now has a chance to increase the amount of Progress gained whenever Progress is earned. Before it was the only Calling that didn't require a roll, and only existed as a boost in power for a character. Now it's more aligned with the "fast learner" archetype that it represents, while also giving the player more to do with it throughout the campaign. (Still very selfish and unbalanced, by design)

Added a second instance of "[ ] Choose one ability from a different Mark." to every core to allow for more variety in types of builds.

5/8/2025

Added a section for making Villains. Very much a placeholder, as the numbers are based on educated guesses, and no actual data.

Made more adjustments to the Character Sheet. Added Braces { } next to each stat to indicate which ones are impacted by Wounds.

Changed the Firnus Core's second ability to "[ ] Increase your Elemental Stat by +1, ignoring the limit of 3 stat increases for your character." from "take 1 Wound to turn any Elemental roll into a 13+"
This allows a player to more easily dedicate a character to an Elemental build from the start, while also making it possible to reach a maximum of +5 as the other stats currently can.

5/14/2025

Added Restrain to the list of options when Attacking. This provides a mechanical option for the Elemental "Cage" options.

Changed Distract/Provoke so 13+ allows you to Block or Dodge instead of imposing a -2 to the enemy's attack.

5/16/2025

Changed the Brawler Calling's 1-8 to limit enemy counterattacks to Three enemies within the scene. As amusing as it would be to watch one guy get crushed by eight enemies at once, it would just be overkill.

5/20/2025

Changed the third Bellus ability to instead be a modifier to Lend Aid, mirroring the Arkus ability, but providing each with a distinct purpose.

Changed them both^ to be limited to a +3 on Lend aid, as being able to help someone else fight by playing cheerleader is a tad ridiculous. (Or is that just what Bardic Inspiration is for?)

Added example questions to the Observe tab.

Controversial: Adding a new Mark to the list.
Even more controversial: considering adding Abstract Elements, like Gravity and Time.
Why? Because it's 3 AM and no human is here to stop me.
(Actual reason: There are no Mark abilities that grant Strength or Speed any merit outside of using Weapons specifically.)

Moved the Kallus Core's "You can use your Action to Block an attack that was targeting someone else." to just be part of how Blocking works for everyone. More opportunities for teamwork moments

Moved the Terrus Core's "Successfully Blocking an incoming attack (reducing their roll to a 1-8) allows you to immediately counterattack within the same Moment." to the Kalus Core, being the designated "Tank" core, it should have the shield one.

Added more core abilities wherever I added them. (3:25 AM now. Heh. I'm fine.)

Added specific rules for Stealth and Deception.

5/25/2025

Added Smashing as its own section in the actions list, since it's listed as something you can do with Brawn in the stats section, but doesn't elaborate further.

Considering reworking Cores (again) this time, making the cores more about Powers, and replacing the Abilities with a Tropes system. The Strong One, The Smart One, etc. each having the same Abilities from the existing Marks system, but also making room for… stuff… and things… I dunno, I feel like the character creation process is too boring in its current state, and want to spice it up if I can.

5/28/2025

Yeah, that trope system is stupid. The whole point of the Cores system is that it's something other RPGs don't have. Any rpg can have a tropes system.

9/8/2025

Adjusted some wording in the Wounds section (still not 100% satisfied with where it is. Still can't think of anything better)

Might go back to the 1 Wound = -1 to all rolls. The fact that getting stabbed can impact your social-skills and *nothing else* feels pretty silly on its own, but -1 to everything at once feels heavier for a narrative game, especially when it goes up to -5.

Considering a ramp up mechanic, similar to how Progress becomes Skill Points, have Injuries become Wounds. 3 injuries becomes 1 Wound, and 3 Wounds puts you Out of Commission. Will need to update everything to match, but I don't feel like doing it rn…

-Wounds
-Medic
-Cores
-Combat rules

Pretty sure those are the places that mention them…

A'ight, that's done. Might tweak it further later on, but it's… something. (At least now it's not just stolen from Masks)

Manually repairing Wounds is no longer an option since being Wounded happens less frequently, making a Night's Rest and Medic the only way to recover Wounds.

Made Villain's 13+ Attacks more impactful, now being able to inflict 2 Injuries at once.
(Combine this with the first Terrus ability, and a Villain can inflict a full Wound with a single attack)

11/17/25

Added additional text to Repairing Cores, noting that the process can be interrupted, and how to handle it when it is. Wanting to put more emphasis on time being a valuable resource, as most Calling abilities are also quite time-consuming. Not quite sure how yet…