

The Purpose of Special Abilities

Special abilities allow players to bring new elements into the game and find new creative avenues. Living Alchemy uses many techniques to produce tense situations and encounters with the effect of framing difficult choices for the players. In these cases, special abilities may provide a 'third option.' A protagonist on the verge of bankruptcy may use Borrow to get just enough resources to save his business.

In this way, special abilities put some constraints on the game master. If they construct an elaborate mystery hoping to string the protagonists along from clue to clue, a tactical use of Scry puts a sharp end to it. If they center the game around the search for some particular macguffin, they should prepare for Discover to be invoked at any moment.

Special Abilities can upend the dynamics of a conflict very quickly. If the game master wants the players to engage with a conflict in the game master's own framing, they should take care to follow certain practices. The game master's elements (characters, mysteries, resources, etc.) should be interesting and engaging. Rather than mere antagonists and challenges, there should be advantages to interacting with them.

On the other hand, there are some significant disadvantages to using Special Abilities. Most require special resources or introduce lasting challenges.

Hire (Socialite)

Introduce a new character (scholar or agent) into the game for the purposes of hiring. This character will have a dice pool with dice equal to the number of target hit plus 2. Each target helps frame the interaction between you and the hire. Using this special ability requires expending money to obtain the necessary information, to pay reference fees, and to obtain special access.

Your character has something the hire desperately needs: 6
treatment for an affliction, information, your personal approval
Declare a detail about one of the hire's objectives: 5
Declare a detail about the hire's background: 4

Borrow (Reputed)

Introduce a Contact into the game who grants you a resource draw. When you use this ability, there is an associated debt that must be repaid. The terms for this debt are decided by

agreement. For each target in your roll, choose a different kind of resource your Contact may supply you with.

Declare a major term of the debt (form of payment, timeline, etc.): 6

Choose a detail about one of the creditor's objectives: 5

Declare a background detail about the creditor or their title: 4

Scry (Diviner)

Scry allows you to obtain a vision that decisively answers one or more questions. Each target represents a different question that may be asked. While the game master may give correct yet misleading information, it should adequately answer the question asked. If the roll misses, you may receive incorrect information.

Answer a 'who/what' question: 4

Answer a 'when/where' question: 5

Answer a 'why/how' question: 6

Note: If the GM is unable to answer the question definitively, then the produced vision should divulge as much information as the GM can reasonably supply.

Coronate (Advocate)

Introduce a Title into the game that's up for grabs and declare a number of conditions that can be satisfied to acquire the Title. Whoever satisfies all these conditions simultaneously. Coronate leverages the powers of law, history, and rhetoric to grant political legitimacy. The number of dice associated with the title is equal to the number of targets plus one.

6: Claim Birthright

- The title must be controlled by a member of a particular family, or by someone enumerated in a prophecy. This usually rules out all but a very narrow selection of people.

5: Win Contest

- The Title requires winning a contest of some sort such as winning a war, an election, personal combat, or battle of rhetoric.

4: Hold Position

- The Title requires controlling a particular position which may be a cultural center, religious center, or other important location.

Charter (Advocate)

Introduce a new property into the game. This property does not enter the game under your control. Rather, it must be purchased, seized, or acquired. This is usually accomplished with a title (see the *Titles* section of *Resources*). Using Charter requires special legal resources representing a staff of litigators, access to a law library, various bribes, etc. The types of resource draws associated with the property is equal to the number of targets hit with charter.

Choose a detail about the property's exterior or location: 6

next to city hall, defended by the king's armies, made of reinforced concrete

Choose a detail about the property's interior: 5

e.g. secret passageways, guard dogs, confusing layout

Choose a detail about the property's history: 4

Heal (Physician)

Remove another character's harm or appropriate penalty targets. Choose one or more wound or penalty targets to roll against. If you hit, those targets are cleared. If you miss, you receive a penalty equal to the highest target missed. This penalty applies to your character, and not to the patient. Heal requires special medical supplies drawn from a resource and a safe location to monitor the subject's recuperation.

Transmute (Alchemist)

Specific to Campaign Module.

Summary

- Borrow: Introduce a contact and get immediate access to one or more resources.
- Hire: Introduce an agent or scholar into the game with a useful trade (dice total equal to 2 + number of targets hit).
- Charter: Introduce a property (not necessarily under your control) that provides one or more types of resources (equal to the number of targets hit).
- Coronate: Introduce a Title into the game with a number of requirements to obtain it. (Dice total equal to the number of targets + 1).

- Heal: Remove a number of blood, harm, or penalty targets.
- Transmute: Use alchemy to create or transform something.
- Scry: Ask one or more questions to the GM that must be answered honestly.