

HEAT **HIGH EXCITEMENT** **ACTION TABLETOP**

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the HEAT roleplaying game - a game of action, adventure and thrilling heroics. In HEAT, you take on the roles of misfits and adventurers, pirates and corsairs, space adventures and dangerous vampires, all from the comfort of your own living room, with all your friends!

If the idea of all of your friends having access to high powered machine guns, psychokinetic fireballs, and interstellar spaceships armed with nuclear bombs doesn't fill you with gibbering terror, then this book is for you!

THE HOOK!

So, a lot of these books start with a 'what is a roleplaying game anyway?' but I think that's a bad first question. The *real* first question to answer is 'why the hell are you reading this book?'

Fortunately, HEAT has a great answer! Actually, due to my complete inability to reign in my own hubris, it actually has *five*. By playing this game, you and your friends will get to play in any of five pre-made settings! Including...

Tankquest



In a world where hard-light holograms were invented before the wheel, the world has become inundated by ancient, malfunctioning tanks - hard-light projections of military vehicles used in warfare that now roam the earth like wild beasts. Since they are programmed to disregard anyone under military age and use only minimal force on them, it has become a common rite of passage from childhood to adulthood to set out and tame your own collection of semi-sentient tanks. Can you be the very best? Like no one ever was?

Agents of the Gods



The ancient gods never died. They were banished. Thousands of years ago, the petty, squabbling pantheons of Earth were sent to a world known as Purgatory, a hollow shell of thick jungles and bronze aged cities, populated by fantastical creatures - elves, goblins, lizardfolk and more! The war between the exiles and the natives destroyed much, but in the aftermath, a

tenuous peace exists. Now, each god plots against the others and there exists a thousand rooms for a cunning mortal, demigod, or elf blooded sorcerer to *profit*.

Blood Dimmed Tide



An alternate history of our own Earth where the 20th century began with the calamity of a Martian invasion, stopped in its tracks by the most unlikely savior...of Count Dracula!? Years after the Normandy Armistice, the city of Shrouded London tries to hold its own in a Europe wracked with Martian infiltrators, fascist agitators, American and Russian imperialism, resurgent cults worshipping dark gods and whatever else that might go bump in the night.

Disunited Front



A possible future of Earth, where FTL was invented *before* we got our act together and unified. Now, every nation with the technological capacity of printing silicon chips and basic understandings of the DeVilbiss Drive are setting up colonies across the galaxy, much to the consternation of the various aliens who are more used to dealing with a less...unruly species. Can this Disunited Front stand? Or will it fall - and take humanity with it?

Star Walkers



The Machine Intelligences gave humanity miracles of immortality and nanofabrication and interstellar travel. Then they left. Now, a million years later, only the memory of the golden age survives, kept alive by the power and grace of the Liminal Knights, humans that travel the vast Chain - a linkage of hyperspace connections that runs from Earth to the furthest reaches of the cosmos - blessed with nigh mystical powers by their enigmatic AI patrons.

And so many more...

These are just five *example* settings. HEAT is a game that gives you the tools to play in any universe that strikes your fancy. Ever wanted to play *Mass Effect* without needing to wait for

Bioware to release a new game? HEAT is for you! Thrilled to movies like *Fury Road* or *Dredd*? Well, HEAT has you covered! Did you enjoy *Gears of War* and realize it's actually a really good example of antifascist art? HEAT's ready for you to rock and roll!

OKAY, BUT HOW!?

"Fine, Mr. Cobalt, if that is your *real name*," you say. "But what is a roleplaying game?"

Well, let's break it down. It is a game because it has rules - like Monopoly. Except, unlike Monopoly, these rules are actually fun to play! But what about roleplaying? Well, roleplaying means taking on a 'role' that is different from your own. Rather than being yourself, you pretend to be a mysterious spell slinger, sexy spy, yourself but you're a catgirl, etcetera, etcetera. Now, the canny among you may already be saying: "Well, wait, I do that in Monopoly? In Monopoly, I'm taking on the role of a fat cat capitalist piece of shit, trying to make a bunch of money and fuck over the homeless!"

Yup! And in video games, you often also take on roles: You pretend to be Commander Shepard or Altair or Kratos or, god help you, Soap.

So, what makes a roleplaying game different?

There's no board. There's no levels. There's no guidance as to what your character is and does beyond *yourself*. In a video game, you may play Kratos, but you can't choose to *not* stab Baulder at the end of Dad of Boy. You might play...uh...let me google the main character of a more modern Call of Duty game... Jack Mitchell, but you can't *not* press F to pay respects. In Monopoly, you have to move around the board and you have to be the aforementioned fat cat capitalist piece of shit.

In HEAT, the only people who can decide who you are playing and what your character does is you and your friends at the table. And the only people who can decide *what happens* to your character is you and your friends at the table.

That's why I like to play tabletop roleplaying games: The freedom to be who I want, to do what I want, and to see what happens with the people I love.

Sold?

I sure hope so! Cause we're about to get into the meat and potatoes!

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

To play HEAT, all you need is at least one other friend (though you can get as many as you can realistically get around a table - take it from an expert that more than five players starts getting

really unwieldy and unfun), some dice (the classic six sided dice used in any board game will do) and a few hours to play in.

Now, the actual game itself is telling a story with you and your friends. You may be a **player** and be commanding the role of a single character (also referred to as a **Player Character** or PC for short) or you may be the **Game Master** (or GM!), in which case you will be adjudicating the rules and controlling all the characters who aren't controlled by the players - the **non-player characters** (or NPCs!)

This story is told using the rules that follow. Each rule can be thought of as a tiny computer program or machine that you use to generate story - you put in actions, crunch the numbers, and out comes more story, which then leads to you taking more actions, which you put into the mechanics, which then puts out more story, and so on until you're out of pizza and coke zero and want to take a nap.

Now, you may ask: *Why do we need all these rules? Why can't we just do improv?* Well, STEVE, the answer is a little multifaceted. The first facet is simple fairness. If you say 'I shoot the bad guy' and the bad guy goes 'nah', then how do you determine who is right? Well, you use the rules! The second facet is, counterintuitively, creativity. You'd think being restrained by rules would limit your creativity, but as someone who has faced the tyranny of a blank white page and been told to fill it with words...let me tell you, having constraints and goals are a *godsend*.

These rules provide for you narrative shorthands for stories and plots and characters, allowing you to take some of the mental weight off your own brain and put it into my brain via these rules.

The final facet is this: The rules, when used by multiple people at once, provide for unexpected results and exciting new directions. A story told by a single narrative voice is coherent and exciting! ...for other people. For the actual storyteller, it can be damn hard work and take a lot of time. But with these rules, a group of people can collaborate together to start at point A of a narrative, then zip off into a great big galaxy of possible events.

So! Let's get into the actual rules that will be used to create these stories.

THE RULES!

No matter what setting, you will be playing a character who is a serious cut above others. If you've seen a high octane action film like *Commando* or *John Wick*, or played a video game like *Mass Effect* or *Doom*, then those are the kinds of characters you are.

In short...even if your character is not built for combat, you are going to wreck face like a living hurricane made of .50 caliber bullets.

All characters are made up of a few aspects that indicate what you can do in the game.

- Skills, which indicate your general physical, mental, and social abilities.
- Powers, which are incredibly potent abilities that put you at some risk to use.
- Traits, which are inherent features of your personality and even biology. Unlike the above, these can be negative!

In play, you take actions during two kinds of situations. The first is 'narrative play', which is a freeform conversation between you, the GM, and the other players. Timing is not super important and the focus can be on solving problems, but those problems are usually fairly simple and straightforward. Only when timing becomes relevant and the problems get more complex does the game shift into 'structured play.' There are three broad kinds of structured play.

- Combat - the guns, the swords, the magic powers, this is when they all get to strut their stuff. This is highly detailed and structured because...okay, to be honest, combat is really fun? Stuff blows up, bad guys make thumps when they hit the floor, and your characters get to show the Nazis what for. Because it's fun to do, I have lavished it with mechanics.
- Piloting - this is combat, chases, or simple operation of vehicles. They might be airships exchanging mana cannon fire, X-frame interceptors unloading rockets, or deadly tripod walkers armed with heat rays and death beams.
- Intrigues - this is the most nebulous kind of structured play. An intrigue could represent a daring heist of a mansion, excavating an ancient ruin, trying to outwit the Archon of Secrets himself in his own mansion of green flames, repairing a massive sundiver before the system you're in is wiped out by a gamma ray burst and more!

Each of these structured systems *can* and *do* interact with one another. An Intrigue may require a Piloting scene to successfully steal documents, but then the villain of the Intrigue could send goons, triggering a Combat, which can lead to new twists in the Intrigue when you capture one of those goons to interrogate him, and so on!

WHAT HEAT CAN DO

The HEAT system is ostensibly universal - but 'universal' is a tricky thing when it comes to tabletop games. Stories and mechanics in the tabletop space are interwoven, and ignoring one in favor of the other leads to less satisfying play than having a synergy between the two. This is why crowbarring a game that is built around dungeon delving and monster slaying into supporting a different mode of engagement (romance, comedy, whatever) leads to...less than optimal byproducts.

So, while I do want HEAT to be a big flexible toolbox that GMs and players can use to play in any number of settings, the actual *mechanics* and *stories* of those settings are surprisingly narrow.

HEAT is not great at horror. It can do action with a horror bent like cult classic action/horror FPS F.E.A.R (go play it if you haven't, it *fucks*) but not outright disempowered spookums.

HEAT is not great at low power games. While you can make characters that are more 'grounded', even a PC that ostensibly has no magic or superpowers is still going to be closer to John Wick than John McClain.

HEAT is only so-so at slice of life games. Go buy *Chuubos: Marvelous Wish Granting Engine* or any number of better indi games than this one if you want something quiet, homey, and focused on feelings over face-punching.

HEAT *is* great for action-centric gameplay, where PCs are larger than life and important. The original inspiration for HEAT was *Mass Effect*, so the characters are 'calibrated' to a roughly Commander Shepard-ish level of competence.

SAFETY RULES

We have to stop here for just a moment: There is one set of rules that are the most difficult to write and hardest to enforce, because they don't involve math or precise numbers. They're about people and the way that people, even with the best of intentions, can hurt one another. Everyone has topics that they are sensitive around, from the obvious (sexual violence, abuse, putting little old ladies in peril) to the less obvious (spiders, gross out gore described in living detail, specific medical treatment.)

Bringing things up that people are sensitive to, especially unexpectedly or in an unguarded moment, can be deeply unpleasant for everyone involved. It sucks for the person who got their worst sore spot poked by a big stick, and it sucks for the person who (most likely) did it by accident.

So, before any game begins, start with a discussion of any 'Veils' and 'Lines.' Veils are topics that you're fine with being in the game, but don't want lavish detail. I.E, you're okay with gore but don't want it to go further than 'he was decapitated.' Lines are topics that do not enter into the game.

This idea was invented by Ron Edwards. I'm stealing it!

But as one final note here: these concepts are tricky for groups because human beings are messy, complex piles of gears and guts. It's incredibly easy to be annoying, insensitive, or simply thoughtless and to foster a general 'bad vibe' at a table, even if you're not actively setting out to be a jerk. There's no magical bullet that will fix the vagaries of human interaction, but the best methodology is to just *be honest*, assume good intentions when in doubt, and have conversations with people.

And then if they're still a dick, kick them out of your game.

It'll suck, but it will be the best in the long term.

BUT ENOUGH TALK! HAVE AT YOU!

Turn the page, and let's get rolling. An ironic turn of phase, considering this is a diceless game...

CHAPTER TWO: PLAY

ROUNDING

This is going to come up, and I will forget it later: If you half anything, round up! So, $15/2 = 8!$
Okay?

Okay.

Let's blow stuff up!

ACTIONS & HEAT

Whenever a character acts in this game in any mode of play and the outcome of that action is in doubt, it is referred to as "**Taking An Action.**" In structured play (combat, piloting and intrigues), actions are taken in a round robin fashion: Each PC gets a **turn**, which has as many **actions** as they see fit to use. Once a PC has taken their **turn**, they cannot take any actions save for **free actions**. Once each PC has taken their **turn**, the **round** comes to an end.

The limit on **Actions** is their **Heat** - Heat is a byproduct of the action's **Difficulty**.

All characters have a **Heat** of 0-6 (represent this with a six sided die, which will hereafter be called a 'd6' - have the d6 on your sheet at 0 heat, place it at 1 on the table at 1 heat, then tick it upwards as you gain heat, tick it down as you lose heat.) **Heat** is gained by taking **Actions** and can only be lost by **Taking a Hit, Cooldown, taking a Rest or Failure**.

If your heat goes up to 7 or higher, you **Overheat**. Your action is successful, but the followup leaves you in danger *and* puts you into **Cooldown**.

That's a lot of different terms. Let's break them down in the order you'll use them at the table.

SKILLS, ENVIRONMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

When you take an Action, you begin with a **Skill** that is most applicable to the action in question - guns for shooting guns, charm for being nice to people, your background in criminal stuff for finding the smuggler's den at port, and so on. Your Skill is then modified up and down by Environmental effects and Equipment effects. If you have a tool that helps you, then it will have an **Add**, which is added to the action in question.

The environment, meanwhile, is a bit of a wild card - sometimes, it can help you. Sometimes, it can hinder you. ...honestly, most of the time, it's making things harder for you.

The combined total of all of this is the **Total Value** (TV) of your check.

Example: Neferti is a spy, living within the bubble world of Purgatory, working for the god Loki and she's been tasked with creeping into the Dodektheon city of New Athens to steal some incriminating documents on one of Loki's many enemies. She has to creep past a few guards who are on standby. She has a Stealth skill of 2 and a midnight black cloak, which suits the night, giving her a +2 to her stealth skill, and getting her a total value of 4.

DIFFICULTY

Actions have a Difficulty, representing their innate "hardness." Difficulty 1 is relatively simple actions - shooting someone, talking a frightened dock worker into not fighting the heavily armed mercs, sneaking past a bored guard. Difficulty 10 is the upper end of what is possible for just about anyone: Hitting a demigod, evading a nuclear blast in a fridge, hacking into the computer of a hyper-advanced alien spaceship.

Example Difficulties

- 1: sneaking past someone in the dark
- 3: sneaking past someone in a well lit room
- 5: sneaking past someone who is looking right at you
- 7: sneaking past the demigod of watchers
- 10: sneaking past the demigod of watchers while she looks right at you

Difficulty's base value can be modified in only one way: Each **action** after the first **action** you take in a row adds +1 to the difficulty, with no cap.

Once you have acquired your Total Value, you compare it to the Difficulty. If the TV is equal to or greater than the Difficulty...you did it! If your TV is *higher* than the Difficulty, the difference generates **Oomph** (more on that later.) If your TV is *lower* than the Difficulty, then you can either **Fail** or take **Heat** - which is treated as a direct Environmental add to your Total Value.

There is no limit to how much Heat you can take for any action - if you want to get lots of Oomph, you can push an effortless attack even harder! The only concerns you should have are how you're going to get rid of that Heat later...

Example: Neferti had a total value of 4 in the previous example. She wants to sneak past five guards in a row, one after another after another! The GM rules that since these are standard guards, their standard difficulty applies: 1. So, it's a difficulty 1 check to sneak past the first one, giving her 3 oomphs. However, since we haven't covered what oomphs are yet, we'll just assume she doesn't use them in this example. The next check would be at diff 2. The third? At diff 3. The fourth is diff 4. The fifth, though, is at diff 5 - and this is one higher than her TV. Neferti takes 1 heat, and succeeds. She darts past each in the darkness.

As a note, since the above example was in a dramatic scene, Neferti could not have taken a hit to reset her multiple action penalty, nor lost heat that way. Pausing in her sneaking would mean that the guards would be free to act - and the first thing they'd do would be to spot her and call the alarm.

LOSING HEAT

How do you lose all this Heat you're getting? Well, as previously mentioned, you can **Take a Hit**, enter **Cooldown**, **Fail** or **Rest**. The first two options are only available in structured encounters - Combat, Intrigue, and Piloting. In normal, free-form play where you're just roleplaying and taking skill checks, the only method to lose Heat is via **Failing** and **Resting**.

Resting is dirt simple: You don't do anything stressful for an *hour*. Now, sometimes, you will have time to kick up your heels and take a break. But most characters in HEAT have cities to save, people to seduce, and bad guys to beat up! You need something *faster*.

The other alternative...is to Fail. If you choose to Fail a check (I.E, don't take any heat on it), you *instantly reset your Heat to zero*. However, the check fails, with the consequences dependent on the situation and difficulty in question. This means that skill checks in dangerous situations require some forethought and caution.

Example: Neferti has entered into New Athens, but in the act of finding the documents that she has been sent to retrieve, she has racked up some heat. She had to gain 2 heat to succeed in an intimidation check against a dock worker who was recalcitrant in giving up information. She had to gain 1 heat to succeed in an athletics check to clamber up onto a rooftop and leap across to the roof of her target's building. Then she had to gain a whopping 3 heat to lockpick her way into the building, putting her at *six heat*. But, at last, she has the documents...but she has to creep out of the building and several guards have begun to patrol nearby.

These crack guards have a difficulty of 2 and are carrying torches that impart a -2 penalty to her check. She sneaks past the first one (her TV of 4, even reduced to 2, is still on par with difficulty 2) but the second one she has to sneak past is an elite guard with a diff of 4 - which would cause her to take 2 heat and put her at 8. She instead chooses to fail, which sets her heat to zero...right as the guard shouts: "Stop! Thief!"

At least she'll be ready for a fight now!

If you fail in structured play (I.E, decide to take a shot in combat and think better of it after realizing the heat costs), then you simply **take a hit**, which is going to be described...right now!

TAKING A HIT & COOLING DOWN

The two primary ways to lessen heat in structured actions like combat and intrigues are **Taking a Hit** and **Cooldown**.

The first is low risk, low reward. Taking a Hit just means your turn ends for the round, you lose one heat, and *one* NPC gets to act (this is why it's called taking a hit - because an NPC will now get to, uh, hit you.)

Cooldown is more complicated: When you use a power (throwing telekinetic force at someone, putting your starfighter into a complex dogfighting maneuver, digging up dirt on an enemy in high brow social circles), you lose Heat equal to the strength of the power (the more powerful a power, the **less** Heat you lose), then enter into Cooldown.

Cooldown ends your turn and allows **one** NPC per PC or four NPCs, whichever is higher, to act. This means if you are heavily outnumbered by singularly easy to beat enemies, it may be worth *not* using cooldown, so that the enemies will not be able to use the advantage of their numbers!

SIDEBAR: SOLO PLAY?

If there is only one PC, then consider reducing the NPCs that can act during cooldown by half, so that power use is still risky, but not *that* risky. You are alone, after all.

FREE ACTIONS

Free Actions are any actions denoted as such - usually, they are expending powerful oomphs, or using certain powers. They also include dramatic talking - shouting short bits of advice to friends, insulting enemies, and calling out warnings are all examples of free actions. Unless stated otherwise by the rules, Free Actions can never have skill checks or anything that might require a skill check with *one* exception: Speech!

If a bit of dialog could meaningfully be stated within a short moment, then it can be used as a Free Action to allow for a skill check. For example, you could shout 'come on, kill me, do it, do it, kill me!' at the alien hunter to try and dissuade him from attacking your friend with a skill check.

...better hope you can tank the alien's wrist blades, though.

OOMPH

So, you've heard of Oomph for a while now. But what *is* oomph?

Can you eat it? Is it tasty?

Well, an *oomph* is the onomatopoeia of a really impactful sound effect, like when you use a combo in a video game that makes someone *super* explode. In HEAT, an Oomph is a discrete chunk of narrative control that you get by using your skills. A lot of the time, you don't really

need to worry about the specific timing and placement of Oomphs. Technically, succeeding a sneak check to slip past someone means you place an “Unaware” Oomph on the guard you’re slipping by...but in narrative mode, you don’t *really* need to worry too much about that.

However, sometimes, the situation is more complex and the impact you want to model requires more detail. In that case, you can place oomphs on NPCs, on the battlemat (more on that in the Fight chapter), and even on yourself, to produce any number of effects. The specific oomph will lay out the effects in question.

You get 1 oomph for meeting the difficulty of an action, and then get to add +1 per TV above that difficulty. If you want, you can add more Heat to your check to increase your TV and get more Oomphs. Oomphs can be applied to anyone that they can be reasonably applied to - but in general, they need to be within the same range for physical effects, within line of sight or communication range for social effects. Oomph can be applied to any number of targets and can be split (if you have 5 Oomphs, you can give 4 to one guy, and 1 to another, cause fuck that one guy in particular if you want.)

The only restrictions on these above distribution rules is this: All applications must be *narratively justified*. You can’t shoot someone and then apply “Arcane Charge” to the dude next to him without a really good narrative reason that is supported by play - for example, you’re shooting them with some kind of *magical* gun (where’d you even buy that?)

If you’re ever unsure, the table can decide as a group.

All Oomphs decay. In combat, piloting and intrigue scenes, this decays at a set rate. In narrative play, it depends upon the oomphs and situation, but usually is either a “scene” (5-10 minutes of narrative time) but can be longer. It really depends...like, pinning someone with a burst of machine gun fire so you can run away won’t last for very long. But putting the moves on someone and giving them a “Seduced” oomph might last for days, or weeks, depending on how many butterflies the NPC gets in his tummy.

If you want Oomphs to go away *faster* than the normal decay, then they can be removed by taking an action. This is a skill check for PCs at a base difficulty of 1 to remove one oomph then removing an additional +1 oomph per counter-oomph created. So, say you’re pinned with 3 Pinned Oomphs and decide to use your Personal (Athletics) skill of 2 to scramble to a new position. That’s a diff of 1 and a TV of 2. This means you succeed (removing 1 oomph) and have 1 oomph, which you can then spend to drop you down to 1 Pinned Oomph. Take 1 heat and you get away!

Each skill check can remove one *kind* of Oomph - increasing the difficulty of future actions. (So, removing 2 Lifted and 2 Stasis and 2 Pinned oomphs would be at diff 1, diff 2 and finally, diff 3 because it’s *three skill checks*, not just one!)

Example: Venn of Stumble is facing off against the evil Lord Drak atop an antiproton factory suspended in a gas giant's upper atmosphere, armed with nothing but her pluck, her wits, and a threshold blade jacketed in pure holographic light. Lord Drak is close to going down for the count, but she knows that if she tries to just strike him down, she'll rack up too much heat - she's at 5 heat, after all! And Drak has a ton of evasion (more on that later) and armor (even more on that later) so hitting him directly is out of the question!

She needs to buy time for herself to recover.

So, she uses her Melee skill to hit Lord Drak with the Unaware Oomph by slashing a coolant main with her threshold blade. Venn's Melee is 3 and the base diff is 1, creating 1 oomph, +2 for the TV, imparting the 3 Unaware Oomphs on Lord Drak. Coolant gushes into the air, spraying up into the masked Hegemonic Knight, buying time for Venn to leap into a surface vent and deeper into the antiproton factory's innards.

When her turn ends, Lord Drak is unable to take any action related to where Venn is located - he doesn't know where she is! So, he spends his action clearing the oomph, meaning next round (he's a high level enemy, so he'll be able to remove a lot of oomphs in his turn) he can begin to stalk after her. Hopefully by then, Venn will have a better shot at taking him down for good!

SAMPLE OOMPHS

In Fights

Arcane Charge: The target has been charged with unstable magical energies. If hit with another Arcane Effect (power, improvisation, skill check) of any type, they explode, creating 3 Damage per Arcane Charge oomph removed in a small AOE.

Off Balance: The target loses their Evasion until this oomph is cleared.

Pinned: The target is pinned in place by your gunfire, arrows, magic missiles, or angry glare. They cannot move.

Suppressed: The target's head is down. They cannot move. However, if they are in cover, double that cover bonus.

Smashed: Something has been destroyed, creating an environmental penalty for movement and combat equal to the Oomph placed here. This can only be cleared by actions.

Cleared: A hole has been blown in something, creating an environmental and narrative opening in a wall, barrier, floor, ceiling, what have you. If applied to cover, reduce that cover by 1 step per Oomph. This can only be cleared by action.

In Intrigues...

Advantage: You've set things up better for your buddy - giving them +1 to their total value per Advantage Oomph. This can only be used by other people, no stacking advantage on yourself.

Disadvantage: Enemies have to take an action to remove this oomph before they can take an action related to the Piece this oomph is on.

In Piloting

Careening: the vehicle that's being piloted is wildly out of control! This oomph must be removed before it can be driven properly. If in a confined area, it will take 5 damage per Careening if not removed by the end of the round!

Overheated: The enemy vehicle has begun to become overheated, stressed or generally disadvantaged. They take -1 action per Overheated oomph placed on them.

Dogfighting: This is an oomph that is shared between you and an enemy. You get +1 to hit them per Oomph and they cannot attack you so long as the Oomph is on the field.

Blocked: a chunk of something is between you and them - or somehow, their targeting is getting messed up. Treat as cover equal to its level. This applies to shooting *and* piloting checks.

Lock On: You have targeted the enemy ship's weak point! Count as positive environmental modifiers, equal to the number of Oomph applied.

In All Situations

Command: This NPC is following your orders. Expend this oomph as a free action to get the NPC in question to do what you want.

Panicked: The target is panicking! Rather than taking the most efficacious action, they will instead do something irrational - shooting friends in the back, betraying their allies, hiding rather than going to the police, trying to run away.

Distracted: The target is distracted, reducing the difficulty of anything targeting them by 1 per Oomph.

Enraged: This target is really pissed and will act before any other NPC when the turn order swaps back to NPCs. This is useful to keep stronger enemies from acting by pissing off their goons first.

Unaware: The target is unaware of you - either because you're hiding or you've distracted them. They cannot take any action related to targeting your specific area.

Jerry Rigged: A damaged component is working! ...FOR NOW!

SIDEBAR: Creating Oomphs!

The guideline is that an Oomph should do one tiny chunk of narrative control. So, their effects should be relatively limited and focused upon creating the output that the skill

input would logically create in the narrative. Now, it's important to remember that a *lot* of the time, you don't really need to create an Oomph or even name it.

Like, technically, the way the system works is that if you use the Athletics skill to climb up a wall, you're creating a "Climb Up Wall Oomph" that then resolves with you at the top of the wall. But you don't need to actually worry about that, it happens automatically as a byproduct of narrative play.

Some guidelines, though, for when the mechanical effects are a bit more complex

Evasion is the easiest thing to remove. If an Oomph impacts it, it should negate it entirely.

Armor is harder to remove, if an Oomph impacts it, it should drop it by 1 per 3 Oomph.

If an oomph causes damage, it should do 3 damage if it is simple for an ally to trigger after you place it, and 5 damage if it's hard for someone to trigger. Delayed damage should be about 2 per oomph and should trigger when the oomph is decayed.

OOMPHS AND TIMING

Sometimes, oomphs and their timing will matter. Say you've got a vehicle with weak points and enemies slap on weak point oomphs, then drop damage on you afterwards. Thanks to the weak points, you're going to take down tons of damage! Should your friend remove the weak point oomphs or the damage oomphs?

If one oomph allows for another oomph to exist, then you have to remove them in the reverse order. You cannot remove pinning to free someone from being suppressed - you need to remove suppression, then pinning. You cannot remove a weak point to retroactively apply armor. And so on and so forth. Sorry guys.

OVERHEATING

So, overheating sounds bad. It *is*. And what is worse is, there isn't just one level of overheating - things get worse the more over your cap you go. Basically, you track your Heat with a d6. If the d6 is on your sheet, it is at 0. If the d6 is at 1 and in front of your sheet, you're at one, then you tick your way up to 6.

But when you overheat, slam down...ANOTHER d6 at 1 (this puts you at 7) and tick up from there to track your Overheat!

The overheat track below shows the results of your overheating and when your heat resets to zero.

When your turn ends due to overheating, enemies act as if you had taken a hit.

1-2: *Overheated*: The GM can worsen the situation slightly - adding in ½ the PCs number of Shock to a situation if it's combat. In an intrigue, a dangerous prop can be created owned by an antagonistic Actor, an unclaimed or owned prop can be yanked by an antagonist Actor, or a prop can be stashed freely in your control.

Reset: On the beginning of your next turn.

3-4: *Badly Overheated*: The above, but at double values - full PC numbers or two Props.

Reset: On the beginning of your next turn.

5: *Wounded*: rather than the situation getting worse, you're are Wounded

Reset: Upon choosing a wounding option.

6: *Badly Wounded*: As above, but you pick *two* wounding options.

Reset: Upon choosing a wounding option.

7+: *Dead*: You're just fuckin' dead.

Reset: ...never. You're *dead*. Depending on the setting, you might be brought back to life with timely cryo prep surgery or magical intervention.

SIDEBAR: Poor Kenny

Remember that scene in Robocop where the malfunctioning ED-209 opens up on this poor wanna-be corporate slick, Kenny? And it just...*pours* bullets into them for what feels like ten minutes straight, reducing him into a heavily shredded pile of twitching meat and blood? This is really funny (or tragic, depending on your feelings on Kenny) when it happens to an NPC or in a movie.

(If you haven't seen Robocop, there's a security robot called ED-209 that is used to illustrate how the corprocratic future of the film is one where cheap, shoddy products are being fronted into public service to make a CEO a bunch of money while putting human beings in direct danger. Which is very unrealistic and silly, as befits an 80s cheesefest action film.)

But as much as we love watching Kenny get blown to pieces... this *sucks* when it happens to a character in an RPG that the players are playing. This is why the wounded results reset your heat immediately to zero. This means that if a GM is *going* to continue to hose down a character at 11 heat, they won't need to just do 2 more heat and instantly kill them. Instead, they'd have to *keep hitting them* from 0 to 13 again. Which is just an absurd amount of bullets, arrows, or sword swings.

This should *only happen* if a character has deliberately put themselves into a position to be hammered like this - heroic last stands, desperate bids to protect others, and generally bold and brave actions. Not because the NPCs couldn't hear a gun drop.

...that's why ED-209 blew Kenny away, he dropped a firearm during a policing test and ED-209 didn't hear the gun hit the floor, so it thought Kenny was still armed and blew him away. If you never knew that, now you do!

(If you haven't seen Robocop, uh, spoilers, that's why ED-209 kills Kenny.)

(Also, Kenny dies? Sorry.)

OVERHEATING IN NARRATIVE PLAY

So, when you overheat in narrative play, the first two results (the majority of overheating, as few people will find "convincing the pretty girl to kiss you" worth dying for) are 'make the situation more dangerous' for you. But what's the guidelines on that in a sitch without shock or props?

The first and *most important* guideline is to **never** ever **ever** negate the result of the check. If your overheating result is indistinguishable from failing, then it's a bad result! So, if a PC charms someone and overheats and you have the person get insulted by some faux pass that the PC said, you're doing it wrong!

What you can do is *imperl* the result of the check. A protective third party shows up before you can make the kiss. You catch yourself before falling to your death, but bad guys find you as you dangle from the branch. You manage to hide in a barrel, but that barrel you're hiding in is picked up and transported onto a cargo truck heading to a mysterious base. You spot the tail, but the tail isn't just a tail (as the GM initially planned) but rather...an *assassin* with a nerve disruptor!

In general, if the overheating result leads to the mood of 'dun dun dunnnn!' and then leads to PCs excitedly thinking of how they're going to get out of this situation next, then you're good to go!

If you can't think of a good overheating result, then this check was low stakes enough you *really* shouldn't have asked for one. If that ever happens, it's fine to admit it and just move on before the game derails! Games are hard, cut yourself some slack, jack!

WOUNDING

There are several types of wounds, and you can only take the ones that are appropriate for where you are. You are unlikely to be "bleeding out" at an Intrigue, unless that Intrigue is a murder mystery and the unknown killer got behind you with a knife. This applies to Dead as well - if you get killed at an Intrigue, work with the GM to figure out what and how you died, using the narrative. Freak accident, heart attack, or maybe a sudden assassination, use what makes sense for the story that's going on.

You choose the wound, but the GM gets to dictate specifically how it befalls you.

Bleeding Out: You are bleeding out! Place a d6 on the table at 6 and tick it down each round. If it hits 0, you *die*. It takes a diff 5 Narrative action to fix you up and bring you back to fighting trim. You can *choose* to reduce your d6 by 1 to reduce that diff by 1, but *watch out!* You cannot act while bleeding out.

Item Destroyed: An item that's important to you - a Piece in an intrigue, a Weapon in combat, what have you - is destroyed irrevocably. While you choose this Wound, the GM chooses the item.

Precarious!: You're in a precarious situation - if you don't escape at the end of the next *round*, you will instantly die. This can be trapped in a burning room, arrested by the police and on trial for murder, hanging from a cliff, what have you. Unlike bleeding out, you can act.

Scarred: A permanent wound is left on your body, something that only expensive cybernetic prosthetics will "fix" (and even then, you'll always be obviously clocked by it.) Gain 1 Heat that cannot be vented until this repair/fix is applied.

Real Bad News: You're fine. It's everyone else who is about to have a bad day! Add [PC]x2 Shock to the scene.

RELATIONSHIPS

Characters who interact don't just become more loyal to one another like this was some video game - that loyalty is then filtered by *how characters feel about one another*.

That is tracked by the Relationship system.

...you may ask: "Why is this in the general rules area? Isn't this more of a Spot Rule thing?" Well, no, relationships are important. Characters in the HEAT system use teamwork to overcome their problems, and how they interact is almost as important as their ability to explode things with their minds, stab people with swords, and use grappling hook guns.

So, here's how Relationships work: after a roleplaying scene or combat or intrigue or anything where you and another player feel as if your characters have had a strong emotional connection with one another, you can decide to have a Relationship.

To do this, you simply have to decide how your character feels about the other, then confirm it, verbally in an out of character conversation. If *either* player is uncomfortable or doesn't like the idea of the relationship, then it is immediately canceled with no hard feelings between players (hard feeling between characters, maybe, but only if it doesn't cause unwanted drama. If it causes *wanted* drama, go full speed ahead.)

The feelings you can have are...

Butterflies: You feel butterflies in your stomach when his mandibles spread in a smile.

Friendship: You know this guy is the fucking best. Besties!

Flustered: You cannot stop thinking about her encounter suit.

Rival: You *will* hit more bottles next time at the range.

The feelings merge to form a relationship, which provides the following effects.

	Butterfly	Friendship	Flustered	Rival
Butterfly	Meet Cute	Longing	Smitten	Tsundere
Friendship	Longing	Besties	Oblivious	Snarkers
Flustered	Smitten	Oblivious	Beat Red	Top to Bottom
Rival	Tsundere	Snarkers	Top to Bottom	Frenemies

Beat Red: You're both really, really, really physically into one another.

Effect: Negate heat gained from a single source by your partner by diving onto them, physically intervening, or generally getting up close and personal with them.

Besties: You get along great!

Effect: If you share a skill with your bestie, add $\frac{1}{2}$ your skill to theirs when you work together. If you don't have the skill, add a base +1 for assisting.

Frenemies: You *will* show this guy up!

Effect: Add +2 to any action taken to show up the other.

Longing: One of you doesn't know the other is falling for them.

Effect: The PC who is longing gets +2 to a skill they think will impress their partner. The friend gets the effect of 'Besties.'

Meet Cute: You two are going to get married. You know, eventually, after teasing the audience long enough.

Effect: If you enter Cooldown or Take a Hit, your partner gets to act once before NPCs do. Note, this is an action, not using a power!

Oblivious: One of you doesn't know the other thinks they're hot.

Effect: The PC who is lusting can transfer Heat from their partner onto themselves at any time as a free action, at a 2 to 1 ratio at any time (thus, a net heat loss.) This can be engaged before Overheating effects take place. The friend gets the effect of 'Besties.'

Smitten: You're both feeling sparks, but neither are sure if this is lust or love

Effect: If you are fighting back to back, you can use either Beat Red or Meet Cute's effect, but not both. Outside of combat, you get nothing.

Snarker: You are friends, but no one could tell if they listened to your snarks.

Effect: Each time you or the other gives a good snark apply the *Snark* oomph as a free action, which can be expended to add +1 to a skill check.

Top to Bottom: Step on me, please.

Effect: If you follow the order of your top, get +3 to your action. Tops vent 1 heat by giving an order (this can only be done once per round.)

Tsundere: I-idiot!

Effect: The lovable idiot gets +2 to their charm skill, which applies to all situations and characters. The one who has to deal with the lovable idiot gets +3 to their action if it is taken after they and their partners butt heads.

SIDEBAR: But, Dragon Cobolt, I play TTRPGs! Emotions are scary and confusing to me! What do I do with these rules!?

Fear not! I am not a *complete* bozone. I know that not everyone is going to want their adventuring party to be polycules of Tsunderes, Tops, Bottoms, and Blushing Cuties Meeting Cutely. You know, if you're a loser nerd who needs to touch grass. In most tabletop games, there are mechanics for helping other player characters by providing assistance.

In my game, that mechanic is tied to being 'Besties.'

So, if your party isn't interested in shyness, stammering, snarking and smooching, just have everyone be chill bros who are besties with one another. Everyone gets the nice, simple ability to add ½ their skill rating to their friends by helping out, and you can focus on what makes your table happy - be that killing Tuatha pirates, throwing Nazis off cliffs, or driving steam trains directly into the New British Empire's ammunition dump!

SCALE

All these rules, so far, have dealt entirely with actions on human scale - humans, interacting with humans, or at least human-type deals. Like, what is an elf if not just a sexier human? But HEAT is a game that ranges far. Possibly much too far! Can you believe this is my first RPG? And I'm going to throw in a kitchen sink vehicular combat system too? And they called me mad when I went to college. Mad? I'll show *you* mad!

Ahem.

Scale is added or subtracted to values based on this chart!

SCALE (SIZE) MODIFIER	DAMAGE	A	DURABILITY	RANGE	SPEED	MASS	PEOPLE	COMPLEXITY (Information Material)
0 (Human)	Handgun	+0	Flesh	Reach	Walking	Handful	1	A single sentence of text, crude drawing, simple sensation A single undifferentiated mass of an element
3 (Power Armor)	Heavy MG	+0	Plate Armor	Rifle	Horse	A backpack	5	A single page of text, simple drawing, complex sensation A complex element or radioactive
6 (Mech)	Tank Gun	+0	Tank Armor	Sniper Rifle	Car	A human	10	A few pages of text, a complex drawing, multiple senses Alloys and such
10 (Frigate)	Missile	+1	Ship Armor	Artillery	Prop Plane	A boulder	50	An entire novel, three dimensional shapes, perfect illusions, complex ideas implanted into minds. Simple Technology (sword, plate armor, basic clockwork, 1600-ish tech)
15 (Cruiser)	Orbital Laser	+1	^+ Ablative Armor	ICBM	Jet Plane	Tons	100	An entire movie or similarly complex multi-part media, reactive illusions, perfect memory alteration/sharing Moderate Technology (1900s-1940s tech)
21 (Battleship)	Fuel Air Bomb	+2	^+ Shields	High Orbit	Chemical Rocket	Dozens of tons	500	A simplistic computer program (video game from 1980s), combinatorial effects of multiple metrics ranging from 1-4.) Modern Tech (1950-1990 tech)
28 (Dreadnaught)	Nuclear Bomb	+2	^+ Heavy Shields	Other Planets	Fusion Torchship	Hundreds of tons	1000	A complex computer program (video game from 21st century), combinatorial effects of multiple metrics ranging from 5+ Postmodern Tech (2020-2050 tech)
36 (Moon)	Crust-Burster	+3	^+ Wish Magic	Kuiper Belt	FTL (slow)	A mountain	5000	Quasi-sentient computer program or similarly sophisticated information cluster. Sci-Fi (Spaceships, cloning, cryogenics)
45 (Planet)	Planetkiller	+3	Literally a Planet	Other System	FTL (fast)	A continent	10,000	Sentience or anything of lesser complexity in any combination. Space Opera (FTL drives, stasis bubbles, farcasters)
55 (Star)	Stellar Converter	+4	Indestructible	Edge of Galaxy	Time Travel	A small moon	50,000	A singularity intelligence or similar complexity. Posthuman Technology (Magic, Basically)

Not all things will be at the same spot in the Scale Chart. For example, a space fighter might have a Speed Scale of +21, but only have an armor scale of +6. What does this mean? Well, if you are piloting that fighter, you'd add that 21 to your speed. If your base speed (you'll learn more about that in the next chapter) is 5, then you can zip around at 26 hexes per turn! ZOOM! Meanwhile, if enemies open fire at you, you can ignore 6 damage per turn! Dang!

The inverse is true. Say an enemy battleship is in orbit. She's got armor and ablative layers of armor *and* force screens protecting her, giving her an obscene +21 armor. The NPC who serves as her "base template" for the GM has 2 armor, so that's a whopping 23 armor! Worse, she's got battleship scale guns. Normally, that NPC might only do 1 damage whenever he attacks. Now? He's got +21 scale modifier for that, so that's 22 damage which, if you remember your overheat chart, will kill you *so dead*.

Sometimes, scale is a penalty, though. That battleship has a big fusion torch for its main drive (+28 speed) but vehicles can get rebate on their costs by applying combat penalties - in this case, the Battleship weighs roughly as much as a mountain, giving it a -36 mass penalty, which means its total speed modifier is -8.

This reduces its speed below 0, giving it a minimum hex speed of 1 in combat. It's a big, lumbering battleship slowly cruising through the air above you - like Star Destroyers in Star Wars!

(As a note, I said *combat* modifiers - narratively, the fusion drive is still able to soar between planets in a few days like any other fusion torchship. Does that make sense? Absolutely not! It's entirely a genre convention and gameplay feature to make exciting combat that I like. If you want realistic spaceships, buy GURPS, nerd.)

Scale also impacts how PCs design vehicles (which is cool and covered in Chapter 4), and covers Improvisations (which are, honestly, even cooler and covered in Chapter 6.) But the basics *always* work the same: You're either adding or subtracting the "scale number." No more complicated than that!

Oh, also, when in doubt: Out of combat, use the narrative descriptions (so, a scale +6 ranged gun can shoot roughly as far as a sniper rifle.) In combat, use the numbers and hexes listed (take your gun's base range and slap +6 to it.) The range of a "hex" is pretty flexible - it can be a meter, it can be a mile, depending on the situation. This also covers how most sci-fi settings have ships going into "warp speed" to zip zop zoop around at their FTL speeds: A big ship with an FTL engine might only go 15 or 16 hexes per combat, but out of combat, they can zoom away at their FTL speeds.

AND WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT A?

Oh! Uh, the A is for AOE. It's special, that's why I've split it off here: Basically, unlike other scale metrics, the AOE is always linked to damage. So, if you are firing a gun with a +6 damage scale,

it'll have a +0 AOE scale free of charge, but if you are toting around a gun with a +10 damage scale, it automatically gets a +1 to its AOE. This moves the weapon along the AOE scales, which are listed in the combat chapter.

This is a mixed blessing. AOE means that your damage can mulch goons, or easily peg slowbies! But it also means that fast, zippy vehicles can evade them. This is how those daring starfighters can evade the *objectively* horrifying amounts of damage large scale guns dish out. They get squashed if they get hit - so that must be your operative word!

If.

CHAPTER THREE: FIGHT

You are standing in a room.

Across from you is another man. Between you is a knife.

In a few seconds, you are going to struggle for that knife, and one of you is going to end up with that knife buried in your heart, bleeding out the last moments of your life onto the ground...*and it's gonna be fucking sick.*

He's gonna feint to the left, then snap out with a knife palm that shatters into the wall behind you. You're gonna blast him back with telekinesis, then levitate the knife up and fling at him - but oh no, he's dodged out the window. He pops back up! He's got two Uzis! Bullets spray through the room as you lift your palms and snap up a crackling field of blue-white energy. The bullets slam into it, only to be flung straight back at him, shredding the wall and the window frame into a spray of metal fragments and wooden splinters.

This...is the *fighting chapter*.

Structured combat begins whenever a bunch of bad guys and relatively few good guys are in the same room and the time has come to start blowing people up with cool space magic (or, in some settings, regular magic.) In a lot of ways, combat works just like the freeform dramatic actions described above - but there is a more specific checklist order that things go in. Furthermore, where most non-structured events have character position be "wherever they want to be", in combat, range matters a *lot*.

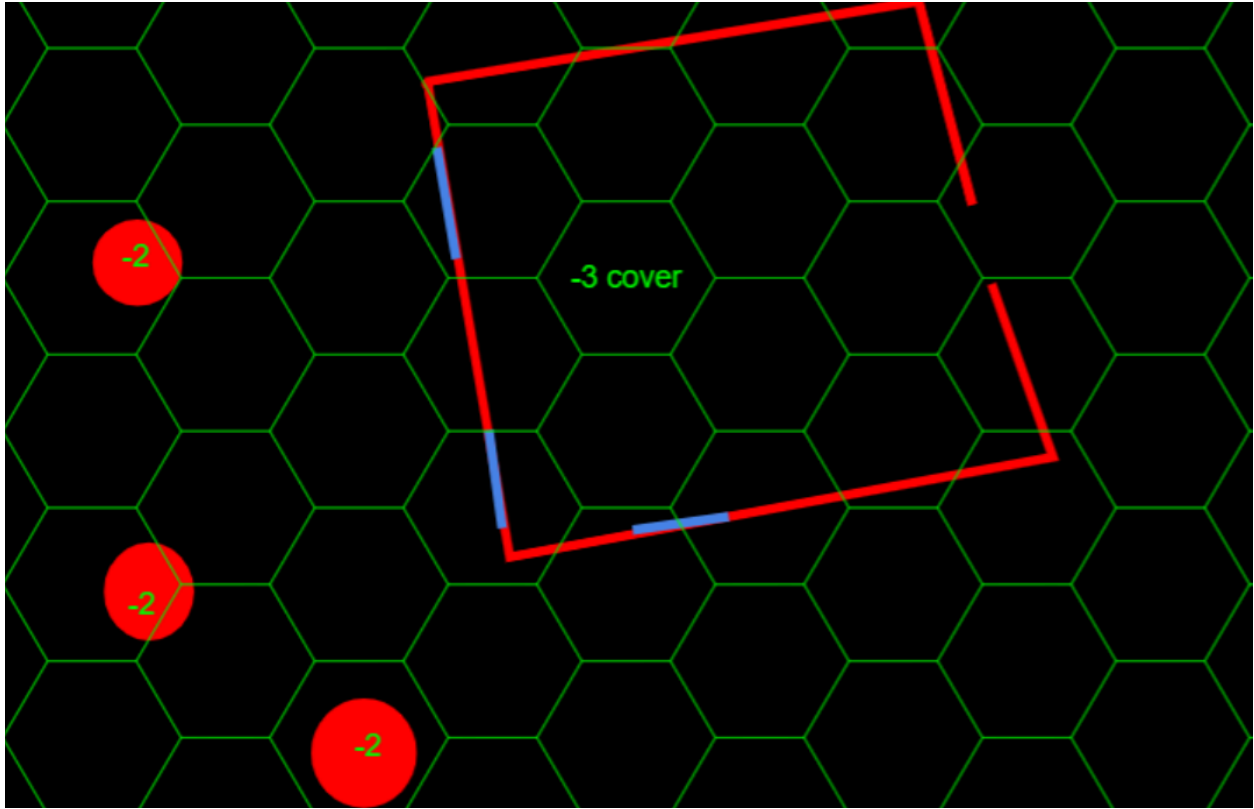
This is because it may not *super* matter in which order players investigate a ruined building, nor specifically where they are standing...it sure does matter when and where shots are fired when the results are life or death!

RANGE BANDS

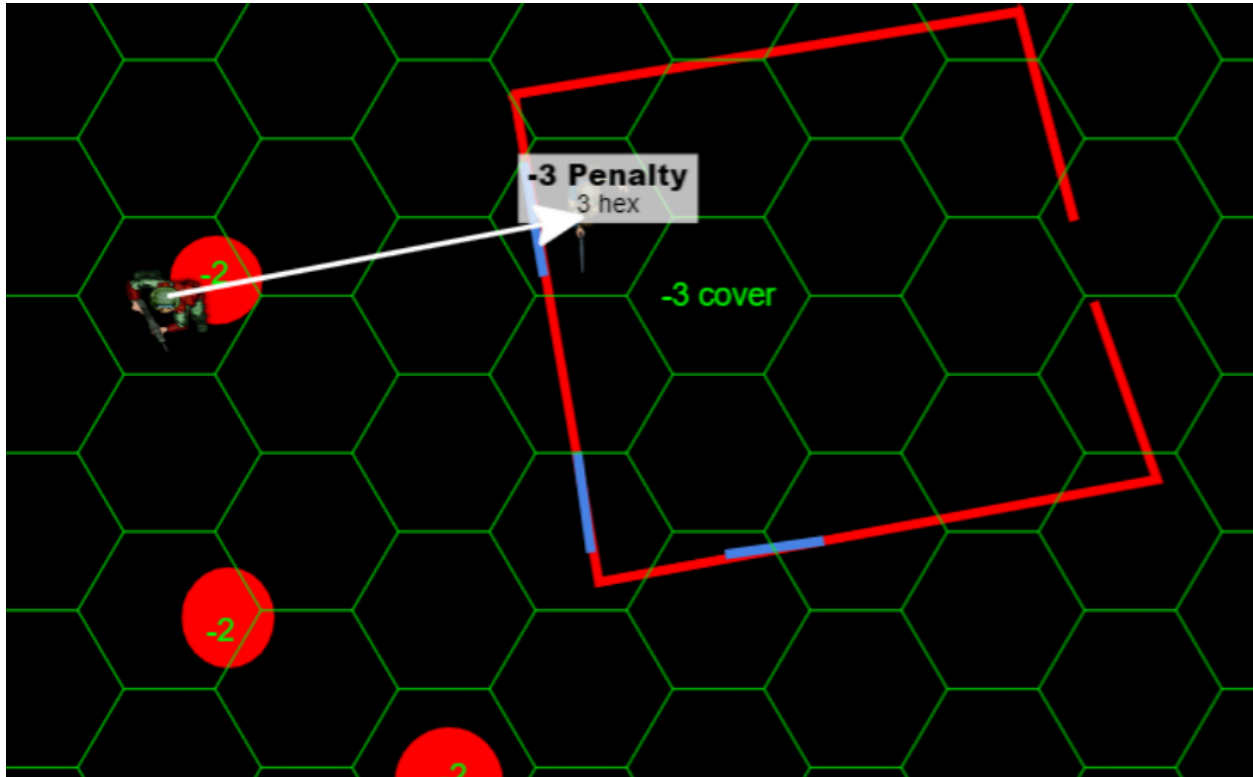
So, a lot of times, you will want to know how far away you are from someone - it makes it hard to hit someone with a sword if they're across a chasm, and it is tricky to hit someone with a sniper rifle when they're right in your face (unless, of course, you're using the gun as a sword!)

There are two ways to handle range: Abstractly and Battle Map style.

Battle Map Style works like this! You get a hex map! Then you draw on that hex map the terrain. Like this!



This is a cool, sci-fi drawing (ignore how bad it looks) of a house with windows and some barrels out front. The negative numbers indicate cover. Each hex indicates one step of range. So, let's put some people in there, to demonstrate!



Now, we have one guy and another guy, both in cover, with 3 hexes between them! However, the way range penalties interact with your skill checks matters a *lot* in what you're doing. Weaponry will have a specific range band that is where you count from. For example, Red Guy here has a pistol with a range of 0-3. This means that there's no penalty from his hex to the enemy he's aiming at. But if the enemy was 4 hexes away, he'd be at a -1! At 5 hexes, he'd be at -2! And so on!

Now, the actual *scale* of each hex depends on the situation! On foot, it might be one meter (or 5 feet, if you're a filthy, disgusting D&D fan), while in vehicular scales, it could be as much as 5 meters or 10 meters or, maybe even kilometers or dozens of kilometers or whole astronomic units if you're in space!

However, if you don't really *feel* like using hexes, you can use the theater of the mind!

Using the non-battle map style means just kind of guesstimating things based on what you think their distance is, theater of the mind style. Tell people what their range is, then count from there for penalties and don't worry too much about exact positioning. So, you can describe some bad guys in a building shooting down at you and if a player wants to shoot back, you can say they're about nine hexes away. Since their gun has a range of 6-10, they're at no penalty.

Don't worry too much about exact positioning because battlefields are fluid and people are always moving around!

THE ROUND ORDER, STEP BY STEP

Every round in combat goes in this order.

- 1) Arrival + NPC Action
 - a) Any Perceptive PCs interrupt here.
- 2) A PC acts until they end their turn by taking a hit or cooldown.
- 3) 1+ NPCs act.
- 4) Repeat 2 and 3 until every PC has acted. If there are NPCs that have not acted, they get *nothing*.
- 5) 1 Free Oomph is lost by characters.
- 6) GM expends Shock they have and goes back to 1.

ARRIVAL

An NPC “arriving” represents them being placed on the board. They are put onto the map anywhere where it makes sense for them. In a setting with teleportation or orbital drops, they might arrive right next to you! They might bust out of the trees! But often, they’ll run in from the edges of the battlefield.

If the enemies are surprising the PCs, it is entirely reasonable for that first action to be opening up with their guns. If the enemies are being surprised by the PCs or both sides are equally prepared, then their first action is consumed with a “cutscene” action - essentially, describe them arriving, setting up their guns (or whatever it is they’re doing before the PCs start shooting them.)

For each round after the first, though, newly arrived NPCs are coming fully expecting shit. So they’ll come in shooting, swinging, or generally blasting.

NPCs who are already here *can* act during Arrival if they have 2+ Health. Mooks are more reactive and less dangerous than Lieutenants and Elites. Anyone with 2+ Health can only act once during the Arrival phase, and this counts as one of their actions.

NPC ACTIONS

Each time an NPC gets to act, they can move their free move (unless an oomph has denied their movement), *then* use a Tactic (either a generic tactic or one of their special tactics.) Note, this order (unlike with PCs), cannot be altered. This is because if they could act then move, then it’d mean that they could remove pinning, then run at you. That’s not fun!

So, again: Every time an NPC acts, they move their free move, then use one of their tactics. And *only* in that order.

SURPRISE!

Hey, what if you've got the drop on enemies and you want to take some extra time to prep things up? Like, say, using some heavy weapons to begin combat by dropping a few subnuclear kinetic munitions on your enemy, or prepping some Oomphs to make your opening barrage easier?

Well, firstly, when enemies arrive on the field, they are described *doing something*. Usually, when you are sneaking up on a bad guy camp, this means they're doing something related to their duties: Cleaning guns, loading shuttles full of captive slaves you're here to rescue, setting up the bombs to blow up the colony, that kind of thing. **So long as your action is not obvious, the enemy will continue to take that action when their turn comes up.**

However, not every enemy is going to be doing something (unless they're, like, really shitty and bad at their jobs. In which case, yay, enjoy the easy fight!) Usually, they will have one or more sentries, pickets, and guards. When their turn comes up, those fuckers will take the action of "spot you and call out the alarm." If you want to buy more time before they do that, place subtle Oomphs upon them that they have to clear - like panicked or unaware. Or you know, kill or KO them quietly with your cool PC powers.

MOVEMENT

So, before we move onto attacking, let's figure out how to get around. It won't help much to have a sword if the enemy is twenty hexes away and you want to swing at them!

All PCs get to move 3 hexes for free, +1 Hex per applicable skill (Athletics or Finesse are good bets, but an appropriate Background Skill can also substitute in.) Multiple skills can stack but multiple skill specializations cannot. So, if you have Personal 2 (Athletics, Finesse) and the background skill of Olympian Gymnast 2 (International Fame, Knows Other Gymnasts), they both apply. But you can't go, "Well, I have Athletics AND Finesse, that means Personal applies twice!" That's cheating!

Still, with 2+2 for the skills +3 for free, that's 7 hexes of movement!

Zoom!

You can then get even *more* hexes with a Diff 0 action at a penalty of -1 per hex you want to clear in one action. You can split this movement into multiple actions or take all the hexes at once, depending upon how you want to spend your turn. Multiple actions can be easier, since difficulties are lower, but then they can make an attack at the end of that action harder since you've racked up penalties all the way.

The choice is up to you!

The only exception is when leaping or springing. If you want to jump over a chasm, the hexes need to be jumped all in one go. If it seems like you're jumping unrealistically far, narrate swinging on a rope, small platforms floating in the air, cool use of powers...or maybe your character is a superhero! Don't let "realism" and "previously established facts" get in the way of you vaulting a 5 meter gap!

Example: Neferti and Erik are both trying to fight their way out of the jungle swamps of Purgatory while being hounded by a bunch of lizardmen that are *strangely* upset at the theft of their sacred tombs. Weird, that. There are two burly Lizardmen between them and escape, both of them 10 hexes away!

Neferti has 3 Personal (Finesse, Athletics, Stealth), giving her 6 free hexes of movement. Erik has 2 Personal (Athletics, Finesse) and 1 Huscarl (Shield Brothers.) He argues that his soldier training gives him a bit extra mobility and the GM agrees, so that's 6 free hexes for him too! They run up and get within 4 hexes of the lizardmen!

Neferti decides she's going to take the hexes one at a time, since she's not going to bother attacking the guy blocking her way. It's a diff 0 check with a -1 penalty for the first movement. Her Finesse is 3, so that gives her a TV of 2 versus a diff of 0! That gives her 2 Oomphs, then 1 Oomph on the next hex, then just regular movement on the third hex, then it costs 1 heat to get the last hex. She spends the 3 oomphs to apply the Unaware Oomph to the two lizardmen ahead of her - one on one, one to the other, and then pinned on the one that is between Erik and escape.

Narratively, Neferti has darted forward, moving fluidly from shadow to shadow, and snatching up some muck and throwing it in the lizardmen's faces before darting past.

Erik decides he's gonna take it all in one go! That's a diff 0 with a -4 penalty for 4 hexes. His Athletics is 2, so that's a TV of -2, requiring 2 heat for him to reach there. However, when he then attacks the lizardman ahead of him. Since he's pinned, he has no evasion...and since this is his second action this round, he's only at +1 diff. More than a match for his Melee skill of 2!

With one lizardman wiping muck from his eyes and another one bleeding out on the ground, Erik and Neferti make their escape!

HITTING PEOPLE

So, listen up!

Everyone has ways to dodge, defend themselves, and reflect away damage, both PC and NPC. However, for PCs, it doesn't really matter how thick their armor is, how big their shields, or how fast they dodge. It doesn't matter if you are Taken Out because someone blasted through your armor, or got a lucky hit in, or just wore you down with repeated smashes.

Against NPCs, though, there are two means that they defend themselves: **Armor** and **Evasion**.

Armor represents long term protectiveness, created by hardened flesh, thick plates of mail, or futuristic power armor. Armor is a boolean state: It either exists or it doesn't. Powers that remove armor do so *permanently*. The trade off for this is that a mere Oomph cannot remove armor.

Evasion represents...well, how good an enemy is at turning a straight hit into a glance, or simply dodging out of the way entirely. This includes shields (be they kinetic barriers in a sci-fi setting or...just a shield that goes on your arm in a fantasy setting) and fancy footwork. Evasion is the inverse of armor: It can *only* be removed by Oomphs, meaning it is much easier to nix, much easier to get back.

When you try to attack someone, evasion applies to your TV, while Armor reduces your Base Damage. This does mean that some guns simply cannot penetrate armor!

Example: Liam Vanderbilt is facing off against a Basilisk while on a passenger ship traveling down river to the Platonic Sea. The deadly snake has 0 armor and 3 Evasion. This means that Liam's melee skill of 2 is going to be reduced to -1 against a difficulty of 1, forcing him to take 2 heat to slash into the creature and cause any damage. He could choose to fail...but Liam's at zero heat. He can take this! He springs up, sword in hand!

If you are firing an AOE weapon, you can target an area rather than a specific critter. This is a good way to ignore evasion (be sure to say "dodge this...*motherfuckerrrrrrrr!*" before doing it) but if the enemy moves out of the way, you will miss automatically.

Also, there's delays involved in AOE attacks that will be described later.

But how do you actually turn a hit into...damage?

DAMAGE

Damage is the Oomph you're going to be applying most in combat. Here's how Damage works: Like with most things, it operates in two different ways for PCs and NPCs. For PCs, it sticks around like a normal oomph...**until the next time you act** or the **end of the round** when Oomphs decay naturally. Once one of those triggers hits, any damage on you is removed and translated immediately into Heat. Some equipment (like armor) will allow you to avoid this.

The exception to this rule is AOE attacks: AOE attacks go off when you **enter the AOE** or when the round ends. So, you can run out of the way safely, but you cannot run into AOE's safely.

When Damage is applied to NPCs, it goes off the instant the PC **wants it to** or **at the end of the round**. This means that against mooks, you can do your damage and instantly pop them if

you want, while against vehicles or big bad guys, you and all your palls can rack damage up against them.

Damage does not have to be applied to NPCs - some weapons will apply it to an area (like, say, artillery!) If the Damage is applied to an area of the battle, then it cannot be triggered by movement because *hexes don't move*. Instead, it will pop off at the end of the round. Most damage that is placed on the field of battle will also have an AOE! More on AOE...later.

But how much damage is actually applied? This is denoted by the weapon's Base Damage. Your weapon deals that much damage per Oomph devoted to it. Thus, high Base Damage weapons can do devastating amounts of damage with sufficient Oomphs, while a low Base Damage weapon will usually do a 1 to 1 damage/oomph. NPCs with armor reduce the base damage - meaning that a low damage gun cannot penetrate an NPC with armor!

Like all Oomphs, damage can be removed with skill checks!

Yes, this DOES mean that sometimes, characters will be in weird limbo states. Like, say a dark lord of the Hegemony slaps your good friend, Techne, with 6 damage. Until Techne acts or the round ends, that damage hangs over her head. But since each round in combat is relatively short, then what's happening is Techne is scrambling away from the Dark Lord as he swings his threshold blade around. Sparks fly, scenery is getting wrecked, but Techne's not dead...yet. The killing blow doesn't come until Techne acts and the damage turns into 6 heat, pushing her from 5 heat to 11..

When Damage is in an AOE and there are multiple NPCs, then it is applied to the weakest, less dangerous NPCs first, then works upward.

KILLING STRANGERS (NPCS)

Unlike PCs, NPCs do not have a big squishy Heat bar that lets them take cool wounds instead of dying horribly when they hit high levels of heat. Instead, NPCs have health. This is going to be explained again in the Mastery chapter for your hated blood enemy (the GM) but you should understand it here too!

NPCs have a stat called Health. When you apply Damage Oomphs equal to their Health, they lose 1 health and, so long as they are not at 0 Health, Escalate. When an enemy Escalates, they shed any additional damage they have then get *more dangerous*. Fun!

Example: DeShane Gallagher opens fire on three people with her huge fuckoff revolver. At the end of all the math and calculation, she's done 2 damage, 4 damage and 2 damage to the three bad guys. The first guy is a mook with 1 health. He's at or above his Health, so he loses 1 health, hits 0 health, and is dead. Blam! The excess damage is lost.

The next guy is a Lieutenant with 2 health! He takes 4 damage, which is above his health. His health drops to 1 health and he Escalates (the GM chooses what Escalation he uses.) The 2 remaining damage? It goes away! It is shed, lost to the aether. However, next round, if he takes 1 damage, he'll be dead as shit.

The third guy is a top tier ultimate level threat with 4 health. He absorbs 2 damage without losing jack shit. He just dodges out of the way, or the bullets reflect off his armor. That kind of thing!

COVER & FLANKING

There is a special fourth kind of defense, which is separate from the others because, unlike armor and evasion, PCs can access it as well: *Cover*.

Cover may or may not matter a lot. In a setting with firearms and easy access to rapid fire ranged weaponry, cover matters a whole heck of a lot. In a setting where most people are hitting one another with swords, cover will come up far less often.

When enemies crouch behind some simple cover is a -1. A chest high wall is -2. A thick wall is -3. Sandbags and a trench is -4. A bunker is -5. Hardened bunker? -6. Then, if somehow, enemies get access to some kind of super-mega-ultra bunker, then it might get as high as -10. But that's the maximum!

However, cover only applies to when you're shooting at them from one direction - if you flank them, then the cover bonus is *inverted*. This means that if someone is suppressed, now is a great time for you to sprint around and flank them out to take advantage of their *doubled* cover bonus - which is why PCs working together to suppress and flush enemies is such a great tactic. It's almost like it works in the real world or something!

"But what if I'm behind the chest high wall?" you ask. "How do all these fancy pantsy penalties work to help me when our damage systems operate completely differently? Huh? Did you even think of that at all while designing this game, you *hack*?"

Well, you're in luck, I did! That cover *subtracts* away Damage oomphs without you needing to, uh, take the Heat. However, each Damage oomph removed thusly will damage the cover, reducing it until it hits zero. In which case, you need to find some new cover!

"But what if I wanna ignore the cover modifier and I'm too lazy to flank?"

Well, you're in luck! If you want, you can ignore any cover you want - but then the cover will act for the NPC like how it does for PCs. This means that most of the time, ignoring cover doesn't actually change anything. The difference between having a -2 to hit and having to do +2 damage is usually no difference at all...unless you have a high powered weapon that can put out *tons* of damage. Or, if you're spraying down an area rather than targeting a specific person.

COVER & MOVEMENT

While you are moving with your free movement and you run into cover you get to compare the cover to your chosen movement skill. If your movement skill is higher than the cover, then you can ignore it! If it is not, then you lose 1 hex per difference for the movement!

So, let's say you're someone with Personal 2 (finesse, stealth) using your free 5 hexes of movement to leap over some -2 sandbags. Since your finesse is 2 and their sandbags are -2, you ignore it. Cause you do a cool flippy! But then if you come to a -3 wall, that'd take 2 hexes of movement to move through (1 hex for normal, +1 for the 1 that the cover is over your skill.) But if you had 3 ranks in skill, even that wall would be effortless to move through.

The reason for this is because it's really cool and you're a badass and, also, I love you.

If you are getting extra movement, then the same penalty is applied to your skill check!

RATE OF FIRE

Usually, when you take actions, you add +1 diff per action. But some weapons are much, much faster firing than others. This changes how many actions it takes to attack! Weapons are split into three modes: Fast, Medium and Slow Firing.

Fast Firing weapons can be used a number of times *without* increasing difficulty equal to the skill rating used by the player character. So, a fast firing assault rifle in the hands of a hero with 2 Guns can be fired twice before racking up penalties. A fast dagger gripped by a badass with 4 Melee can be stabbed *four* times before racking up penalties.

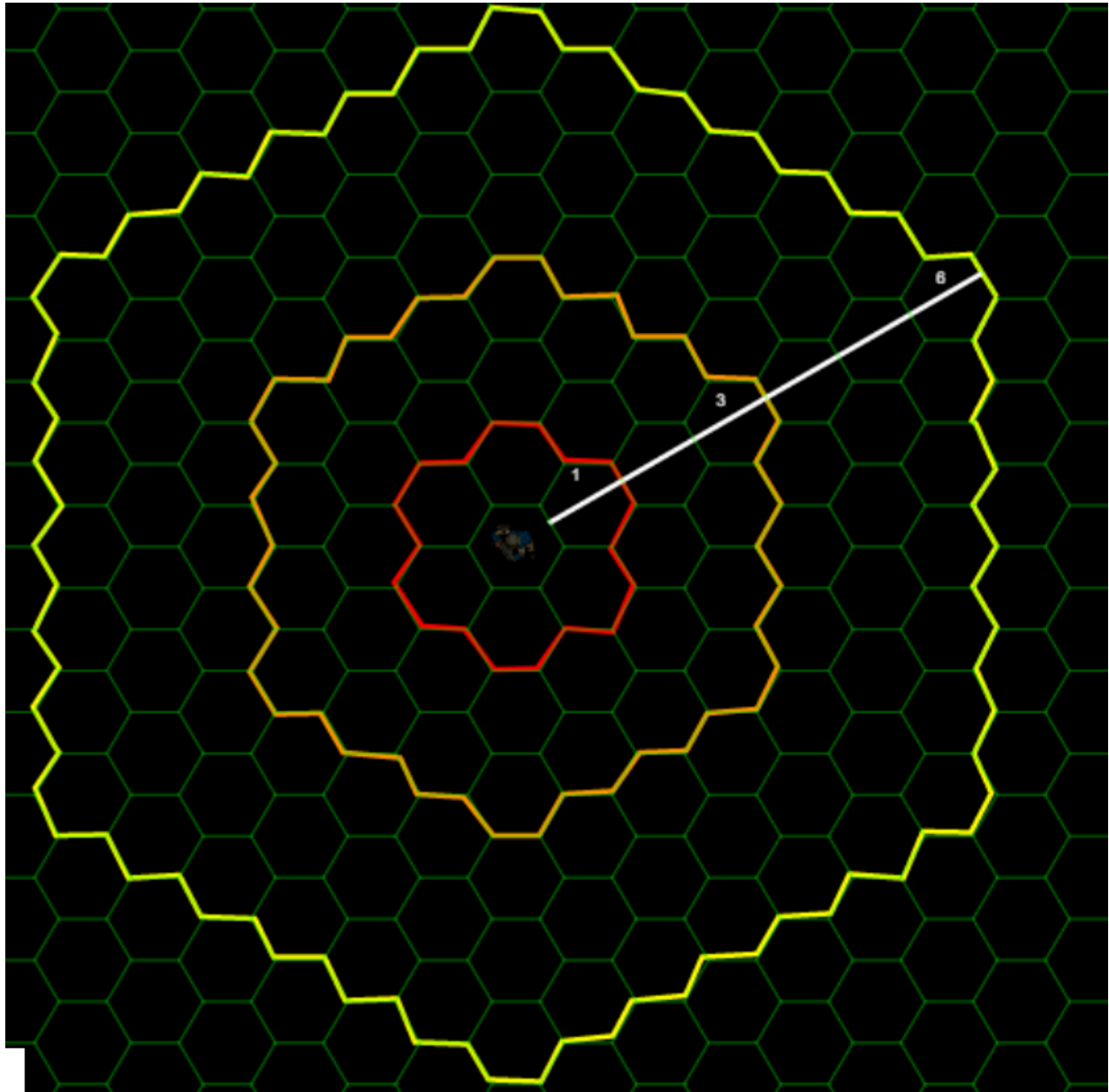
Medium weapons use the rules as normal.

Slow firing weapons need to be "primed" with a diff 0 action per shot. Very, very slow weapons might be listed as Slow (x2) or Slow (x3) indicating the number of actions needed. The action in question is usually the same skill used to fire the weapon, but for very large weapons, it might involve command or leadership checks to direct the crew!

Example: Marwen is using a ballista to shoot at the time traveling Romans (long story.) The ballista is a Slow (x3) weapon. He takes his first action to fire and mashes a bunch of Romans into paste. Then he takes a diff (0+1) 1, (0+2) 2, and (0+3) 3 action to reload it. His next shot would be at diff +4 - he chooses instead to take a hit to reduce his heat and let the Romans continue to march forward.

AREA OF EFFECT

Some things have an AOE! There are three base AOE: Short, Medium and Long! Furthermore, AOE are all tied to Oomphs! The way to represent this on a battle map is to stack up the oomphs in question underneath a d6, which is then set to 1, 3 or 6! Because, incidentally, those are the ranges in hexes of those AOE, as depicted by this fancy map!



Now, what these AOE do depends upon the Oomph that impacts them! So, a medium AOE with 3 Damage means that everyone in that burst is going to be facing that 3 damage, wiping out goons and hurting stronger dudes. However, if it is a medium AOE with 2 Pinned oomphs means everyone in there is gonna be pinned for a while, and so on!

The only time you get AOE is if you're getting access to them from equipment or powers. However, sometimes there will be a combination of equipment AOE and scale! Say a weapon just innately *has* a small AOE, but you're using a Scale +10 version of it! That's +1 AOE, so that becomes a medium AOE!

...so what happens if you go off the scale? You start back over at the previous scale, but with *two* AOE's that you get to place, splitting damage between them as you wish. The next step up would have two medium AOE, then two large AOE, then three small AOE's, and so on and so forth.

COVER AND AOE's

If damage includes PCs or enemies in cover, then the distribution is modified: Characters soak up more damage based on the cover - since the cover takes the brunt of the damage first!

Example: A PC with an LMG hoses down a squad of 12 bad guys with an LMG. He has overkill (an oomph a power gives you) which turns his normal -2 Add to +2, and the baddies are in -3 cover, with 2 evasion (not that it matters), 0 armor and 1 health each. SO! He has Guns 2, +2 for 4 and, since he's shooting at an area rather than bad guys, he just has to beat a diff of 1.

His LMG does 3 damage and 1 pinned for hitting, +3/1 per oomph! Since the gun's fast, he uses two actions and sprays down the area for 12 damage and 4 pinning, then again for another 12 damage and 4 pinning. Thus, the bad guys are VERY pinned and facing down 24 damage, which is now spread among them!

However, first, being so heavily pinned doubles their cover bonus! And more, the cover soaks up extra damage. So, it costs 7 damage (6 for the cover, 1 for the health) to kill a dude. So, rather than annihilating the entire squad (something they could easily do if they were in the open), it just takes out three guys and suppresses the rest!

Which is what LMGs are meant to do!

Now, this all sounds great, but...I have some bad news: You cannot get AOE's narratively.

...unless you wanna make something *explode*.

USING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Let's say you want to use the environment in combat to help kill someone - if there's something volatile or big or easily usable to cause havoc, then there should be guidelines on how to do it! Fortunately, there *are*. First, ask the following questions.

- 1) Has it been established narratively?
- 2) Can you succeed on the skill check required to use it?
- 3) Are you willing to lose it?

If the answer to all these is "yes", then the environmental object is destroyed in a calamitous display of your careless OSHA violations! This means you get to make a Diff 1/3/6 skill check and create Damage in a small, medium and large area depending upon the difficulty of the check in question! The base damage is always 1!

Example: DeShane Gallagher, a D.E.V.I.L soldier in the 22nd century, is pinned down in a spaceport by a Shockpod merc and his human goons. Since there are too many of them for her to take alone, she figures it's time to be creative. There are a few D-SAT heavy lifter shuttles parked, with their fuel tanks just *crammed* with liquid hydrogen fuel. Not a great place for a gunfight. She has a pistol and 3 ranks in her Firearms skill, and decides she's going to make an AOE!

The shuttle has been established narratively.

The skill check would be Firearms (she's going to use her gun for this.)

And she is *definitely* willing to lose some corporate shuttles for this. Her Pistol has an add of +1 and her Skill is 3, so that's a TV of 4! The diff is 3 for a medium AOE, and that gives her 2 Damage Oomph (one for success, beating the diff by one!) She decides to go for broke and slap down another 6, putting her heat at 6 and the Damage at 8. Then she vents all 6 using her Shield power and goes into cooldown.

Narratively, she lifts her pistol and opens up on a shuttle, puncturing the fuel tank and causing the whole shuttle to explode with a roar of flames and smoke as she ducks down below a spatial warp field thrown up by her D.E.V.I.L rig.

There are five goons and one Shockpod, with 8 Damage Tokens. They're all in -2 cover, so that eats up 2 damage tokens. In a just world, that Shockpod would then take 4 damage and save Gallagher a lot of trouble. But HEAT is a world of dramatic adventure, and thus, goons go first! 1 Damage takes out 1 goon, then 2 damage to bypass cover for the next guy and 1 damage to kill him, then there's 2 damage left floating, unable to actually kill the third guy. The GM, being nice, lets DeShane change those to Pinning Oomphs (since they cost teh same heat!) and slaps them on the two surviving goons.

The Shockpod, though, is not pinned. And he gets to act...a *lot*.

After all, Gallagher is in cooldown!

CHAPTER FOUR: PILOT

Driving a rickety wagon down the road to try and escape knights on horseback. Darting between corpse-city asteroids in the orbit of a radioactive world to engage with Hegemonic fighters. Roaring through downtown, post-war New York in a Martian tripod while engaging in a running gunbattle with the FBI. Riding in the commander seat of your favorite M1 Sherman while being chased by a pack of feral T-34s.

These scenes and more fall under what the HEAT system refers to as 'piloting' scenes. They cover everything from fleeing to fighting, and they have a bit of added complexity that are layered on top of regular combat rules. These rules interact, too! You can blow a tank up with a rocket launcher while on your own two feet, and you can blast goons while in your mecha. All it takes is a little bit of extra rules, but they're worth it!

Because vehicles - be they spaceships, mecha, or a biomorphic flying manta rays you control with your mind - are *heckin' cool*.

PCs AND NPCs

The first step to understanding a vehicular scene is to understand how to make vehicles, and to understand vehicles, you must understand that there's a big difference between vehicles controlled by players and vehicles controlled by NPCs (in the same way there's a big difference between PCs and NPCs in dramatic play and personal combat.) All of the rules in this chapter involve the PC rules - the way NPC vehicles work will be established after we know about how PC vehicles work!

Okay? Got it?

On to the fun part: Making a vehicle!

SILLY BUGGERS

The vehicular chapter, more than any other core chapter, is written with the assumption you will be using the spot rules involving *money* and the economy of the game. However, those rules are called spot rules because they can be swapped in and out as you see fit. So, how do vehicles work when you're not using money?

Well, all vehicles will then be designed by you and your GM to suit the world you're running, with the only "balancing" being what feels right for your setting.

It's entirely possible for you to play a game where you're in moon sized mechas playing solar system scaled basketball games, with the main focus being the games (which you play against cthulian monsters the size of small suns) and the relationship drama between you and the other

players. Does that sound *balanced* with a game where you're playing scavengers in a magitech city, driving spider-horses around and trying to avoid the cops?

No, and trying to "balance" between those purely by math built into my RPG would...be...silly! It would be, in fact, *silly buggers*! It would be a complete waste of my time.

So. At the end of the day, what makes up a vehicle, the abilities it has, the scale of the effects it is able to apply, depends entirely on the *fiction* you are trying to ape. If you balance around that, you can't go too far wrong.

THE ANATOMY OF A VEHICLE

All vehicles are defined by their Components. Without Components, a vehicle is just a big hypothetical empty space and you can't kill any clanner scum with a big empty space, you need to fill it with big stompy robot legs first!

A vehicle can have as many components as you want, up to the size scale of the vehicle in question. So, if you have a Size +10 transport, it has 10 slots. If you have less slots than the vehicle, you get to apply the difference in number of slots and your size as a rebate! So, a Size 6 vehicle with 1 slot gets -5 Credits off its cost. This is because without slots, a size 6 vehicle has lots of downsides that kinda makes it not great.

If you want to have *more* slots, then you increase the cost by each step between your size scale and the components you want. So, Size +10 transport with 12 slots will cost +2 credits.

Example: Bandersnatch, the lovable slug mecha pilot (that is, he's a slug who pilots mechas, not a pilot who pilots mecha slugs) is building his mech. He prefers them big and chonky, but wants to make this one kind of cheap. So, he sets their size at +6 (Mech) and decides he'll try and fit everything he wants in just three components. That'll mean his base cost is -3, giving him 3 extra credits to work with since his mech is relatively simple.

Meanwhile, his arch-nemesis Globolder, wants to show Bandersnatch up. He's making a suit of highly sophisticated power armor, with a size of +3 (Power Armor) and he's going to make his vehicle using , costing him 3 Credits before he even gets to adding anything to it.

So, how much do components cost?

They cost their scale! So, a +10 gun costs 10 credits. A +35 engine costs 35. You total it up and you will likely get a vehicle that is far too expensive for you to afford. This is where Vehicular Penalties come in.

All vehicles can have the following penalties

Speed Penalty: This penalty reduces your hexes of movement for one type of movement.

Skill Penalty (x4, x3, x2, x1): This reduces your skill checks while using one kind of skill (awareness for bad vision slits, finesse for clumsy controls, Empathy for cursed plate armor you cannot remove and does not allow you to grasp human feelings, and so on!) The multiplier is based on how *often* it reduces it. If it is for ALL skill checks ALL the time, it is x4. If it is for only most of the time (“this cursed plate ruins empathy with everything but orcs!”) then it’s x3. If it’s about half the time, it’s x2 (“this fighter turns badly, but accelerates great!”), and if it’s very rarely in specific circumstances it’s x1 (“this armor is terribly unfashionable for elves and only elves”)

Crew Penalty (x2): This adds a number of crew positions required to operate the vehicle equal to scale chart (so a crew penalty of -6 requires 10 people!) They don’t need a crew chamber if your vehicle is a short ranged one where they won’t need to spend time (they can work in the control room if need be.) But if your vehicle is like...a ship? It should have? Rooms?

Fuel Penalty (x2): This indicates the amount of a fuel that is applied to a specific utility component per day of use. This can be for engines, for psionic foci, for anything that makes sense for “needs rare something something.” The cost of a fuel (generally) costs the scale modifier on the mass (So, a vehicle using a “backpack” sized amount of fuel for a -6 cost adjustment, would need to spend 3 credits to buy fuel.) However, fuel should always be available narratively speaking in the game world, accessible via intrigues and adventures. If you’re not using the money system, then the GM should work it into their plots and use it as a narrative lever to drive the game.

Then there are some special penalties that may or may not be applicable! Check with your GM!

Environmental Limiting (-Size x Environments): For every environment your vehicle cannot go due to whatever reason, you get your ships size off as a rebate. Some example environments might be space, phlostian, the sea. This is a wonky one because it gets less of a rebate on small vehicles and, like, if you’re never going to space, it won’t matter. But It’s also a good way to make a more “hard” SF ship that cannot go into atmospheres but can exist in space.

Weak Points (Armor x 6-Weak Points): If you have this, then your armor does not protect against certain points! If the enemy gets enough Weak Point oomphs to equal your Weak Point value, then the next attack will ignore your armor. At high levels, this represents teeny tiny vents (5 oomphs required to ignore armor) while at lower levels this represents directional armor (1-2 oomphs to represent flanking someone out.) The reason why it is oomph based and not positional based is because direction isn’t really tracked in this system! You can also stack this to create a more textured defense - a tank

might have +10 armor that gives a -30 dollar rebate because it only protects the front of the tank, but then you can grab 6 armor *without* any rebate. Once again, **the sillybuggers rule applies**. It's entirely possible to get +55 armor and then get 275 credits back on the assumption you'll never actually use that armor since 1 oomph is super easy to get. Then it's entirely possible for the GM to say, "no, you can't do that."

The credit rebates are either equal to the level of reduction (I.E, -6 to awareness for bad vision slits on your tank = -6 to the cost of your tank) or they're worth twice the level (requiring 5 crew is worth -3 x2 or -6.) This is because, for crew, you need to then give them quarters to live for long term ships and, with fuel, it ends up costing more over time.

Getting a huge fuel requirement makes a very cheap ship that can be very expensive to operate.

Which does make sense for stuff like starfighters!

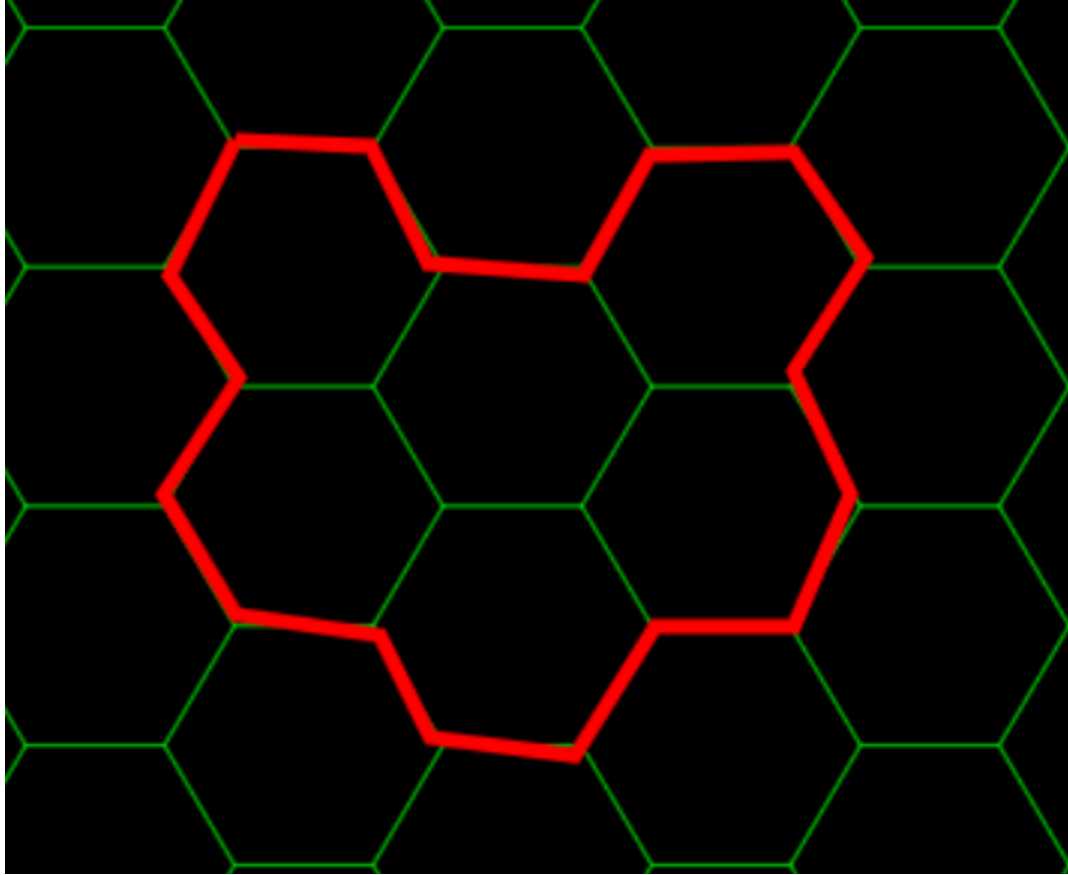
You can stack and mix and match penalties as you see fit to adjust your price, provided you remember the Silly Buggers Rule (I.E, your vehicle has to fit the setting conceits and world that the GM has created.)

SIDEBAR: Speed Penalty? Why not buy smaller engines?

Remember: The hexes moved is the combat maneuvering, while the narrative scale of the engine applies out of combat. Also, bigger engines are tougher and give you more damage to soak with!

SIZE AND HEXES

The size of a vehicle impacts how big it is in piloting (more on that later) but it also matters for hexes! Your vehicle's "footprint" is equal to the size scale - which can be arranged however you see fit. So, for example, a +6 mech has 6 hexes. Like this!



Bigger and bigger vehicles take up more and more space. This might get unwieldy. Don't worry, I have rules to account for that at the end of the chapter!

So, we've got the mechs. But how do they *fight*?

Whoa! Hold your horses. We have to drive them first. Let's move on to Basic Piloting.

USING A VEHICLE, PART ONE: BASIC PILOTING

Aka: Yo, Dragon Cobolt, where the *fuck* is my piloting skill?

Piloting depends on the setting. In some universes, flying a ship is so complicated that specialized, skilled crew need to be involved. In others, any old dipshit can hop into an Incom X-wing and shoot down three TIE fighters within five seconds.

So, depending on your setting and world, you *either* simply use any skill that makes sense (finesse to weave through an asteroid belt, athletics to jump a horse across a chasm, melee to stab a biomorphic horror with your mecha's big stabber) *or* you use a background skill (your game might have background skills like *Ace Alliance Pilot* or *Grizzled Dropship Veteran*) that is applicable.

Movement is handled precisely as it is in personal combat, save that hexes represent significantly larger areas and there's one extra step for movement that changes things: You throw your scale modifiers!

Example: Both Bandersnatch and Globolder have slithered to the mech proving grounds. Glaring daggers at one another, they slime into their cockpits, activate their mechs, and begin with the simplest test: A footrace!

Bandersnatch has 3 ranks in Personal (Athletics) and 3 ranks in Slug Mecha Pilot. Globolder meanwhile is an NPC with 5 base speed, so fuck him. This means their base speeds are 6 and 5. Bandersnatch's mech has +6 legs, and Globolder's mech has +6 legs and +10 jump jets.

Bandersnatch starts running forward and moves 12 hexes, easily taking the lead. Globolder activates his jump jets and rockets forward 15 hexes, soaring through the sky and landing ahead of Bandersnatch! That *cheating dick*. Not willing to let this go, Bandersnatch moves forward 4 more hexes, using his Personal (athletics) skill. His TV is 3, with a -4 penalty for the range, giving him a -1 TV. He takes 2 heat to manage it and leaps forward, just barely pulling ahead.

Globolder shakes his tiny slug fist at Bandersnatch as his hated rival wins the footrace.

USING A VEHICLE PART 2: ADVANCED PILOTING

Sometimes, like on foot, you will run into cover penalties. They function a lot like they do on the ground, with you needing to spend extra hexes of movement, modified down by your base skill but, there's one big difference: It is modified by, you guessed it...your Scale Modifier

Cover penalties for movement are worsened by your scale modifier, using the Size of your vehicle.

After all, trees are hard to drive through in a big truck! However, like with foot travel, your skill helps to negate those penalties before you have to expend extra hexes. Furthermore, if you have any maneuvering/pilot enhancing components, they add to your skill for the purposes of negating penalties!

Example: The next competition is the Urban Combat Course. Both Bandersnatch and Golbolder have to move through -1, then -2, then -3 urban terrain. The judges have disabled Golbolder's jump jets and threatened him with a disqualification if he fucking tries anything sneaky again.

So, first, Bandersnatch. He has 12 movement hexes. Normally, it'd cost him 2 hexes of movement to move through the -1, then 3 hexes to move through the -2, then 4 hexes to

move through the urban terrain. But first, it is modified down by his size (6.) So, those are effectively -7, -8 and -9! Fortunately, his piloting skills do apply, negating 3 of those penalties, but that still means he's facing a -4, -5 and -6 penalty. This would cost him, in total 18 hexes of movement. He could do it, but it'd take him TWO rounds of combat!

Too slow!

So, Bandersnatch uses his Slug Piloting Skill to apply the "cleared" oomph to the cover, representing him using his expert piloting skills to spot a way through and taking that route. That's a diff 1 check and he has a TV of 3, and he pumps his heat from 2 to 6 to get +4 to his TV, giving him 7 Oomph, which he uses to drop the penalties to -0, -3 and -7. He spends 1 hex to get through the first penalty, effortlessly piloting forward, then takes the second hex for 4 hexes, leaving him with 8 hexes of movement, which just barely clears the 8 hex cost for moving through a -7 hex! He emerges!

Globolder, meanwhile, is facing a much easier route! His mech is size 3, so that's -4, -5, and -6 cover penalties. However, he's an NPC who can't take multiple actions. He's only got his base speed of 11, and he spends 5, then 6 of it to move 2 hexes then ends his turn. He's lost! *Again!*

Globolder emerges, trembling with rage as people cheer! *Bander-SNATCH!*
Bander-SNATCH! Bander-SNATCH!

USING A VEHICLE PART 3: SHOOTING PEOPLE

This all works just like shooting at normal people, but with scale modifiers slapped in there for ranges and damages and armor values and such. Each piece of equipment will list out what its range and scales are and they might be wildly different (it is theoretically possible for something to do +55 damage but have a range of only 1 hex. This would be super dangerous. Don't do this! Do not use a weapon that does +55 damage at a range of 1 hex, you will die.)

Example: The next competition between our stalwart slug and his sneaky slug rival is the shooting range. There's one target 10 hexes away that they both are going to shoot at! Bandersnatch is up first with his +10 Autocannon, which has a range of 3-9 and can either ignore [$\frac{1}{2}$ Damage Scale] Armor or have a Small AOE, depending on if it is loaded with AP or HE shells.

The target is just an empty shell: Diff 1 to hit, 0 evasion, 0 armor. Bandersnatch has a Guns (Vehicular Weapons) skill of 2. So, the TV 2-1 for range = TV 1, which will hit a diff 1 target. But Bandersnatch loads HE and puts an AOE 1 hex ahead of the target, which means it's *within* his range. This lets him hit with +1 oomph, meaning he drops 20 damage downrange in the AOE. The roar of detonation blows the target to smithereens.

Globolder meanwhile has his +10 pulse laser, which has a range of 1-6 and can ignore [Damage Scale] Armor while doing ½ Damage. Being a mere NPC, he simply does his base damage of 5, subtracted by any range penalties. Since the target is 10 hexes away, that's a mere 1 damage. A glancing shot that scores into the target.

Once again, Bandersnatch has won, despite being in that clanker piece of shit mech and not Globolder's fancy new power armor. GRRR! Just because Bandersnatch is talented and skilled and Globolder kind of sucks but is also very rich! It's so unfair...

VEHICULAR DAMAGE

Vehicles, like character, rack up damage oomphs. However, when the time comes to unload them, vehicles have choices as to how the damage is handled...or, more accurately, the PCs have choices. Vehicles are *much* harder to destroy outright, but they also have significantly more things that can be shot off! Every component is a potential weak point...

So, here's how it works!

When Damage Oomphs impact a vehicle, the PCs who placed or have the oomphs placed upon them determine how they are spent. This means that NPCs shot at by PCs get fucked up the way the PCs want, but PCs who are being shot at by NPCs get to choose how they're fucked up.

Sorry, guys, it's the PC's world, the NPCs all just live in it, I don't know what to say.

For PCs, Damage Oomphs are, first, reduced by your armor. If you've taken 15 Damage oomphs and have 6 armor, you only have to deal with 9 Damage afterwards. Damage can then be placed into Components, into the Hull, or turned into Heat (this is something only PCs can do, representing their sheer piloting skill and dogged refusal to die.)

When Damage oomphs are placed onto the hull or a component, they remain until they are repaired with a skill check. The effect of this damage depends on what it is on!

If you have Damage **equal** to the scale of your **Hull**, your vehicle is disabled - on the ground, it slumps over or grinds to a halt, while in space or on the sea, it begins to drift. In the air, it enters into a (barely) controlled crash and lands relatively safely.)

If you have Damage is **double** your **Hull**, your vehicle explodes in a pretty fireball. You can eject as a Diff 5 action or die. You can always die!

If you have Damage equal to **half** the scale of your **Component**, that component is disabled. It can be fixed with a skill check, removing oomphs as per usual...assuming you can reach the component.

If you have Damage **equal** to the scale of your **Component**, then that component is destroyed. It cannot be fixed, it must be replaced.

Damage oomphs must be distributed in solid “chunks” equal to Damaging or Destroying a hull or component, with excess being distributed similarly until you have none left. (I.E, you can’t ablate off 10 damage by putting 1 damage into each component. Even if you had ten +3 components, you’d need to at minimum put 2 into each one, as that would make them Damaged.)

If you have any damage left over after applying it in discrete chunks, you have to turn it into Heat for the pilot. However, you can deal as much or as little damage as Heat, because...you’re a PC. You’re cool like that.

SIDEBAR: BRING ON THE PAIN

At any time, you can “bring on the pain” and turn a chunk of damage that is close to but not quite enough to damage or destroy a component. Say you have 20 damage and nothing you want to destroy or damage, but you can’t apply that damage to your *hull*, your hull is scale 21. But if you take all that excess as *heat*, then it means your character is GOING to DIE. Fortunately, there is one last escape: You can just elect to take more damage until you are able to put the damage into something.

When applying Damage to NPCs, you have to distribute this way. Mostly because it will keep the GM from *going insane*. It’s far easier to track damage/destroyed components than fiddle with damage tokens.

Example: Take Bandersnatch’s mech. Say it was ambushed after he headed home with his trophy for winning all three competitions. Say that the ambusher managed to do 20 damage thanks to that ambush and Bandersnatch had to distribute his damage. Say this horrible thing did happen and was not merely a fantasy of Globolder! How would Bandersnatch be able to weather this storm!

Well, since he’s still at 6 heat (he hasn’t had a chance to vent nor has he had an hour to rest and relax), he can’t take any heat. If he takes all 20 damage to his hull, his mech is going to explode (that’s well more than 12) and he may not be able to eject without injury. If he tries to just damage all his components, that’d be 5 damage to his autogun, then 3 to his legs and 6 to his hull, for a total of 14, leaving him with 6 heat. That could only then be applied to *himself*, which would leave him badly wounded.

So, he bites the bullet and has his autogun be destroyed, taking 10 damage, 3 to the legs, 6 to the hull, for a total of 19, leaving 1 heat to slap onto him, leaving him overheated. The situation gets worse - meaning the second shot would be much easier from Globolder’s POV...but when Bandersnatch’s turn comes around, he has 0 heat. He can leap out of his heavily damaged mech and make a break for it, maybe turn the tables on the sneaky Globolder...

REPAIRING IN THE FIELD

All right, you have a damaged +28 engine and are drifting through an asteroid belt. What do?

You need an oomph called Jerry Rig! BUT HOW GET!?

It is a Tech (Repair) check with a difficulty equal to the steps along the scales of the component's modifier. Since, like, diff 28 is just *stupid* amounts of difficult! Diff 7 is much more reasonable, though it is still incredibly hard. It takes an amount of time equal to this CHART!

Round (+6>)
Hour (+10)
Days (+15)
Weeks (+21)
Months (+28)
Years (+36)
Decades (+45)
Centuries (+55)

You can increase the difficulty by +1 by moving along this chart by 1 per +1, or you can decrease the diff by moving along the chart in the other way!

So, say you're trying to repair your +28 engines. It will take a diff 7 check and take a month or so. But you could cram it into a week for diff 8, in a day at diff 9, and in just ONE HOUR at 10 diff - literally, working at frantic speeds to get your hyperdrive on before the SUN EXPLODES.

Alternatively, say your mecha's +10 railgun is busted up and you've got plenty of time. Normally, it's diff 4, but you decide to take a week off to fix it. Since it normally takes an hour, that's two steps along the track, and is thus, diff 2!

Either way, once you beat the diff, you make 1 Jerry Rig oomph. The Jerry Rig oomph allows the device to work like normal...but it is just an *oomph*. Remember: Oomphs decay narratively and by round in combat. This means that jerry rigging is great for getting you home! Not so great for, uh, fighting bad guys. Buuuut you can stack multiple Jerry Rig oomphs by pushing your repair skill for more heat! If you think you might get into a fight with your busted cannons, you can push yourself really hard, maybe even injure yourself, to get 3 or 4 jerry rigs. Hopefully the battle doesn't last that long!

REPAIRING...BUT, LIKE, PROPERLY

But wait, I hear you cry. Jerry Rigging sounds kinda shitty compared to normal, functioning stuff. It breaks! And then you have to fix it again? Not good.

NOT GOOD INDEED, dear reader! Fixing something permanently costs 1 credit per damage and takes 1 [X] per damage equal to the track. You can rush it by adding +1 to the cost per damage, moving it along the track!

So, you've limped home with your +28 engine. It'll cost you 14 credits to fix and 14 months in drydock (meaning it may end up costing much more, since you need to pay for 'rent' and your 'debts' and "pay your employees' and other commie bullshit.) So, if you pay 1+2 credits per damage (for a total of 42 credits), that moves you 2 steps along the track, from months to days. It takes two weeks (14 days.) Nice and easy!

Alternatively, if you're not using credits, repairing takes either a period of reasonable downtime (the GM should use the chart to guesstimate) in a repair facility with supplies. It can also be worked into an Intrigue, with each repaired component being an objective in the Intrigue. More on that in the Intrigue chapter.

REFITTING

If you wanna add components, upgrade components, and add slots, it costs the normal value x2 (half the cost is for the component, half is for the labor to fit it into your ship, mecha or horse) and takes a single unit of time equal to the scale of the component. So, if you want to strap some +15 missile launchers to your horse's haunches? That costs you 30 gold and takes a day of wizards using magic to make your horse grow biopunk missile launchers.

Bitchin!

This also means that adding a slot costs 2 credits and takes another time unit equal to the component you're putting into the slot. So, like, if that aforementioned horse was already full up on 3 slots, that missile launcher would cost 32 gold (30 for the missile launchers, 2 for the slot) and would take *two* days.

You cannot rush refitting.

Again, if you're not using credits, then this is purely narrative and is based on the plot. It can be worked into intrigues as well!

HUGE BATTLEFIELDS

If you ever think that the hex sizes going on are getting unwieldy, then there are rules to fix that! Like, no one has a map that has room for a 21 hex sized battleship? Just reduce the hexes by $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{10}$ th, whatever fits your needs for the most. Round up on anything involved. For each divisor, reduce AOE's by 1 step. Here are some more guidelines!

If you're the biggest thing on the map, it can be lots of fun to *be* the center of the map. Place your huge hex representing your big old battleship, and you can have your little guys on the

map. Run them around to move them to turrets for shooting at enemy fighters, and the enemy fighters can zip around you! When you move, you represent this by moving the enemies around you.

You can even place damage oomphs in specific areas, to represent how incoming fire has damaged your ship, and thus, have characters running around inside of the battleship to fix the bits within. Fun!

If you're the smallest thing on the map, the inverse is true: The centerpiece of the battle is the big battleship, and you get to fly around it in your zippy fighter as it drops AOE effects around you.

If you are roughly the same size as everything else on the map, apply a hex divisor modifier until the battlefield can be modeled in a way that is both interesting and fun!

MASS COMBAT

Sometimes you want to model large numbers of people. You can do this...but only with mooks (I.E, NPCs with 1 Hit.) One of the scale modifiers is "numbers" (it's the secondary application of slots.) These are used not just for improvisations (more on those later) but they're also used to model mass combat. Essentially, if a collection of NPCs are clumped together into a group equal to one of the numbers, they become squads, platoons, battalions, and so on! This, in effect, turns them into a kind of vehicle for the purposes of the mechanics!

This adds the scale modification equal to their size scale to the Damage caused by any tactics they have (this can make them into AOE's), and alters the way they take damage: They take damage like vehicles, and all squads have the following bits and bobs.

Personnel: When damaged (Scale x1), half of them are casualties (dead or wounded), reducing the damage of their tactics by $\frac{1}{2}$. When destroyed (Scale x 2), the majority are casualties.

Morale: When damaged (Scale/2), they $\frac{1}{2}$ the damage of any tactics they use. When destroyed (Scale x1), they break and flee, but still exist narratively (and thus, may return to bedevil you.)

Gear: When damaged (Scale/2), disable a Tactic of your choice. When destroyed (Scale x1), they can only take basic actions.

There's another special thing: The base damage for any non-AOE weapon is 1 when fired against a squad. It is unchanged for AOE weapons. This is cause doing 15 damage to just one guy in a squad of 10 men is...like, it's not that impressive. Yes, Johnny is dead, but that's just Johnny.

Example: Istella is in her mech, the *Panghasa Ng Panday*, and is facing down a squad of ten men with antimech gear at the worryingly close range of 9 hexes.

They're built using the NPC template of Vanguard, meaning that they have 1 hit, 2 evasion, 0 armor and a pair of tactics. Anti-Armor lets them ignore 2 armor for all attacks, and Charge lets them run forward 5 hexes and then do 5 damage at the end of that. There are 10 of them, so that puts them at +6 scale. So, just sitting still and shooting their anti-tank guns, they'll do 7 damage (ignoring 2 armor - remember, the scale adds to damage and damage only.) They can charge forward 5 hexes, throwing mag-charges and fusion grenades, and do 11 damage (ignoring 2 armor.)

Meanwhile, Istella has two guns! She has a heavy duty railgun that does 10 damage and ignores a ton of armor - but if she uses this against the squad, each time she shoots it, she'll do only 1 damage. Fortunately, she *also* has...a goddamn chin-mounted scale +3 machine gun! This is represented as a +3 scale SMG, giving her the following stats: Adds: -2 | Range: 1-9 | Damage: 4, with a small AOE!

So, her gun skill is 2, and the Vanguard are in the trees (-2) cover. That, combined with their evasion, puts her at a -2 TV, requiring 3 Heat to hit. She throws down 6 heat in total to hit twice (it is a fast gun, after all.) That drops 8 damage on the buggers! She puts 6 damage into their cohesion, driving the Vanguards away in a spray of bullets and forcing them to quit the field. For now.

They'll be back.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTRIGUE

INTRIGUES

A thrilling train robbery, undertaken at a hundred KPH during a howling blizzard.

Uncovering an ancient Stakosha ruin at the edge of the galaxy's most uncharted regions.

Stalking a vampire gangster to their lair in the depths of New York sewer systems.

Deciphering the use of a Martian doomsday weapon before their agents break down the door.

All of these things - and more - are known in the HEAT system as *Intrigues*. An Intrigue is a loose framework of rules that help to track and manage complicated, rapidly changing situations in a way that allows players to use their skills, powers and creativity to engage with scenarios that may be hard to plot and diagram in a freeform style.

While in an Intrigue, the scene is run precisely like personal combat in terms of taking rounds, turns, and actions - though rather than a few heated seconds of battle, each round can be anywhere from days to weeks to hours to minutes, it really depends on the situation! But, like with combat, you can only vent heat by overheating, taking a hit, or using a power and entering into a cooldown. Like with combat, this determines when your enemies act. And, like in combat, enemies always begin their actions at the start of each round.

However, *unlike* personal combat, there is *no limit* to the number of actions an enemy (called 'Actors' in intrigues) can take! Enter into Cooldown at your own risk!

Since Intrigues are kind of weird and hard to grasp unless you see them in motion, I will be running an example Intrigue alongside each description, so you can see how the system works.

Let's start with the most important part of the Intrigue: The Table

THE TABLE

The table is you and your buddies at the table. The Intrigue puts a lot more power in the hands of both the players and GM than is normal in a lot of games. Which is saying a lot! The GM is Sutter Kane - if they like blue, the world is blue, that's just the way it is. But normally, the GM is not allowed to cart blanche create NPCs out of whole fabric in response to PC actions to make PC's lives more complicated.

...well, okay, yes, GMs are allowed to do this. But normally, the PCs don't get to see it happening in real time. It feels different! And normally, PCs aren't able to (as you will learn later

in the chapter) make a skill check and just *create* an entire platoon of armed insurgents who will follow their orders.

This power, though, is not an excuse for the GM to create the “bomb that instantly explodes and ruins the PC’s plans” and it is not *carte blanche* for the PCs to create the “everyone loves me and does what I want” fact.

So, for all of the actions and mechanics outlined below, everyone is free to say ‘yes, and’ or ‘no thanks.’ In general, you should only use ‘no thanks’ if something absolutely runs against your guts (and it is worth pausing, momentarily, to figure out why exactly this is the case and make sure everyone is on the same page *before* everyone gets mad at each other.) The ‘yes, and’ means that as facts and NPCs and armies are mustered by the PCs and GMs, everyone gets to suggest stuff to tailor things as a group to create an interesting story.

Obviously, only ‘yes, and’ if you...actually have a sick, rad idea. It’s 100% fine if your friend Scott had a heckin cool idea to just let it get put into the game...because it’s heckin cool! Now, onto the actual mechanical stuff!

We start with: The Goal and the Risk.

GOAL AND RISKS

An Intrigue is always a *player focused* event. If players don’t care or have nothing at stake, then the Intrigue happens according to the whims of any powerful or skillful NPC who is involved. Fortunately, players usually have goals and things at stake, so it is easy enough to get them! A goal needs to be both *possible* and *discrete*. Robbing a bank, talking a mayor into buying your 50 autogun turrets, finding a source of radioactives for the nearby space colony, that kind of thing.

The goal is not just useful for roleplaying - it also lets everyone know the *story* of the Intrigue. Let me bold this, to make sure everyone sees and reads it: **these mechanics work best when everyone is cooperating to create the story of the goal.**

If the goal is “raise an army to overthrow Lord Blood”, then the GM and PCs will create *Props* and *Actors* (more on them later) that *support that story*. Yes, even when the GM creates “Lord Blood’s Elite Cyborg Assassins” and then sicks them on the party, that is the GM *helping* the story. Because the story of “four guys walked up to Lord Blood while he was standing around doing nothing, then pushed him over with no risk, threat, or any action taken by anyone else” is *super fucking boring*.

But this also goes for PCs! They have a lot of power in Intrigues - far more than most games would allow - and that power works best when used to support the *story* of the goal. If you keep that story in mind, and you work to improvise with your buddies, nothing can go *too far* wrong.

The counterpoint to the goal is the *risk*. The risk is what happens if the Intrigue fails, either due to NPC completing their objectives before PCs, or due to the timer running out the clock. A risk should be clearly stated and *can* put the PCs into serious danger (though it should rarely be instantly lethal.)

The risk is useful because it helps the GM determine the objects of the NPCs involved (since their objectives might be different from the PCs! If the PCs want to rob a bank, and the police want to catch the bank robbers, the police will not succeed in the Intrigue if they *rob the bank*.)

Example: Three players: Erika, Lucy and Scott are playing a homebrew setting where mecha pilots travel from world to world in the wild frontier, doing merc work and protecting outworld planets from an overbearing Federal regime. During the last session, their pilots stumbled upon an ancient alien structure at the outskirts of a colony they were protecting from interstellar slavers. The structure itself is built to titanic scale - even while in their mechs, the PCs feel as if they're only barely large enough to interact with the structure's doors.

The PCs of course immediately want to explore it and discover what's up with the ruins, maybe find something of value within. This sounds like an intrigue to the GM! So, first, the goal is easy (the PCs want to explore the ruins, figure it out, find treasure) and next, the risk: The GM narrates that the characters know that the Feds won't let a discovery of this size go unsecured for long. They have to get in, find what they can, and get out before the bluejacks get in.

Once the goal and risk has been determined, we move onto the Complexity

COMPLEXITY

Unlike the GM only stat Danger - which is used as a direct measure of combat capacity - Complexity is more of a rough guess. This is because combat is an extremely direct, binary interaction. Either you shoot the bad guy in the head, or you do not. Either your cover holds against your enemy's shotgun or it does not. There is not a whole lot of wiggle room there. Meanwhile, in Intrigues, a deadly and experienced pirate can be hoodwinked by a reprogrammed shuttle and some quick FTL work.

So, rather than giving an *exact* number of enemies and "danger points", Complexity instead gives a rough ballpark for the difficulties and time limit of your Intrigue. When in doubt the difficulty of any action starts at the Complexity of the Intrigue (so, if you're running a Complexity 5 intrigue, trying to pick the lock on someone's door is a diff 5 check.)

Oh, now is also a good time to figure out the general timescale of the action. A bank heist might be in minutes, while researching a derelict alien spaceship could take months. There will be rules on how to incorporate other stuff around a long term intrigue later!

The risk comes about if a hostile Actor accomplishes their objective before the PCs manage to accomplish their objective. More on that later.

Next step: Determine the *Props* and the *Actors*.

PROPS

An intrigue's most numerous component is the "Props." These are the 'non active' parts of the intrigue - they don't take actions, they are only acted upon. Depending on the intrigue, they may represent relatively uninvested or powerless NPCs, chunks of data, entire groups or organizational loyalty, a starship, and more! Props are placed onto the field "unclaimed" and can either remain there *or* be claimed by a PC or *Actor*. They may also have Oomphs placed upon them, which need to be dealt with!

'Claiming' a Prop represents having direct control over it, through any means. If you have a gang of mercs working for you because you shot their boss and scared them into falling into line, you have 'claimed' it just as much as if you had won them over with charm or purchased them with cold, hard cash.

When a Prop is claimed, the person involved may take actions with it, depending on the narrative function of the Prop. If the Prop is claimed by an NPC, they can do so once per action they have, depending on if the PCs hit cooldown or simply took a hit. If they're a PC, it costs 1 heat per action taken *on top* of any skill checks that may be required.

Props that have been claimed *cannot* be taken by *any* means save using another piece and the steal action (see below.)

Those actions are...

Claim: A prop on the field may be claimed by you as a diff [Complexity] action, using a skill check that makes sense for the narrative description of how it is claimed.

Hide: You may hide a Prop - preventing NPCs from knowing where it is to act upon it using a narratively appropriate skill at a difficulty of [Complexity]. NPCs cannot reveal hidden props, but if you *use* the prop, they become revealed again.

Reveal: You may reveal a Prop that has been hidden by an Actor. This can also be used to *create* a Prop using a narratively appropriate skill check. If a prop is created narratively by you, it *begins* under your control.

Attack: You may trigger Personal Combat with an NPC. If this is used against you, the scene will switch from Intrigue to Personal Combat, with Heat carrying over, and the Danger of the scene beginning at the Complexity of the Intrigue, modified up as normal.

If the NPC is a prop, killing them in combat will count as destroying them. If the NPC is an Actor, killing them might be an objective - however, the danger of attacking them can be modified up by each prop they have related to their defense (usually +5 per prop, making it very useful to weaken an enemy you want to kill before attacking them.)

If the NPC is attacking you, then each supporting prop they get adds +5 to the danger of the situation, which starts at a base of the [Complexity], modified up even more by the danger questions in the Mastery Chapter.

If the Actor is a metaphorical Actor (like the weather) you cannot attack it. I mean. Unless you can. Check with your GM.

Destroy: If you are capable of rendering a non-NPC prop irrelevant to the field (usually by smashing it or destroying it) you can use this action to remove it.

If you have a prop that can directly attack or render irrelevant a Prop on the field, it is a Diff [Complexity] action.

If you wish to directly attack a prop held by another actor, it is Diff [Complexity]x2 action. If you have claimed the prop, it can be destroyed as a diff 0 action (sometimes, even when it's a person.)

Note: Non-Player Actors cannot Destroy Props held by Players.

Steal: If another Piece is held by a Person, and your Piece grants you indirect or direct access, you can *steal it*. This is always a skill check, with a difficulty of [Complexity.]

SIDEBAR: Destroy and Attack?

Destroying is for destroying things that aren't *people*. Remember how props and actors are differentiations between agency, not actual what something is? So, both "Gentek Hegemonic Shocktroopers" and "Intelligence Reports On Your Movements" are props. But the Gentek Shocktroopers represent...like...humans in power armor with laser guns. If you use your Tech (Computer) to hack into the computer vaults and delete those intelligence reports, that's **Destroying** them. If you and your buddies pop out of ambush and engage a company of Gentek Shocktroopers? That's **Attacking** them and is handled as a combat scene.

There are times where you can destroy a person and that is if you have claimed them. Usually, if there's only one or a few people in the prop, then they're pretty easily destroyed. However, this opens up narrative space for the GM to escalate things. It is *entirely* fair for the GM to react to you, say, mass murdering a bunch of people by using their next turn to reveal the prop of "Survivors Of Your Horrible Massacre."

But, just...in general? Don't massacre whole populations! It's evil! Don't do it!

Whether or not these actions take a skill check depends upon the piece. Sad as it is to say, if the 'piece' is 'first born son of the mayor', it takes literally no effort to shoot him in the head. You...fucking monster. If the piece is an 'ancient Stakosha data crystal', hiding it may take a Piloting (Astrogation) check to find a quiet backwater world to dump it on.

Sometimes, you will have multiple props that seem like they should work together. If you have both the prop "Fortifications" and "Well Trained Militia" and "Clues As To Who The Monster Is" then it seems like those all should work together in your attempt to Steal the "Who The Monster Is" prop from the Monster Actor, yes? Of course! Props that you or your fellow PCs own that can provide assistance between either +1 (if it's useful) or +2 (if it's extremely useful.)

An Intrigue has no set "requirement" for Props, beyond what makes sense narratively. You can always add more as required (and PCs are *absolutely* going to add more Props.) The only required Props are the loyalties and motivations of any *Actor* involved (more on them later.)

Using Reveal to add a Prop as a PC is as easy as a narratively appropriate skill check. For example, creating a 'tactically viable position' would be a Tactics check, and getting 'some hirelings' would involve Charm, or maybe a background skill that relates to the criminal underworld. The base difficulty for creating a piece is the Complexity of the Intrigue, modified by Range (you *can* hire a gang of goons while on a desolate alien planet, but if the closest planet is another solar system away, you're going to be facing, at least, a -15 range penalty! See Range for more details.)

SIDEBAR: Going Hard

If you choose to claim, reveal or destroy a prop and the range bands are revealed to be *much* harder than you expect, you can either choose to not do the action - playing it safe - or you can *go hard*. Going hard only applies in situations where your action can involve combat and, essentially, it means you decide to go into personal combat or piloting scenes to get it done as an action scene!

ACTORS

The less common, more active counterpart to *Props*, Actor are...well, they're not quite NPCs (though they often are.) Rather, they are the chunks of the Intrigue that are active and have agency (hence the name) whether it's from sentient action or the narrative tropes driving the Intrigue. An Actor might be 'hostile wildlife' and 'bad luck' during a mining expedition, while during a mansion heist, it might be Police Chief Ajex Varken and Rival Thief Blendan Mak and Eccentric Billionaire Tavian Xorst.

Actors don't have to be hostile. They may even be allies! They might be neutral. They may be entirely unaware of the actions of the PCs. To help the GM (and PCs) keep track of what everyone is about, though, each Actor has two Props directly related to them: Their Motivation and their Loyalty. Their Motivation is what they want to get out of this Intrigue and their Loyalty is what or who they care about the most.

In general, Actors will do whatever makes the most sense for them on their turns, when they have actions. However, if the PCs are able to *leverage* them, they will instead do what the PC wants. To do this, the PC has to make a credible *offer* or *threat* that is related to their Motivation or their Loyalty, combined with a skill check at a difficulty of the Complexity of the Intrigue. If they are able to somehow impact *both*, then there is no check at all and the Person just does it!

Actors can be removed from play as well. This requires the right Props to be held, the right skill checks, and the right mentality. However, this may lead to complicated repercussions and even personal combat. Assassinating the President, even if you pull it off, rarely leads to the end of a story...

[SIDEBAR: NPC?]

Sometimes, the rules will specify NPC rather than Prop or Actor. What's the dillio? Have the dangerous number of 1990s RPGs you are a fan of corrupted your brain, *old man*? Has the time come for the new blood to cull the weak and put you out to pasture? Slow down, buckaroo: NPC denotes a kinda fuzzy area that can mean either Prop or Actor, because Props and Actors can both be NPCs! So, you cannot attack an Actor that is not an NPC, because you *can't fistfight the fucking weather*.

Here's what Actors can do on their turns...

Claim: If a prop is on the field, unclaimed, then an Actor can snatch it right up!

Hide: If a prop is held by an Actor, the Actor can hide it - this functions exactly like how PCs do, right down to it being revealed again when it is used.

Reveal: When an Actor reveals a prop, it is only to create them - they cannot reveal props that have been hidden by PCs.

Attack: This can trigger an attack on an NPC, with narratively established forces.

Stash: A special NPC only move! If they have a "negative" prop, they can foister this on a PC, forcing them to have to deal with the narrative weight of this prop!

DIFFICULTY MODIFIERS

So, the base difficulty of any situation in an intrigue is always the Complexity, or multiples of it in some move cases. That might get boring, or make no sense! Fortunately, the difficulty is not set in stone and can be modified by various narrative factors!

These absolutely *can* stack, but the difficulty can never go above 10 or below 1.

Range

- It's far away (+2 diff)
- It's hard to get to (+2 diff)

People

- They don't like you (+1 diff for moderate dislike, +3 diff for hatred, +5 diff for actively despising you)
- You literally just saved their entire town from a dragon (-1 diff for Marvel Cinematic Universe Civilians, -3 diff for regular people, -5 diff for Care Bears)

Magic

- The magic is complicated (+1 diff)
- Magic is easily understood (-1 diff)
- The lore is obscure (+2 diff)
- You're in a library (-2 diff)
- You need The Sight to Witness Whatever This Is (+2 diff)
- Magic All Glowly (-2 diff)

Tech

- Ancient Precursor Tech (+2 diff)
- Off the Shelf Tech (-2 diff)
- Broken Tech (+1 diff for lightly damaged, +3 diff for heavily damaged, +5 diff for non-functional)

Communication Barriers

- No Shared Language (+5)
- Lingua Franca, But It Kinda Sucks (+2)
- There's no real bonuses for sharing a language, sorry!

Atmosphere

- It's Spooky Scary (+2 diff)
- It's bright and sunny (-2 diff)

Hard Limits

- Each People Scale Step For Minions (X Diff, where X is the People Scale)
 - People are thin on the ground (+2 diff)
 - People are plentiful and cheap (-2 diff)
- 5 Credit Prop (+1 Diff)
- 10 Credit Prop (+3 Diff)

Example: Xelasha is studying some Precursor ruins and wants to reveal a "discrete piece of Precursor history." The complexity is 3, but this is ancient precursor tech (+2)

and it is heavily damaged (+3) for a total diff of 8! Her TV is 2, meaning she either has to max her heat to reveal this prop...or have other props helping her out! Since she has both "Friendly Precursor AI" and "Direct Linkup To Precursor Computers", she's getting +4 to her TV, meaning it only takes her 2 Heat! Nice! Way to go Xelasha!

POWERS

There are some powers that are made for use in Intrigues, but sometimes, the narrative effect of a power seems like it should be able to accomplish something - for example, a wizard's fireball power seems like it should be able to cow and impress a bunch of nobles when a haughty wizard shoots it into the local chandelier. In general, if a power's *narrative effect* seems like it should accomplish an action in an Intrigue, allow it!

The limiting factor to this is, of course: Is the action legal (I.E, you usually should not be able to directly destroy a prop unless you have claimed it) and, of course, the danger of Cooldown.

KICK OVER THE TABLE

So, something is about to happen that will lead to an immediate loss, or unacceptable outcome. Bad guys are using their props to attack a prop representing innocent civilians. Do you just have to watch helplessly as they gun those poor people down? No! If you are narratively in the same space, and are willing to risk life and limb, you can kick over the table, pull your threshold blade, bring up your magic, and throw yourself into combat!

This breaks the normal play sequence, and counts as beginning a new combat round, with the only downside being that you start off combat with whatever Heat you currently have accrued.

PLAY

So, what now? Well, now, things go as described above, in the beginning of the section. The victory conditions for either side depends upon the context of the Intrigue and Props and Actors involved.

Remember, the rounds of Intrigue run on this checklist. Unlike combat, GM's do not get Shock.

1. Arriving NPCs act.
 - a. Any Perceptive PCs interrupt here.
2. A PC acts until they end their turn by taking a hit or cooldown.
3. 1+ NPCs act.
4. Repeat 2 and 3 until every PC has acted. If there are NPCs that have not acted, they get *nothing*.
5. 1 Free Oomph is lost by characters.

EXAMPLES

So, this is all a bit abstract. Let's turn some of these actions into roleplaying examples.

CLAIM

You are engaged in a campaign to sway a planetary population into supporting the Alliance To Restore the Republic of Free Worlds. The props on the field are “worried blue collar workers” “intelligentsia” “military caste” “indentured synths”, “criminal element” and “hegemonic nobles”, representing the various parts of a planetary society that might be for or against the Alliance.

- You use your Background skill of Freighter Pilot (Smuggling Routes) to claim the “indentured synths” by flying smuggling missions to evacuate the synths to the asteroid belt freeholds.
- You use your Social (Charm) to schmooze with the nobility, picking out those who are dissatisfied with the Gentek Hegemony.
- You use your Gun (Rifles) skill, augmented by an ally's Social (Lies) skill to join the military and find likely allies and supporters among their organization while pretending to be a mere marine.

—

You are some archeologists, in a dig in the depths of Egypt attempting to save cultural artifacts before the Red Weed completely overwhelms the desert - but have to not only pit yourself against the Red Weed and ancient traps, but also displaced European brigands who predate at the edge of your camp with heat rays and savage, cannibalistic attacks! The props are “defensive location”, “dangerous traps”, “food supplies”, “source of fresh water”

- You use Personal (Awareness) to keep watch over the food supplies to ensure that no cannibal mutants can get at it. You claim the “food supplies.”
- You use your Tech (Sabotage) skill to disable the traps - and maybe turn them to your advantage. You claim the “dangerous traps.”
- You use your Background skill of Great War Veteran (Battlefield Tactics) to know how to best put your local allies on those defensive fortifications. You claim “defensive fortification.”

—

You are going to rob the hovertrain from Charon City to the Wormpit - your goal? The Tsarina's crown jewels! But you only have *three hours* before the tram arrives and the Tsarina and her entourage leave for the United Nations conclave. Can you get away clean? The props on the field are “guarded hallways”, “secret passages on the train”,

“communication network” and then one prop for each train car (banquet car, passenger car 1, passenger car 2, cargo car, and so on.)

- You’re going to cause a distraction! You use your Gun (SMGs & Pistols) skill to quietly put a bunch of silenced rounds through the window in the banquet car! Charon’s atmosphere rushes in, alarms fill the banquet car, and no one will know WHAT is going on in here for the next few minutes! You claim the banquet car.
- You hack into the train’s communication network, using your Tech (Computer) skill. Boring, but it works. You claim the “communication network.”
- You find a quiet hiding spot and peek out. You use your Personal (Awareness) to “claim” the “guarded hallways” - because you now know exactly when the guards change positions and where their blind spots are...

REVEAL

The attempts to rile up the population are only going to be so useful. You need to steal a prop (more on that later) representing “Control of the Planetary System” (which is currently held by the Hegemonic Governor, the enemy Actor of this intrigue.) To do this, you need props that give you access to it. To get those props, you need to reveal them!

- You use Personal (stealth) to scout out the Hegemonic Palace, revealing “secret entrance ways” as you find the boltholes and air vents that can be entered into.
- You use your Social (lies) to fake your way into the security detail, revealing “stolen uniforms and fake IDs” as you do so.
- You use your Mastery of Liminal Knight (Technopathy) to just blind every security camera you walk past, revealing the “Occluded Cameras” prop as you do so.

—

Okay, time for the actual archeology! Or is tomb raiding!? Well, since all this stuff is going to Cairo and the Kingdom of Egypt’s museum, where it can be protected from the predations of the Red Weed...it’s archeology. Seriously, who’d just show up in someone else’s country, then steal their stuff and take it back to *London*? What kind of absolute asshole would do that? You sure wouldn’t!

- You use your Background Skill of Archeologist (Artifact Identification) to identify some still active magical talismans, revealing the “Magical Talismans” prop.
- You use your Personal (athletics) to dig up a solid golden sarcophagus, revealing the “Solid Gold Sarcophagus” prop.
- You use your Personal (Awareness) skill to spot a completely intact mural that hasn’t yet been corroded away by the Red Weed, revealing the “Intact Mural” prop.

—

The best part of a train heist is the heisting on the train, isn't it?

- You use your Personal (Stealth) skill to sneak into the Tsarina's luggage compartment to reveal the "access to the Tsarina's luggage."
- You use your Tech (Sabotage) skill to pick the locks on the case for the Crown Jewels, revealing the "Opened Locks" prop.
- You use your Melee (Swords) skill to slice a hole through the glass roof of the car with your monomolecular sword to reveal a "quick escape route" prop. It may come in handy.

HIDE

The Hegemonic Governor of the planet has struck back. The Intelligentsia and the working class are firmly in their pocket - using one to rile up the other into a wave of anti-synth hysteria. You fear that they will begin to export their pogrom even to the asteroid belts!

- You use your Tech (Tinkering) skill to provide Synths with artificial skin grafts so they appear like normal biologicals. They're now hidden and cannot be targeted by the Hegemonic Governor during his turn.
- You use your Background Skill of Asteroid Miner (Construction) to build top secret hiding spots for them. They are now hidden!
- You use your Social (Leadership) skill to organize the intensely anarchist inclined asteroid miners, turning them into an ad-hoc self defense organization. Any synth haters that show up HERE get their heads broken! The synths are now hidden.

—

The European brigands have been kept at bay...but you have a sinking suspicion they're going to try and smash up all the pretty treasures you've recovered from the ancient ruins. So...

- You use your Personal (stealth) to conceal them among less valuable looking cargo. Boring, but it works!
- You use your Mastery skill of Master Vampire (Obfuscation) to simply conceal the cargo from mortal eyes. Less boring, also works!
- You use your Social (Empathy) to recognize what terrifies these fiends and set up some very scary looking intimidation statues around your recovered items. That should keep them at bay.

—

The Tsarina's security forces are on the hunt...for YOU! The prop "our exact location" has been added to the fray, and they might steal it on their action. That would be *bad*. So, you better do something about it.

- You're going to cause a distraction! You use Tech (Sabotage) to start setting *fires*. Where? Everywhere! The confusion is so intense that you're hidden. For now, at least.
- You're quite good at impersonation. You use your Social (Lies) to pretend to be the security director and announce your location on the other side of the train.
- You have the power "Where Did I Park" which lets you summon your vehicle at any time. You vent heat and use this power and remote pilot your ship from orbit to the side of the train where you and your buddies can jump aboard. Natch!

ATTACK

There are some dirty sides to the rebellion. The Hegemonic Governor owns several props representing NPCs that are his major lieutenants, including Admiral Aleander. If you simply attack the governor now, Aleander will provide +5 Danger and narratively justify the GM in sacking waves of Hegemonic fighters on you while you assault the palace. Time to...remove him. Describe how you approach and attack Aleander, and the GM will create an encounter, using the Danger of the Intrigue, +5 for each prop that supports Aleander in his defense. If you manage to shoot Aleander dead in the combat encounter, then Aleander is removed from play.

You want to stop these European bandits before they cause any more dangerous attacks. Since they have no more props that make them more dangerous, now is as good a time as any to hop into your tripod and roll out! An exciting battle ensues. Like. You have heat rays. They have heat rays. But you're also a vampire! But they have dark magic, wrested from their worship of eldritch gods. But *you're a vampire!* If you beat up the bad guys, then the intrigue is done, since there's no more threat.

You don't really want to attack anyone in the train heist, because...like, you're thieves, not murderers. So, this is an example of why you *wouldn't* want to use attack: It means a drastic escalation in stakes and the situation. Though, if there were some guards in the way, and you had non-lethal weapons, you could attack them - but that might be better represented using a claim or steal action, since it's a binary outcome: *Either* you knock the guards out and they stop being a threat *or* you fail and they spot you. There's no reason to game out with hexes the interstitial steps.

DESTROY

The Hegemony is crumbling on this planet - but before the final assault, there is a prop that represent a serious danger: "Dome Self Destruct Codes." They're owned by the Hegemonic Governor and he's going to use it to blow the domes if the attack goes off before you wipe it out. But worse, the GM has made it clear that if it is in your possession afterwards, then there might be a whole new civil war after the first civil war is done as factions fight over who has total mastery over the habitation domes. There's only one recourse: You have to *destroy it*.

- You will hack into the computer networks with your Tech (Computer.) If you can beat the difficulty, the prop will be *destroyed!*
- You will lead a sneak attack that will destroy the computer cores of the Gentek Hegemony's main facility, right before the attack proper, using your Social (Leadership)
- You will use your Mastery Skill of Liminal Knight (Technopathy) to create an improvisation to simply erase the prop from existence with your mind.

—

The raiders that have perpetually harried your digsite have, at their center, an idol to the dark god Yog-Sothoth, which the Europeans have turned to after the Martian Invasion brought their once haughty civilization low. Claiming it would just mean claiming a *curse* *idol*. No! You will see it put to destruction.

- There's no problem not solved by a sufficiently large hammer! You use your Close Combat (Blunt) skill and *smash it with a HAMMER!*
- Or you can be just a bit more modern about this. Dynamite and the Tech (Sabotage) skill works even better.
- Dark Idols require even darker magic. You will use your Mastery Skill of Solomanci (Thamaturgical Invocations) and just create a pillar of flames around the idol.

—

Good news! You got away with the Tsarina's Crown Jewels! Bad news! The Russian Empire has your information and scanprints. You don't want anyone to have those. You're not keeping them around!

- Why? A thief? You? No! You are...Sir...Ivan...Ivanistan...Ivanovich, from ISBT. That's the department for internal security. Yes, now, the papers? Using your Social (Lies) skill, this might even work!

- Would anyone suspect this completely different set of galaxy hopping adventurers of being those ne'er'do'wells? Not at after you make some fake IDs using your Background Skill of Fence (Fake ID Guy.)
- Okay, hear me out...what if...we shoot the computer? You have managed to use your Guns (SMG & Pistols) three times now in this intrigue, and it's worked every *time*.

STEAL

The Hegemonic Governor owns several props that you'd rather be tapped by yourself before the attack. The juiciest price of "Orbital defense forces" is rendered impossible by range penalties and the base difficulty of your complexity. But the "Gentek Shocktroopers" and "Hegemonic Snubfighters" definitely *are* within your reach...but how?

- You use your claimed prop of "Turncoat Pilots" and your skill of Personal (stealth) to steal the Hegemonic Snubfighters. You lead a team of turncoats (the prop that allows you access to the other prop) into the enemy base, then fly away with the best of their forces.
- You use your claimed prop of "Rebellious Clones" and your skill of Social (leadership) to start a mass uprising in the outward garrisons of Gentek Shocktroopers, gaining access to the prop.
- You use your claimed prop of "Hacked Com-Codes" and your skill of Tech (Computer) to hack the shocktrooper HUDs to...get them fighting the way you want them to...

—

The cannibal raiders that have been menacing the digsite have captured many of your local workers and guides and, worst of all, a very pretty archeologist named Ryker Jules Mohammad! He's in peril! You have to get him back - and attacking puts him at too great a risk. It looks like you're going to have to be *sneaky* for this...

- You use your claimed prop of "Knowledge of the Land" and your background skill of Emir of New Egypt to lead a quick ambush party through the red weed choked deserts and into the rear of the cannibal camp. Under the light of the moon, you steal away with Ryker and the captive workers.
- You use your claimed prop of "Martian Flying Machine" and your Personal (Finesse) skill to fly the flier into the middle of the shocked cannibals, firing heat rays in every direction to cause confusion and shock, then hustle the prisoners aboard, then fly off!
- You use your claimed prop of "Cannibal's Clothing" and your Social (Bluff) skill to act like cannibals as you sneak into their camp and quietly get the prisoners out. Just...don't stay for snacks.

—

This is the finale. The climax. The moment you've all been waiting for. This whole gosh dang train heist has been building up to this very moment. So, you...

- Use your claimed prop of "air vent access" and your Personal (Finesse) skill to descend down from the roof in the heavily guarded armored train car and swipe the Tzarina's jewels right out from under her very nose!
- Use your claimed prop of "keycard access" and your Personal (Stealth) skill to roll past a guard, swipe the keycard through the slot, then slip in to yank those jewels.
- Okay, hear me out...you could use your claimed prop of "panicky and confused passengers" and your skill of Guns (Pistols & SMGs) to cause *even more* confusion as you shoot your way through the wall, into the safe, and then to the gems! This is a perfect plan that *cannot fail*.

PLAYER RULES REFERENCE PAGE

RULES REFERENCES

BASICS

Skill+Equipment+Environmental modifiers = Total Value

Total Value is compared to Difficulty.

TV = Difficulty? Success!

TV > Difficulty? Success + 1 Oomph per excess TV over your difficulty

TV < Difficulty? Potential Fail! Can gain 1 Heat to add +1 to your TV.

STRUCTURED CYCLE

1. Arrival + NPC Action
 - a. Any Perceptive PCs interrupt here.
2. A PC acts until they end their turn by taking a hit (-1 heat) or cooldown (-X heat.)
3. 1 NPC acts (taking a hit), [PC] or 4, whichever is higher, act (cooldown)
4. Repeat 2 and 3 until every PC has acted. If there are NPCs that have not acted, they get *nothing*.
5. All Oomphs decay by 1.
6. GM expends Shock they have and goes back to 1.

HEAT CONDITION: 1-6 = Fine | 7-8: Overheated | 9-10: Badly Overheated | 11: Wounded | 12: Badly Wounded | 13+: Dead/KO'd!

Overheated: Resets at beginning of your next turn | Wounded: Resets when a Wound is chosen | Dead/KO: N/A

WOUNDING OPTIONS

Bleeding Out: Place a d6 on the table at 6, reduced at the end of each round, with death at 0. You cannot act. Can be resolved with a Diff 5 skill check. Can reduce Diff by 1+ by starting the countdown 1 lower per reduction to a minimum of Diff 1 with a countdown of 2.

Item Destroyed: The GM chooses an item/possession/Prop that is destroyed

Precarious!: Placed in a perilous situation, will die at the end of the next round but can still act.

Scarred: Gain 1 Heat that cannot be vented or lost until your scar is repaired.

Real Bad News: Add [PC]x2 Shock to the scene.

COMBAT BASICS

Movement: Applicable Skills+3 Hexes of free movement, additional movement is a diff 0 action using personal (athletics).

Range Bands: -1 per hex outside of your maximum or minimum range

Cover: -1, -2 and -3 (applying to all)

Damage: Apply base damage on success, +1 once additional hit. Enemy armor applies to base damage. If total damage exceeds Health, the target loses 1 health. At 0 health, they are killed/KO'd.

OOMPHS

GENERIC OOMPHS

Command: Expend this oomph to make an NPC group to take an action you choose

Panicked: Rather than taking the most efficacious action, they will instead do something irrational.

Distracted: The target is distracted, reducing the difficulty of anything targeting them by 1 per Oomph.

Enraged: This target will act before any other NPC when the turn order swaps back to NPCs.

Unaware: The target is unaware of you - either because you're hiding or you've distracted them. They cannot take any action related to targeting your specific area.

Jerry Rig: A damaged component functions so long as this oomph exists

COMBAT OOMPHS

Arcane Charge: If hit with another Arcane Power, of any type, they explode, creating 3 Damage per Arcane Charge oomph removed in a small (1) AOE.

Off Balance: The target loses their Evasion until this oomph is cleared.

Pinned: Target cannot move.

Suppressed: Target cannot act. Double any cover bonus.

Stunned: the target cannot act. Lose Cover Bonus.

Smashed: Causes environmental penalty for movement and combat equal to Oomphs. This can only be cleared by actions.

Cleared: Reduce cover by 1 step per Oomph. This can only be cleared by action.

PILOT OOMPHS

Careening: Vehicle cannot be controlled until oomph is gone. If in danger, it will take 1 Damage per Careening if not removed, until the Oomph is gone

Overheated: Take -1 to all actions per Overheated oomph placed on them.

Dogfighting: Gain +1 to hit a single enemy per Oomph and they cannot attack you so long as the Oomph is on the field.

Blocked: Treat as cover equal to its level.

Lock On: Expend as a free action to gain a positive environmental modifiers equal to the number expended.

INTRIGUE OOMPHS

Advantage: Another PC may expend this as a free action to get +1 to an action per oomph. You cannot use them.

Disadvantage: A targeted Actor cannot act with this Oomph on them until it is removed.

CHAPTER SIX: SPOT RULES

There are some rules that may or may not apply to a setting. Improvisations may not be in your space opera, cybernetics aren't in a fantasy, and wealth doesn't matter for a squad of military officers who are exploring the depths of space. These are all just guidelines, though! If you want space magic, go nuts. If you want people to have magical artifacts built into their body in a fantasy setting, why not? If you want a government operative working directly for the galactic council to have to deal with money and item vendors...for...some reason, you can!

Each of these rules add more complexity - so, be aware of that!

SPOT RULES: IMPROVISATIONS

Powers are singular, focused abilities that characters have, which are based on anything from technological augmentation, magic, sheer talent, or even just metatextual genre conventions. Sometimes, though, characters will want to use things that their powers represent in a creative fashion.

If you can throw ice bolts with a reskinned "magic missile" power, why can't you make ice cubes for your friend's whisky on the rocks? If you are so good with a shotgun that you can explode tanks using the "overkill" function, what does this imply about your ability to modify and alter guns? If you can always be sure you have a starship on hand when you need it using "where did I park", what else can you pull out of your pockets?

The HEAT system encourages this kind of creative freewheeling through the Improvisation system! All Improvisations are built along Themes, using Metrics, which work together to give a guideline for the GM on the narrative impacts of your Improvisations.

THEMES

The first and most important step for all power improvisation is understanding Themes. The long and short of it is that when you try and do something with an improvisation, it *must* fit inside of your Theme - a decision that is agreed upon by everyone at the table. The Theme of your power is determined when you make your character, since lots of powers are built to be easily modified by the players to fit any number of settings.

Take the power 'Swashbuckling.' While it is written to cover the idea of a derring do protagonist flipping around, it can just as easily cover the short ranged teleporting powers of a character like Kurt "Nightcrawler" X-Man from the hit comic series, Magneto's Super Friend Squad.

'Magic Missile' could represent you shooting magical bolts from your palm or psychokinetically skeletonizing people because your mom was the lady from *The Ring*.

'Carnage' covers being so good at using shotguns that you make tanks explode, but that could range from everything to being a techhead that modifies your own guns to being in a sci-fi universe where shotguns sometimes just shoot real good because they're space shotguns.

The only real restrictions on what Themes your powers have is the setting that your game is set in, and the agreement of your table. Pitch ideas and brainstorm ideas. Sometimes, just giving the same Power different Themes can make two characters wildly different in play! Once you've settled your Themes, you can know *what* your improvisations can cover - and what they *cannot*. If a power's theme doesn't cover a facet of a metric, then it simply cannot do it, no matter how much Heat you pump into it or how badly you want it to!

METRICS

So, you want to make an Improvisation. How do you do this?

Step one: flip to the Rules Reference section of this book, and plant your eyes upon the Scale table. That scale covers how and what your Improvisations do. Rather than using the normal Scale Modifier of 3, 6, 10, 15, 21, you instead just count along the table 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and so on. So, if you wanted an Improvisation that has a range of "sniper rifle", that'd be 3 steps along that Metric.

Fun fact: This actually *does* use the same numbering system, because the scale chart is based on triangular numbers. The reason why it goes 3, 6, 10, 15 is because $1+2 = 3$, $1+2+3 = 6$, $1+2+3+4 = 10$, $1+2+3+4+5 = 15$, and so on! Thus, 3 steps is equivalent to the +6 scale. This doesn't actually matter, I just...kinda wanted to show off some of my math. Also, now you know why the numbers are that way! (Yes, I know that Scale 0 should then technically be 1, but the base assumption of all gear is that it starts at 1, and adding +1 to that would work everything up. So, like, just...shh. Shh. Don't worry about it.)

If you want to combine multiple metrics, you need to buy your way up to each of the metrics you want. For example, if you want to make a boulder at 10 hexes, you'd need to get 8 steps in total (4 for mass, 4 for range.) You only need to use metrics you want...with *one exception*. Damage and AOE are linked. If you want to cause damage, you need to also spend steps buying up AOE - even if you don't want AOE.

However, this does not go in the opposite direction. If you want AOE (say, to create a magical field, or teleport a bunch of friends at once) you can buy AOE without having to also buy Damage. You can also buy more AOE than damage! For example, you can spend 6 steps to do 6 damage, then spend 1 extra steps to bump the AOE from +0 to +1 and do 6 damage in a small burst! Or you can go hog wild and spend 7 steps and do 6 damage to a *huge* burst!

The reason why damage is linked that way is because high damage is balanced by it being dodgeable. If you could pin-point blast someone for 40+ damage, it'd make some fights REALLY easy.

So! How do you get these steps?

Well, good questions! That depends upon the difficulty and cost of your setting.

SIDEBAR: Duration?

How long do these things last? In combat, they last until the end of combat unless it is damage (in which case, it just goes away once the damage oomph is applied.) Out of combat, they last as long as the character is spending at least some of their time maintaining them - enough to represent real narrative cost. A character can do minor stuff like talking, kissing, planning with other characters, but nothing that takes a lot of effort or skill. They also cannot rest to lose their heat!

DIFFICULTY AND COST

Before using Improvisation, the GM first decides how easy and how hard Improvisation is, and whether it has a cost involved. There are seven difficulty scales and three costs, which can be mixed and matched in any configuration (though, spoilers, one difficulty renders costs irrelevant.)

The difficulties are...

Impossible: Improvisation is not merely hard. It is like eating the sun. This is suited for games where character abilities are limited and specific and relatively “grounded.”

Difficult: Improvisation is relatively hard and only uses your Powers to move along the Metric Steps.

Simple: Improvisation is pretty easy. You use your Powers *and* your Skills to move along the Metric Steps.

Specialist: This is where Improvisation is pretty easy - for people who have actually spent the time and effort to learn it. In this mode, Improvisations key off Powers and Masteries, but not regular Skills.

Earth Shaking: Improvisation is easy *and* powerful, keying off Powers, Skills *and* Masteries to move along the Metric Steps.

Machine Required: Improvisations can **only** be used with the “Focus” component, adding in your powers as normal.

Machine Assisted: Improvisations can **only** be used with the “Focus” component, but you can then augment that with Powers, Skills and Masteries.

SIDEBAR: I SAID ONLY

Machine Assisted and Machine Required are for settings where improvisations *require* a Focus to be used. In the other difficulties, a Focus can assist but is not required, unless the GM has disallowed that component for their own incomprehensible whims.

The costs are...

Free: Power use is free. Go nuts!

Fatiguing: Every time you use an improvisation, gain 1 Fatigue Oomph equal to the highest Metric used, ignoring any ties (I.E, if you have two metrics at 3 and one at 1, then you gain 3 Fatigue Oomphs.) Fatigue Oomphs decay as normal. If you have unused steps, negate 1 Fatigue oomph per unused step. *REMEMBER:* Oomphs can be removed by skill checks from your friends or yourself!

Fatigue: This may be spent by a GM to add a -1 to a skill check rendered more difficult by your magic. The GM expends the oomph when stating the difficulty of an action - this does mean that you can reconsider and take a different, non-impacted action and the Oomph will still be spent.

Corrupting: If you use an improvisation during a session, gain 1 Corruption on your character (this only happens once - meaning if you use an Improvisation a bunch of times, you don't get more Corruption.) Each level of corruption is cumulative with the previous.

1-2 Corruption: Minor corruption, provoking a sense of unease from those around you and adding +1 difficulty to social checks.

3-4 Corruption: The corruption of your magic has begun to twist your body. Choose a minor mutation (strange skin color, glowing anima, odd twists of luck) and a skill that it imparts a +1 difficulty towards.

4-6 Corruption: Your corruption is nearly out of control! Double all previous penalties.

7+ Corruption: Your character has been consumed by the magic and is removed from play until the corruption can be reduced.

Reducing Corruption takes an Intrigue built around the purification of that corruption, with each point of corruption being a Prop that must be claimed and destroyed to wipe away your corruption. Other players can help - this is important if a PC has hit 7+ corruption! Mutations caused by corruption can stay or not, depending on how sexy you think they are.

MOVING ALONG THE METRIC STEPS

So, you want to create an improvisation! The first step, now that you know how hard it is and how much it is going to cost, is to determine how many 'steps' you have along your metrics. You begin with 0 steps, meaning you can't do any improvisation *at all* until you get steps from the following sources.

Powers: A power provides +1 to any metric that is in keeping with the theme of the power.

Skills: A skill provides +1 per skill rank to any metric that is in keeping with the use of the skill (E.G, using Finesse to add into your Speed metrics as you use your ice powers

to skate along the ground at super speed makes sense. Conversely, trying to use Finesse to add to Information metrics for your cyber-rig's abilities? Not so much.)

Masteries: Some settings have Masteries - these are fancy skills that *only* exist to empower powers, meaning they cannot be used in normal skill checks but do add to your Improvisations.

Equipment: Some settings also have gear that add to your metric steps!

Heat: Finally, you can buff up your Improvisations with some extra heat, if you need to!

AND HOW LONG DOES THIS TAKE? AND ARE THERE ANY OTHER CATCHES?

All Improvisations, in combat, are a combination of a Diff 0 action...and a Power Use. This means that once you use it, you enter into Cooldown, allowing enemies to act. Worse? You don't lose any heat!

That's the price of Improvising, I'm sorry to say.

What is more: if the Improvisation *directly targets* or *impacts* someone, the difficulty of 0 will be increased by the target's general level of danger, as represented by their Health and, depending on the Theme of the power, by their Evasion and Armor.

Encasing a hyper-dangerous 4 Health enemy in solid ice would begin at Diff 4, and definitely get a buff from their Evasion, which would combine to penalize your steps along the Metrics. However, their armor wouldn't really help against that, since their toughness has nothing on avoiding a big old chunk of ice forming around them.

When in doubt, Evasion usually is far more likely to be important to resist Improvisations. This is because A) dodging out of the way looks cool and B) evasion is the easiest defense to negate, creating a fun synergy between players.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER!

Let's take an example!

Example: Xelasha Dreamspinner is a dreamwalker and dreamshaper Void Elf in a setting where Improvisations are Earth Shaking and Fatiguing and she's got a problem: She needs to move a ton of militia troopers and tanks to a forward staging position and past a horrible death jungle. So, she decides she's gonna *improvise*.

She has two powers - Dreamstride and Only A Thought Away - which both represent her intuitive teleportation abilities. So, that's two steps right off the bat!

She has 2 ranks in Personal (Awareness and Finesse) and her player describes how Xelasha uses her awareness of the natural flowing of the world's psychic potential to find a quick route to where she wants to go through non-euclidean space. The handsome,

clever, wise and all around cool guy GM allows this application of skill. That nets her 2 more steps on the metrics.

Next, she has 2 ranks in Psionics (Teleportation, Psychokinesis) which only exist for this kind of thing. That's another 2 steps along the metric.

Lastly, she's in her PsyKer mecha, Hausos, who has a Scale +6 Psionic Amplifier, giving her 6 more steps!

Totaling it up, Xelasha has *twelve* steps along her metrics. She spends 5 on range (netting her intercontinental ballistic range, which easily covers the continent she wants to cross), then 4 on AOE, netting her a small radius (to represent the portal that she's ripping open. The last 3 metrics are put into Mass...which gets her a single human being. That means if her mecha piloting pals try and walk their mechs through the portal, they'll just bounce off. Fortunately, she has an empty Heat track, so she pushes herself and takes 3 heat to move 3 steps up the mass track to "dozens of tons" allowing even her friend's largest mech to walk straight through!

Since the highest metric was her mass (6 steps in total) she takes 6 Fatigue Oomphs. Fortunately, she has stim packs that clear those...

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN IMPROVISATIONS AND SPOT RULES

How do these improvisation rules interact with other spot rules like, say, money?

It *depends* on the setting and the improvisations! It depends on your GM! What do I mean?

Well, let's take a wild example!

You're playing a crew of people on an interstellar carrier which has a focus component representing the construction facility and you use this to net yourself a bunch of high complexity metric results, with high people results (for 10 of them) and high mass results (each one is several tons each.) Do you just...generate ten hundred credit starfighters right off the bat? Just by snapping your fingers?

That's up to your GM and the setting. If you're aping the style of a real time strategy game, with a goal towards conquest and expansion, then it might be just fine to build stuff like this - you'll still need to hire people to fly them! If you're playing some space adventurers in a small shitty freighter, then it breaks tone and setting to just mass produce space fighters at will.

So, in general, improvisations like this last for a short time - say you use your telekinetic powers to improvise a sword made of telekinetic force. You have a sword now for this combat, but it will fizzle away once the battle's over. If you want it to last permanently, work it into an intrigue (say, crafting a magical sword!)

Another useful guideline? You need a blueprint for building something if you have a construction device and construction improvisation, which means you need to buy at least one vehicle to be able to reproduce it (representing the blueprint.) This is also a fun way to expand your carrier's production, and to represent research and development! You can use the credit system to represent research and development - finding data in an Intrigue each representing 10 credits, then spending those credits to build a blueprint of your new fighter type, then building that fighter with improvisations and your focus. If the focus component on your carrier has a fuel requirement, then you also get resource collection mechanically represented!

SPOT RULES: CYBERNETICS

Cybernetics, in the rules system of HEAT, actually represent a very specific kind of cyborg-narrative. If that kind of story isn't what you want to use, you can still have the trappings of cybernetics without these rules - for example, nothing stops you from declaring your favorite pistol is part of your cyber-hand. It's cool, and it doesn't really influence the mechanics that much.

(GMs, if you're concerned about not being able to disarm or take the pistol from someone with a cybernetic hand pistol...chill the fuck out and let your PC have fun? It's fine. Your story will be fine.)

The cybernetics rules in HEAT are a story of marginalization and acceptance: You begin with an aptitude for cybernetics that marks you out from everyone else, then through the game, move from being uncertain, weak and disempowered to being confident, strong, empowered as you self actualize (representing, in this case, by having cool-ass cybernetics.)

But to begin this story, you and the GM have to work out the ending.

ENDPOINT

The first step in cybernetics is determining your endpoint, which is created by expending 10 'cyber points.' Each point will have to be "bought off" in game through Intrigue and character development, and once you've completed your arc, you will be at your Endpoint.

HEAD

Augment	Points	Description
EYES	1-5	Each point spent here provides an augmentation that allows you to perceive in a spectrum beyond human, using your normal skills. This reduces applicable penalties, or allows narrative actions beyond normal scopes. Example Spectra: X-Ray, T-Ray, Thermal, Arcane, Psionic

BRAIN	2	Buying this grants you a +3 add to all skills involving lore and study and during an Intrigue, gain a Prop of “Superhuman Intellect” that begins owned by you and can be used to justify narrative action.
COMP	1-5	Each point spent here provides one function from a modern computer to you, which can be used narratively in normal play and during an Intrigue, are created as a prop - but that prop DOES NOT begin owned by you. The only exception is “internal firewall.” Example Functions: Internet connection, perfect calculator, perfect memory, recording device, database, firewall
VOICE	2	Buying this grants you a +3 add to all skills where your hypnotic voice can beguile, convince or inspire people. During an intrigue, gain a prop of “beguiling presence” that begins owned by you can be used to justify narrative action.

ARMS

Augment	Points	Description
MIGHT	2	Buying this gives you a +10 scale to your strength - providing you the ability to lift and throw a boulder, +10 range to your thrown weapons, and +10 to any Personal (athletics) checks related to raw physical strength.
TOOL	1-5	Each point here provides one tool function that is linked to your arm, which can be used narratively in normal play. During an intrigue, pick <i>which</i> tool is currently prepped and deployed, then begin with that as a prop that is owned by you. To bring out a new tool, it will need to be created. Example Tools: Drill Arm, Mechanics Hand, Hacking Forearm Rig, Personality Override Spike, Magnetic Palm.

BODY

Augment	Points	Description
TOUGH	1/3/5	This increases your toughness, through extra plating, armor, and so on. Gain +3, +6, or +10 armor value.
TOOL	1-5	This works exactly like the Tool Arm, but for stuff that goes into the chest region. Example Tools: Fabrication Unit, Shield Emitter, Life Support Systems, Regenerative Healing Unit

LEGS

Augment	Points	Description
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MIGHT	2	Buying this adds +10 to your speed and to the range of your leaps.
MOVE TYPE	1-5	Each purchase allows you to ignore environmental penalties that that kind of movement would help with! You can also use them in Intrigues, just like Tool Arms. Example movements: Roller blades, Ice Skates, Magnetic Soles, Rocket Boosters, Sprinting Legs

ADDITIONAL

Augment	Points	Description
LIMB	1-5	You gain 1 additional arm per point, which can hold more things. Every 2 adds +1 to your “free actions” before your difficulty increases (so, at six arms in total, you can take three actions before getting +1 diff.) These arms can also have any arm augments attached to them! These arms can be tentacles, just for fun!
Drone	6	You carry a single Size 0 vehicle, which you can build and deploy as you see fit, which runs a Summoned NPC that you can then command.

PARTS

Once you have assigned your points, decide how they are formed into “parts.” For example, having Cyber Eyes and a Cyber Brain and a Head Computer can be all one part (your sexy chrome head.) You can split your cybernetics into ten distinct parts, if you want!

Each Part is affected at the same time by positive and negative things. Say you have a cyber arm (might 2, Tool 2) and a Drone (6). So, if someone hits you with an anti-magic field that shuts down one of your magical prosthetics, they’ll either shut down your Drone or your Arm, but not both. However, if you then get repaired, it’ll repair whole parts in a go!

In some situations, having lots of parts is better (since it isolates disruptive effects) but sometimes, having less parts is better (making it WAY easier to repair them, since you don’t need to be bogged down with multiple actions.) Which you think is better is up to you!

ANCHORS

For every 2 points of Cybernetics you have, you have 1 Anchor. Anchors are the thing between you and your Endpoint - they’re whatever keep you from fully enjoying your unbridled cybernetic self. There are, in general, three kinds of Anchor: Social, Fiscal and Personal. Each of them need to be linked to a specific cybernetic piece, and you can apply multiple of the same one to the same thing if you want to make one part of your augmentations very heavily anchored.

Fiscal: Each Fiscal Anchor represents expensive components and materials that are required to maintain the device within you. These components may be entirely legal fictions (DRM and leased bodyparts, owned by corporations) or they might be physical (diamonds fed directly into your freeze gun arm.) Each Fiscal Anchor makes a Cybernetic Part unusable until you have acquired 15 credits per Point invested in the Part *or* until you agree to do a mission for the assholes who partially own you.

Social: Each Social anchor represents a social drawback for being augmented. Locals are scared, bigotries exist, and generally, you just have a tough time. Work with your GM to figure out who hates you and where they are in the setting. Remember, bigotries are essentially irrational, and justifications are paper thin at best! Each Part linked to a Social Anchor imparts a -1 to social skills per point in the part in narrative play, and in Intrigues, it creates a Prop of “hateful bigots” that begin claimed by the most hostile Actor.

Personal: This is more heavy. Each Personal Anchor represents a dysphoric or unpleasant downside linked to the Part. There is no mechanical reflection for this - it just makes your character miserable and unhappy with their bodies. The solution to this should be worked out between you and the GM - maybe they simply need to get used to it. Maybe your character needs validation from their friends and loved ones that they are still beloved. Maybe your character needs to replace a wheezing, clunky metal arm with something sleek and chrome. Maybe they just need a component that lets them sleep easily!

(SIDEBAR: ...NO DOWNSIDE!?)

Yeah. I trust you guys. A personal anchor represents something that cannot be easily gamified, and I don't think it should be. Taking a personal anchor signals that you want your cybernetics to be *explicitly* about your personal interior journey. If you decide to cheese that for “easy” points, then...well, you're playing the game wrong? Have fun cheating yourself? I guess?)

SPOT RULE: ALLIES AND MINIONS

Some players might, through hook or crook, get their grubby little mitts on allies and minions. It may be through an Intrigue (“we've revealed the prop of a platoon of infantry and will now lead them into battle!”) or it may be by just slapping down money (see the next section to learn how money works.) However you got them, you have them, now how do you use them?

Well, NPCs, when they work for the PCs, are one of two things. If they're powerful individuals whose allegiance you gained via diplomacy and kissing, then they are controlled by the GM on the battlefield, following your directions if they see fit (and if your directions fit their ideas of what is right to do.) They will put damage onto the field and that damage will take out bad guys.

If you ask them to accomplish something that they can reasonably expect to be able to do, then they'll do it at a cost of 2 Heat and then they will become busy and cannot be used again until either the next round of combat, the next round of an intrigue, or however long the action takes outside of combat. They might also balk at any request you make, depending on their character. Telling Jason the Babysaver to kill those ten babies (no matter how justified) might make Jason do a double take and decide that, no, he's not getting paid enough (or at all) for this shit.

If the NPCs are just regular old mooks, down home goombahs, faceless goons, conscripts, dogfaces and ninjas in sufficient numbers (I.E, more than one ninja), then they are only significant if they are collected into a group using the scale chart. Round to the closest number of minions (so, if you have 8 dudes, count them as a +6 group, not a +3 group) then classify them.

ANATOMY OF A GROUP

All minion groups have the following classifications

Speciality: This is what the minions do.

Quality: This is how good they are.

Speciality is a single sentence describing what the minions are. Qualities range from Rabble Elites (with summons as a special outlier.) Quality indicates how hard it is to command minions during a stressful situation, and gives a general guideline of how many props they represent.

Rabble (-3): Bare scrapings, picked up at a moment's notice (1 Prop)

Trained (-1): Moderately well trained. (3 Props)

Experts (+0): Excellently Trained and skilled (6 Props)

Elites (+3): The best of the best of the best, SIR! (10 Props)

Summons (+0): Created from an improvisation (None)

Of the props, one must represent the actual bodies on the ground. The surrounding props can be support staff, training, the *esprit de corps*, whether or not they can spit acid, and so on. If you lose access to enough props to pop your troops down a level (I.E, if you lose 4 props on your lovely, lovely Elites) then they will be reduced to fighting like Experts instead.

If you're just hiring them, the props are instead multipliers to their cost. Treat a +0 cost as x1. No free experts, you goof. You fuckin...sillyass goof.

Hired goons have a monthly cost of ½ their scale modifier.

Example: You wanna hire a squad of 10 marines to back you up on this mission. They're experts. It costs 6 credits to hire them, x6 for them being experts, for a total of 36 credits.

Example: They called you mad! MAD! But you will make the world's most perfect killing machines, with you and your fellows. Over an intrigue representing your long research process (which does involve several combat actions as the Actor representing "Technological Progression's Inherent Dangers" spawns props of mutagenic horrors and attacks you with them) you create the following props: "One Thousand Soldiers", "Enhanced Healing Factor", "Enhanced Reaction Speed", "Acid Spitting Gland", "Can Sleep Like Dolphins", "Two Hearts", "Hardened Dermal Armor Skin", "Perfect Recall", "Absolute Loyalty Conditioning" and "Hyperadvanced Power Armor with Laser Gauntlets." The ten props combined together equals an Elite mob!

Example: You need some demons to move a sofa, so you improvise up a spell with your 6 steps on the metric scale from your Occultism mastery and your powers. You take 4 steps on the Information (they're kinda dumb, but can hold at least one idea in their head, the idea of *moving your sofa*) and 2 steps on the People Scale (you summon five of them.) You now have a gang to carry your sofa!

COMMANDING THE BUGGERS

It is a diff 1 action to give orders in a battlefield, using a Background Skill or the Social (Leadership.) If you have both then you can augment one with the other as if you were giving yourself assistance (I.E, you add +½ one skill to the other.) This skill is modified by their quality (So, rabble gives you a -3 to your TV!)

Success on this check makes 1 oomph, +1 per success beyond the first. These oomphs can either be narratively appropriate oomphs or **Command Oomphs**. Command Oomphs can be spent as a free action to have your minions do a task! They can either be banked (so they stay on task each round) or you can cash them all in to get minions to do multiple things in a single go.

A minion mob can only be given an order *once per round*.

When minions attack, they create damage equal to their equipped weapon plus their scale modifier, reduced by the enemy's cover, armor, and any range penalties as if they were just regular old NPCs.

If minions don't have Command Oomphs, they will do what seems most reasonable to them depending on the battlefield situation. Depending on their morale, this may be to just run the fuck away - but then again, it might also to throw themselves screaming at their enemies (having 10,000 fanatical rabble might be nigh impossible to give orders to, but you may not NEED to give them orders if they wanna throw themselves at the enemy fortifications!)

Example: A merc band of mecha pilots needs infantry support. They have the props "Local militia" (bodies), "security chief" (leader) and "Forward operational base" (logistic support.) This nets them Trained minions armed with rifles. They have a platoon of 50

(+10 scale) of them with them for this op, armed with rifles. The minions, whenever they fire on enemies, do 11 (1+10) damage, which the PCs can distribute as they see fit so long as they have a Command oomph.

These militia have 10/20 health, 3/5 morale and 3/5 supplies if they take damage.

One of the PCs gives them an order with their Social (leadership) of 2. That's diff 1, with their skill modified by -1, allowing them to place 1 command oomph. They take 2 extra heat to get 3 command oomphs. They spend 3 to have the riflemen hose down an area, placing 33 damage on an enemy troop formation.

SUPPORT MINIONS

Some minions aren't actually really operating as independent critters. Sometimes, they're just the people on the battleship who die as their consoles explode to make the damage seem more threatening! If your vehicle has a crew requirement and you stock it with minions, they just do their jobs. Their level of quality doesn't matter, save for roleplaying. Rabble are far more likely to mutiny, grumble and get superstitious starts, and grouse about having to do anything. Trained crew will be mostly in the background, experts let you feel fancy for having such a well run ship (they should have swanky uniforms.)

The only exception to this is Elites. Elites provide their +1 to skill checks to your vehicular skill checks!

Because, like...do you know how expensive Elites are? You worked hard and paid a lot to get those elites, you should get SOMETHING for your trouble!

SPOT RULE: SURVIVAL & SPECIAL DAMAGE

Heat and Damage are pretty abstract - most bullets are missing, most wounds only matter when they're important, and getting a drink is as easy as it is for a distressingly few number of people on our planet. But sometimes (like, say, you're playing a post-apoc game, or you're stranded on an alien planet, or you're trying to keep an army alive on the mach and the GM wants to be a *dick*) the where and how-for of water, food and shelter matter quite a lot!

Or, you know, you could be exposed to radiation!

Or hit with a witches curse!

Or any number of things that might do more to your body than just raw damage.

First, let's deal with need.

NEEDS

A human being needs a water prop, a food prop, and a shelter prop every day. These props begin your survival themed intrigue unclaimed by the Hostile Wilderness (which is usually the main antagonistic Actor in this kind of intrigue) and claiming them represents acquiring a steady source of them that cannot be threatened. Each prop represents 10 credits worth of supply, so it will last you for 10 days per person, since room and board costs ya 1 Credit (at the cheapest.)

Thus, a party of four with Water, Food, and Shelter props will use those props up in two days, giving you two days to spend your actions on literally anything else.

You can buy these props in the general equipment section (see Wealth and Equipment) to start off with extra stuff, so you don't have to spend character actions on acquiring it. These props can also be threatened, stolen, and even destroyed by Actors, leaving you without!

Every day without water, gain 1 heat you cannot shed by resting, cooling down, or overheating.

Every two days without food, gain 1 heat you cannot shed by resting, cooling down, or overheating.

Any day without shelter, drop your heat cap by 2 until you get some shelter and rest there for a day. This doesn't lower your cap any further - it's just a flat -2 until shelter is found.

If you're overheating, you can no longer act due to delirium and hunger and thirst. You lay on the ground until someone helps you.

Example: Ed the Vault Dweller has left his home to explore. Unfortunately, Ed is very bad at it. After one day wandering around and failing to do anything, he gains 1 heat and loses 2 from his heat cap, putting him at 1/4. The next day, he continues to suck, and gains 2 (1 for water, 1 for food) putting him at 3/4. The next day, he hits 4/4. Four days in, he hits 6/4, meaning he is badly overheating and loses a prop to the capricious wasteland he is wandering through. Worse, even overheating doesn't help.

Five days in, he's at 7/4, which means he's badly overheating (he's 3 above his cap.) The wasteland strips him of even more of his props, if he has any.

After a week of failing utterly, Ed hits 10/4 heat. Preferring to not drag this out, Ed takes the wounding condition that leads to his immediate death. Ed's dead.

You may ask: How the *hell* did Ed manage that, there's no fucking randomness in this game, did he literally just sit around, doing nothing? Yes. Ed was just an example.

BAD STUFF

Sometimes, survival involves exposing yourself to bad stuff beyond lack of food, water, and drink. There are four kinds of generic bad stuff, but they all work the same way: By applying an Oomph that sticks around, doing the bad thing to you until you resolve the situation causing them, which **must be clearly communicated to you by the GM.**

Vacuum: Gain +1 heat per action you take. If you overheat, you pass out and take 1 more heat per action taken by your fellow PCs (thus, if the three other players each take 1 action, you'd gain +1 heat.) If you hit wounding, this oomph is removed and you must take Bleeding Out (representing your terminal stages of decompression.)

Resolution: ...put on a fucking helmet, you doofus!

Curses: The GM gets a pool of 3 Shock per Curse Oomph per scene to spend on bad stuff that happens to you. Environmental effects, adding to heat (so you are forced to fail an action you could have succeeded), even creating enemies as your food turns to...spiders or something.

Resolution: Break the curse, apologize to the witch, absolve your sins

Radiation: -1 to your heat cap per oomph until this Oomph is resolved. If your heat cap hits 0, it is a terminal stage of radiation and you will die within an hour of game time.

Better hurry up on resolving this Oomph, Jimmy!

Resolution: Magic healing can do it. Advanced tech can do it. But, uh, if you're in a modern setting, radiation might just be a fancy way for the GM to kill you instantly. In which case, punch the GM in the face for exposing you to radiation without adequate warning. If they did warn you and you exposed yourself heroically to save the world, uh...don't punch the GM.

Poison: Poison WILL kill you in 10-Oomph minutes!

Resolution: Drink the un-poison bottle!

Other kinds of badness can be modeled based on this. For example, a disease might be equal to a single oomph of radiation for unpleasant but survivable colds (but, also, like, what kind of HEAT game are you playing where an unpleasant but survivable cold needs to be modeled? A like...coffee shop AU Catradora fic that *still* sometimes has thrilling battles with Hordak? Because, if so, I want to play in this game, sign me up.) Alternatively, a virulent eat your face off disease might be on par with Poison!

SIDEBAR: For God's sake, WARN THEM!

All these bad things are very bad. WARN THE PCs BEFORE EXPOSING THEM! ...well, okay, vacuum might hit you unexpectedly during a space battle. But, like, PCs know that space battles have vacuum, it's kinda the deal. Also, if you're running a game without these rules, just assume everyone has easily accessed space helmets.

SPOT RULE: WEALTH

These wealth rules *may* not matter. If you're playing badass Space Marines or James Bond or desperate survivors in a galaxy overrun by hideous space zombies, *no one gives a shit* about your *money*. However, if you're playing mercs and traders and assassins, money matters a great deal!

Wealth is treated abstractly - the GM may give solid figures ("This art heist will snag you half a million credits!"), but in general, money is abstracted out into the Wealth score which represent...no...*specific* amount of money, but a combination of backing, reputation, contacts, and hard cash. Here's a general overview of stuff you can get just for having a Wealth of a certain value - since no one cares how much you spend on dinner.

0 Wealth: Nothing, you're flat broke, and have to steal, beg, borrow.

1 Wealth: You live real cheap - slum housing, pure fast food and ration bars.

2 Wealth: You've got an average lifestyle, and can eat nicely from time to time.

3 Wealth: You've got enough cash that you can eat nice regularly and maybe own a home.

4 Wealth: You've got enough connections and rep that cops look the other way when you run red lights. You have the best clothes, and can casually buy fancy things.

5 Wealth: You live in a huge mansion - you may not be Jeff Bezos rich, but you are going against the wall when the revolution comes.

Some ballparks beyond most PCs reach.

6 Wealth: A small corporation

7 Wealth: A large corporation (or black ops organization)

8 Wealth: A small planetary government

9 Wealth: A system wide government

10 Wealth: A multi-system Government

15 Wealth: The Stakosha Empire

However, your Wealth also gives you access to a pool of Credits - which represent liquid assets that you can slap down on big ticket items. But once Credits are spent, they're *gone*.

(SIDEBAR: Credits?)

Or gold, or dollars, or thrones, or whatever the nom de guerre of your fiscal transactional bullshit is in your setting.)

You can only get Credits back with an Intrigue, Combat or working a day job appropriate for your wealth level for a year. Credits are the triangular value of your wealth, up to Wealth 5. Once you have hit Wealth 6, you have *ten times*. Once you hit Wealth 10, you have times *one hundred* credits.

Wealth 1 = 1 Credit (Poor)

Wealth 2 = 5 Credits (average)
Wealth 3 = 10 Credits (well off)
Wealth 4 = 50 Credits (Rich)
Wealth 5 = 100 Credits (Mega rich)
Wealth 6 = 500 Credits (a major corporation)
Wealth 7 = 1,000 Credits (an entire country)
Wealth 8 = 5,000 Credits (an entire planet)
Wealth 9 = 10,000 Credits (an entire solar system)
Wealth 10 = 50,000 Credits (a multi-solar government)
Wealth 15 = 100,000 Credits (the galactic hegemony)

Equipment has credit costs, which is where all the credits go!

WAIT, FIVE CREDITS????

That's not a lot of money for a starting character (the average starting character will have 5 credits.) Fortunately, you can fix this by going into **Debt**. Debt multiples your starting credits by ten and has absolutely no downsides.

VEHICLE UPKEEP

Vehicles have special costs that require underlining! A vehicle's upkeep is equal to 1 Credit per component, plus half its Size.

Example: Remember Bandersnatch and his mech? He has 3 components and his mech is scale 6, so it has a total upkeep of 6 Credits.

GAINING WEALTH & CREDITS

Missions and Intrigues give a number of credits equal to the Shock of each encounter, approximately. For example, 4 PCs going into a mission with two danger 2 combat encounters and one danger 4 combat encounter is expected to earn 40 credits (2+8 for the first, 2+8 for the second, and 4+16 for the third) - but only if the PCs actually...succeed at them in a way that is profitable. Like, it doesn't matter if they survived the mission to rescue the Huntress ambassador to Earth - if she ended up dead, they're not getting paid.

If the characters are undertaking an Intrigue each Prop that has value can have a value of 5 or 10 credits. If something has more value than 10, break it into Prop - for example, if a bank vault is filthy with lucre and has 100 Credits worth of money in it, it should be ten 10 credit Props that the PCs will have to siphon while keeping a watch out. Prop can be valuable even if they're not actually physical - the location of an uranium rich asteroid can be valuable! This does mean that valuable things are harder to find (a uranium rich asteroid might go for the same as a 100 credit worth bank vault, meaning it'd take ten "coordinate" locations to find it.)

Value always has difficulty related to it - if it was easy to get, then it *would already be gotten*.

If you want to bump up your wealth, you have to dedicate yourself towards doing it. This requires you to bank as many credits as the next triangular level of your Wealth, then your Wealth bumps up to that level - but your credits *drop* to zero. This is because moving into a new wealth stratum has its risks and dangers. However, so long as you manage to get more credits before upkeep hits you, you'll reap all the benefits of free purchases and nice houses and fame.

You can try and bounce to higher levels of wealth - but this will require acquiring sources of steady income more than a single merchant ship or random merc jobs will require. That is beyond the scope of the current rules as written and involve staking claims on colonies, founding corporations, and so on. Maybe they can use the wealth levels as ways to indicate what each region is worth...the game practically writes itself!

LOSING WEALTH

Well, remember the vehicular cost?

That's *part* of your costs. You may also be in **Debt!** Remember when I said Debt has no downsides? I *fucking lied*. Your Debt is equal to your starting credits (50) times 1.5 (75) and you pay it off at a rate of 1/12 per month, rounded up. So that's 7 credits per month on top of your Upkeep for a year. Per character in debt!

Fun!

So, what happens if upkeep hits while you have 0 Credits?

Well, you drop down a wealth level and stabilize at $\frac{1}{2}$ that Wealth level's credits. If you own a vehicle and cannot pay for its monthly upkeep, then repo people will come and try and take it. The operative word being, uh...try. If you're in debt, the debtor will come calling. You may face assassins, legal trouble, and other exciting plot hooks!

WHY GO INTO DEBT?

To afford a sickass rad fuck as cool goddamn spaceship, duh.

GLOBAL, GALACTIC AND DIMENSIONAL DOMINION

So, what if you wanted to take HEAT far beyond what is even slightly reasonable? What if your wealth hits the magical distinction between 5 and 6, where your yearly income is 14 times bigger than it used to be?

What if...you want to *take over the entire galaxy*?

Well! Good news, here's some basic spot rules for covering that!

Take the region your megalomaniac imperialist wants to conquer (or liberate, or whatever.) Draw a map of it! Then assign each region a few props that represent their government and general ethos. Give them values representing their worth, and then those credits are available...depending on the loyalty and control that their rulers have over them! Every prop you have representing more control/loyalty, increasing the amount of credits they give you by +30%, starting at 10% for the most basic level of control.

So, let's say you're playing space emperors and you have access to a planet with wealth 7 (1000 credits in total wealth) and two asteroid colonies that are wealth 6 (500 credits total wealth.) The colonies are restive and you have no props on them, so they both give you 50 credits. Your planetary satrapy, though, has three props representing your constitutional authority, your secret police, and your "loyal" populace. That's +90% for the three props, giving you a full 1,000 credits for buying spaceships and deploying troops.

Conquering a world involves an intrigue with normal objective systems, but each "loyal/control" prop that you do not destroy or subvert becomes a negative prop, which *reduces* the income by -30%. If this hits negatives (which is very easy, considering how the base income is 10%), then the colony *COSTS* money to maintain until you've secured your dominion. You can also do this to other powers - fomenting rebellion to tax their coffers to reduce the size of their military. This has never gone wrong *ever* in the real world!

And yes! A region can get *more* than 100% income from additional props (but at a -5% increase per prop.) So, 4 props is +125%, then 5 is +145%, then 6 is +160%, then 7 is 170%, then 8 +175%! However, if you push through to 10, sucking down the +0% twice, then it rounds up to 200%. That's the total maximum though.

If you default on your income, though, the GM is allowed to create props representing what's gone wrong. At this level, you're not really working with "Money" but with actual, like, real wealth: Production, labor, resources. This means that shortages and bad expenditures don't just accounts zeroing out, it represents, like, famines and infrastructure breaking down because it cannot be replaced, and rebellions as people go without what they should have.

Fun!

CHAPTER SEVEN: GENERIC EQUIPMENT

Here is a list of generic equipment to use as you see fit.

PERSONAL WEAPONS

These weapons are all treated as Scale 0. However, they can be put up on higher scales, if you wanted to represent the weapons of giants or to give your mecha a huuuuuuuge shotgun. When used by larger scale things, those things do need the hands to use them. The scale modifier adds to the cost (so, a +10 SMG would cost 11 credits.)

This is a fun, cheap way to get additional weapons without needing further slots: If you have arms on your mech, then you can just have it carry guns. Fun, huh? Heck, give arms to your spaceships! Give a +21 giant ax to a space battleship! Who would stop you? *God?* The Devil? It is to laugh!

Adds: How much is added to or subtracted from the skill used.

Speed: How quick or slow the weapon is to use.

Range: The range of this weapon.

Base Damage: the base damage caused by this weapon.

S: Scale

[S/2]: $\frac{1}{2}$ scale

AMMO

Hey, what if we wanna use ammo? Well, don't, it's entirely out of character with HEAT. But I'm still going to write rules for it! First, determine the capacity of the weapon. Next, fast weapons fire 3 shots, +3 per Heat spent, while mediums fire 1 shots, +1 per Heat spent. Slow weapons fire 1 shot, always, cause they're slow. This means slow weapons have an advantage all of a sudden, good for them!

A new magazine, clip, or reload costs $\frac{1}{2}$ the base cost of the weapon. So, a 1 credit pistol gets 2 magazines for 1 more credit.

Example: For some reason, you're playing Fallout in HEAT, despite the fact there's a Modipeous RPG set in Fallout. You have a 10mm Pistol (medium speed) and it has 12 rounds. You're shooting at a Super Mutant with 3 Evasion, 3 armor and 2 health and have a skill of 2. So, $2-3 = -1$, with a base diff of 1, so you need to take 2 heat to fire. You use three rounds to do 1 damage to the Supermutant, which his armor soaks. So, you spend 4 more heat to do 5 damage, which means you use 6 heat in total. This means you fired SEVEN SHOTS (1 for shooting, +6 for the heat) and managed to reduce the Supermutant to 1 health. They escalate and kill you, because this was a bad idea, just like real Fallout!

I mean, holy shit, a 10mm pistol does, like, 5-12 damage and super mutants in Fallout 1 have pretty high DR, even if you shot them in the eyes each time seven times (which you can't do, you only have 10 AP max, and even with the faster shooting perk, that's still only, like, 2 shots a round) they'd be shooting back, so, like, this doesn't even work, why did I write these rules?

Ancient Weapons

Axe (1+[S/2] Credits)

Adds: +0 | Speed: Medium | Range: 0 to 1 (Hard Cap) | Base Damage: 1+S

Cutting Edge: Ignore 2+S armor.

Crossbow (1+[S/2] Credits)

Adds: +1 | Speed: Slow (x2) | Range: 2+S to 10+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Ratchet: Reduce slow by 1 per Strength enhancement you have from any source, to a max of fast.

Dagger (1+[S/2] Credits)

Adds: +0 | Speed: Fast | Range: 0 to X+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Thock!: Maximum range is your Personal (Athletics) skill. (You always have more knives.)

Longbow (1+[S/2] Credits)

Adds: +0 | Speed: Medium | Range: 2+S to 15+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Quiver: You can narrativize your damage to be fire or blunt by knocking appropriate arrows for the purposes of narrative effects.

Musket (2+[S/2] Credits)

Adds: +1 | Speed: Slow (x3) | Range: 5+S to 10+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Powder and Shot: This weapon is INCREDIBLY LOUD. Ignore 4 armor.

Polearm (1+[S/2] Credits)

Adds: +0 | Speed: Medium | Range: 2 to 2 (Hard Cap) | Base Damage: 1+S

Trip and Gut: Can apply a one Pinned oomph and your Base Damage at the same time (these can be to the same person, or different people.)

Shortbow (1+[S/2] Credits)

Adds: -1 | Speed: Fast | | Range: 2+S to 10+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Quiver: See longbows

Sword (2+[S/2] Credits)

Adds: -1 + X | Speed: Fast | Range: 0 to 1 (Hard Cap) | Base Damage: (X/2)+S

Lord of War: The X in the statline is your Melee skill.

Unarmed Attacks (Free!)

Adds: +0 | Speed: Medium | Range: 0 to 1 (hard cap) | Base Damage: Y

Buff or Whippy: Y is equal to your Athletics or Finesse.

Modern and Space Weapons

Assault Rifle (2+S Credits)

Adds: -1 | Speed: Fast | Range: 5+S to 10+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Suppression!: Can apply *Off Balance* or *Pinned* even on a miss.

Pistol (1+S Credits)

Adds: +0 | Speed: Medium | Range: 1 to 6+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Dance, Fucker, Dance: Gain 1 heat to apply *Off Balance* to a target *before* resolving your attack.

SMG (1+S Credits)

Adds: -2 | Speed: Fast | Range: 1 to 6+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Brrrrrapt: This weapon has a small AOE.

Shotgun (1+S Credits)

Adds: +1 | Speed: Medium | Range: 1 to 6+S | Base Damage: 1+S

Buckshot: You may double the armor rating of a target to double the Shotgun's Base Damage.

Sniper Rifle (2+S Credits)

Adds: +2 | Speed: Slow (x2) | Range: 10+S to 15+S | Base Damage: X

Take a Bead...: You or an adjacent friend gains access to the *Aim* oomph, which is applied with the Personal (Awareness) skill.

Aim: Expend as a free action before attacking, adding 2 Base Damage per 1 Aim oomphs.

Ballista (3+S Credits)

Adds: +2 | Speed: Slow (x5) | Range: 10+S to 20+S | Base Damage: 5+S

Chain Shot: When a target is hit, applied 5 Pinned Oomphs as a free byproduct.

RPG (1+S Credits)

Adds: +0 | Speed: Special | Range: 5-10 | Base Damage: 6+S

Boom!: A RPG is either an HE or AT missiles (chosen when purchased.) An HE has a medium AOE. An AT missile, it ignores 6+Scale armor. Once fired, the RPG is gone!

LMG (3+S Credits)

Adds: -2 | Speed: Fast | Range: 5+S to 10+S | Base Damage: 3

Bulletstorm: The LMG has a small AOE and also does 1 Pinned Oomph per damage for free (So, if you go *budda budda budda* at some motherfuckers and spend 3 heat to add your base damage three more times, you'll do 12 damage in the AOE with 4 pinned oomphs.)

Combat Gear

These are worn by human scale beings and cannot be "scaled up."

Body Armor (Cost: 2C)

Special: Once per battle or scene, negate all damage oomphs on your person at the beginning of your turn. Alternatively, negate half the small AOE oomphs in your area, a quarter of the medium AOE oomphs. Body armor does nothing to large AOE.

Grapnel (Cost: 2C)

Special: fires a grapnel up 10 hexes as a free action. You can either retract it, use it to set up an environmental attack (this will remove the grapnel you have fired, but you can fire another later), or even tie people up with it. If you use it to swing for an attack, add your Athletics or Finesse to the attack.

Grenades (Cost: 2C)

Special: Once per combat, you can make a small AOE attack using Athletics, doing 5 Base Damage.

Flash Grenades: As above, but rather than doing damage, it will apply 5 Stun Oomphs.

Smoke Grenades: As above, but it will create a -3 cover in that AOE that will last for the combat or until acted upon by some exterior function.

Gravi-Boots (Cost: 2C)

Special: Micronized gravity generators allow for the creation of short term artificial gravity fields that negate the gravity of the world you're on (up to 2Gs) and allow the creation of an alternative gravitational field (1G). In a word, you can run on walls. Also, if you hit someone with Brawl, you can apply the *Lifted* Oomph to an Unshielded enemy. In a fantasy world, they're *magic* boots.

Deployable Shields (Cost: 5C)

Special: Take 2 heat as a diff 0 action to deploy a -3 cover anywhere in the field of battle. This can be repeated as many times as you want (remember, increasing diffs will increase the heat cost by 1 each time you use it.)

Targeting Array (Cost: 2C)

Special: Ignore 2 levels of penalties for shooting or attacking people. Also, if you are close to a thin wall, you can see people through it. Also, also, it's a cool monocle thing over your eye.

Strength Enhancement (Cost: 7C)

Special: Take 2 heat to lift and manipulate objects and items roughly the size of a boulder or small tank for a short time.

Stim-Injection System (Cost: 2C)

Special: Trigger to continue fighting after being Taken Out. Does not work twice.

Mana Potion/Combat Stims/Psi Hypos (Cost: 1C)

Special: 3 times per scene, you can restore yourself to 0 fatigue if using low risk magic. In high risk magic settings, these do nothing, don't bother.

Environmental Systems (Cost: 2C)

Special: Ignore environmental damage.

Special Ammo

All guns and bows and such use ammo! Even if you're not *tracking* the ammo, this ammo is still being fired liberally into walls, ceilings, floors, goons. But some settings have fancy ammo that do special, fancy things. The mechanics for this is simple: You choose which kind of ammo you got popped and locked at the beginning of a combat. If the ammo is standard, you have as much as you want, but if the ammo is special, you're out of it once the fight is done unless you can make a concrete case for why you haven't used *that* much bullets. Alternatively, if you're using my terrible ammo tracking rules, an amount of shits will be provided per battle.

The ammo's scale must match the scale of the weapon!

Armor Piercing Ammo (Cost: $1 + \text{Scale}/20$ bullets)

Effect: Ignore $1 + \text{Scale}$ armor.

Black Hole Ammo (Cost: $10 + \text{Scale}/1$ bullet)

Effect: Place a number of *Black Hole* oomphs equal to the damage of your weapon with +1 step along the AOE track from your weapon's base level of AOE.

Black Hole: Counts as 3 damage and 1 pinned per oomph.

Explosive Ammo (Cost: $3 + \text{Scale}/10$ bullets)

Effect: +6 damage and +1 AOE scale to your weapon.

Hollow Point Ammo (Cost: $1 + \text{Scale}/20$ bullets)

Effect: Add $+1 + \text{Scale}$ damage but double armor values.

Ice Ammo (Cost: $3 + \text{Scale}/10$ bullets)

Effect: Create cover equal to damage caused in the area you hit. Can be used to build temporary ice structures.

Magic Ammo (Cost: 1+scale/20 bullets)

Effect: Cause one *Arcane Charge* oomph per damage caused.

Tracking Ammo (Cost: 3+Scale/10 bullets)

Effect: Ignore all cover penalties and ½ of all evasion penalties.

General Costs

Fuel, Fodder and Focus Crystals

Cost: [Scale]xRarity

Effect: So, some vehicles have fuel requirements. How much does that fuel cost? Well, it costs an amount equal to the scale of the requirement. So, a horse that needs about a backpack full of feed (+3 scale) would cost a base level of 3 credits to feed per day. This is modified by the rarity

Ubiquitous: x1/4

Common: x1/2

Average: x1

Scarce: x1.5

Rare: x2

Exotic: x3

This can vary between fuel types. Take a spaceship that uses hydrogen for the fusion torch, but hypercrystals for the FTL drive. The hydrogen might be ubiquitous (meaning that your fuel “penalty” for your spaceship is actually just FREE MONEY (unless you get stranded in an outback system without any fuel ports) while the hypercrystals are exotic, turning your +3 scale fuel penalty into a 9 credit resource hog!

Finding Fuel: Don't look at fuel as an annoying money sink. Look at it as an exciting plot hook! Fuel can be found in props, wrested from the hulls of your defeated enemies, or siphoned in dangerous, high flying gas giant mining missions. Or, worst comes to worst, you can just kill and eat your horse.

Room & Board

Cost: 1/3/5c per day

Effect: It costs 1 credit to sleep somewhere squalid and unpleasant but livable (barely.) 3 will net you somewhere nice but not fancy. 5 is when you get into the fanciest digs. If you sleep in the fanciest digs, you get +1 to your heat cap for the day. Sleeping on the street will reduce your heat cap for the day by 2.

Props

Cost:5/10

Effect: You begin owning any old intrigue with these props by spending the money to secure them as a permanent fixture. This can represent supplies for the wilderness, tents and shelters, food, water, magic crystals, ancient scrolls, blackmail material. Their value is 5 (cheap) and 10 (expensive.) They last for the intrigue they're in, so use em or lose em!

Mooks, Minions, Goons, and Ruffians

Cost: [Gear] x [Scale] x [Quality]

Effect: If you want to hire 100 well trained bowmen for your upcoming siege, that would cost 1 for gear x 15 for scale x 3 for quality for a total of 45 gold. If you want to hire 10 elite space marines with assault rifles and combat-hardened spacesuits, that would cost 3 for gear (assault rifles are 1 credit, environmental armor is 2 credits) x 6 for scale x 10 for quality, or a whopping 180 credits! This may sound like a *lot*, but wait till you see what they can do with the +3 command modifier!

If the minions aren't for fighting (like, say, if they're for running a ship), then it costs 0.5-3 gold depending on how hard the crewing is. In a setting where you can press men into flying your starships without needing to train them at all, it's 0.5. In settings where...you're hiring astronauts...then, like, it's 3, obviously.

COMPONENTS

Movement

Afterburner

Scale: Any

Effect: Gain 1 heat to move [S/2] bonus hexes as a free action.

Legs/Wheels/Hoversuch

Scale: Any

Effect: Allows for moving and stomping on the ground at a speed equal to your Leg's Scale. Also works for treads, wheels...

X Engine

Scale: Any

Effect: Allows movement through [X] environment (air, sea, phlogiston, and so on) using the Engine Scale as normal. Your ship only needs one Engine. This can stack with legs, if you want a mech that can also fly and do flying kicks.

Maneuvering Jets / Enhanced Articulation

Scale: Any

Effect: Gain a bonus of your scale modifier to piloting checks.

Defense

Armor Cladding, Shields, Defensive Fortifications, and so on!

Scale: Any

Effect: Adds to your Armor equal to its scale (stacking with multiple components, if you have multiple armor components.) When you resolve damage, reduce that damage by your armor value before applying it as either heat or damage to your vehicle.

Narrative Armor: Each source of armor can be fluffed to be different things, if you want armor and shields. The impact of this is it sounds neat and cool!

Stealth Systems / Cloaking Device

Scale: Any

Effect: Reduce your vehicle's Size Scale by the Component's Scale modifier for the purposes of stealth modifiers. If your vehicle's scale becomes negative, then your vehicle is cloaked and all enemies gain the *Unaware Oomph* at the beginning of each round of combat for the duration of your cloaking. However, long term cloaking is dangerous: All PCs aboard the vehicle gain 1 Heat that cannot be vented every [Time Unit.]

SIDEBAR: Time Unit?

Some settings have super swanky, cool cloaking devices that work for days and days. Some might cook you in an hour from the waste heat being trapped inside of your ship. Some collapse in mere minutes. Check with your GM about the setting and consider that before blowing the cashey dollar money golds to get a scale +32 cloaking device for your frigate.

Any high energy action taken causes the cloaking device to shut down. If the cloaking device is shut down, the heat can be vented normally. If the heat gain causes you to overheat, the heat is lost normally (but you're in a much more dangerous situation.)

ECCM

Scale: Any

Range: 0-10+S

Effect: Allows the ship to remove negative Oomphs at the listed range. This is a standard skill check, using Tech (Computers) or an appropriate Science background. You do NOT get a scale bonus for this check, sorry!

Crew

Control Room

Scale: 0, 3 or 6+

Effect: Allows the vehicle to be controlled by a person or artificial intelligence. If you lack this component, then the vehicle is entirely open topped and you're exposed to enemy bangshoots.

You need a scale 0 room for vehicles between 3 to 6. Scale 3 control rooms are good for 10, 15, and 21. Scale 6 rooms are what it takes for dreadnaughts. A scale 36 vehicle, if such a thing could exist, would require three such control rooms. A scale 45 vehicle would need six, and a scale 55 vehicle would need ten scale six control rooms to fully run and manage the vastness of the vehicle in question.

DAMAGE NOTE: This component cannot be targeted unless the vehicle has no armor components. This only really matters for PCs shooting at NPCs cause...what PC is going to put damage into their control room? That's a great way to get yourself killed, don't do that!

Crew Quarters

Scale: Any

Effect: Provides crew quarters that can hold a number of people equal to the people scale. They're moderately comfortable. By doubling the cost, they become luxurious. By halving the cost, they become squalid and miserable. As a note: You can put Crew Quarters on ships that don't need crew to make short ranged troop carriers and passenger planes!

Utility

Cargo Hold

Scale: Any

Effect: A big empty space, holding the...amount listed on the scale chart under mass.

Scanning Suite

Scale: Any/Any

Effect: Provides the first Scale Modifier to any action involving scanning and examining other things and allows scanning at a range equal to the other scale modifier. So, a basic sensor with a range to the horizon would be +0/+10, and cost 10 credits. Meanwhile, a close ranged scanner that really buffs you might be +6/+3 and cost 9 credits!

Vehicle Bay

Scale: Any/Any

Effect: Grants a number of berths equal to the number of People Scale, in a Size scale equal to the second scale. Cost can never be higher than your size scale.

Example: A Bay that holds 10 scale 6 starfighters costs 12 (6+6.)

Manipulators

Scale: Any

Effect: Allows the use of hands and arms (two per manipulator.) Gain your scale modifier to strength and strength based checks (including the range for throwing things.) For lifting and carrying, you can manage with one hand anything equal to your mass scale and with two hands, you can handle anything +1 step up. So, a +6 arm can hold a human one handed, a boulder with two.

Magic/Psi Foci

Scale: Any

Effect: Adds a scale modifier to the number of steps you get on a single type of improvisation.

Offense

The guns! The glory of combat! All these weapons come at a pre-set scale. You can, however, “enbigger” the gun by increasing the number of slots they take up. This is how you get stuff like twin-linked autoguns or spinal beam lasers! Basically, you just add the costs and damage together (but not the range!) If the weapon had no AOE, it goes up by one scale per component added! If it has an AOE, the AOE is unchanged.

Damaging one of these components puts the whole thing out of commission. The risk of embiggening guns!

Autocannon

Scale: +10 | Cost: 10

Adds: +0 | Range: 15-20 | Speed: Slow (x1) | Base Damage (AOE): 10 (None or Medium)

Autoloader: Can either fire AP (ignore 5 Armor, reduce AOE by 1) or HE (gain +1 AOE shift) shells. This is the base ammo it comes with for free! If you get special ammo, an autocannon can be loaded two two types and shift between them as well. Fancy!

Pulse Laser

Scale: +6 | Cost: 6

Adds: +1 | Range: 1-12 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage (AOE): 5 (None)

Like Butter: Ignore 12 Armor.

Beam Laser

Scale: +10 | Cost: 10

Adds: +2 | Range: 10-20 | Speed: Slow (x2) | Base Damage (AOE): 10 (Special)

Red Beam Of Death: Place damage or oomphs caused by this weapon in a *special* AOE! The AOE is made up of 10 hexes, which can be placed in any formation so long as each hex is touching another hex. Otherwise, this acts as a normal AOE.

Short Ranged Missiles

Scale: +6 | +10 | +15 | Cost: 6 | 10 | 15

Adds: -1 | Range: 1-12 | 10-16 | 15-21 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage (AOE): +6 (None) / +10 (Small) / +15 (Small)

Barrage: By swapping the speed from Fast to Slow (x2), you can gain an AOE shift of +1.

Long Ranged Missiles

Scale: +10 | +15 | +21 | Cost: 10 | 15 | 21

Adds: +1 | Range: 20-25 | 25-30 | 31-36 | Speed: Slow (x3) | Base Damage (AOE): 10 (Small) | 15 (Small) | 21 (Medium)

Tracking: Can be fired over hills, around corners, and so on. Ignores cover.

Superlaser

Scale: Any | Cost: S

Adds: - | Range: 10+Scale to (No max) | Speed: Heavy | Damage (AOE): Special (None)

You May Fire When Ready: Expend 1 Heavy Oomph to destroy 1 target of equivalent Scale Size or smaller.

PREMADE VEHICLES FOR EXCITING ADVENTURE!

Here are some generic vehicles!

Your Trusty Steed

Size Scale: +3 | Slots: 3 | Cost: Free!

Damage: 3 (Lamed) 6 (dead)

Components

Horse Legs: +3 Movement Scale

Damage: 2 (broken leg), 3 (missing leg)

Spurs and Reins: Gain 1 heat to move 3 bonus hexes

Damage: 2 (damaged reins) 3 (bareback riding now!)

Penalties

Fuel (-3x2): Requires a backpack full of feed per day.

Warhorse

Size Scale: +3 | Slots: 3 | Cost: 3 Gold

Damage: 3 (Lamed) 6 (Dead)

Components

Horse Legs: +3 Speed Scale

Damage: 2 (broken leg), 3 (missing leg)

Spurs and Reins: Gain 1 heat to move 3 bonus hexes

Damage: 2 (damaged reins) 3 (bareback riding now!)

Barding: +3 Armor

Damage: 2 (torn barding) 3 (armor destroyed!)

Penalties

Fuel (-3x2): Requires a backpack full of feed per day.

Rattletrap Car

Size: +6 | Slots: 3 | Cost: 6 Dollars

Damage: 6 (Totaled) 12 (exploded into a fireball)

Components

Wheels + Engine: +6 Speed Scale

Damage: 3 (More smoke than movement), 6 (Engine block Cracked)
Control Room: an enclosed cab for you and your pals.

Damage: 1 (After This Point, You Are Now Being Shot)

Trunk: Can hold about a human's worth of cargo.

Damage: 3 (the trunk is full of holes), 6 (there is no more trunk)

Penalties

Fuel (-3x2): Needs a full tank of gas per day of operation.

Modified Technical

Size: +6 | Slots: 3 | Cost: 9 Dollars

Damage: 6 (Totaled) 12 (exploded into a fireball)

Wheels +Engine : +6 Speed Scale

Damage: 3 (More smoke than movement), 6 (Engine block Cracked)

Control Room: An enclosed cab for you can your pals.

Damage: 1 (After This Point, You Are Now Being Shot)

Back Mounted HMG

Adds: -2 | Speed: Fast | Range: 1-12 | Base Damage: 7

Brrrrrarrapt: This weapon has a small AOE.

Damage: 3 (Jammed!) 6 (Your gun is gone)

Bolted On Armor: +3 armor

Damage: 2 (armor plating is loose) 3 (armor plating is GONE!?)

Penalties

Fuel (-3x2): Requires a full tank of gas per day of operation.

Landship Carrier

Size: +15 | Slots: 15 | Cost: 110 Credits

Damage: 15 (Totaled) 30 (explodes into a fireball)

Treads: +6 Land Speed Scale

Damage: 3/6

Heavy Armor Cladding With Point Defense Guns: +21 Armor Scale

Damage: 11/21

Control Cabins: +3 scale bridge and control systems

Damage: 2/3

Crew Quarters: +21 scale crew cabins - space for 500 personale and passengers

Damage: 11/21

Flight Decks: +10 scale decks, capable of holding fifty +6 scale vehicles

Damage: 5/10

Cargo Hold: +28 scale cargo hold, carries hundreds of tons of supplies.

Damage: 14/28

Construction Suite: +10 improvisation steps for "construction" powers

Damage: 5/10

Long Ranged Sensors: +0 sensors at +15 range modifier.

Damage: 0/1

Short Ranged Sensors: +6 sensors at +6 range modifiers

Damage: 3/6

Light Kinetic Autoguns Turrets (x6)

Adds: -1 | Speed: Fast | Range: 15 to 20 | Base Damage (AOE): 11 (Small)

Suppression!: Can apply *Off Balance* or *Pinned* even on a miss.

Damage: 5/10

Penalties

Speed Penalty: -10 to land speed.

Crew Requirement (21x2): Requires 500 crew to man and operate the ship

Fuel Requirement (21x2): The construction suite requires literally dozens of tons of raw material to feed the vast fabricator systems.

Tramp Freighter

Size: +10 | Slots: 6 | Cost: 62 Credits

Damage: 10 (Totaled) 20 (exploded into fireball)

Sublight Engine: +21 Realspace Speed Scale

Damage: 11 (Out of Commission) 21 (Gone!)

FTL Engine: +6 Hyperspace Speed Scale

Damage: 3 (No Hyperdrive Now), 6 (No Hyperdrive, Ever)

Armor Cladding: +6 Armor Scale

Damage: 3 (hull at 50%!), 6 (hull plating offline!)

Control Cabins: A bridge for piloting and commanding the ship. (0)

Damage: 1 (After This Point, You Are Now Being Shot)

Sensors: +0 up to a range of +28

Damage: 1 (Your sensors aerial is gone)

Nose Mounted Laser Machine Gun

Adds: -2 | Speed: Fast | Range: 1-12 | Base Damage: 7

Brrrrrarrapt: This weapon has a small AOE.

Damage: 3 (Jammed!) 6 (Your gun is gone)

Dorsal Beam Turret

Adds: +1 | Range: 1-12 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage (AOE): 5

Like Butter: Ignore 8 Armor.

Damage: 3 (the turret's cracked!) 6 (the turret is gone!)

Crew Cabins: Cabins for the captain, pilot, navigator, engineer, and doctor. Comfy!

Damage: 3 (life support offline), 6 (there's no more atmosphere)

Cargo Container: Carries a few hundred tons of cargo.

Damage: 14 (cargo hold venting!) 28 (We don't have a cargo hold anymore!)

Penalties

Crew Requirement (-3x2): Requires 5 people to run.

Speed Penalty [Realspace] (-21): Not the most maneuverable!

Fuel Requirement [Realspace] (-6x2): Requires a full tank of hydrogen to power the fusion torch for a day.

Fuel Requirement [Hyperdrive] (-3x2): Requires a bit of hypercrystal per day of operation.

Deadly Starfighter

Size: +6 | Slots: 6 | Cost: 25 Credits

Damage: 6 (Totaled) | 12 (exploded into fireball)

Sublight Engine: +15 Realspace Speed Scale

Damage: 8 (out of commission), 15 (gone!)

Afterburner: Gain 1 heat to move 5 hexes as a free action.

Damage: 5 (out of commission), 10 (gone!)

Pulse Laser

Adds: +1 | Range: 1-12 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage (AOE): 5 (None)

Like Butter: Ignore 8 Armor.

Damage: 3 (knocked out), 6 (Gone!)

SRM Pods

Adds: -1 | Range: 15-21 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage (AOE): 15 (Small)

Barrage: By swapping the speed from Fast to Slow (x2), you can gain an AOE shift of +1.

Damage: 8 (knocked out), 15 (gone!)

Cockpit: A cockpit!

Damage: 1 (After This Point, You Are Now Being Shot)

Scanners: +6 at range +3.

Damage: 3 (knocked out), 6 (gone!)

Penalties

Fuel Requirement (-15x2): burns through more fuel than anyone likes to admit.

Worldkiller

Size: +28 | Slots: 27 | Cost: 276 Credits

Damage: 28/56

Sublight Engine: +36 realspace speed scale

Damage: 18/36

Hyperdrive Engine: +10 hyperspace speed scale.

Damage: 5/10

Armor Cladding, Shield Generators and Point Defense Systems: +28 Armor Scale

Damage: 14/28

Control Room: Scale 3 command room for the bridge crew.

Damage: 2/3

Sensor Bay: +6 to scan at +36 range.

Damage: 3/6

Port Guns: Autocannon x5 (Fore/Port)

Adds: +0 | Range: 15-20 | Speed: Slow (x1) | Base Damage (AOE): 10 (Medium)

Damage: 5/10 (x5)

Starboard Guns: Autocannon x5 (Fore/Starboard)

Adds: +0 | Range: 15-20 | Speed: Slow (x1) | Base Damage (AOE): 10 (Medium)

Damage: 5/10 (x5)

Dorsal Guns: Autocannon x5 (Fore/Port/Starboard)

Adds: +0 | Range: 15-20 | Speed: Slow (x1) | Base Damage (AOE): 10 (Medium)

Damage: 5/10 (x5)

Zenith Guns: One LRM (Down)

Adds: +1 | Range: 31-36 | Speed: Slow (x3) | Base Damage (AOE): 21 (Medium)

Tracking: Can be fired over hills, around corners, and so on. Ignores cover.

Damage: 11/21

Cargo Hold: Carries Hundreds of Tons

Damage: 14/28

Garrison: Holds 10,000 Hegemonic Shock Troops

Damage: 22/45

Crew Quarters: Room for 5,000 spacers

Damage: 18/36

Fighter Bay: Holds 100 starfighters

Damage: 8/15

Hegemonic Knight Sanctum: Acts as a Psi Foci (range) with a +10 scale modifier.

Damage: 5/10

Crew Quarters: Room for one captain in splendid cabins.

Damage: 0/1

Penalties

Skill Penalty (-15): -15 Stealth. It's a Worldkiller?

Crew Requirement (-36x2): Requires 5,000 people to run.

Speed Penalty [Realspace] (-36): Not the most maneuverable!

Fuel Requirement [Realspace] (-15x2): Requires literally metric tons of antimatter to operate the main torch.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CHARACTER CREATION

Okay!

Now that you know all the rules, let's create the characters that will be *using* those rules! Finally! How to make characters!

STEP ZERO: SETTING

This is what happens before any characters are made (psyche, I lied to you, this isn't the character creation chapter yet.) But it is important to know what the setting of the game will be. Are you going to be high-tech action adventurers on a modern Earth? Are you going to be space explorers? Maybe criminals in a seedy fantasy setting? Whatever the setting is, you will need to know it so you can move onto the actual step one.

STEP ONE: CONCEPT

Okay, now we start making characters. All characters start with a concept. There are, in general, two great ways to conceptualize. The first is to have an endpoint in mind ("I want to play a cool badass twink who kisses the ladies and is struggling with his gender identity") and the other is to have a role to fill in mind ("i want to handle the sneaky stuff and maybe some tech stuff too.") Both are great, but no matter what your character concept is, run it past the rest of the table to make sure that they are all on board. Some characters will rub up badly against others, and that's no fun.

(SIDEBAR: Just Be Friends

In my opinion, it is a good idea to make characters who get along with other PCs. Having a party that is constantly at loggerheads and doesn't get along is...really fucking annoying and depressing after enough time.)

Some advice for concepts in the HEAT System!

- Characters are generally competent at a lot of things, so choosing to specialize means you won't be 'locked out' of doing stuff that aren't related to your combat.
- Two similar seeming roles (combat, healing, piloting, w/e) can be given a lot of distinctiveness by theming the powers differently (this has the most impact with improvisations, since a different theme radically changes how improvisations work.)
- You can always just say your character has two sexy girlfriends. There's no law against it! No rules against it! You can just do that.

STEP TWO: TRAITS

The first mechanical choice you take is to choose one positive trait and one negative trait. Now, you may ask: Which species gets which traits? Some games have elves, after all! Where the *Elf* trait!?

The answer is: All species across all settings get access to all traits. An entire species of millions if not billions of people is a hugely diverse range of people. Now, there are biological differences between elves and humans and Huntresses and sexy shark people - but those biological differences don't impact the game *mechanically*. Narratively, they crop up (for example, a Huntress getting taken out in combat would have to deal with their encounter suit being breached and their bodies beginning to melt, but mechanically, it is treated as flavor to normal recovery rules.

Some talents are *stereotypically* associated with a species - but there's always exceptions. You will find dwarven poets, humans who just won't die, and elves who pack a mean right hook.

Positive Traits

Aggressive: You think slowing down is for *other* people. Ignore up to 4 range penalties.

Charming: You have a way with words! +2 environmental effect to positive social interactions.

Defensive: You keep enemies at bay. At the beginning of your turn, you can move enemies backwards 2 hexes if they are adjacent to you.

Elder: You've been around. Upon entering a kingdom, solar system, new nation, or city, state a fact about it. This fact is now true - but can be modified by the GM (since it *has* been a while...)

Empathic: You know people. Upon meeting someone, the GM must reveal their Motivation to you (note, their motivation may be "keep their true intention from you.") In an Intrigue, you can reveal *one* Motivation at the beginning of the Intrigue.

Experiment: You've been augmented somehow. If you are sent into Overheat you can use a power immediately.

Nerve Uplink: You can connect with other minds with a touch - either biologically or technologically. If you touch a defeated enemy, you can learn 1 fact from them.

Perceptive: You're hard to surprise. Before enemies act, you get to take one action.

Suited: You're always in a spacesuit - either because you have to, or because you're just a trained spacer. You never get harmed by environmental effects unless narratively,

you're turbofucked. Like, you need to be naked and tied up and then dumped into a vat of chlorine gas.

Alternative Names: *Charmed, Lucky, Warded*. You know, for non-SF settings.

Tough: You're *unstoppable*! Once per combat, if you'd be taken out, you survive and are fine.

Teeth: You got big chompers, fangies, toofs, clacky clacky white stabbers, jaw-hugs. Add +1 to your base damage for unarmed attacks. This can also represent non-teeth related unarmed abilities.

Unstoppable: You're a juggernaut, baby! You ignore cover penalties while moving.

Lucky: Once per combat or intrigue, you can "create" a piece of the environment or a prop that is fortunately in your favor, that just happens to be there.

Shapeshifter: Gain 3 heat to alter your physical form to be between cat sized and human sized. This can be due to technology, a quirk of your biology, magic or any combination of the three.

Negative Traits

Asshole: You're just a dick. The first time someone tries to help you using a relationship or loyalty per session, it just doesn't work cause you were like, "Tsch, like I *need* your help." Dick.

Dependent: You have an NPC you have to take care of - younger sibling, helpless boyfriend with cute dog, Corporal Jenkins. If they die, your Heat cap is reduced to half, and recovers at 1 point per session afterwards.

Hunted: Someone, somewhere, wants you and wants you bad. The GM adds +1 to the base danger of all combats.

Medically Dependent: You require something complicated and expensive to live (5 credits per month.) If you miss it, you reduce your heat cap by 1, per session you miss out until you hit 0 Heat and are Taken out.

Scarred: You've been run through the mill and are mostly held together through cybernetic components and hope. Choose a sub-skill and take a -2 environmental penalty to it (Charm for ugly scars, Athletics for gimpy leg, and so on.)

Gullible: When an Intrigue begins, you must reveal your motivations to every Person involved.

Incompetent: When you gain heat in a skill test (but not for damage or other effects), gain +1 heat afterwards, even if this overheats you.

STEP THREE: SKILLS

After you've picked your traits, you get 10 skill points to distribute, with all skills capping, at this point, at 2. Skills in the HEAT system are highly setting dependent, so check with your GM as to which are allowed or not.

All skills in HEAT are also *manifold* skills. What does that mean? Well, it means that each skill has several 'sub-skills' under it. For example, there's Guns, which has the sub-skills of Pistols, Rifles, Shotguns, Machine Guns, and Vehicular Weapons. Each time you get a rank in a skill, you can pick a new sub-skill. Your skill applies to *each* sub-skill that you have, but does not apply to any you don't

Example: Deshane Gallagher has 2 in Guns (Pistols, Vehicular Weapons.) If she picks up a shotgun, she'll be rolling at a +0. Later, she gets third rank in Guns, giving her access to shotguns. Now, she gets +3 when using a shotgun. Go her!

SKILL LIST

Close Combat: The skill of hitting people with fists, face, and laser swords.

- Brawling: Martial arts and barroom throwdowns.
- Blunt: The use of maces, hammers, and anti-armor tools.
- Edged: The use of the most elegant cutting weapon, from a more civilized era.
- Polearm: In a realistic game, this would be the only skill anyone got.
- Flexible: Whips, chains, and similarly flexible weapons.

Guns: The use of technological weapons in the field of combat.

- Pistols & SMGs: If it goes *bang* or *brrrap*, this is your skill!
- Shotguns: Close ranged, brutal weapons (frowned upon by the Imperial German Army.)
- Assault Rifles: A middle of the road gun, good for all situations!
- Sniper Rifles: The longest ranged weapon, elegant and deadly
- Vehicular Weapons: If it is mounted on a tank or strapped to a plane, this covers it. Is that unrealistic? Yes! Do you care? Not even a little.

Personal: This skill covers your innate abilities and personal growth.

- Awareness: Perception and awareness of the physical world around you.

- Athletics: This covers your strength and skill at expressing it - lifting weights, kicking open doors, and so on!
- Finesse: This covers your dexterity and speed and grace. Can you scramble up the side of a building, jump a ravine, or balance.
- Stealth: How quietly you can move and effectively you can hide.
- Endurance: Innate toughness and constitution! Resisting stuff.

Ranged: This is for when guns don't exist.

- Bows: Legolas style!
- Crossbows: These bows were banned by the Pope, actually!
- Thrown Weapons: This covers shurikens, throwing knives, throwing axes, and slings.
- Gunpowder Weapon: Flintlock pistols are really sexy.
- Siege Weapons: Balistas, catapults, and onengers, oh my!

Social: For when you want to talk to people and not put holes in 'em.

- Charm: Politeness, diplomacy, tact, seduction.
- Bluff: Lying, deception, subterfuge, seduction
- Empathy: Understanding the other, spotting lies, determining emotional truths, seduction
- Leadership: Leading people in combat and giving orders that are followed
- Taunt: The art of getting under someone's skin and making them make bad decisions.

(SIDEBAR: No Intimidation?)

Intimidation, the skill, in most roleplaying games exists to defang dangerous characters by creating a skill that they can suck at despite the fact they can kill a dragon with a folding chair. Intimidation is leveraging your ability to hurt people into getting people to do things you want them to do so that you won't hurt them. Thus, if you want to intimidate someone, you need to use a combat skill and appropriate social blustering. If you're lying about your abilities to hurt someone, use Bluff instead!)

Tech: The skill related to all manner of craft and technology.

- Construction: Building anything larger than a handheld gadget.
- Tinkering: Building anything handheld or smaller.
- Repair: Restoring what has been broken to full operations.
- Computers: Programming, hacking, and manipulating computerized systems.
- Sabotage: Destroying things using applied demolitions, or technical trickery. This is also used for lockpicking!

BACKGROUNDS

Background skills are a combination of what you know, who you know, and how you've been taught. When you select a background, you need to state, definitively, the specifics about it (meaning the background skills suggested below are more...guidelines than specifications.) So, rather than "Criminal" you might say "Ex-Purgatorian Street Rat" or "Underhive Ganger." When you want to know information about the setting, you call upon a background. When you want to find a contact, you call on a background. When you want to be recognized for your accomplishments, you call on a background.

A rank in a background does not necessarily relate to a specific rank in any organization, but in general, a new agent or recent hire or private is rank 1, a captain or commander is rank 3, and a general or president is rank 5. You don't *need* to have official ranks in an organization to have 5 ranks in the skill - you might just be an old NCO who knows a bazillion people because you've been in the military for a dog's years.

With backgrounds, it behooves you to create the sub-skills that it will branch into, but each setting in this book shall provide some examples for each one. But here are some generic ones!

Academic: A widespread organization of knowledge.

- Fellow Academics
- Digsites for ancient relics
- Places to buy ancient relics
- Places to sell ancient relics
- Famous Adventurers

Criminal: An organization related to crime.

- The lower levels of the organization.
- Who is who in the upper echelons
- Best fences in town
- Where the safehouses are.
- The history of the gang.

Military: The armed forces of a nation state.

- Rank and file soldiers
- Up and coming officers
- The logistic pools
- Tactics, strategies and histories
- How to "Borrow" a Tank.

MASTERIES

Some settings have Masteries - special skills that are used to improve your Improvisations. Here are some examples!

Magic: The arts of magic and mysticism.

- Evocation: The art of creating and directing energies - ice, fire, holy blasts, unholy darkness, and so on.
- Illusion: The art of creating senses and clouding senses - altering perceptions and the seeming of reality.
- Conjuraton: The art of conjuring objects, people, and items from the ether.
- Enchantment: The art of imparting new features and functions to an object - boats that fly, men that charm, and swords that cut souls.
- Necromancy: The art of controlling life and death - restoring health, whipping it away, creating undead, and destroying undead.

Psionics: The arts of mind over matter

- Telepathy: Reading and influencing and controlling minds.
- Teleportation: Moving the body (or, given augmentation, starship) from point to point.
- Biokinesis: The mastery of the body with the mind - healing, disrupting, shapeshifting, and so on.
- Psychokinesis: The mastery of heat, cold and force to create shields, attacks, and generally fuck things up.
- Clairvoyance: The mastery of perception beyond the human range.

Pulp!: Ancient secrets from the depths of Nepal, a body trained to a million tricks of mysticism and martial arts, and the raw power of a determined mind.

- Genius Knowledge: Deduction and understanding of even obscure esoterica! Why, of course I speak Latin, my good Doctor.
- Martial Arts: Laying out six men in a single blow? Why, it is nothing but a simple maneuver shown to me by the Sambo masters of Siberia, my good Doctor.
- Occlusion: Nothing but clouding the minds of wicked men, my good Doctor.
- Gadgets!: This? Oh, but a simple vial of carbolic acid. I always keep it next to my grappling hook gun, my good Doctor.
- Determination and Steely Resolve: Your mesmerist tricks won't work on me, Orlock!

STEP FOUR: POWERS

At the beginning of the game, you choose THREE powers: Defend Power and Two Any Other Power. The only requisite to these powers is that they must fit (or be refluffed to fit) your setting.

[SIDEBAR: Oomphs!

Unless explicitly said otherwise, an oomph can be given to other players. You can help your buddies out, give them magic, and enhance their abilities. It's cool!]

ARCANE POWERS

Corona of Destruction

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to apply 1 the *Arcane Charge* oomph to all enemies within a small AOE within 10 hexes. Reduce Vent by 1 to increase the AOE along the AOE track by 1 or to increase range by 5 hexes. If a target already has the *Arcane Charge* oomph, then it goes off as per usual.

Flash Flight

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to move 6 hexes in any axis without taking an action, doubled per vent decrease, and ignore physical restrictions. Arcane barriers cannot be ignored.

Gravity Swap

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to apply the *Lifted* and *Arcane Charge* oomph to one target within 10 hexes. Reduce vent by 1 to apply these oomphs to 1 more target, to a maximum of 5 at 0 Vent.

Alternatively, reduce vent by 1 to add +5 to your range.

Lifted: The target is lifted into the air and cannot take any actions until this oomph is cleared by the round reset

Magic Missile

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to deal 2 damage to a target within 10 hexes. Reduce Vent by 1 to increase the number of missiles by 1 (which may be spread among as many targets as you want) or to add +5 to your maximum range (or any combination of the above.)

Wall of Blades

Vent: 0

Effect: Vent 0 heat to create a static -2 cover in a small AOE around you that will cause 1 damage to any unarmored enemies who come within range. Allies can use it freely, but unlike the Shield barrier, it cannot be used for construction (it is too stab.)

Transmorph

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to create 1 Transmorph Oomph, +1 per vent reduction. This can be applied on anyone you touch, or at +5 hexes per vent reduction. This can be applied on you!

Transmorph: Turn into a critter of smaller and less dangerous proportions and look all cute and fluffy. Still have access to base damage, but not tactics if you're an NPC.

(SIDEBAR: ...magic and arcane powers?)

What's the deal with the fact there's an ENTIRE MAGIC SYSTEM and 'arcane powers.' Well, Arcane Powers can be refluffed as psychic powers or warping powers created by the use of implanted FTL engines or whatever you want. Alternatively, you can have both

the magic system and arcane powers, representing 'ritual magic' and 'rote magic.' Or you can have one be innate sorcery that corrupts and twists, while the powers are the safe methods used by true heroes. It depends on your whims! But no matter what the *fluff* of these powers are, they mechanically work as Powers. Even if your universe has the magic system from the spot chapter with the high risk setting, these powers *do not produce corruption.*)

DIVINE POWERS

Aura of Strength

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to apply 1 *Strength* Oomph. Reduce Vent by 1 to add additional Oomphs. These Oomphs can be spread among as many people as you want within 10 hexes - you can put all of them on one person too, if you want! It's up to you!

Strength: Each Oomph moves you 1 step along any Scale metric that is applicable to Strength, which is then added to your action. This may cause deleterious side effects (E.G, hitting someone for +10 damage with a standard sword *will* shatter that sword.)

Blessing on High

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to apply 1 *Blessing* Oomph. Reduce vent by 1 to add additional Oomphs, which can be placed anywhere in 10 hexes, each using a small AOE. Alternatively, for each reduction of venting, you can increase that AOE scale one step along the track.

Blessing: Any character that shares your ideals (or allegiance) can expend the Blessing Oomph as a free action to reduce all incoming damage from a single source to 0. Any character that opposes you must remove all Blessing oomphs to move into the area with an action.

Circle of Peace

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to create 1 *Tranquility* Oomph. Reduce vent by 1 to add additional Oomphs. These Oomphs are all given to yourself and cannot be given elsewhere.

Tranquility: You and every character within a large AOE cannot take hostile action while these Oomphs exist without taking 1 Damage per Oomph from divine retribution. These hits consume the Oomphs.

Rebuke Evil

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Deal 2 Damage to 1 target within 10 hexes, +1 target per vent reduction. These targets *must* be supernaturally "evil" (as dictated by your character's power source.) If the targets are merely mundane assholes, then they simply gain the *Rebuked* Oomph. If the target is supernaturally evil, the damage can be racked up as you see fit, if you want to apply multiple hits to one very evil fellow. Alternatively, add +5 range per vent reduction.

Rebuked: Anyone targeting this character gains +1 to hit per *Rebuked* oomph. These oomphs are not expended per attack, but may decay or be removed via actions as normal.

Serpent Staff

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Transforms a held object into a deadly creature, which lasts for 1 round and can take 1 damage. The creature has 1 skill point in either Close Combat or Personal, +1 per Vent reduction. It cannot use cover, and has a ranged attack of Unarmed. It acts on your cooldown and follows your *general* intentions (but not specific orders.)

MELEE POWERS

Back to Back

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Choose 1 (+1 per vent reduction) ally within 6 hexes. They can each take one action using one of their skills. Once they do, make a free attack against an enemy within the reach of your melee weapon. For each ally that takes an action involving or related to a single enemy, gain +1 to your skill check.

Clash!

Vent: 1+ only

Effect: If targeted by an enemy causing any damage, you may use this power as a free action. First, turn all damage to heat, then vent all heat caused, then move 2 hexes per rank in Athletics or Finesse and make a melee attack - ignoring all cover or directional penalties. If you cannot reach them, this power cannot be used.

Cleave

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Make one melee attack, +1 per vent reduction. Each hit has a small AOE and may be placed within your melee reach, causing damage that is then distributed as normal.

Flourishing Disarm

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Place one *Disarmed!* oomph on enemies within reach of your melee weapon, +1 per vent reduction.

Disarmed!: While the enemy has this oomph, they cannot with one of their weapons (chosen by you.) If they have no other weapons, they turn this oomph into damage and can be "taken out" (forced to surrender.)

Reversal

Vent: 4/2/0

Effect: Vent 4 heat to use a Tactic used by a 1 Health enemy that is in the field of battle. Vent 2 to use a Tactic used by a 2 Health enemy. Vent 0 to use a tactic that is used by a 4 Health enemy. The tactics function identically to how they are described - allowing you to apply their oomphs or deal their damage. This damage ignores any difficulties or skill penalties you would normally face.

Swashbuckle

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Gain one Swashbuckling Oomphs, +1 per vent reduction.

Swashbuckling: Expend this oomph as a free action to move 2 hexes in any direction.

Describe this really cool.

SHOOTING POWERS

Assassin

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Nominate an enemy within range of your weapon. For 1 (+1 per vent reduction) rounds that enemy's death is unnoticed by other enemies. Alternatively, attack +1 enemy.

Carnage

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Nominate an enemy within range of your weapon. This enemy is about to have a *real bad day*. By venting 4 heat, they take your weapon's base damage without difficulty no matter what their evasion, armor, and cover. For 3, they take base damage *and* permanently lose their evasion modifier. For 2, they take base damage *and* permanently lose their evasion and armor (note: this only removes their character armor, not any armor from their vehicle.) For 1, they take base damage *and* permanently lose their evasion and armor and cover. For 0, all of the above happens to one guy, and every other enemy in a small AOE loses cover permanently due to it exploding, being ripped asunder, or generally being destroyed.

Hot Swap

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Alter the ammo type of a pistol in your hand by venting 4 heat. For 3, alter the ammo type of pistols or shotguns. For 2, alter the ammo type of pistols or shotguns or assault rifles. For 1, alter the ammo type of pistols, shotguns, assault rifles or sniper rifles. For 0, alter the ammo type of the entire squad. **Note**: They do not need to *have* the ammo type. You do.

Marksman

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Nominate 1 (+1 per vent reduction) targets within your weapon's range, then make a free attack against each of them - gaining heat and oomphs as you do so. These attacks do not have increasing difficulties and can be used with medium or slow weapons. Heat is gained *after* Cooldown. **Be careful!**

Overkill

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Gain one *Overkill* oomphs (+1 per vent reduction), to be given to yourself or friends as desired.

Overkill: Expend this oomph as a free action to change a weapons' negative add to a positive add of equal value.

SUPERNATURAL POWERS

Aquatic Might

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Gain 1 *Aquatic Might* oomph, +1 per vent reduction.

Aquatic Might: While this oomph exists, you can breathe and move normally underwater. Expend this oomph as a free action to swim 10 hexes instantly, or to reduce damage from edged, blunt or piercing weapons (but not magic, beams, or psychic powers) to 0.

Desert God

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Gain 1 *Desert God* oomph, +1 per vent reduction.

Desert God: While this oomph exists, you are terrified of cats, felines, and similar supernatural guardians of thresholds as related to the origin of your powers - but as an upside, you may move in three dimensional space by turning into a sandstorm. Expend this oomph as a free action to cause 3 damage per oomph expended to enemies within 10 hexes and in a small AOE using desiccating powers, deadly sand storms, swarms of flesh eating beetles, and other horrors.

Spectral Form

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Gain 1 *Spectral Form* oomph, +1 per vent reduction

Spectral Form: While this oomph exists, you take no damage from physical attacks, normal damage from psionic attacks, double damage from magic attacks. Expend this oomph as a free action to possess a single individual at the cost of 1 oomph per their Danger. This possession lasts for as long as you have oomphs and allows you to use their Tactics as if you were an NPC. If they die, you emerge from their body. Alternatively, you may possess inanimate objects to force your will upon them - objects cannot do what they are not already able to do, but what they can do, they will do upon your command.

Undying Body

Effect: Gain 1 *Undying Body* oomph, +1 per vent reduction.

Undying Body: While this Oomph exists, you cannot approach sources of open flame. However, you also take 0 damage from 1 damage attacks and 1 damage from 1+ damage attacks and gain prodigious strength - able to hurl boulders, bend bars, and lift portcullises.

Red Thirst

Vent: Gain 1 *Red Thirst* oomph, +1 per vent reduction.

Red Thirst: While this Oomph exists, you take 1 damage per round from direct sunlight. Expend this Oomph as a free action to become mist (same immunities as Spectral form), wolf (+2 to athletics and awareness) or bat (+2 to finesse and stealth, also, can fly.) This transformation lasts as long as the *Red Thirst* lasts. If an enemy is slain by you in melee combat while you have a *Red Thirst* oomph, vent all heat.

Warshift

Vent: Gain 1 *Warshift* oomph, +1 per vent reduction

Warshift: While this oomph exists, you take double damage from silver and double your chosen Melee Combat skill, while also having the superhuman strength of *Undying Body*. You may expend this Oomph as a free action to vent all heat taken this turn (this can be triggered before being taken out or taking a wound.)

INTRIGUING POWERS

Arms, Armor and Amphoras

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Create a prop that augments a minion prop - this may be magically summoned, a byproduct of your skill at survival, or a connection with a logistics organization. This prop can augment a minion prop of 10 people (a squad), +1 step along the people metric per vent reduction. Alternatively, create an additional prop per vent reduction.

If used outside of an intrigue, this can, as a rule of thumb, feed and water 1 person, +1 per vent reduction for a day. Handy!

Mustering Field

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Take a minion prop and increase its scale by 1 step, +1 per vent reduction. Alternatively, apply this increase by one step per vent reduction.

This has no effect out of an intrigue, but since minion props are very powerful, that's okay!

Protection in Obscurity

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Conceal a prop - be it physical or social in nature - including those you do not control. If they're concealed and you do not control them, you can reveal them as a free action to claim them. Increase the number of props concealed by 1 per vent reduction.

Outside of an intrigue, this prop creates 1 Unaware Oomph, +1 per vent reduction.

Position, Prestige and Power

Vent: None

Effect: Gain a prop representing rank (knighthood), prestige (famous movie star) or power (commander in the space navy.) This prop can be used to justify narrative actions and buff intrigues. The GM is free to veto or edit your prop if you choose to be King of the Universe in a game of hardscrabble space merchants (or, they may not! Imagine the Rocenantie but one of the crew is just Q. That'd be fun!)

Outside of an Intrigue, this prop can be used to narratively justify skill checks that normally would be impossible. You know how being a king works!

Castigate! Castigate! Castigate!

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Destroy an ideological prop (sentiment, ideas, beliefs in people) immediately, so long as it is not held by any Actor. At 3 vent, you can destroy something written and codified (legal agreements, a specific law, diplomatic contact.) At vent 2, you can destroy the above if they are owned by an Actor. At Vent 1, you can destroy a prop representing a person. At vent 0, you can destroy a prop representing a person that is owned. The GM can attempt to block this by triggering personal combat (representing them resisting your overwhelming personal assault in the most visceral way possible.)

If used outside of an intrigue, create 1 panicked oomph, +1 per vent reduction, in a small AOE.

Inquisition

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Reveal a Loyalty or Motivation of your choice. Reveal one more per vent reduction.

If used outside of an intrigue, the GM must answer 1 question about the scene, +1 per vent reduction.

PILOTING AND POSITIONING POWERS

Battle Stations

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Create one *Battle Station* oomph and grant them to chosen allied PCs who are within communication range.

Battle Station: As a free action expend this oomph to, move to a weapon system, site of damage, or emergency upon a vehicle and take a single action related to it. Alternatively, this may be expended to provide +1 to a skill check related to a vehicular weapon system, site of damage, or other anything influenced by a component's scale bonus.

Calibrations

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Create one *Calibration* oomph and place it upon a vehicle, heavy weapon, or piece of scenery, +1 per vent reduction.

Calibration: As a free action, any character (friend or foe) that can use the item this oomph is placed upon may expend that Oomph to add +5 to the maximum range of a weapon system, -5 to the minimum range band of a weapon system, +1 step to the base damage, +1 to the armor, or move 3 hexes. If the item has a narrative function, this may be expended to cause that function to 'go off' - I.E, jump to FTL, open a drawbridge, vent atmosphere from a room, active golem defenders, ect, ect.

Danger Close

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Use as a free action immediately upon the impact of an AOE weapon, effect, or narrative event to render 1 character immune to the effect, +1 per vent reduction.

Rocks Ahead!

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Create one *Rocks!* Oomph within 10 hexes with a small AOE. Add +1 Oomph or +5 hexes of range per vent reduction.

Rocks!: Replace the name with what it actually is for the situation - any character or vehicle who enters into narrative range of the Oomph takes 3+their vehicle's scale in damage per oomph, which is then reduced by their armor (meaning that the armor only applies once to multiple oomphs.)

Turn the Tables

Vent: 4-0

Effect: Take one Oomph that is on you or your vehicle and place it upon any enemy or enemy vehicle within 10 hexes. Add +1 oomph thus swapped per vent reduction.

Alternatively, increase the range by 5 per vent reduction.

Where did I Park?

Vent: 0

Effect: Summon your party's vehicle to the scene, no matter how improbable, through either good luck, an NPC pilot swooping in, the autopilot, some magic, or you whistling really loudly.

DEFENSIVE POWERS

Shield

Vent: 6/0

Effect: Vent 6 heat - represents protecting yourself from enemy damage (heat) by venting yourself back to 0. Alternatively, vent 0 heat to create a two static -2 or one -4

cover shield within 6 hexes. This can be used for makeshift construction (bridges, ramps, support for a collapsing cave.)

Healing Corona

Vent: 6-0

Effect: For 0 Heat, vent 1 heat from all allies in a small AOE Heat, +1 per Vent reduction. Any undead (if undead are damaged by healing in your setting) take 1 damage per 3 heat vented.

Aggro!

Vent: 6-0

Effect: Vent up to 6 heat, creating 1 Aggro Oomph, +1 per vent reduction.

Aggro: One enemy MUST attack you (if they cannot attack you, they must spend their turn to approach and get into range, or spend their turn negating their oomphs so they're able to attack you) per Aggro. Each attack against you removes one Aggro.

Dig In!

Vent: 6-0

Effect: Vent 6 heat, improving the quality of cover by -1, -1 per vent reduction.

Just as Planned...

Vent: 6-0

Effect: Vent 6 heat and create 1 Planning Oomph, +1 per vent reduction.

Planning: The person holding this Oomph can expend this to get +1 to an skill check as a free action.

Hold Together, Girl!

Vent: 6-0

Effect: Vent 6 heat, and create 1 Jerry Rig, +1 per vent reduction. These Jerry Rigs can only be stacked or distributed among the vehicle as you see fit (to keep multiple damaged components intact and alive.)

STEP FIVE: EQUIPMENT

Here, you choose what gear your character begins with. If you're not using the wealth rules, you can begin with one weapon, two pieces of gear, and whatever vehicle the GM determines as appropriate, with the GM being allowed to negate any choices depending on the scenario - after all, if your game is about playing four prisoners being dropped into a massive underground maze and needing to survive while buckass naked, then that's just how it goes.

If you're using the wealth rules, you begin with Wealth equal to a skill of your choice - just define how you used that skill to reach this level of wealth (Like, if your Gun skill is 2, you may be an ex-soldier with a wealth of 2 leftover from your time in the military!) and that will indicate how

many credits you begin with. You can go into debt to get more (see the wealth spot rules for more details.)

Then go to the equipment section and go buy stuff!

STEP SIX: FINAL TOUCHES

Determine all the non-rules parts of your character *here*. For example, think of their name, their backstory, their looks, their preferences. Also, think about their Powers - what, exactly, are they and how do they function.

Once you're done, it is time to play!

ADVANCEMENT

Each encounter has an XP rating (either its Danger for combat or piloting scenes or its Complexity x5 for Intrigues.) Leveling up is triangular and decimalized - so it goes relatively quickly at first, but gets slower as you level up!

Level 2: 30 XP (2 SP, 1 Power)

Level 3: 60 XP (1 Trait, 1 Upgrade, +1 Loyalty)

Level 4: 100 XP (2 SP, 1 Power)

Level 5: 150 XP (Legendary Trait, 1 Upgrade, +1 Loyalty)

Level 6: 210 XP (2 SP, 1 Power)

Level 7: 280 XP (1 Trait, 1 Upgrade, +1 Loyalty)

And so on! ...except you never, ever get any more than 1 legendary trait.

Each even level gives you 2 skill ranks, which must be spent on different skills and 1 Power of your choice.

Every odd level gives you 1 Trait and lets you Upgrade a power of your choice. Upgrading a power lets you slap any applicable Upgrade.

If you hit level 5, you're a living legend on par with the most heroic, badass members of your setting, and can take a *Legendary* trait!

LOYALTY

When heroic people work together over time, they learn one another's ways. They figure out how one another operate. They, in a word, become Loyal. Loyalty is a spendable resource that represents your characters getting better at working together, becoming closer, and possibly even falling in love. That last part isn't required, but it *is* fun!

Loyalty requires two things. First, the narrative always comes first - your characters need to *actually* like one another. Or, at least, have gotten over your bullshit enough that they can work together. Secondly, they need to have hit 3rd level. At the 3rd level and each odd level afterwards, you gain 1 Loyalty.

Loyalty can be spent on the following effects!

- 1 Loyalty: Negate a Wound Effect (describe how you save your teammate)
- 1 Loyalty: Negate an environmental danger die (describe how you work together to block it.)
- 1 Loyalty: Vent 3 heat from *everyone*. (Describe how you are all working together to cover one another.)
- 1 Loyalty: Add a Diff 3 Environmental effect to the environment to hinder your enemies (describe how you set it up, and how you knock em down.
- 1 Loyalty: When you use a Power, one other player gets to use a power, both using heat, but triggering cooldown *once*. (Describe how you both whammy a badguy.)
- 1 Loyalty: Take a Person off the field during someone else's turn (describe how you distract, play interference, or help out.)
- 1 Loyalty: Make 1 free attack against an enemy before that enemy attacks a friend, gaining heat as normal (...this is self explanatory.)

Loyalty is regained on victory or defeat. Yes, this means you get this pool *every* combat, *every* intrigue and *every* piloting encounter! However, any use has to be agreed upon by all PCs.

POWER UPGRADES

Area

Effect: Add an AOE to a power's effect. Each additional area increases the AOE by another stage, to a maximum of longarm range.

Controlled

Effect: You can nominate one character, object, or piece of the environment per level of Controlled that would be impacted by your power and have it not be damaged or influenced.

Cool

Effect: Add +1 to your Vent, after Cooldown begins (I.E, spending 4 heat to blast one guy with Throw will then have you losing another heat for a total of 5! This also means that a 0 heat power use actually *is* 0 heat now!)

Devastation

Effect: Increase the Damage that your power causes by 2.

Efficiency

Effect: Add +/-1 to the *base* targets allowable (I.E, if a power impacts 1 target, +1 per Heat Loss Reduction, it now impacts 0-2 targets.)

Speed

Effect: Reduce enemies that can act after you hit Cooldown by 1, to a minimum of 0. Cooldown still ends your turn!

Range

Effect: Permanently add +5 to the range of a power.

LEGENDARY TRAITS

You are one bigass motherfucker

Just As Planned: At the beginning of an Intrigue, you can reveal 2 Props of your own design and reveal one of either the loyalty or motivations for every Actor on the field. You can't choose both, but you're not stuck to all loyalties or all motivations.

Death Dealer: At the beginning of your round, deal 1 damage to each enemy within range of any of your weapons that are either in your hands or can be in your hands. If you are in the middle of a group or a group is in range of your guns, do $\frac{1}{2}$ their Scale Modifier in damage. Like John Matrix! From The Matrix!

Top Gun: Add +1 step along each of your vehicle's metrics (but only if it helps.) So, if your gun normally does 11 damage because it's a scale 10 autocannon? Now it does 16 damage since it's now a +15 damage! But the base range doesn't increase by +5, because that would be bad. The max range, though? That *does* increase by +5. You're a top gun, baby!

Speed Runner: +6 to your base speed, ignore all penalties, slowdowns, and immobilization. Pinned? Nope! Paralyzed by magic? Pfft! Medusae turning you to stone? Hah!

Legendary Leader: Gain 4 Command oomphs at the beginning of each round, to place on any NPC group you want - either all on one or split as you see fit. Remember, these can be spent as a free action!

Unkillable: You cannot die! You can only be badly wounded - no matter what. Work with the GM to contrive how you survived even the most absurd situation. This does mean you can only take wounding options that don't lead to your death. If you do hit 13 heat, you are knocked out for the scene.

CHAPTER NINE: GAME MASTERY

So, you've decided which setting - or made your own - and are ready to play. The players have created their characters, picked their powers, and nabbed their starting equipment. Now it comes down to the brass tacks: How the hecking frick do you *GM* this game? This chapter will be full of advice and also, rules! Let's get the rules out first.

GENERIC RULES FOR EVERYDAY GMING

A lot of the scenes you're going to be running are going to be players saying what they do, you giving them a diff, penalizing or buffing their skills from the environment, and then them taking heat to succeed or shedding heat when they fail, with the combat and intrigues only showing up when the situation gets more complex or dangerous.

Now for a dark and dirty secret: Environmental penalties/bonuses should be pretty much entirely in the PC's hands. They're a way to give the PC a bit of an extra edge if they describe their action in a cool way. Say a PC is trying to talk their way past a gate guard and the player rattles off this charming series of fast talking lies - well, that sounds like an environmental bonus to me! A stealthy PC describing how they're sticking to the shadows? Bonus! Keep the bonus range to 1-2 and the PCs will feel clever and cool for having gotten the obscure tidbits.

Throw in penalties a *lot* more rarely and as a way to underline a specific scene detail to really make it feel visceral. The math between a diff 1 stealth check at -2 from the searchlights sweeping around and a diff 3 stealth check are identical, but one of them *feels* more coherent and chunky!

...and it also means that a PC with a silenced sniper rifle can take an action to shoot out the searchlights. And now the penalty is gone, and teamwork has happened, and the PCs get to feel like big ass motherfuckers! That's the goal of the game, good job, you did it!

RUNNING INTRIGUES

The intrigue system requires a light touch and creativity - allow players to use their skills creatively, but remember that an Intrigue with few people will be relatively fast and easy to solve, while an intrigue with lots of people will be significantly slower to run and solve. Remember, also, that *Actors* means anything that is active in the scene - it can be local wildlife, a crumbling space station, and so on.

The main goal of an Intrigue, for you, is to create an interesting narrative. Rather than undoing character activities, try and bring up new and exciting things to force the players to need to come up with creative situations. So, it's kind of a pisser to steal back a prop the PCs just

grabbed - rather, create a new prop to represent danger, then use that prop to attack them directly!

Just think: What is more fun? The detective and his buddies rescuing a star witness, only to have the bad guys kidnap him back, then have the detective rescue the witness again, then the bad guys kidnap him back, then the detectives rescue him again-

Or, alternatively, the detective and his buddies rescue the star witness, and then the bad guys send *hired goons* to shoot up their bar and they have to drive away in a thrilling car chase. That's much more fun!

Remember, also, the narrative and mechanical differences between the parts of your Intrigue and what they represent. Take this detective example I've brought up: The bad guy might have a loyalty to "my daughter" which begins flipped over. Say the PCs do some investigative sleuthing and flip that prop over. You get to decide, right then and there: Does that prop represent the *abstract* concept of the bad guy's loyalty to her daughter...*or her daughter*.

This represents two different things, after all!

The first would be: *You enter into the dingy office, holding your flashlight up. You come to Don Carlita's filing cabinet and begin to open it and rummage through it with Brunt stays at the door to keep watch. You work quickly, there has to be proof that she's up to smuggling White Flower at the docks. But then, as you open a folder, a picture catches your eye. You turn to the desk and shine the light down on the Don smiling as she holds up a young girl who is her spitting image. Her daughter!?*

In this example, the PCs now know the Don loves her daughter (since they flipped that motivation over.) They also can take that prop and use it as blackmail material or as a way to create a new prop of "The Don's Daughter" which they can then use.

The second would be: *You and Brunt walk through the maze of apartments and high rises and come to the building you've been tracking down. Don Carlita has been spending hundreds of thousands on renting this place out. You knock on the door - and to your shock, it is answered by a young girl who is the spitting image of Don Carlita!*

In this example, they know the Don loves her daughter, but the motivation becomes a *physical NPC* in the world that can be influenced. In this, if the PCs try and steal the Don's motivation, they're actually *doing a kidnapping*. If they try and destroy the Don's motivation, they are doing *an murder*.

Which is better? Neither! They're different ways of going about telling a story and offer different opportunities. Sometimes, the players *do* want to destroy a motivation - but that's a lot trickier if that motivation is more ephemeral. Also, remember the Actor in question. Say you're dealing

with an ancient supercomputer that isn't actually sentient. Further, its loyalty is just "To This Facility" and the hacker PC finds that loyalty, then just deletes it.

That supercomputer actor now just has no loyalty. It may shut down! It may go on a killing spree. It may release the G-Virus! The PCs don't know! The choice is up to you and should be guided by who and what the Actor is - which cannot be determined by mechanics. It is determined, instead, entirely by narrative.

CONCLUDING INTRIGUES

Once an intrigue is over, PCs can turn props into money and, if the props are already useful items, they get those items. When in doubt, try and make the item be worth the value of 5 or 10 credits. For example, finding a ruined car in the wastelands might be a great way for the PCs to get 5 credits then have to build a vehicle out of it using the vehicle building rules!

Also, they get the Intrigue's Complexity x5 in XP!

COMBAT RULES

As the GM, you determine how *Dangerous* each combat encounter is based on what makes narrative sense. Danger is basically a number that indicates how many bad guys there are at the beginning of the combat, and how many "Shocks" you get to spend as the combat continues to keep things...*exciting*.

(Note, you can work backwards. Say you want to have the main characters fight a tank and a squad of infantry. You absolutely can go 'well, the tank is Y danger and the infantry are X danger, so this battle is gonna be X+Y danger!' and then work from there. But if you want to start with a Danger value, then math it out the other way around, that works too.)

SIDEBAR: Some Mathematical Proofs

Take a character with 2 in a combat skill, a medium speed weapon, and a +0 adds.

How many motherfuckers can this badass bitch waste in approximately six seconds?

There are six Troopers. They have evasion 2 and are standing before her. So! That's a TV of 0, diff 1: 1 heat, 2 heat, 3 heat to shoot three of them, putting her at 6 heat. Then she vents 2 of that heat to use her magic missile power and blasts the remaining three of them.

Meanwhile, let us say that those 6 troopers attacked her, all at once - maybe it's an ambush, maybe she's in a six person party that went into cooldown, maybe an NPC used a tactic to do it. Whatever! She's at 0 heat, and they all open fire. She'll take 12 damage, which is enough to badly wound her.

Unless she's in -2 cover. Or has armor. Or both. If she takes even the slightest step to protect herself (-1 cover) she'll only be lightly wounded, which doesn't even have to lead to a permanent downside *unless she wants it to happen*.

In short?

PCs in HEAT are scary mofos who can totally wreck absolute face!

Also, if you're playing HEAT: You are tougher and more badass than you think you are!
Go ham!

DANGER GUIDELINES

1-4 Danger: A pathetically easy fight. A single PC can handle this without gaining more than 1-2 heat, even if they're not combat specialized.

5-7 Danger: Still pretty easy, but it is entirely possible for a non-combat PC to have trouble with this alone.

8-10 Danger: A moderately difficult fight - characters may overheat.

11-14 Danger: Seriously threatening. Characters may get hurt!

15+ Danger: The PCs are going to be pushed to their utmost limit - if they work together, they might just pull through...but some may be Taken Out.

Each NPC has a "danger" value - this, added together, creates the Danger in question. There are further modifiers, depending on the situation.

Situational Modifiers

+1 Danger: The enemies are well coordinated and trained

+2 Danger: The enemies have support from some external source (airplanes, artillery, magical enchantment, blessings, the dark gods)

+2 Danger: The enemies are entrenched in a defensive position.

+5 Danger: The enemies are an X-Risk

(SIDEARK: X-Risk?)

Each setting has *the big bad guys*. The guys who are an existential risk to the setting itself - either because they're going to completely alter it in a way that every PC would prefer they wouldn't, or because they're going to destroy it. Which, now that I think about it, is the same thing. They might be Martians, they might be the Hegemony, they might be the White Walkers from the *Game of Thrones*.

Whatever they are, they're *bad news*. This is why their danger add is so freaking high! Just by dint of the fact you're fighting them, an encounter bumps to the next level of sheerest danger.

SHOCK

So, you've gotten the NPCs on the field and determined how much Danger they are. Now, take that value, and then multiply it by the number of PCs (so, a 5 Danger combat encounter with 4 PCs = 20) and that is how much **Shock** you have. Shock are points that can be spent on various things to make the PC's life more exciting! Cast your mind back to this checklist, way back in Chapter 2.

1. Arriving NPCs act.
 - a. Any Perceptive PCs interrupt here.
2. A PC acts until they end their turn by taking a hit or cooldown.
3. 1+ NPCs act.
4. Repeat 2 and 3 until every PC has acted. If there are NPCs that have not acted, they get *nothing*.
5. 1 Free Oomph is lost by characters.
6. GM expends Shock they want to up to a maximum of the amount they have and goes back to 1.
7. If the GM is out of shock, if the NPCs are all dead or running or surrendered or you finally KISS the beautiful woman you're having an erotic sword fight with, then the GM hands out XP equal to the danger of the encounter.

Each time the round hits step 6, you get to spend Shock on the following options. Oh, all options can be bought multiple times to create multiple types of things. If you wanted to make two different environmental upsets, you can! Just buy them!

Reinforcement Wave (X): Bring in a number of NPCs up to the amount of Shock you expend, at a price of 1 Shock per 1 Danger of the NPC. They arrive at whatever seems to be most logical - sprinting in from side alleys, dropping from flying shuttles, and so on.

Fresh Vehicle (X+Y): Bring in an NPC (X) with an additional cost equal to 1/10th the cost of the vehicle in question.

Counting Down ([6-X]xY): This creates environmental dice that count down! X is the counting die, Y is the radius die.

Counting Up (X x Y): This creates environmental dice that count up! X is the counting die, Y is the radius die.

Countdown ([1 to 4]+Y+Z): Create a ticking clock! The countdown is a number of ACTIONS equal to 5-[1 to 4], and anyone within Y hexes takes Z damage.

Turn Up The Heat (3): Spend 3 Shock to cause 1 Heat directly to the entire party - describing how enemy fire is pouring down, how the conflict is drawing closer.

Oomph! (1): Place a standard Oomph on a character of your own choice, with narrative justification for it.

Damage Bump (2): Add +1 damage to an NPC's attack for one attack, at a 2 to +1 ratio.

Escalate! (X): Make a character ESCALATE! This costs an amount of shock equal to their Danger, and lets you apply an escalation, which can be used to add some spice to some heavy level brawls.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUFF

When an environmental danger exists on the board - be it a raging fire, magical vortex, regular vortex, space vortex, death vortex (enough with the vortexes already!) - it is represented by the Double Dice of Doom. The first die (the radius die) represents the hex radius (which can represent meters, light years, kilometers, leagues, or whatever scale the environment is supposed to be) and the second die (the counting die) either counts up or counts down!

If the die counts up, then each round that it is there, it will cause that level of heat to all the players in the area as the vortex goes swirl and the lightning goes crash and the fire goes foosh. Once it hits six, it caps out, and it does not get worse. But, like, six heat every single round is, like, bad? You don't want that!

If the die counts *down*, then it does absolutely nothing! ...until it hits 0 and is removed from the table, at which point a **Terrible Fate Befalls the Party**. What that fate is depends on the situation! The vortex sucks them into another dimension, or the vortex rips them apart, or does whatever else a vortex might do.

Players can deal with these by creating oomphs that protect them (temporarily) using narratively justified skill checks and improvisations (you know the drill by now!) or they can strike at the source by damaging the radius die. This takes an action with a difficulty equal to the die's value. Succeeding reduces it by 1, +1 per oomph created! Once the radius die is gone, the counting die goes as well.

When the players are in vehicles, they can take the heat created as Damage, with the *downside* being that the Heat is increased by their vehicle's Scale. Big chunky cruisers cannot dodge asteroids as good! Counting down dice are not modified by scale because *that doesn't matter* because 0 is the same for everyone in the AOE!

Like all AOE, these come into effect when you enter a field or end your round in them!

GAINING DANGER

Hey, what if the PCs are totally wrecking face on what should be the climactic battle. What do!? Well, firstly, sometimes PCs do deserve an easy win. But if they're kinda looking a bit disillusioned and 'this is it?' at your table, now is the time to turn up the heat!

...so, like, you can just add Danger at any time by introducing more NPCs without using Reinforcements. This increases the XP value of the encounter, so the PCs have no reason to complain! Plus, bitches love thrilling heroics. All my bitches love thrilling heroics!

BAD GUYS

Finally...

The *bad guys*.

Badmans have seven base stats: Health, Armor, Evasion, Preferred Range, Damage, Movement and Cost.

Health is how much damage it takes for an enemy to be Damaged. Enemies will have either 1, 2 or 4 health. When they are Damaged, they lose one health and, if they are not at 0 Health, they will Escalate and lose all additional damage applied to them. If Enemies are in vehicles, they still have that health, *but* they cannot be damaged unless the vehicle is open topped (like a knight on a horseback can be shot off his horse) so you have to damage the vehicle instead.

Armor and Evasion are applied as penalties to PCs targeting them in combat.

Preferred Range is the range bands of the enemy in question, and it functions exactly like it does with PCs, save that it applies to the damage caused. So, if an enemy causes 3 damage and tries to hit someone 1 range band beyond their preferred bands, they'll cause 2 damage heat. If they try and hit someone 2 range bands beyond, they'll cause *zero* heat. Enemies can never cause negative heat. That's a miss, babyeeee!

Damage is the base damage that they cause when they attack! It's scaled up if they're in a vehicle.

Movement is the free number of hexes a badman can move per turn!

Cost is how much Danger or Shock they cost to deploy into battle *before* being modified by any scales because they're in a vehicle.

Badmans also have Tactics. These are basically actions that they can perform to make everyone unhappy - unless the tactic refers to "base damage", then these Tactics have a flat effect that is not modified by scale **unless** the vehicle they are in has a component that buffs that tactic. Which component? Well, just use the "Foci" component and refluff it to be whatever makes sense - psychic amplifiers, big digging claws, drills, night vision scopes, magic

enhancers, biomorphic polyps, whatever the tactic does, come up with a cool component that adds scale to it!

Example: Take three bad guys.

Troopers have a base damage of 2 and the “Dig In” example. They’re in a tank that has an autocannon with +10 damage, so they do 12 damage. Since the autocannon doesn’t buff tactics, their “Dig In” works as written (improving cover normal amounts.)

Psychics have a tactic that lets them do their base damage and throw people hexes, which they must split between throwing and damage. They’re in a tank too! This means that their base damage is 20 (scary!) so they can do 10 damage and throw you 10 hexes back. With, like, a psychic cannon shell.

Vanguards have two tactics! One lets them charge forward and do a set amount of damage. The other lets them ignore armor with their base damage. So, they’re in a tank! They can charge and hit people for the set damage but this is NOT ENHANCED by the tank’s main gun! Meanwhile, the shot with the cannon will ignore 5 armor (ontop of the armor piercing shells an autocannon can fire.) Scary!

Now, let’s say they’re in vehicles that have a +6 Foci Component. This would mean the troopers can only hit for 2 damage, but if they dig in, they’d improve the cover by a mind boggling -7 steps! The psychics would act the same, but with +6/+6 to the two values (since the foci is buffing the tactic itself.) The vanguards would have a better charge and their armor piercing would be at 11 (5+6.)

This way, you can make fun, unique combat encounters, giving bad guys specialized vehicles that transform old tactics into new, frightening forms!

However, there are four basic Tactics that all badmans can do.

- 1) Attack!
- 2) Oomph
- 3) Reposition
- 4) Retreat

Attacking is simple: The badman does their Hits in Damage to a single enemy. If they’re in a vehicle with a big chunky gun, then they can do that amount of damage instead, with an extra flourish. Better pilots, though, are more dangerous and thus can fire one gun per Hit, up to the maximum of their guns. So, a 4 hit veteran in a mecha with a machine gun, a pulse laser, and two SRM racks can fire all four as a *single* attack! Eep!

Oomph allows the badguy to apply either Off Balance, Pinned or Weak Point to 1 PC per Health.

Reposition lets the NPC move their free movement...*again!*

Retreat means the bad guys run away and disengage from the battle. They can only use this if they aren't immobilized (so, they can't retreat if pinned or suppressed or lifted or whatever) and it always works if they can use it. They are removed from the map and can come back narratively later, if you want!

ESCALATIONS

You know what's super fucking boring? Trading hits with someone until they die. Like, who wants to just ablate away hit points without any change in combat beyond a single number point going down? Not this roleplayer.

This is why *escalations* exist. At the end of a round, the GM can expend Shock to make a damaged enemy escalate! Choose whichever escalation you think is most neat!

These can be used to add spice to 2 or 4 hit enemies, or they can make a 1 hit enemy come back even more dangerous than before!

BLEEDING

The dragon bellows in rage as your blow slashes open a line along its belly. Blood like lava spurts into the air and you nimbly roll aside, gasping as the flames spread along the castle walls. Nearby men at arms cower backwards as the dragon turns its head and belches flames at you.

-5 Range Preference (minimum 0-1)

Gain a Free Action, once per Round

Bleeding Something Nasty: Cause 3 damage in a small AOE around it.

CREEPING

You open up with your X-9 and manage to tag the creature of black chitin and killing claws. With a screech, it springs upwards into a vent. You run forward and find a hissing, bubbling puddle of blood left behind. A faint clunk from the vent is the only sound before silence descends. Where is it?

, +5 Range Preference

Can only be targeted by attacks if unable to be moved or detected through some extranormal (technological, psychic, magical) means.

DEFENDING

The magician snaps up his palm and your arrow shatters against his shield before striking his belly. "You think you've won!?" He lashes out with his hand and a glowing

field of force explodes outwards, sweeping out to block off every entrance and shroud him in a shimmering aura of pure might.

, +3 Evasion, gain a new Tactic

Defensive Matrix: Place [Hits] x [PC] *Blessing* oomphs on the field of battle.

RAGING

You've put more silver and stakes into this goddamn vampire than you've ever seen before - and its still stalking towards you, eyes blazing, fangs glittering.

+1 Armor, -20 Range Preference (minimum, 0-1)

Immortal: This creature can only be killed via dismemberment, complete destruction of the brain (if it has a brain), or fire. This means either an explosive based AOE, 10+ damage from a single attack, or the use of fire from the environment or weaponry. Alternative sources of destruction can be agreed upon by the table (silver, holy water, the crushing vacuum of space.)

STORMING

The Huntress commando lifts her hands and as you watch, several grenades hover from her belt. You have enough time to dive for cover before they start landing around you.

, All attacks gain +1 AOE and gain +1 to their damage scale (enemies at +0 scale get +3, enemies at scale +6 get +10, and so on.)

GENERIC BAD GUYS

Goon (Danger 0.5)

Health: 1 | Armor: 0 | Evasion: 1 | Preferred Range: 0-1 | 5-10 (swords or rifles) |

Damage: 1

Movement: 6

Tactics

None

Troopers (Danger 1)

Health: 1 | Armor: 0 | Evasion: 2 | Preferred Range: 0-1 | 5-10 (swords or rifles) |

Damage: 2

Movement: 6

Tactics

Dig In: Increase cover by one step, to a maximum of -1.

Captain (Danger 6)

Health: 2 | Armor: 1 | Evasion: 2 | Preferred Range: 1-6 (daring pistol) | Damage: 3

Movement: 6

Tactics

Come On, Boys!: The captain allows all Danger 1> NPCs or a single squadron to act again, even if they've already acted.

Psychic (Danger 8.5)

Health: 1 | Armor: 0 | Evasion: 3 | Preferred Range: 10-15 (Psi Powers) | Damage: 10

Movement: 6

Tactics

Bolt: The psychic flings psychic force at a PC, doing half their base damage as damage and throwing a PC backwards the other half. So, 5 damage, 5 knockback! Fomp!

Engineer (Danger 2.5)

Health: 1 | Armor: 0 | Evasion: 3 | Preferred Range: 10-15 (Ranged Weapons) |

Damage: 3

Movement: 4

Tactics

Drone: The engineer creates a drone or summons or releases a dog or something that has 1 hit, 0 armor, 0 evasion, 1-6 range that begins to cause problems on the field. This drone acts once whenever the Engineer acts (including the action to summon this.)

Vanguard (Danger 3)

Health: 1 | Armor: 1 | Evasion: 2 | Preferred Range: 1-6 (anti-tank), 0-1 (Melee) |

Damage: 3

Movement: 6

Tactics

Charge: The Vanguard moves forward 5 hexes, dealing 5 damage and at the end of the trip. If they cannot move forward, they must use their standard attack.

Anti-Armor: They ignore 5 Armor with their base damage.

Infiltrator (Danger 6)

Health: 1 | Armor: 0 | Evasion: 0 | Preferred Range: 20-30 | Damage: 5

Movement: 4

Tactics

Cloak: The Infiltrator gains 3 *Cloak* oomphs. Unless removed, these oomphs prevent anyone from targeting the Infiltrator.

Sneak Attack!: remove as many cloaked oomphs as you want, causing 3 damage per Oomph removed to your target.

ELITES

These badmans are the Draculas, Hegemonic Knights and Archons of War that you may end up fighting. The way you take them is you construct them by picking one of the following statlines, then taking two tactics of your choice!

All Elites have a danger of 30.

Durable

Health: 4 | Armor: 3 | Evasion: 2 | Preferred Range: 1-20 | Damage: 10

Movement: 10

Flashy

Health: 4 | Armor: 2 | Evasion: 5 | Preferred Range: 1-20 | Damage: 10

Movement: 20

Titan

Health: 4 | Armor: 5 | Evasion: 1 | Preferred Range: 1-20 | Damage: 10

Movement: 6

ELITE TACTICS

Adept: Apply 2 of both the *Lifted* and *Arcane Charge* oomphs to any unshielded PCs in an 2 range band AOE.

Soldier: Nominate a PC. Destroy their cover, then deal 10 Damage to them.

Divine: Apply [3] x [PC] of your choice of the *Strength*, *Blessing*, *Tranquility* and *Rebuked* Oomphs to anyone in the field of battle. Strength may be spent to add +1 damage.

Vanguard: Attack one PC within 10 hexes bands for Damage with a single attack that has an automatic flank bonus (so, if they're in cover, add that to the Damage.)

Infiltrator: Gain 5 *Cloaking* Oomphs and apply 3 *Bead* Oomphs to targets of your choice. Gain the tactic *Bang*.

Bang: Expend 1 *Bead* to cause 4 Damage

Sentinel: Augment cover for all enemies by -1, to a maximum of -4. If you take a hit, deal 2 Damage to all PCs in a medium AOE.

MAKING YOUR OWN BAD GUYS!

So, here's the guidelines for bad guys! Basically, it's POINT BUY for each of the things!

The lowest possible cost is 0.5 Danger!

Health 1: 0 Danger (everyone starts with this)

Health 2: 3 Danger

Health 4: 6 Danger

Evasion 0: 0 Danger (everyone starts with this)

Evasion 1: 0.5 Danger

Evasion 2: 1 Danger

Evasion 3: 1.5 Danger

Evasion 4: 2 Danger
Evasion 5: 2.5 Danger

Armor 0: 0 Danger (everyone starts with this)
Armor 1: 1 Danger
Armor 2: 2 Danger
Armor 3: 3 Danger
Armor 4: 4 Danger
Armor 5: 5 Danger

Range: Any weapon range (Free, +1 if you have multiple weapons)
Range 1-20: 1 Danger

Movement 6: Free
Movement +1: 0.5 Danger per increase
Movement -1: -0.5 Danger per decrease

Base Damage 1: -2 Danger
Base Damage 2: 0 Danger
Base Damage 3+: +1 Danger per damage increase

Tactics: Okay, this is where things are a bit wonky, because tactics are supposed to break the rules. But in general, if they have no tactic, it should be -5 Danger because they're now a lot less dangerous. If they have a tactic that applies 1-5 oomphs, ignores 5ish armor, or adds a special effect to their base damage, that's +0 Danger. If they have tactics that are moderated and modified by how many PCs they are (so they get more dangerous the more PCs there are) then that's +5 danger!

PUTTING BAD GUYS IN VEHICLES

If your PCs are NOT IN VEHICLES, increase their Danger by 1/10th of the vehicle's cost. People on foot have a hard time with even a relatively small vehicle.

If they ARE in vehicles, ignore their cost - but try and keep the vehicles on par. The best advice is to check the PC's base damage and their armor. Is there a way to damage the vehicle? Do they have weak points? Do the PCs have special powers or improvisations that could bypass that armor? If so, then the PC can destroy them.

CHAPTER TEN: TANKQUEST!

BACKGROUND

In the 15th century, famed inventor and artist Leonardo da Vinci wished to create a kind of armored vehicle to bring victory on the field of battle. But the engines of his time were both too weak and the metal armor for his design was too heavy for his turtle-shelled creatures to ever 'get off the ground', so to speak.

If only he was one universe over...

In the world Trak, on the continent of Treadella, primitive man needed protection against the nocturnal blood drinking elephants that would come into their villages to impale and drain people dry on their hollow tusks. They needed salvation from the skyborn roks that could carry off entire caravans of people in their claws. They needed protection from the sharp, well thrown spears of their fellow humans most of all.

They needed...the *tank*!

But if the greatest minds of our world could not make a tank with steel and steampower, then what hope did the tribes and city-states of Teadella, who had barely mastered the art of smithing bronze? The answer came in the mineral known as Panzerite: A crystal that when illuminated by a light source would project hard-light, known as luxin. By shaping Panzerite appropriately, very lightweight, easily repaired, durable structures of intricate design could be built.

Early Panzerite tanks were nothing more than luxin boxes, ridden in by the fearful peoples of Treadella. But as they were able to beat back the night elephants and roks and the hideous mole people, their knowledge of Panzerite and Luxin grew and soon they had begun to build more and more using these miraculous technologies.

Soon, the neighboring continents of Turrat, Sponson and Engone were explored and settled as humanity built first kingdoms, then nation states...and then, lacking the terrible enemies of yore, they wondered.

What to do with all these tanks?

Then they remembered the last item on that list described earlier.

THE IMPERIAL WARS

There were four main powers - three states and one revolutionary movement - at the time of the first Imperial Wars, though they weren't each confined to their own continent. Turrat might have

been the capital of the Kotin Empire, but her colonies were peppered along the eastern coast of Treadella, including the valuable Panzerite mines of the coastal mountain range.

Meanwhile, the Christie Republics were spread throughout the middle of Treadella, on the original 'seven hills' where Panzerite had been discovered, but there were conquests they had snatched from their larger, weaker neighbor of Kingdom of Straussler, which was primarily located on the southern half of Sponsen and the northern half of Egone. And lastly, the Morozovites were *everywhere* in the three kingdoms, agitating for the liberation of the common people from their lordly masters.

It was a Morozovite assassin who killed the Republican President in the year 1211 and kicked off the landgrab from the Struasslers - which caused the Kotin Empire to land their own troops on Sponsen's southern border, wishing to catch the vital territories there in a pincer attack.

Luxin tanks battled one another across every field, and in every town and village. Lands were won and lost, kingdoms were fell and shattered, and when it was all done, each group had exchanged their adjective, becoming the Kotin Demarchy, the Emergency Council of Christie Supremacy, the Mozoro Commune and the Straussler insurgency movement. This uneasy peace lasted...

For twelve years.

Then, the wars kicked off again when the last surviving Struassler king was found and led an army to his ancestral capital. Again, the world of Trak burned. Again, tanks battled in every field, every city, on the coastline of every continent. Again, once it was over, everyone's adjectives changed, but this time, millions more were dead than last time.

...then it happened again, fifteen years later.

THE ANSWER

At the tail end of the Imperial Wars, a Christie inventor named Jamie Tankerson sought to find a way to bring some fight back to his land. While luxin tanks were easy to produce (it just took a single crystal of Panzerite and an electric light with a battery) the *crews* for them were getting more and more scarce. The world was devolving bit by bit, crunched to death by the treads of tanks and cycles of vitriolic violence, as expertise was lost and the youth were fed into the endless grindstone of war.

So, Tankerson built the first Autotank.

By combining the electric light with an electric computer that could adjust minute Panzerite facets within the crystal, the luxin machinery of the tank could be made to *run themselves*. Then he was shot three times in the back by his research assistant, a Morozovite spy, and the

technology was stolen. If the spy had not missed a cache of notes left behind by Tankerson, then maybe history would have turned out different.

As it was, the Christies and the Morozovites began to build Autotanks. Shortly later, the Kotins and the Struassler had acquired the technology as well.

Thus began the Age of Automated Warfare!

THE AUTOMAT WARS

The Automat Wars allowed for humanity to catch its breath while still indulging their fanatical masters and capitalist interests.

This actually turned out to be a *bad* thing, long term. But in the short term, it meant less deaths and more profits (for the people who owned the Automat Factories) and thus, created a strange kind of “warful peace.” The people in the cities could almost pretend they weren’t at war, while working in war factories and reading war news - while the people whose lands were fought over...

Well, who cared about them, right? The combination of a functional economy, growing population, and nationalistic fervor kicked up by the almost sports-like atmosphere of automatic tanks quashed the anti-war movements (doubly so when luxin machineguns were used to shoot down a few dozen protestors - an order easy enough to give when the tanks weren’t piloted by humans that could balk at the bloodthirstiness.)

It seemed the power brokers and the would be world conquerors had caught on to a golden ticket that would see them to ultimate victory. After all, it wasn’t like the automatic tanks would become *sentient* or anything, driven mad by their perpetual battling, and bring about the end of the world! The idea was preposterous!

THE TANKS WERE DRIVEN MAD BY THEIR PERPETUALLY BATTLING, BRINGING ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD!

With every innocent civilian caught in the crossfire, every tree crushed by their treads, every innocent burrow of bunnies driven in terror from their advance, the Panzerite hearts of the autotanks drank in the dark energy and became increasingly bloodthirsty.

The danger was dismissed at first as ‘twitchiness’ - yes, the tanks would sometimes open fire at random movement, but they were *supposed* to do that. Right? But then reports came in from every front of tanks - often from multiple sides - turning their guns from one another to the humans that were directing them! These reports were dismissed...until the tanks were advancing on every city at once!

Antitank guns and autotanks exchanged fire - but the tanks were coming in greater and greater numbers than anyone expected! The autotanks captured Panzerite mines and used their own crude manipulators to get even more Panzerite, to make more tanks. People of every creed and nationality were forced, at literal gunpoint, to fight back to back against the Autotank Menace!

One by one, the cities fell, until at last, there was only one place left: The fortified city of Kursk, in the very heart of Treadella. There, the forces of humanity fought against their own creations until, at last, salvation came in the form of the Panzernacht - a desperate gambit to stop the autotanks by bombarding Panzerite with certain high energy frequencies of light that had only been recently discovered.

It worked! The luxin of the tanks vanished and humanity looked out at the blasted wasteland that their world had become...

THE SLOW REBUILDING

The next four centuries actually had a lot of stuff going on, but it can be summarized quickly and easily: The world healed. The survivors agreed to never again let war darken their world, and used Panzerite and Luxin only to build peaceful and good things. They replanted forests, and regrew the wilderness and left the autotank hearts where they laid, not wanting to risk reawakening them, lest their fell purpose once more came to fruit.

Over time, many towns grew where mighty cities had once been. Without the constant driving need for profit or imperial ambition, the pace of life remained slow and pastoral, and slowly, the memories of the Imperial War faded into stories and cautionary tales and the world of Trak knew nothing but peace and plenty.

New innovations and inventions did come - but they were used by the people and for the people, rather than simply to make some greedy investor a quick buck. This meant that, despite no longer going to war, things like insulin and telephones and radio and, yes, even the internet were all invented on Trak *without* needing for millions of people to die!

Until...

THE REBIRTH

In the year 2012, a shocking event was captured on a smartphone's camera by some teens wandering in the woods: A tank, clearly built during the Imperial Wars, trundling through the forest. It saw the children filming it...and opened fire! But the bullets and shells whipped through them, harmlessly, and they were able to run back to town. There, the local defense force figured out how to rebuild an anti-tank gun using their Panzerite reserves and destroyed the autotank, but not before the machine gun on the front had wounded three of them.

Reports began to come from all around the world - the ancient autotanks were reawakening!

Fortunately, whatever fell purpose they had had was gone, replaced with an almost naturalistic behavior pattern. They would feed on sunlight, travel in packs, even create new tanks by working as family units to dig up Panzerite crystals and shape them with careful bursts from their machine guns. But when they saw humans, they would often be both dangerous and aggressive...

With one exception.

Ancient documents were studied and the answer was found: The Imperial Wars had been fought with a tiny modicum of decency, and so, when autotanks were built, they were designed *expressly* to not damage anyone of seventeen years or younger. By adjusting the properties of their luxin shells and bullets, they could create startling and intimidating attacks that did little or no damage. What this meant was debated...

Until Ashley Carronade.

ASHLEY CARRONADE

Ashley Carronade was just your average thirteen year old who dreamed of seeing the big wide world. Such pilgrimages were not odd, but it seemed like a bad idea with the autotanks running around. But Ashley decided to ignore the stern warning of her parents and just...left home.

And then she ran into a wild M4 Sherman, which immediately machine gunned her with coaxial and sponson mount. But since the autotank was still following its ancient programming, the holographic bullets whiffed through her harmlessly. When Ashley wasn't frightened off by the gunnery, the M4 Sherman began to back away, while she approached, tentatively - and then gently petted the front of the wild tank. Eventually, the tank calmed, and even opened his hatches for her.

Ashley had made her first friend!

She and her Sherman were driving around, enjoying the bright sunny day, when she ran into a pack of L3/35 Tankettes. The little tankettes swept around her Sherman, who clearly was terrified of being swarmed - but Ashley knew what to do. She quickly began to order her Sherman and soon had put an AP round through one of the L3/35s. With one smoldering, the other two fled into the woods and Ashley went to the L3/35. But since she hadn't hit the Panzerite, the tank was beginning to repair itself.

Ashley took the Panzerite core, squeezed it, and the whole tank shut down. Some experimentation later, and Ashley found if she hucked the Panzerite core away from her, the L3/35 would appear in a flash of light, ready to follow her orders.

Ashley Carronade had become the world's first Tank Trainer.

THE MODERN DAY

Now, we have come to the modern day. It is 20XX and the hip new thing for teens to do, the rite of passage to go from childhood to adulthood, is to get together with a few of their friends and go into the wilderness to capture, tame, and then collect wild tanks, then battle wild tanks and other tank trainers - often in televised arenas, with the goal to eventually hit the top of the training circuit.

The rarest tanks - the M1 Abrams, the Type 99s, the T-90s - are owned and controlled by the highest ranks of the training circuit, and every child dreams of one day owning and being best friends with an M1 Abrams, though some never give up believing in their plucky little tankettes and common M4 Shermans. Whether heart or hardware wins the day is still hotly debated across the world!

However, with this new sport taking the world by storm, the chances for power and profits have begun to awaken ancient greed in human hearts and there are criminal organizations that wish to use wild tanks for their own nefarious ends. The most infamous, Team Tankfist, has even gone so far as to attack children to steal their wild tanks, the scoundrels!

But there are rumors that in the deepest wilds, there are even more strange and unusual wild tanks, displaying possibly magic powers. No trainer has ever managed to capture one...but you may be the first?

The only way to find out is to grab your portable rocket launcher and out into the wild grass and *find out*.

GAZETTEER

There are no set locations, instead, there is just a *mood*. And that's a mood we all know and love: Anarchocommunist Pastoralism!

Duh, obviously. The world is populated by small towns and bustling cities, where the pace of life is relaxed and ambling, and people get what they need because people are people and deserve to not die in privation just because they didn't make a billionaire a ton of money. There are forms of currency - mostly used to assign value to goods and services that are exchanged, but the means of production (factories, Panzerite mines, farms) are owned communally rather than by singular entities.

The biggest, most popular thing in the world is tank training. People just love watching tanks driven by teams of teenagers blow each other up in a way that hurts no one and costs nothing. Admit it, if that was real, *you'd* watch it too! It'd be the sickest shit.

Technology is on par with the year 2020ish. There are cellphones, there's social media (but, as a note, the social media is better moderated and not driven by a profit motive, so rather than being a combative hellscape, it's generally way nicer. There are still mobs of hateful dicks, but they usually get banned and have to make new accounts, limiting their abilities to be hateful dicks.)

Being trolled on Tanker (the open source social media network for Tank Trainers) is called "being Blitzed."

THE LAY OF THE LAND

There are four continents in the world of Trak and while they were once split up by imperial powers, now, they are covered with a complex patchwork of communes and communities that, when needed to be referred to in their totality, are called the Sprocket. The actual terrain of each continent is wildly different, though, and thus shapes the ways of life of the people living in each region a lot more than any government or law ever could.

Treadella, the original homeland of humanity before they migrated to Turrat, Sponson and Engine, remains the place we're most suited to: Rolling hills in the center, surrounded by broad prairies, with lots of rivers and coastlands. It is also the most fought over continent, being constantly squabbled over during the Imperial and Automat Wars, and the landscape is still being carefully nurtured back to some measure of health and happiness. Reminders of the past dot the landscape, from the relatively benign (like the old pillboxes that have become green lumps of masonry) to the deeply dangerous (like all the goddamn *mine fields*.) Teadella does get markedly hotter and drier once you pass the Copula Mountains that mark the almost exact point of the Equator, and the last quarter of the continent is almost all deserts.

Turrat, to the north of Treadella, is a land of taiga, snow and mountains, most famous for its white giraffes, which are like giraffes from Earth, but adapted to snow. It is a place of breathtaking natural beauty and, thanks to its mountainous terrain, was only lightly contested by luxen based tanks - instead, it was a land of infantry and mountaineering battles. This has given it a faintly foreign and exotic air to the rest of Trak - but this has faded thanks to the ending of the wars and the beginning of the peaceful coexistence of the Sprocket.

To the south of Teadella, perched right below the equator, you have Sponson: a sprawling jungle that has been regrowing since the ends of the war, hemmed in by the high Coaxial Cliffs, which create the highlands of Sponson - a largely flat, arid region. Due to the immense reserves of Panzerite in the Coaxial Cliffs and their highland regions, this area was fought over immensely and vast stripmines dot the Coaxial region of Sponson even to this day. The flat prairie here is far more suited to tanks, and great herds of wild tanks still roam the plains like Earth buffalo.

And finally, hugging the eastern coast of Treadella is Engon - called a continent but actually it's a big island with lots of teeny tiny islands around it. Thanks to its sprawling nature, these islands range from frozen over glacier ridden coldzones thanks to being near Turrat to being tropical

paradises thanks to being closer to Sponson. Engon is most famous for its sprawling Panzerite-fused reefs, which project glittering hardlight flying fish and sometimes try to become sailors off the safe sailing routes to their demise. During the Automat Wars, many drilling platforms were set up on these reefs to extract Panzerite, but now, those rusted out artificial islands are just another part of Engon's landscape - left to nature and communities that have refurbished them into homes that live with nature, rather than against it.

THE GYM SCENE

Tank Trainers are organized into a series of collaborative gyms, each run by a tank trainer that has gained some renown and fame for themselves. Ashley Carronade set up the first, and many others follow her model as being a place for tank trainers to meet, show off their tanks, and talk shop. Using Luxen and Panzerite technologies, these gyms are often highly personalized and deeply themed to the idiosyncrasies of the trainer's in question. The only major rule is that Tank Gyms cannot be nationalist themed - not even 'as a bit' and the few gyms that have tried this have been roundly and solidly mocked and booed out of existence.

Some tank gyms include...

The Water Gym: A place for you to take your tanks for a swim. Some may say 'this is *not* cute, tanks only go into the water for amphibious landings when they're *very upset*' but those people don't understand the full range of tankish attitudes. Quite a few tanks love to splash around in (shallow) water, fording artificial rivers and spraying water with their treads. Sprawling along a series of artificial rivers and shallow lakes, the Water Gym is the place to go for water themed fun with your tanks, and if challenging other trainers is more your style, then the Water Gym has an entire beach for amphibious assault challenges - the most common is the 1 v X, where a single tank gets hull down on the ridgeline and challenges as many tanks as they think they can take as those tanks rush the beaches.

Tankette & Trouble: This a gym that is devoted to the delights of the tankette. Obstacle courses that are impossible for their bulkier cousins dot the grounds, and camouflage challenges abound for shyer and more demure tankettes like the sheepish Christie M1931 or the playful Carro Armato L3/35. The most exciting part of T&T, though, remains the titular "Trouble", the main tank of the gym's owner. Trouble, ironically, is one of the vanishingly few Maus superheavy tanks that were long thought extinct (only three were ever carved during the Imperial Wars, and none were thought to be made into Autotanks.) Every week, every Tankette visiting at T&T does a free for all brawl, with Trouble in the middle - the tankette (or team of tankettes) that gets the most kills or takes down Trouble wins the game!

Can-Do Gym: The most serious of the famous gyms, the Can-Do Gym is not a gym for playing or horsing around. No - this is a gym for actual, real, hardcore training for tanks. They'll learn target acquisition, shell selection, angling their hulls better against incoming

fire, and how to deal with being on fire. For the few that tough it out for the entire three week training course, the final challenge is the Can-Die Cul De Sac, a terrifying artificial urban environment that is staffed by the Can-Do's serious minded and no-fun allowed gym staff. Rocket launchers, grenades, Morozovite cocktails and cunningly concealed antitank guns are all going to try and blast you to bits...but for the tanks and their trainers that make it to the end, the gray baseball cap of the Can-Do gym is their reward, and worn with pride for the rest of their lives.

TEAM TANKFIST

Not everything is all peace and pastoralism. There lurks the threat...of Team Tankfist!

Team Tankfist is organized into cells of three people, and are currently more focused on trying to steal tanks from kids. The reason is simple: Team Tankfist are all adults, and thus, cannot actually fight their own wild tanks without risking death. But if they fight tamed tanks owned by kids, they'll be fine, even if they're hit with an HE shell and sent flying miles away by the blast.

Tankfist members are all masters of disguise and trickery, but they are institutionally so arrogant that they have to announce themselves before attacking the "mere children" that they are facing off against.

However, in recent days, Tankfist has unveiled a new innovation: Drones! These are humanoid soldiers with stun-guns and luxin antitank weapons, who they use as infantry to supplement their own tanks (if they have any.) These Drones feel no pain, and can be rebuilt in about an hour, but are definitely not happy with being conscripted by their masters, and will bemoan their condition. If their controller can be snatched from their Tankfist minders, then they can be liberated (however, each squad of Drones is linked to a specific controller.)

The master of Team Tankfist is an unknown and shadowy figure known only as Mr. A.B Krieg and his goals are...

- To conquer the world!
- To own all wild tanks and make them his slaves
- To destroy Panzerite once and for all
- To awaken an ancient Luxin entity buried in the center of the world
- To rewrite the past by traveling back in time using a magic tank
- To make lots and lots of money
- To make making lots and lots of money normal again
- To revenge himself against the Tank Trainer who, in his youth, defeated him.

Pick the one you want!

CHARACTERS

PREMISES

All characters are tank trainers, meaning they're ages teen to late teen. You can change this exact number to whatever your table wants because this ain't our world. Maybe in your Trak, the age of majority is 30 and your tank trainers are roughly college age! Whatever makes you happy.

However, your goal is always pretty much the same: To go on your Tankquest as a group of friends, travel to various towns, battle tanks in the wild, face off against Team Tankfist, and eventually become the very best that ever was!

SPECIES

There are several species for Tankquest!

Human: Classic homosap! Except, uh, they tend to have pink, blue, green, or white hair. Deal with it.

Molefolk: Once ancient enemies of humanity, the Molefolk and humans are now friends and all ancient prejudices are forgotten and buried. Molefolk are bipedal humanoids without eyes, huge cute batlike ears, and the ability to dig really fast, even though their hands are basically just human. It's magic, don't worry about it.

Rokborn: Some of the humans snatched by roks, thousands of years ago, have returned from the sky with feathers and wings and a devil may care attitude.

Drone: Some Drones have been freed from Tankfist and, thanks to Trak's immense community of tinkerers, they can look however they want! Girls, boys, spiders, maids, there's no end to what Drones can look like. Usually, Drones keep their controllers on their person so they can't be ordered around. To be given a Drone's controller is a sign of trust. Or they're a sub!

SPOT RULES

Here are the spot rules! There's *almost* no improvisations (magic exists, but it is a plot device, not a thing that humans or humanoids can do), there's no wealth (people basically just get what they need and you're not adventuring for money) and there's a special rule for damage.

- 1) Nothing leads to death. If you die, you're instead knocked out and captured (possibly by Team Tankfist.)
- 2) Vehicles CAN be destroyed, but this just makes them return to their Panzerite Core. Basically, the tank explodes, then the rubble sits there for a bit, before turning into glowing light and collapsing back into their core.

Damage is all repaired to your vehicles by letting your tank take a nap in their Core for about 8 hours. Often, battles are not decided until every last tank in an enemy's roster is defeated, but if a trainer is out of tanks that can best yours, it is not considered odd or dishonorable to surrender.

The only improvisations are from tanks. Some tanks, due to reputation or special features, have the "improvisation foci" equipment. These will lay out what, specifically, the tank can assist with and allow you to use the foci for that improvisation and that improvisation alone.

SPECIAL RULES

Tanks in Tankquest run the gamut from early, primitive tanks (like the Mark VIII) to modern, sleek future tanks (like the M1 Abrams.) To represent this, a tank has a special scale stat: TECH LEVEL!

Great War: +0
Interwar: +1
World War 2: +2
Cold War: +3
Modern: +4

So, even if a light tank from the Great War might have the same stats as a Modern Tank, the Modern Tank just gets a +4 to its speed, shoots, range, armor, whatever. However, there is another special thing...

EVOLUTION

When a tank is believed in and loved and gone through many adventures...they might...what is this!? M4 Sherman is...evolving!?





Your M4 Sherman has evolved into a M4A3E8 Sherman Easy Eight!



To evolve a tank, you need to show it proper care and affection and level up while driving it. If you level up while driving it, you can forego your advancement (meaning your XP to hit the next level doesn't increase, you don't get new skills, powers, whatever) to instead have your tank evolve!

Evolution adds +3 to two stats of your choice (damage, speed, armor, whatever) or +6 to a single stat. This means a highly evolved tankette might be better than an M1 Abrams in some areas, while the M1 Abrams is better in all areas. Even better! If a tank evolves, that bonus only applies to the driver it evolved with.

Believe in the heart of your tanks, and they will believe in you.

GEAR

Suggested Gear: Basically, any gear! But, like, refluff it to be kid friendly, luxin based technology. So, a shoulder mounted rocket launcher is just firing a hardlight rocket. It's fine! Don't worry about it. An SMG? More like a Stun-Machine Gun!

Tankbelt

Effect: This is a belt that lets you hold and toss out tank cores without having to rummage around in your pockets. As a free action, you can chuck a tank core that you've captured within 10 hexes and then either command the tank or drive it with your buddies.

Portable House

Effect: A Panzerite core that, when deployed, becomes a comfy house to sleep in.

VEHICLES

Starter Tanks

Flammpanzer II - *fiery tempered tank for fierce friendships*

Size: +6 | Slots: 6

Damage: 6/12

Treads: +6 speed scale - relatively slow by more evolved tank's standards, but faster than walking!

Damage: 3 (snapped tread), 6 (blown track!)

Control Room: The cramped interior of the Flammpanzer II is thick with the smell of Red Luxin, the glop used to fire the hardlight flamethrower. Some people like it. Those people are weird.

Damage: 1 (after this point, you are now being shot)

Coaxial 7.92mm Machine Gun: loaded with luxin ammo, of course.

Adds: -2 | Speed: Fast | Range: 1-12 | Base Damage: 7

Brrrrrapt: This weapon has a small AOE.

Damage: 3 (Jammed!) 6 (Your gun is gone)

Hardlight Flamethrower: Loaded with jellied red luxin, the hardlight flamethrower is well respected by tanks for its ability to put paid to even cocky and confident tanks. People hit by it liken it to being tickled into submission - humiliated, but kind of enjoyable. No one in 500 years has been hit by red luxin that *hasn't* been set to safe mode.

Adds: +0 | Speed: Slow (x1) | Range: 0-1, Hard Cap | Base Damage: 25

Foosh!: This has a special AOE that emerges in a cone shape out to 10 hexes.

Damage: 3 (jammed!), 6 (your gun is gone)

"Sloped" Armor: +3 Armor - the poor Flammpanzer II has armor that is more vertical than not, especially when compared to other tanks.

Damage: 2 (armor plating is dinged), 3 (armor plating is *gone!*?)

"Oh Shit! It's a Flammpanzer II!?:" +3 improvisation foci - as this is a setting without improvisations, this doesn't really represent a "component" so much as it represents the fact you're in the much feared Flammpanzer II. Even people in more modern tanks don't exactly like the idea of being coated in jellied red luxin during a match! This allows you to make improvisation in the field of "being scary" and "setting things on pseudo-fire."

Damage to this represents...well, it's hard to be scared of someone getting their butt kicked.

Damage: 2 (the intimidation factor is wearing off), 3 (...yeah, they're not scared)

LVT-1 - *the cheerful crosser of seas and canals*

Size: +6 | Slots: 6

Damage: 6/12

Treads: +3 speed scale - one of the slowest tanks out there, the bumbling and cheerful LVT-1 gets where it's going. Eventually!

Damage: 2 (snapped tread), 3 (blown track!)

Propeller: +6 speed scale - faster on Trak than it ever would have been on Earth thanks to the natural buoyancy of green Luxin, the LVT-1 dominates in water, when it can get there.

Damage: 3 (busted propeller), 6 (no engine OR propeller!)

Control Room: The interior of a LVT-1 always smells faintly of the sea breeze and one can practically feel the buzzing excitement of the little tank to see new horizons.

Damage: 1 (past this point, you are now being shot)

Coaxial .50 Caliber Machine Gun: loaded with luxin ammo, of course

Adds: -1 | Speed: Fast | Range: 11 to 16 | Base Damage: 7

Suppression!: Can apply *Off Balance* or *Pinned* even on a miss.

Damage: 3 (jammed!) 6 (your gun is now gone)

37mm Cannon: When directed, the tank can either create HEL (high explosive luxin) or APL (armor piercing luxin) shells.

Adds: +0 | Range: 15-20 | Speed: Slow (x1) | Base Damage (AOE): 10 (None or Medium)

Autoloader: Can either fire AP (ignore 5 Armor, reduce AOE by 1) or HE (gain +1 AOE shift) shells. But they're called APL and HEL rounds in setting. So use those names. Or else.

Damage: 5 (jammed!), 10 (your gun is now gone)

Armor! ...kinda!: +3 armor - the LVT-1, like most tanks of its era, has relatively thin armor compared to their rivals.

Damage: 2 (armor plating is dinged), 3 (armor plating is gone!?)

ZiS-30 - *whimsical, easily distracted, and...a bit spacy, the ZiS-30 should not be underestimated. Look at the size of her...gun!*

Size: +3 | Slots: 3

Damage: 3/6

Treads: +10 speed scale - easily the fastest of the starter tanks, the ZiS-30s can sometimes go too fast for their own good!

Damage: 5 (snapped tread), 10 (blown track)

57 mm ZiS-2 Gun: A gun easily two meters longer than the tank it is mounted on, the ZiS-30's main armament can make just about anyone sit up and take notice. It does pay to have a careful aim...

Adds: +2 | Speed: Slow (x2) | Range: 20 to 35 | Base Damage: X+10 (Small AOE)

Take a Bead...: You or an adjacent ally gains access to the *Aim* oomph, which is applied with the Personal (Awareness) skill.

Aim: Expend as a free action before attacking, adding 2 Base Damage per 1 Aim oomphs

Damage: 5 (gun jammed), 10 (your gun is now gone!) .

"Armor": +3 armor - speed will be your ZiS-30's armor!

Damage: 2 (armor plating dinged), 3 (armor plating is *gone!*?)

CHAPTER ELEVEN: AGENTS OF THE GODS

BACKGROUND

There are beginnings, and beginnings, and beginnings...

The first beginning was near the heart of the galaxy, on a world with an immense nickel iron core relative to its size in orbit around a gas giant. The tidal pressures from the gas giant forced the tectonic plates of the world to move at a highly increased rate relative to normal terrestrial worlds, and set the core to spinning, faster and faster. This created an intensely powerful magnetosphere - protecting the world from the deadly radiation blazing down from the Core of the galaxy. The end result was that while most worlds this close to the Core are barren and dead...this world instead bloomed with life.

That life faced a harsh early history. Even with the magnetosphere that protected them, the early lifeforms of this planet were exposed to more ionizing radiation than other worlds. This encouraged both rapid evolution and a hideous death toll (some might argue the two are inextricably linked.) These factors, combined with the erratic terrain of this world, created the perfect hotbed for evolutionary chaos.

From this chaos emerged a bipedal species with staggeringly advanced self correcting genetic structures - their evolutionary niche was in surviving the cancers that plagued the majority of the planetary ecology and breeding in large numbers, protected by the strength and skill of their elders. They were, functionally, immortal from the earliest days of their prehistory.

In the beginning of their written history, they named themselves the Stakosha. The Long Lived Ones.

The rest of the galaxy would know them by another name.

Elves.

CONQUEST

The Stakosha, as most species do, faced the Great Filters: They faced climatological change (both natural and self-made), atomic war, and stellar disaster. They overcame all, forging a society that was remarkably static in some senses. Because all Stakosha grew up in an era of princes and kings and noble houses, those social structures survived...even as continual competition between Stakosha drove the invention of gunpowder and steel, rocketry and computers.

Through this fire and steel, they survived to build their first interstellar ships. In the Core Regions of the galaxy, star systems are relatively close together and interstellar hydrogen is plentiful enough to make the use of ramscoops both easy and effective. And, considering their theoretically infinite lifespans, the idea of traveling a few years between solar systems was seen as a trivial hurdle.

Their first few exploration missions turned up solar systems that were barren of life, forcing them to search outwards along the galactic arm. It was there that they, at last, found a fellow sentience. The first species they met, the Xon, were an octopus-like species that had colonized several ocean worlds utilizing generation ships. Their worlds weren't even united due to the temporal lag and travel time between them.

The reaction of the Stakosha to a species that thought and acted like them but lacked immortality or what they saw as their own innate grace, beauty and perfection was an immediate and visceral disgust. The Xon were attacked, conquered, and subjected under the heel of the Stakosha House that had discovered them - they would have been exterminated, if it was not for the Lifegivers.

The Xon would grow to hate those ironically named elves most of all...

GENETIC BOUNTY

The Stakosha had begun to truly understand the genetic treasure trove of their homeworld only after their initial interstellar exploration wave had started. The Lifegivers - genetic scientists in service to Stakosha Noble Houses - were able to extract and combine genetic information from their complex ecology, and use them to introduce better, more effective genetic sequences into the Stakosha themselves...and when the first Xon were given over to them, the Lifegivers realized that their understanding had been severely limited.

No matter how sophisticated or complex an ecology was, there were always blind spots created by the interrelated nature of it. With the Xon and their ocean worlds at their disposal, the Lifegivers began to loot the conquests of the only resource that mattered: Genetic templates. From the Xon, they refined their reflexes, honed their spatial awareness, and created the first of many deadly biological weapon systems.

And the Xon? They were the *first*. World after world were conquered, and from the fruit of billions of years of concurrent evolution came innovation after innovation. It became a race between Stakosha Houses to see who could engineer the best warriors, the best slaves, the most beautiful works of biological art. This, combined with refinement to ramscoop technology to allow for demi-lightspeed travel, set the stage for the galaxy's first interstellar war.

It would not be the last.

THE FIRST EMPEROR AND CONVENTION

The war that raged was the most brutal and to the hilt the Stakosha had ever seen - planets were obliterated by relativistic bombs, billions of slaves died as orbital habitats were fought over in grinding attritional campaigns lasting years as both sides cloned replacement armies almost faster than their soldiers could be killed, and Stakosha Houses were reduced to ragged ruin by their enemies. Wild new 'innovations' in genetic science created biomorphic horrors that are better left forgotten, while terrifying war plagues ran rampant in starships and city-domes alike. For the first time in their history, the Stakosha were made afraid by their own terrible killing power.

In the end, an alliance between several Houses ended the war with a decisive conquest and recapture of their Homeworld. The most powerful of these Houses declared their leader to be Emperor and over the next few decades, a Great Convention was hammered out to ensure that no future conflicts would be nearly so devastating.

The Convention forbade the use of certain weapons that could destroy biospheres or planets out of hand, and established the creation of a traditionally bounded warrior caste (the Enforcers) to slow what the founders saw as a dangerous dilution of the Stakosha Form by genetic engineering. It set out ritualized means by which Houses could divy up the spoils of new worlds, resolve disputes, and generally sought to create a true Empire rather than the ad hoc interstellar land grab that had been the Stakosha norm for centuries.

With this new stability, the Stakosha began to expand faster and faster. There were new wars, new emperors, new crises, but none were as stark and as dramatic as that first, terrible conflagration.

Until, at the distant edge of the spiral arm the Stakosha called home, a single scout-ship found a relatively uninteresting blue-green planet, third in its solar system, populated by a bronze-aged species of bipedal, barely sentient apes...

In orbit around this world - named Terratis by her discoverer and Earth by some of her inhabitants - the Stakosha Empire discovered something that would rock the foundation of the galaxy.

THE GODS

There is another beginning.

That beginning happened by purest chance. Evolution has no plan. No goal. Nothing but survival - if you live to give birth, evolution is happy. Anything better than that is a happy accident. Some species luck into preposterous strength or spectacular reflexes or superior lifespan.

Humanity lucked into Gods.

The God Node is a tiny clump of gray-matter that would go undiscovered and unidentified for millennia after the first God emerged. It is uniquely sensitive to quantum emissions, which are created by all sentient beings as a byproduct of the quantum effect nature of sentience. This is the basis for telepathy in some species, but for humanity, rather than being able to merely read minds, the God Node was able to take incoming quantum emissions and then *emit* them to influence the quantum forces that make up the building blocks of reality.

In short: Anything that can be influenced by gravitation, strong/weak nuclear forces, or electromagnetism can be influenced by the emissions from a God Node.

That covers *literally anything*.

However, the God Node and human cognition have limitations that prevent them from directly accessing these awe inspiring powers. Humans relate to the world in stories - and those emissions are what the God Node picks up. Humans tell stories about supernatural creatures, beings beyond themselves, Gods and Goddesses, and the God Node picks up on those stories then reflects them into the world around the nascent God or Goddess. The closer that individual hews to the stories told about them, the more intense the effect is, creating a feedback cycle that rapidly hits exponential levels.

What began as minor enhancements to reflexes and subtle alterations of chance and probability rapidly spiraled upwards into the core of legends that survive to this day: Thor's mighty hammer was imbued with this cycle. Coyote's endless tricks and cleverness was enhanced and driven by this cycle. Tchernobog, lurking in the dark forests of Eurasia, was empowered by this cycle. There was, though, an unnoticed and unforeseen side effect.

The God Node *overwrites* the person born with it. Anubis was born not as a jackal headed man, but as a normal woman living in Ancient Egypt, whose God Node collected stories and reflected abilities and transformed memories and body alike until Anubis was the Anubis of stories - not the woman they had been. And as stories change, the Gods change.

The worst thing was almost no one even noticed as time went on - the gods' true origins becoming obscured by time and stories.

This is what the horrified Stakosha scout ship observed from orbit.

PURGATORY

The commander of the Stakosha scout ship - a minor shiplord of the equally minor House Cren - settled on a wildly risky gambit. She knew that the Gods of humanity were the most important discovery since fusion power, and would be even more revolutionary. She concocted a plan to isolate them from the source of their power and study them in isolation.

She created *Purgatory*.

Purgatory was originally the dwarf sister-planet of Pluto, Charon. But after decades of effort the Stakosha, using cloned slave-laborers and drones, transformed Charon into a hollow world, with an artificial sun blazing in the center and artificial intelligences that could maintain and manage the world within. The Stakosha lifemakers crafted a complex and bountiful ecology that could sustain the energy and food needs of the research laboratory population for the centuries they might need to study the human Gods and their drone technicians spun up mighty research computers, capable of analyzing the data they were getting.

Within a scant century, the Stakosha had not only prepared Purgatory, they had also cracked some fundamental mysteries of the cosmos that had been bedeviling their science for millenia. Most importantly?

Point to point teleportation. By studying the movement of psychopomps like Hermes and Anubis and similar gods, they were able to replicate the effects of these gods. Albeit, significantly less comfortably and far less accurately.

Now, they just needed some dupes.

SOME DUPES

The early Christian church's history was not well documented by the Stakosha. The actual existence of their Christ figure and their divine figurehead was missed by the Stakosha as they focused on the creation of Purgatory. By the time that the Stakosha began to enact their plan to capture the gods, the Christian Church had gained acceptance in the Roman Empire, and was converting from its early traditions of anti-imperial activism and pacifism to becoming a more pliable tool of the Romans.

However, the Stakosha were not up to the quiet and subtle infiltration of an entire organization of the size and scale of the early Church - even with primitive technology, the humans posed too many unknowns for the relatively inexperienced Stakosha. After all, every previous first contact had been at bayonet-point, not by infiltration and subversion! So, instead of targeting the church directly, they scouted and found a minor schismatic sect that could serve as their on the ground patsies.

To these schismatics, they delivered a teleport targeting beacon - disguised as an appropriately mystical artifact - and provided orbital intelligence, limited fire support, and the covert activity of Enforcers and combat-clones to clear their path to the courts of various human Gods. One by one, the pantheons of the world were whisked away to Purgatory, until the world of Earth was left with nothing but legends and those Gods that weren't able to be captured by the Stakosha and their minions.

Those remaining Gods, aware of the mysterious danger that threatened them, withdrew into seclusion and would become increasingly minor figures as belief in them waned as their followers were killed or converted by other faiths. With few exceptions, the people of Earth forgot their past and moved into a future shaped only by mundane means...

SIDEBAR: Which Gods?

I will not give you a list of which Gods were snatched and which were left behind on Earth. The reason why is simple: There's a *fuckton* of Gods and I'm *extremely white*. I know the Greek Pantheon and the Celtic Pantheon and the Norse Pantheon and a bit of the Hindu Pantheon (but holy shit, take all my knowledge of them with a grain of fucking salt!)

So, here's the guidelines that any particular GM should keep in mind.

Firstly: Not every mythological god *actually exists*. A "real" God needs both a human born with the God Node to exist and for that human being to match the stories of a mythological god enough that the feedback cycle begins and they are molded to fit the tales of that God. So, you can decide which gods are "real" and which are just stories, metaphors, or non-physical.

Secondly: While the Stakosha canonically conned a small sect of Christians (and thus, snatched the European, Middle Eastern, and some African gods), they had an orbital presence and didn't really give a shit about human prejudices and beliefs and would snatch anyone they wanted. If you want Purgatory to be populated with kidnapped members of various First People's pantheons, go for it! I assure you, you know more about them than I do and can do an *infinitely better* job of representing them.

Thirdly: Real and "real" are two different things. Gods aren't superheroes in our world - they're a conduit to the divine in our ordinary lives. Theology is deeply personal to many people, and not everyone is going to be comfortable with some Gods being characters that are explained by science and wibbly brain mutations - when in doubt, talk to your players and tailor your Purgatory to suit your table and your own take on faith.

PURGATORY IN REVOLT!

On the one hand, the Purgatory experiment was a stunning success! The Stakosha researchers, able to isolate and examine their captive gods, were able to learn more about the fundamental workings of certain physical laws than they had for their entire history. They invented amazing innovations, including functional inertial dampeners, FTL travel, point to point teleportation, nanotech guided paracausal activity (also known as 'magic' to most people), and more!

On the other hand, after three years of study, the Gods and their followers subverted the slave-clones that the Stakosha used for their middle management duties and waged a brutal uprising that ended up killing the Stakosha leadership and reducing the rest into abject servitude to their former subjects. The war was devastating to the internal structure of Purgatory's automation, corrupting or destroying its AI administrators, wrecking the comfortable homes of the Stakosha scientists, and generally leaving everything in ruins.

So, honestly, if the Imperial Court had been privy to these events, they would have described it as 'mixed', all things considered.

The Gods divvied up the land under their followers, converted the surviving Stakosha clones to their worship, and began to settle in for their dominion over Purgatory. Over time, the truth was lost - and as the scant few surviving Stakosha died one by one from accident or violence, their children were born into a world unaware that they were anything but elves.

They forgot their galactic Empire. They forgot their arrogance and their cruelty.

They became a part of the culture of Purgatory.

From a certain perspective, this was the most incredible, stark improvement in the culture of the Stakosha since their species had first begun to blight the galaxy with their cruelty, bloodlust and dreams of conquest.

From another, it was *really* not great, because they also forgot that reinforcements would be arriving to check up on the situation a few thousand years from now...

GAZETTER

There exists several brands of Purgatory, depending on the whim of the Stakosha who designed and built her. You can choose whichever sounds most fun!

HIGH SEAS PURGATORY

Purgatory is dominated by a single massive ocean, which takes up an entire hemisphere of the world. The ocean itself is dotted with dozens if not hundreds of islands - some large enough to hold several cities, others too small for more than a palm tree or two. Beyond the verdant coastline, there is nothing but inhospitable deserts and thick, overgrown jungles. There are a few cities inland - most hug the coast or sit on comfortable islands.

Trade is carried along seas and rivers, and warfare alike is fought in desperate boarding actions and in naval invasions of cities. Gods of Sea and Storm are dominant, while the ancient relics of Purgatory are often concealed within the deepest jungles, the highest deserts, or the crushing depths of the ocean.

The center of Purgatory is dominated by a glowing orb of white light that, at night, dims down to plunge the world into the silvery dimness of artificial moonlight. The sun creates intense temperatures and humid climates, and the evening is considered a time of relief and relaxation.

FROSTPUNK PURGATORY

Purgatory is modeled on the endless tundras of some distant Stakosha ice-world. Liquid water can be found in rivers that periodically freeze due to the shifting of the internal climate, and cities are built on those rivers, sheltered from the wind and enemies by thick, heavy walls. The sun shines dimly upon this world, and snow sometimes seems never ending. However, there is a stark beauty to this place, and the deep tundras hide many secrets.

Warfare is fought on foot - and in smaller numbers, as the climate does not allow for large populations or easy travel. Gods from warmer climates pine, endlessly, for their half-forgotten memories of Earth, while magic for warding off the chill is most prized.

The ruins of Purgatory here are to be found in deep ice crevasses and labyrinthine dungeons, braved by curious explorers and desperate adventurers. The further you get to the bottom, the warmer it gets and the more intact the ruins are, heightening the danger.

SKYSCAPE PURGATORY

What if, instead of trying to contain their research to the moon of Charon, the Stakosha had a slightly more dramatic flourish and constructed their research facility in the endless cloudy atmosphere...of Saturn? The initial hot-lab would be a hovering city-spire approximately twenty kilometers wide and thirty long, with an internal atmosphere that is lighter than the Saturnian atmosphere beyond. Sustained by vast balloons, the city-spire would merely be the nexus point for Purgatorian civilization...after their revolt, the Gods traveled beyond, using their incredible powers to craft many more floating city-spires.

Now, thousands of years later, these spires drift in a loose formation through the vastness of Saturn, with sky-ships born from city to city. Breather-masks, crafted by gods like Haphestus or Brigid (or non-white ones I don't know) adorn the faces of these crews, while genetically engineered skyborn wildlife are hunted for food and crafting supplies, and crude telescopes watch for meteorites to catch to forge into magic blades of unusual potency...

The ruins of Purgatory here are to be found in the lowest levels of the central city-spire, in secondary lab-habs that were left drifting, in orbital facilities that still lurk among the moons of Saturn, and in the digital memories of the very city-spire that the gods live within. Warfare is limited within the Spire, but waged with utter ferocity in the endless skies beyond.

TICK TOCK TICK TOCK PURGATORY

Purgatory is dying. Whatever terrain it had had before the rebellion, it doesn't have it anymore - instead, the entire side of the whole moon has been blown apart, leaving Purgatory exposed to the cold harshness of the infinite vacuum. But, with the technology of the Stakosha and the powers of the Gods working in desperate tandem, life has persisted...

For a time.

But now? Now Purgatory is reaching its terminal end state. The scant surviving ecosystems and the huddled together cities are reaching resource shortages and feedback cycles that will lead, within a few generations, for there to be no worshipers left for a god to even call upon anymore. And without worshipers, the gods will die, and Purgatory will be an empty tomb. This is a Purgatory that needs, more than any other, heroes to change the status quo.

The secrets of this Purgatory are not to be found. They've already been found - and are being jealously kept by Gods and mortals alike who would rather everyone die than they give up one thin sliver of their power and prestige. They must be won from their power-maddened hands before their short sightedness dooms us all!

CHARACTERS

PREMISES

The first question, after picking what kind of Purgatory you want, but before you make a single character, before you even come up with CONCEPTS for characters...is what is the premise of your game?

Here are some suggestions!

- 1) Ruin Seekers and Treasure Hunters! You're all people native to Purgatory who need to get some gold to rub together, so you want to head out and kick in some old Stakosha ruins and find the goodies within!
- 2) Agents of the Gods! The Gods are caught in a perpetual struggle for who gets all the marbles. Worshipers must be won, new threats must be spied out, and wars must be fought and won. But since Gods fighting Gods can lead to a God's *death*, Gods tend to send their minions out. And those that win get their Gods' rewards...
- 3) ISEKAI'D! You were unlucky enough to find the point to point teleporter disguised as a magical artifact on Earth, with your two to three friends and *wham!* Now you're on Purgatory, surrounded by ancient gods! On second thought, this idea might be kinda unsuited to this setting, seems like no one would like that.

SPECIES

There are several species that dwell in Purgatory.

Humans: Your average homo-saps. You know them! You love them!

Lilin: A byproduct species created by an unknown god to be their servants, spies and seductresses, the Lilin are an all female species that look a great deal like traditional artwork of devils and demons from the Christian Church.

Elves: Unwitting (and possibly unwilling) inheritors of a vast galactic empire, Elves look a great deal like graceful, shorter, lither humans with pointy ears and pastel colored hair. They are immortal without needing to spend a trait on it because, unless your game gets really ambitious on the timeframe front, immortality doesn't actually matter.

Lizardfolk: Once combat slaves of the Stakosha, the lizardolk breed in vast numbers, age rapidly, and die just as young. The grotesquery of the fact they live to be thirty before hitting old age, then die at forty, while their creators are *literally immortal* has only begun to change with recent advances in magic, and by the creation of lizard demigods who are innately immortal.

Goblins: Once created to fly Stakosha starships, goblins are the perfect space farer. But since they're now living on a bronze aged planet, they just have the fact they take up half the food, half the air, half the water and half the space of human sized people to carry them. Oh, also, their enhanced reflexes and improved eyesight! They have that too!

Valkyrie: Winged humanoids created by a union of Gods, Goddesses, and the crystalline robotic-AIs used by the Stakosha for management and security, Valkyrie should be impossible. Like, how does Aphroditie even get knocked up *by an AI*? Well, she found a way, and Valkyrie are able to fly, are born with incredible strength, and seem to think they're better than everyone else.

SPOT RULES

Improvisations: There are two kinds of Improvisation. The first is **Godhood** and the second is **Paracusal Nanotechnological Attunement** (but everyone just calls it **Magic**.)

Godhood is Earth Shaking and Corrupting. However, the Corruption Track has been renamed as *Fate*.

1-2 Fate: You have begun to accrue stories about yourself. Once per adventure, you must perform a minor action reflective of the legend around you or take -1 to your Heat Cap ongoing until you rectify this situation.

3-4 Fate: Your stories have begun to shift your attitudes and opinions. Change 2 skill points to reflect your new status (this can put you above your normal skill cap - I.E, you can take 1 point away from tech to put yourself at 3 Melee despite being level 1, to better reflect your war-god status.)

4-6 Fate: You...have a hard time remembering who you were. Gain a new negative trait: Worshipped.

7+ Fate: You are the God they think you are and become an NPC controlled by the GM. This can only be corrected via nullification (which removes your access to this improvisation) and shedding fate until you're back under the 7 Fate threshold.

Magic is Specialist and Fatiguing - it represents tapping into the nano that fills every inch of Purgatory and is carried beyond it in your very cells to flash-create paracausal events via incredibly advanced femto-scale engineering.

NEW NEGATIVE TRAIT!

Worshiped: You need a number of people to actively worship you as priests, maidens, cultists, 24 hours, 7 days a week, equal to the highest level of improvisation you are attempting to cast. So, for example, if you want to scry on your enemies on the other side of Purgatory, that'd be a +15 range. The +15 scale for people is 100 - meaning your cult MUST BE 100 people, no matter how many metric steps you have!

Cybernetics: **SPECIAL!** These "cybernetics" are only strength and mobility mods and they aren't "cybernetics" - they're there to simulate the ability of the Valkyrie to fly, punch through steel with their bare hands, and generally be terrifying. You cannot use the Wealth Anchor - Valkyries are either uncertain of their place in the world (personal anchors) or they are kinda...you know...arrogant pricks (social anchor.)

Wealth: Scrabbling for funds is the standard mode for adventurers in Purgatory. You have to have SOME reason to go loot those ancient Stakosha ruins!

GEAR

All costs are in *Gold* (if you're on Purgatory), with *Dollars* (if you're on Earth for some reason) and, if you ever manage to unify Purgatory and Earth into some kind of alliance against the Stakosha threat, then they use *Credits*. So, with a long enough campaign, you can use every possible type of currency! Whack!

Suggested Gear: Ancient Weapons, Modern Weapons (Either ancient Stakosha laser weaponry that can be fluffed as "magical" or Isekai'd earthlings packin' heat.)

Nullification Darts | Cost: 3 gold

Effect: Once per scene, you can throw these to negate anything that uses magic to empower itself, creating a *Nullified* Oomph with a Personal (Finesse) or (Athletics) check. The more oomphs you get, the better the nullification dart hits and the longer it lasts (due to there being more oomphs.)

Nullified: Magic cannot be cast (any tactic that is narratively themed as "magic" is unusable) and any scale upgrades from magic are negated. I.E, a Valkyrie warrior who is superhumanly (+10 armor) tough becomes regular tough (+0 armor.)

Short Ranged Teleport Beacon | Cost: 10 gold

Effect: Once per adventure, activate to teleport to a known teleport shrine on Purgatory or, with a diff 1 Tech (Computers) check, retarget to any area. If you are aiming somewhere other than a shrine, one person in the party, nominated by the GM, takes 11 damage, immediately. This damage can be reduced on a 1 per 1 ratio by getting oomphs on the teleporter's check.

R&R | Cost: 1/5/10 Gold

Effect: Representing anything from luxuriating in a public Romanesque bath, to enjoying a skaald's tale, to just getting dicked down *real* hard by Anubis, rest and relaxation increases your Heat Cap by 1 for the adventure at the 1 gold level, by 2 at 5 gold, and an astounding 3 at 10 gold.

THREATS

NEW SHOCK SPENDS

Miracle! (X Shock): The Gods create miracles as a matter of course. If a God opposes your activity and one of their minions is in the fight and has a focus that allows the God to reach into the area and influence things, then create and Improvisation, costing 1 Shock per step along the metrics that you're hitting. However, you have a limit based on the cult size of the God (just like the Worshiped negative trait), which you **must inform players of**. It's common knowledge which Gods have what sized cult, and is a big reason for PCs to run away or attempt diplomacy instead of a pitched battle.

NEW VILLAINS

Basilisk (Danger: 4)

Health: (1) 3/6 | Armor: 0 | Evasion: 2 | Preferred Range: 4-13 (Petrification Gaze)

Movement: 6+3

Tactics

Scale +3: A Basilisk is pretty fucking big by human standards. This means that it takes damage as a vehicle. At 3 damage, it is crippled and can only crawl around, but it can still gaze around itself. At 6 damage, it is dead as hell.

Gazer Beam: A Basilisk can place 6 Petrification Oomphs, which may be distributed as you see fit to any character within range, which are permanent unless removed with a magical skill or improvisation. Unlike normal damage, any level of cover can completely negate all Petrification oomphs

Valkyrie Mercenary (Danger: 9)

Health: 2 | Armor: 1 | Evasion: 3 | Preferred Range: 0-1/5-10 (Swords/Javelins)

Movement: 12

Tactics

Flying: They can move in three dimensions easily.

Strength: Narratively, they have the +10 scale for strength and in melee, do 10 damage.
THOCK!: Deal 10 damage with a Javelin.

Stakosha Drone Bot (Danger: 0.5)

Health: 1 | Armor: 2 | Evasion: 1 | Preferred Range: 5-10 (Kinetic Turret Gun)

Movement: 4

Tactics

Budda Budda Budda!: Do 3 damage in a Small AOE three times. These can be stacked, if you prefer!

Really Dumb: Doesn't give a shit about allies being in the AOE. Do not even bother trying to place its shooting anywhere but in the most direct way imaginable.

Arrogant Demigod (Danger: 16)

Health: 4 | Armor: 0+28 | Evasion: 5 | Preferred Range: 1-20 (magic, swords, fists, bow & arrows)

Miracles: Can create Improvisations with up to 6 steps with a maximum result of +6 to augment an action (increasing movement speed, giving an AOE and Damage buff to their attack, increasing their armor *even more* just to be a dick.)

Smite: Distribute 10 damage to any target in range

Weakness: Choose a single narrative feature (silver bullets, certain relics, worshipers providing powers, magic crystals, uncut hair) that provides their armor. Once used, their armor becomes 0.

CHAPTER TWELVE: BLOOD DIMMED TIDE

BACKGROUND

No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by an intelligence greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water.

But this intellect, terrible and vast and timeless as it was, could never have guessed that the momentary, mayfly lives of the creatures it plotted and schemed and engineered around concealed a contagion that would prove the ultimate downfall of an empire that had stood since the solar system congealed from the nebular gasses. But can we, humble readers, blame Mars and her Martians for their arrogance and overweening presumption that they were the masters of the fate of humanity?

After all, even we did not know about the apex predators that existed, unnoticed and unexamined among our population - invisible as the viruses recently discovered by a most esteemed African physiologist - were the beings that would prove to be our saviors from Mars her legions.

The not so humble *aeterna hominis* - the Vampire.

INVASION FROM MARS!

The War began, seemingly contained, in the English countryside. The entire world read of the men from Mars, who had landed near Woking, Surrey, and their spectacular Cylinder. But within a matter of hours, what had been a curiosity became a horror as the Martians unleashed the first of their terrible weapons - the Heat Ray - and obliterated from the world thirty men, women and children that had gathered to watch their emergence from the Cylinder. The immediate reaction of the most powerful empire on Earth was to deploy her entire military apparatus and the world waited for the news to come, that the Martians had been rebuffed for their callous brutality.

Instead, three days later, London was under Martian control and a full third of the British population laid dead and unburied.

A mass exodus of humanity from England was overtaken by the Martian war machine. The skies, long thought to be the domain of the birds and a few enthusiastic balloonists, became the iron handed home of the alien invaders. After the solitary victory won on the open field of battle by humanity by the now world famous HMS *Thunder Child*, the Martians wasted no time at all to

obliterate humanity's maritime powers from the air. Ports in America, in Africa, in distant China, even in the farthest reaches of Australia, were immolated by flights of Flying Machines.

Black smoke rained upon the cities of Europe, and a vast refugee army battled with the armies of France and Germany - both seeking to use the choked railroad and road systems. Hundreds of thousands died in the panic, and then hundreds of thousands more died as the armies of Europe were set upon by Martian tripods and flying machines.

It seemed that humanity's dominance of the world had come to an end - and possibly, the human species would be consigned to the same fate as the dodo and the long vanished dinosaur.

Until...

A MOST UNLIKELY SAVIOR

From the edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they came. They had lived in secret among humanity for centuries - quietly drinking the blood they needed to sustain their unnatural lives, avoiding those that would hunt and slay them. But with their primary food source under threat, it seemed some were galvanized to action. While many vampires minor and major alike were more than happy to allow humanity to weather the storm while retreating from the onrushing wave of the Martian invasion, the most powerful of the vampire community decided to take action - a lonely count from the distant land of Transylvania.

Dracula.

Where once there were a scant handful of vampires, within a few months of the Martian invasion, there were scores, the hundreds. With their preternatural abilities and remarkable strength, the vampires organized and led counter attacks against the Martians. The first victories were merely against the scouting Tripods - but soon, the first true liberatory strikes in the war were laid. In the ruins of Germany and Poland, in Austria and the Ottoman Empire, the army of Count Dracula grew in strength and power and the Martians were forced to rely upon more and more terrible weapons.

The first they unleashed upon Paris.

THE ATOMIC BOMBS

The theory behind atomic weaponry had been speculated on shortly before the Invasion, with the discovery of the radiative element of Carolinium. But none could have imagined the horror of them when they landed upon the city of Paris, which had continued gallant resistance against the Martian invaders, despite their Black Smoke and their Heat Rays. The French had been emboldened by the rumors of an army that could stand against the Invaders, and so, they were

brought doubly low when Martian flying machines darkened their skies and dropped the atomic bomb on their fair city.

Rather than exploding with raw force, the transmutative elements within the atomic bombs caused the air itself to catch fire in the area around the bombs, which landed throughout the city. The firestorms they created consumed men, women, children, and the city itself - and yet, where even the most terrible human incendiary weapons might gutter out after a day or two, the atomic bombs in the city burned, and burned, and burned...and burn still, even now after the end of hostilities!

Worse, still, the Martians had been idle in the lands they had occupied. From the work camps and harvesting facilities they had crafted, they had found the most unusual tool to use to stymie the unexpected resistance of Count Dracula.

THE DEEP FRIENDSHIP OF TARS TARKAS AND DR. ABRAHAM VAN HELSING

Using their cruel mind probes, the Martians determined that one of their many captives was an expert in the vampires that now bedeviled their invasion attempts. Dr. Abraham Van Helsing, captured in his homeland when it was conquered, had survived within the Martian slave camps, and was now transfixed with a control collar and sent out in the company of the finest warriors that the Martians could bring...for the invasion now had gone for so long that the Tripod Builders (the mightiest of the Martian caste, who ruled all of their home world under the terrible power of their war machines) were now forced to call upon their auxiliaries.

And thus, to the world of Earth was brought the Red and Green Martians. Of those, the Green Martians were put to the unenviable task of battling human *francs-tireurs* and guerilla warriors that seethed everywhere the Tripods were not.

Of the Greens, the mightiest and most fearsome was Tars Tarkas.

It was to him that Dr. Van Helsing was given, and together, they set out into the war torn lands of Europe to find and slay Dracula. A most unusual and unexpected friendship was born from the immense Green Martian and the diminutive Dutchman, and both confided in the other how badly they did hate their MARTian masters...but both knew how little choice they had, bearing the slave collars of the Tripod builders.

Together, they infiltrated vampire territory and, one dark and raining night, they did what the Martians had been unable to do for the entire war.

They slew Count Vladimir Dracula and put an end to his resistance against the invaders from the fourth planet.

THE RETURN OF ADAM

With the Martians once more resurgent and the vampire forces left in disarray, their most powerful leader slain, the war took yet another unusual turn. A century before, a minor member of Swiss nobility had delved into arts some say are better left forgotten - and the creation he left behind had not been destroyed, but rather, preserved in the frozen arctic.

Now, making his way back to his homeland, this creature, this monster, this Adam, crafted by a modern prometheus, found the world he had left behind irrevocably altered, with monsters far greater than he afoot. And it was here that the final turning of the war took place, by greatest coincidence.

Adam came upon Tars Tarkas and Dr. Van Helsing, mid-flight from the vengeful vampires that hunted them. Hearing their tale of woe, Adam revealed his own terrible strength and tore the slave collars from their throats - in time enough for the vampires to come upon them all. If the vampires had been less vengeful, then the story may have turned out far differently, with Adam, Tars Tarkas and Dr. Van Helsing slain there in that quiet clearing. But the vampires wished for their whole coven to see the end of the men who had murdered Dracula, and so, they brought all three back to the stronghold of the Vampires.

There, Tars Tarkas was able to say his piece, to tell of how Mars herself had been occupied by the Tripod Builders, and that if his people could be freed, then even those mighty lords might be felled. With his knowledge of the Tripod Builders and their combined efforts...a chance might be found!

THE DARING ASSAULT!

With the Tripod Builders assaulting on every front, a daring plan was concocted. Using Tars Tarkas' knowledge as a guide, they knew the place to strike: London, where the Martians had built their first and largest 'star port', a facility that allowed them to bring in more and more supplies and materials for their invasion. By taking this port, they could acquire their own atomic bombs and, using fliers, rain fire and devastation on Martian bases across Europe and, in a single terrible strike, end the war!

Adam, vampires, humans, and freed Green and Red martians all attacked - utilizing an experimental submersible provided by the infamous and dreaded sea pirate Nemo Dakkar - the Martians in the heart of London. The star port was captured and the invasion cylinders bringing in yet more Martians were sent flying back into space via the use of the star port's gravitic catapult, while Martian flying machines rained atomic fire on the heads of stunned Martians.

Ruin and despair now reigned supreme across Europe and large swaths of Asia, Africa and America - atomic fires burned, the red weed spread in every direction, tens of millions laid dead in choking heaps beneath the pal of the Black Smoke... it is in this hell-ruin of a world that, for the first time in their many thousands of years of Empire, that the Tripod Builders emerged from their vast war machines and brought forth the flag of Truce.

A BLEAK PEACE

Despite the victories won by the Unusual Alliance, the Tripod Builders retained the orbital supremacy and the majority of their atomic weapons. Without a Star Port to accept new arrivals, they could still be reinforced with scout cylinders (the same that landed upon Woking, in the halcyon days of 1899.) Meanwhile, the Unusual Alliance were finding more and more strangeness to welcome.

Vampires had been joined by their ancient enemy, the Lycanthropes. Adam had rediscovered the art of reanimation that had been used to bring him to his life and had created for himself a wife, Eve, which portended a new race to join the many races of Man. Ancient sorcerers, forced into the light by desperate circumstances, revealed that they could do more than parlor tricks. Demons and devils, strange beasts known only by Jewish mystics, and odder creatures yet, all of them were called together.

Knowing any further fighting would doom all sides, an Armistice was signed in Normandy. Europe was given over to the Tripod Builders - being the worst smote by the war and unfit for habitation for humanity - while refugees were forced to find new homes in a Vast Diaspora. Once humbled powers in the east began to awaken and become mighty and proud again, with the emergence of China and Japan as imperial powers.

As the home to the only semi-functional Star Port, London became a contentious item - but at last, a compromise was reached. A great Shroud was placed above the city, cloaking it in permanent darkness, allowing it to be the home to the vastly expanded population of Vampires, who's long views and calculating intelligences were closer in temperament than anyone else to the Tripod Builders...despite their enmity, they could be accepted as stewards of the Star Port and London.

A COLD TOMORROW

It is the year 1914. The World has entered into war unlike any other: A Cold War - named for it is fought with spies and secrets, in fear of the terrible destructive power of weaponry on all sides, and for the temperatures that the world has reached. The ash-pal from the still burning atomic bombs and transformative properties of the red weed have combined to block the sunlight and reduce the carbon in the atmosphere, cooling the world inch by inch to something chillier than it has been.

Humanity soldiers on with technology and magic, while their Unusual Allies find their own places in this world. The Martian remains in Europe build their queer colony-cities and practice their own enigmatic arts. No one knows if their next invasion will come tomorrow...but people have begun to hope that there will be peace, a peace secured by iron-hulled and cavorite powered star-battleships that ply the orbital seas about our embittered world.

Explorations to the jungles of Venus, the oceans of Ganymede, and even the ice-moors and haunted wastelands of Titan have all revealed that there is more than even the Martians expected in our grand Solar System - and yet, all this new boundary pushing comes, forever, back to Shrouded London and her Star Port and her vampire masters and their own schemes.

Will this era continue? An *Epoque Ombrale* of knives and secrets? Or will the next war, the Second War Between the Worlds, be sparked and plunge all into madness and fire yet again?

GAZETTEER

THE GREAT POWERS

In the year of 1914 the world is straddled by five Great Powers, each poised upon the edge of a knife, war kept at bay by a mystifying array of alliances and the terrible threat of the atomic bombs that each side has stockpiled - a balance that becomes more precarious every day with the dizzying pace of technology and strange knowledge. These powers are the Unusual Allies, the Tripod Builders, Liberated China and the United States of America - though, in these increasingly turbulent days, there remains the danger that a minor power might unlock some new breakthrough, take some outstanding risk, or perform some daring act that will completely upend the applecart.

THE UNUSUAL ALLIES

The Unusual Allies - also known simply as the Londoners - hold power far beyond what their geographic size and population density would suggest. This is both due not only because the population of Shrouded London is almost sixty percent non-humans, but also because of the curious situation of Shrouded London herself and the unusual practices of what could be called her government.

The demographics are easier to explain and more starkly evident in their capacities: When a city with a population of six million souls has, among those souls, two million vampires - all of which are potent masters of magic and supernatural expressions of their enhanced bodies - it becomes an entirely different entity on the global stage! While the vampires are the largest group of non-humans in Shrouded London, they are joined by everything from Green and Red Martians, the reborn Prometheans spawned from Adam and Eve, golems crafted by the Jewish diaspora, and yet more oddities.

It is their government that is more terrifying to the other great powers than their people: The Unusual Allies do not have one. Instead of the dominion of a state, Shrouded London is a consensual direct democracy, with decisions openly debated on and reached via the use of Martian derived communication devices that allow for easy collection and tabulation of such things.

The Allies, more, are aided by the fact that they have access to the only functional StarPort in the entire world - allowing them to easily launch anything they wish into orbit. Many nations must pay through the nose to use it - and these resources are then distributed equally throughout London to the people who live there. This openness also makes Shrouded London the capital of spies - everyone, it seems, wishes to be here...if only to make sure their enemies don't get up to anything shady!

THE TRIPOD BUILDERS

Ruling a devastated western Europe, the Tripod Builders can give the Allies a run for their money for how many enemies they have - nearly every human being on the planet has had someone killed or maimed by them during their war and every single Red and Green Martian on Earth had been their slave before the Emancipation of 1899. And yet, the Tripod Builders remain not only militarily powerful but economically vital. Begrudging trade exists between them and the other powers - and none can say if it is merely another weapon they are using in their subtle war against humanity.

The society of the Tripod Builders is, much like their fearsome war machines, built with a small caste of leaders at the top and a great many 'appendages' at the bottom and edges - all enforced with direct psychic communication and dominion. While the Armistice forced them to free the slaves that were not in their territory from their mental dominion, spies and observers in Europe report seeing vast numbers of mind-slaves of various kinds toiling in fields, collecting the red weed that they consume, building machines, and harvesting raw materials.

These slaves are ignored, for the most part, by other powers...for the Tripod Builders are seemingly eager to sell their advanced technology to all who wish it. In exchange for resources and immunity from military attack, they have given over holographic projectors and zero point energy generators and favorite gravity engines. Are the Tripod Builders seeking to turn over a new leaf?

SIDEBAR: NOPE!

The Tripod Builders are giving to humanity technology that is three or four centuries more advanced than the norm - in short, black boxes that work when you push a button. But if they break, you have one recourse...to buy a new one. The technology is so useful that many people buy the tools to supercharge their own economic goals and aims - but then find themselves reliant on the Tripod Builders for replacement parts. Imperialism with an advert and monthly subscription...

LIBERATED CHINA

During the 19th Century, China - once a great imperial power in its own right - faced humiliation after humiliation. The full list of manipulations and crimes enacted upon them by European powers is too long to easily recount here, but the end result was clear enough: China teetered

on the edge of a collapse into a general civil war. But while the Martian flying machines did bring death to their shores - attacking ports and obvious railroad heads - the stroke fell hardest on the powers that had oppressed and exploited them for a long century.

The result was a civil war - but it was a *lot* faster and a *lot* less bloody than anticipated. Without outside meddling to arm one side or the other, and with the Imperial Court in disarray, it would have been entirely up to who had the most guns...save that a cadre of forward thinking revolutionaries managed to tunnel underneath a Martian base, dynamite their barracks, and steal sixteen Tripods. With their logistic and military capacities suddenly magnified by several orders, the Red Guard founded the People's Liberated Republic of China, modeling themselves after the writings of Marx, Engels, Mao and more.

The current situation in China is one of growing prosperity and deep struggle. While their external enemies were occupied, interior elements - loyalists to the old regime, would be warlords, anticommunist elements - continue their spates of banditry and violence in the hinterlands...but far worse is the scourge of the Red Weed, which grows like wildfire throughout the fertile regions of the Northern Plain and has infested Beijing itself. While foreign wags may jest about the double meaning of red, the ecological results have been devastating and the famine has driven many Chinese to flee the country, bringing their ideology with them.

It also is why the Chinese have the second largest astro-naval cavorite program in the world. . Due to their ideological similarities with the Unusual Allies, the Chinese have a relatively easy time using the London Star Port. With their captured Martian equipment, they have more than enough to learn the production of cavorite. These two facts led to the construction of delicate and beautiful Sky Gardens, to produce the food lost to the Red Weed. This required the construction of their dreadnaughts, which has led to the recent Sino-American Astronaval Tensions - a major point of strife in the human world.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Under the newly minted Presidency of Woodrow Wilson, the United States is a nation that is being rebuilt and reforged...but not into anything particularly charming or pure. With the fires of xenophobia stoked to unimaginable levels by the catastrophic damage inflicted by the Martian invasion, then driven even further by the revelations of 'true evil' in the form of vampires, werewolves, the progeny of Doctor Frankenstein, and worst of all, by the emergence of not one but *two* large communist world powers, the United States has become an ugly thing of iron, blood and riveted hatred.

The Klu Klux Klan, a terror organization from the post-civil-war south, now holds a place of privilege in American society that almost eclipses the church in some cases. Capital and capitalism both have free reign as workers rights are trampled under 'wartime necessities' and strikes, unions and leftist organization are seen as nothing but the byproduct of vampiric decadence and foreign infiltration.

With the immense industrial capacity of the American heartland only lightly damaged by the invasion - the majority of the Martian attacks on American soil was carried out by the vile Black Smoke, not by tripods and heat rays - the United States has the largest human astrofleet and several facilities that could almost match the London Star Port. Through this, they have begun to expand the increasingly flimsy pretext of the Monroe Doctrine to wealthy outer-solar holdings: Asteroid mines, worked by the desperately poor in dangerous conditions. These resources flow in and are used to enrich the nation further.

Subversive elements simmer and crackle beneath the surface throughout the land. Leftist movements, racial separatist movements, religiously persecuted minorities, criminal organizations like the Mafia, and even vile hatemongers who think that the current state of America *isn't vile enough*.

THE SCRAMBLE FOR THE SYSTEM

Nothing ever changes. With cavorite cores and airtight steel, the imperial powers of Earth have claimed the sea of stars in much the same way they had once claimed the sea of Earth. The nebular hypothesis postulated in the turn of the century has been proven true: The solar system formed out of gasses surrounding our star, with the outermost portions forming first, and the innermost portions only forming once the heat of our newborn sun had faded somewhat.

Thus, the youngest world is Mercury - so early in its evolutionary history that its warm oceans and constant volcanos have only recently begun to bloom with oxygenating life, much as Earth did once, billions of years ago. Venus is analogous to the Earth's very own Jurassic era and is blanketed in wet, warm clouds that conceal sprawling jungles full of Venusian dinosaurs that are now a delight and fascination for naturalists and explorers.

Mars, likewise, is a vision of Earth's future, with an atmosphere slowly bleeding away into space and with the parched surface tended to by the frantic construction and maintenance of an elaborate canal network.

The Moon deserves mention: Though it has yet to be confirmed, rumors persist that there exists a vast and complex insectile society of antbeasts that live within the moon's hollow shell, retreating underground when night freezes the moon's atmosphere to the ground. If that is the case, then the Moon may be soon the site of a terrible war between these lunar insects and one of the more belligerent Great Powers.

Beyond are the mighty giant worlds. Jupiter is the largest world, whose mighty surface has a gravity almost two times as much as Earth's - for all that she is large, Jupiter is riven with naturally forged cavorite deposits that reduce the normal flow of gravity. The passage of time has worn down much of her geography into vast plains of bright dust, visible as striations from the surface of the Earth. The only sign of whatever civilization that once lived on this giant world is a huge red 'dot' - much like the ancient Peruvian figures that are, ere now, visible from the orbit of our world.

Next lies Saturn, which is still elder, but is graced by relic and ruin that beggars the imagination: Vast rings of glittering citadels, crafted by some ancient Saturnian species. None know if they still dwell there or not, for the citadels are warded by the Nightmare Child, an automaton the size of the Earth's very own moon, capable of crushing any ship that dares to close within its mighty grasp.

Beyond Saturn lies the twin worlds of Neptune and Uranus, which are the smallest of the outermost worlds, and have only been sighted by telescope from out-system explorers. No Earthman has set foot upon them, and none know what lurks upon their surfaces.

Each of these worlds is vied for by the Great Powers. For those with people upon them (Earth's Moon, Venus) this can be for cheap labor. For those without, then it could be for their raw materials, resources, and most interesting of all, the relics of ancient civilizations that dwelled in this system when the sun was younger and hotter, and the inner system was naught but nebular gasses.

CHARACTERS

PREMISES

With a big wide open setting like *Blood Dimmed Tide*, you need a good solid *hook*. Here's several!

1. Vampires kicked open the door on the supernatural, but the world still doesn't know the full extent of the Strangeness that pervades itself. Archeologists could unearth any number of ancient evils from Egypt or South America or Antarctica, then have to deal with the consequences as they unfold on the war ravaged planet.
2. Espionage is a way of life for each power in the *Epoque Ombrale* and a good thing too - the wrong move by any Great Power could unleash a *second* Great War, one fought across the solar system with cavorite battleships and atomic bombs. The Unusual Allies would need a crack team of specialists to keep secrets, uncover secrets, maybe do a little sabotage...
3. The furthest reaches of the Solar System are full of chances for exploration and exploitation. American colonies on Venus extract oil while enslaved venusians are worked to death on brand new cotton plantations - while glittering ruins around Saturn beg to be explored. What even *is* the Nightmare Child? Can you defeat it? Or talk to it?
4. The Tripod Builders, despite the Armistice, remain a deadly threat to all free-thinking life. Europe under their tentacles is a true tyranny of telepathic domination and the liberation of it will take cunning, stealth, and a shadowy war. Three things vampires and the Unusual Allies are *quite* good at.

5. You can always just start The Great War Two and have an entire military campaign fought in space, on the dusty plains of Mars, in the ruined streets of America, all backlit by the still blazing light of atomic bombs sputtering to their end. Will you be able to claw survival from the claws of total annihilation?

SPECIES

There are several species that immediately leap to mind for Blood Dimmed Tide - but they tend to be best expressed by power selection, rather than specific traits. Still, here's the roleplaying lowdown of these species!

Vampires: Vampires in Blood Dimmed Tide are **not** vampires as depicted in most media. Oh, yes, they're undead, they drink blood, are afraid of crosses and garlic, can't enter buildings if they aren't invited, and can turn other people into vampires - but those are all trappings. Vampires in most stories are metaphors specifically for *parasitic aristocracy*. In Blood Dimmed Tide, vampires are a metaphor for *queer liberation*. In a stultifying, oppressive, homogenous culture (Europe and America in the 1890s and 1900s), vampires are decadent, sensual, and utterly unconstrained by human mores and morals. They fuck *who they want*, love who they want, sneer at distinctions between races, spit on the Church, defy and defile authority, and are generally extremely cool and rad. However, this does require some minor modifications to basic vampire mechanics, which are as follows!

- Vampires do not kill when they feed.
- Vampires are symbiotic (vampire blood is a non-addictive restorative and invigorator that grants humans paranatural powers of their own)
- Vampires are idealized (if you're a closeted trans woman and get chomped, you get the body you want when you become a vampire.)
- Vampirism is a choice - unwilling people do not become vampires.

There's still asshole vampires, and vampires can still be murderers and monsters. Sadly, just being gay as hell doesn't magically make you nice. It'd be cool if it did, but, alas! We live in a sinful, fallen world.

Werewolves: Werewolves in Blood Dimmed Tide are **also** queer metaphors.

Humans (Magicians, Vampire Blood Chugging Ghouls, Badass Normals): These are also queer metaphors.

Frankenstein's Monsters: The children of Adam are also queer metaphors.

Red, Green, or White Martians: These are also queer metaphors.

SPOT RULES

The spot rules for Blood Dimmed Tide include, obviously, Improvisations - which are **specialist** and **free**. Everyone with a mastery, be it in Vampiric Mysticism, Promethean Strength, or just Tough Guy Gumption (or whatever else you want to come up with.)

Wealth is *sometimes* used. Shrouded London, being that it is stuffed full of magic and run by a bunch of queer people, is a democratic anarchy and, thus, does not have money. Everywhere else uses Coinage, which is pegged to the value of cavorite and, thus, extremely stable and interchanged across the world and state lines. I'm sure that this isn't how money actually works, but fuck it, I don't want to do extra math and neither do you!

Cybernetics are also sometimes used - representing innate magical powers or dieselpunk mad science.

NEW NEGATIVE TRAIT: CURSED

You have some kind of supernatural curse laid upon you, requiring you to follow four or so direct commandments. For vampires that would be "no entry without permission, repulsed by crosses, repulsed by garlic, cannot cross running water." If those things happen, they either prevent an action or cause you to gain 2 heat as you find a way to work around it.

GEAR

Suggested Gear: Ancient and Modern Weapons (vampires love swords, what can I say? It's cause swords are sick and cool)

Cavorite Skipboard (5 Coinage)

A sleek board made of slightly canted cavorite slivers that intersect with mundane wood and rubber. This insulates the rider from gravity *slightly* and, when angled, produces forward thrust by adjusting the slope of gravitic insulation. If you have an appropriate skill, this doubles your free movement and allows you to skim over difficult terrain. If you are knocked off, the board tends to shoot off in a random direction.

Parasol Ombrale (1 Coinage): An enchanted umbrella that rests betwixt a vampire and the sun - for comfort (and for some, a direly needed protection!)

Pneumatic C-Rocket Rifle (2+Scale Coinage)

Adds: +1 | Speed: Medium | Range: 5+Scale-10+Scale | Base Damage: 0+Scale

FOOSH!: The longer the range, the more the rocket has to accelerate. Gain +1 damage for every 5 hexes between you and the target.

This rifle fires recoilless mini-rockets with an incredibly thin cavorite coating that insulates the round from all gravity save the gravity waves emanating from directly ahead. This increases the acceleration of the projectile until it strikes something - with devastating effect!

The Heat Ray (5+Scale Coinage)

Adds: +1 | Speed: Fast | Range: 0-10+Scale) | Base Damage: 2+Scale

The Horrifying Heat Ray: Heat Rays can be fired either in focused mode (in which case they ignore 10 armor) or they can be fired in wide dispersed mode (in which case, they have a conic AOE out to their range.)

The nightmare of millions, the Heat Ray may have killed fewer people than the Black Smoke, but nothing inspired terror and horror quite like it. An invisible beam of pure heat is projected from the small black box and anyone in front of it dies in agony.

POLICE TRIPOD

Scale: +6 | Slots: 3 | Cost: 24

Three Terrible Legs: +6 Landspeed

Damage: 3/6

The Heat Ray: Held upon a tentacle

Adds: +1 | Speed: Fast | Range: 0-16) | Base Damage: 8

Damage: 3/6

Tentacles: Scale +10 manipulators

Damage: 5/10

Crew Penalty (-2/-2): Requires a crew of two people to equal a single Tripod Builder's number of manipulators.

This ungainly human crafted device is well known in the United States of America, chasing down bootleggers and communists with sirens wailing. The largest design flaw is, unlike war tripods, this tripod has no enclosed cockpit - and as humans only have two manipulators, it requires both gunner and pilot.

THREATS

NEW SHOCK SPENDS

The Perfidious Weed! (X Shock): The red weed grows...*fast*. By spending 1 shock, the red weed can grow into 3 hexes, creating difficult terrain. This stuff's worse than Tiberium! At least Tiberium was *useful*.

NEW VILLAINS

There aren't really *new* villains or specific monsters for Blood Dimmed Tide - a setting where the majority of the enemies are human or humanish. The Tripod builders, if you fight them, aren't a

physical threat without their legions of slaves and their tripods. That's why they're called the Tripod Builders!

Reskin characters as you see fit, and use Elites for powerful supernatural or super-normal enemies (like that Cathoic guy from Helsing with the knives! That guy!) and you're good to go!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: DISUNITED FRONT

So, you know how in Star Trek, humanity invented the warp drive and then met their first alien species and became one big happy family?

So, you know how in Mass Effect, humanity made an extranational Systems Alliance before discovering FTL travel at all, and then approached the galaxy as a single united front?

So, you know how in Babylon 5, the united 'EarthGov' civilization existed a full *century* before humanity even met their first rubber-forehead aliens?

Heh.

Bryan DeVilbiss invented the DeVilbiss Drive in 2042.

Do you think humanity would have had its shit together by 2242, let alone 2042?

Thought not.

THE BIG OOPS

The DeVilbiss Drive (or DV Drive for short) was invented by one man - and he wasn't even trying to do it. Bryan DeVilbiss had been tinkering in his house for thirty years (enjoying his retirement as one of the last Americans of that era to be able to actually retire and enjoy it) trying to build a gravity wave detector. He had no luck, until room temperature superconductors hit the market. After that...he still had no luck in building a gravity wave detector.

Instead, when he first tested his 'gravity wave detector' and ran a current through it, it didn't detect gravity waves. What it did was collapse space-time ahead of it and expand space-time behind it. Due to the orientation, the spaghettification created by the drive destroyed the roof and wrecked the downstairs and quickly turned the drive into rapidly accelerated scrap that blew out every window and very nearly took DeVilbiss' head right off.

Fortunately, DeVilbiss had kept careful notes!

A year later, the United States' moribund space exploration program was capable of reaching Mars in five minutes.

A year after that, the United States' crumbling internet infrastructure was hit by every single hacker on the planet and shortly later, the Russian Federation, the Chinese People's Republic, the European Union, even poor backwater England, were all building DV equipped vehicles.

The damn things were easier to build than cell phones, after all.

And, like computers (which is all a cell phone is, really), the DV Drive started off the size of a small building if they wanted to make a warp field that was even remotely useful.

By 2068, the DV Drive was the size of a laptop.

By 2091, the DV Drive could be made the size of a pocket watch.

By 2101, the DV Drive could be the size of a 20th century pocket watch *battery*, and derivatives of DV technology were used to protect, establish, and spread colonial efforts by no less than ten distinct, unaligned Earth polities.

And when we met aliens in 2102, we learned that none of this was even remotely close to normal.

FIRST CONTACT

First contact was between the Brazillians and the Shockpods and, honestly, the Brazillians handled it as well as anyone could have expected. Their exploration ship, the X. *Rio Grande do Sul*, was exploring a system near the spinward edge of humanity's exploration sphere when they were approached by a ship of unknown configuration and immediately attacked and boarded by power armored figures armed with high energy weapons and close ranged blades. The crew of the *Ro Grande do Sul* fought the invaders to a standstill, threw on their DV field, and escaped back to a nearby Russian colony.

Humanity had their hands on their first aliens and the news...was better than could have been expected. While the initial bloodletting was intense, the surviving aliens (who identified themselves as the 'Shockpods' once translation efforts were completed) proved to be bountiful sources of information because Shockpods were utterly amoral and completely mercenary.

They had been hired by another polity - the Traumlies - to secure a planet rich in vital resources, and the Shockpods had taken the unexpected arrival of the Brazillians as an encroachment on their assigned area. When the captured Shockpods were returned to their headquarters, the Brazillians were given contact information for the Traumlies.

SECOND CONTACT

The Tramulies were a pugnacious little species. Annoyingly like us, despite the fact they were a highly evolved ambulatory flower - save for one rather large difference. The Tramulies had been organized under a single imperial flowering for the past six centuries, and four of those centuries had been with FTL travel. In that time, they had gotten into wars, conquered a planet or two, set up a colony here or there.

After their first, tentative negotiation with a Brazilian ambassadorial team - a negotiation rife with translation errors and mistaken assumptions by the Tramulies - they saw humanity as a perfect

new upstart species to conquer - just advanced enough to be profitable, just primitive enough to be destroyed by their fleet.

This kind of snap judgment imperialism, as it seems, is quite common in some circles of the galaxy.

The Tramuliese fleet appeared in the outer edges of the SOL system: Four dreadnaughts, six battleships, twenty seven cruisers, fifty odd frigates, and two dozen invasion transports. It was the majority of the Tramulies military might, but it would pay dividends in the form of almost eleven billion new subjects and an industrial ecology capable of producing warp drives and starships. It would punt them from second rate to first rate galactic power overnight, with just one, single, bold grab.

And, afterall, they had heard from the Brazillians, the FAB (the Brazilian aerospace branch) had only the equivalent to 2/3rds of their fleet. Easy.

There are no FTL sensors - only FLT ships. In the time it took for the courier drones from the picket stations near Pluto to register the alien fleet, the Tramulies had formed into their combat formation and crossed the gulf of the solar system in under ten minutes. They arrived in orbit around Earth, sure of their surprise...

And ran into the USAF, IVVS, IAF and FAB fleets, all hastily thrown into battle formation. With the orbital nuclear/kinetic WMD deterrence triangle system aimed outwards.

THE BATTLE OF FIVE FLEETS

It was very, very, very short.

THE DAWN OF GALACTIC HORROR

With Tramulinese imperial ambitions destroyed for the time being, many third tier galactic powers watched with bated breath for a better tomorrow - and found the heavy boot of *human* imperial ambitions crashing down on them just as hard.

What, did you think humans were special?

Well, okay, plenty of humans are special, but the United States of America owns an astronavy, and they don't!

In the space of a single dizzying decade of contacts, minor brushfire wars, and colonial acquisitions, the five strongest human space fairing powers had attained a galactic influence on par with the largest, first tier powers in this region of space. The only reason why they didn't go further was the same reason they got this far in the first place with this speed: Russian colonies, American colonies, Indian colonies, Brazilian colonies, and European Union colonies existed in

a constantly shifting and highly tense web of alliances and backstabbing political intrigue, and the human fleets were just as busy aiming guns at each other as they were aiming them outwards.

During this time, humanity made relatively peaceful contact with the great alien powers: The Huntress Union (which was safe from human territorial aggression thanks to primarily dwelling on planets with liquid nitrogen oceans and by their preposterously advanced technology), the Ventar Hegemony (thanks to being separated from humanity by a region of space shattered by an ancient warp-drive experiment by a previous civilization that remains hostile to traverse even now), and the Sel-Ban Confederation (because the Sel-Ban are *really* good at diplomacy.)

These great powers all signed treaties both with the United Nations - which had been upgraded from tragically ineffective to hilariously ineffective in the wake of imperial expansion - and with the five major human astro-states. Trade flourished and the people terrified of all out galactic war breathed a quiet sigh of relief.

But as 2112 dawned, the Ventar, Huntresses and Sel-Ban all increased their naval budgets by one hundred percent in the most unprecedented uptick in shipbuilding the galaxy had ever seen.

They had seen what happened to the Tramulinese, after all...

GAZETTEER

THE TECHNOLOGY

Space operas are built on their technology, and the technology of the Disunited Front is built on the DeVilbiss Drive. What happens when you can fold space with a device the size of a watch battery?

Firstly, let's be clear what a DV Drive *does*. Modern drives can create extremely articulate warp fields, allowing them to pull off several clever tricks. The normal field will compress space ahead of you and expand space behind you, allowing you to travel faster than the speed of light. But a monopolar field can create a field that only expands in one direction, or only *compresses* in one direction. By bracketing a single area with monopolar fields, you can create a box that is bigger on the inside than the outside. By using fields projected at just the right time, you can redirect kinetic or energy attacks away from you - like a shield.

Even better, the technology that is at the root of DV Drives also gives you artificial gravity for free, since you can create exotic matter with negative energy that does all sorts of fucky fun stuff with gravity.

So, modern batteries are massive, meter or kilometer long flywheels or springs compacted into manifold spaces, slowly unwinding to provide kinetic energy that is turned into electrical energy (and they're infinitely rechargeable as you just wind up the spring.) Modern firearms are gravitationally balanced and have a capacity of thousands of rounds of bullets, compacted within a magazine that is as large as you dare to design it, made lighter by exotic matter. Space vehicles can hit orbit essentially for free and zip between worlds in a matter of hours in a system and days or weeks out of it. Buying a spaceship is a lot more like buying a *car* than buying a house.

Medical technology has also advanced - modern surgery takes advantage of space aged alloys, highly advanced pharmaceuticals, and incredibly creative applications of warp fields to do *bonkers* nonsense stuff with surgery and prosthesis and various treatments.

Holographic projection is easy and cheap. Computers are capable of sustaining actual sentience in some very specialized circumstances.

Life is great!

...if you can afford it.

EARTH

The Earth of the 22nd century is, in some ways, almost identical to the Earth of the 21st century. There's still a United States (boo), there's still a global capitalist system (boo), there's still a People's Republic of China (conditional yay?) that's still not nearly as communist as we'd all like (boo!) and there's still a myriad of people agitating for better, worse and different worlds. Ecologically, the DV Drive has reversed the clock on our doomsday by exporting a lot of the worst byproducts of a perpetually growing capitalist economy to outer space and by making fusion power and batteries both cheap and scalable.

But under the surface, there are several *titanic* changes.

The first is that the world is now *multipolar*. Back during the Cold War and the 1990 to 2020s, the world was either dualpolar or monopolar. There were either two superpowers (the USSR and the USA) or there was *one* superpower (the USA) and the whole world had to just deal with it. But now, with the near fracturing of the United States in the 2050s, the emergency of cheap faster than light travel, and the explosion of extrasolar colonization and industrialization...there no longer is a *single* superpower that can dominate all others.

Instead, the world is tenuously balanced between five: The United States, the European Union, the Russian Empire, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India. Each of them maintains enough colonial outposts and holdings to supercharge their economies, which are then put into building large and powerful spacefleets, which then protect those colonies, which then cost a ton of money, requiring more colonies, requiring bigger fleets...

Conflict will flare up between each or all of these states over colonial holdings, but war at home is kept strictly cold thanks to the orbital nuclear/kinetic WMD deterrence system - a webwork of satellites full of kinetic impactors, nuclear missiles, and similarly murderous devices that are all aimed at everyone else's homeland simultaneously. The oceans are full of submarines with more nukes, and the silos that dot the world are all hardened. In short, no one can knock out everyone's WMD capacity in a single first strike - and thus, no one is willing to try.

You may be saying: "Wow, that sounds like the mutually assured destruction paradigm of the 1980s...*combined* with the geopolitical pressures of the 1910s!"

...yup!

Most of the humans and aliens living on Earth try not to think about it.

QUAH

The homeworld of the Huntress Union, Quah, is very similar to the worlds they have colonized throughout the galaxy: Approximately thirty AU from their star. Similar to Pluto and Charon, Quah is a relatively small dwarf planet with nearly no atmosphere, where the best liquid is helium and life is very...very strange. The Huntresses were the first completely unexpected species that humanity met out there - so alien as to be utterly baffling and so advanced as to be terrifying.

The Huntresses themselves - their actual species name kept a closely guarded secret - are theorized to be quasi-crystalline in nature, with superconducting semiconducting nerve-cells made of silicate lattices surrounded by cryonic adapted cells. This gives them preternatural reflexes, but doesn't actually make them all that much 'smarter' than the average homo sap. What is smarter? Doing math faster? A human computer can do math as fast or faster than a Huntress and make less mistakes. And humans are just as good at empathy and understanding social situations and improvisation and art.

Which is terrifying, when you consider the Huntresses - thanks to living on real estate no one else wants and their preposterously long lifespans - have managed to advance to and maintain a level of technology far beyond everyone else. This leads to the most interesting feature of their biology: Their bodies, thanks to generations of augmentation and genetic engineering, have *integrated* naturally forming DeVilbiss Generators built throughout their bodies. This fact was revealed to humanity when the first Huntress ripped an offending human in half with a focused warp field - and led directly to the creation of D.E.V.I.L Commandos. More on them later.

Fortunately for the rest of the galaxy, the Huntresses' interest in the rest of known space is limited by the fact that if they reach temperatures above cryonic levels they...die. Horribly! This is why no one has ever seen a Huntress without her environmental suit: A skintight, possibly

strength enhancing exoframe most notable for the definite feminine features (no matter what pronouns the Huntress uses) and the long, winglike radiators that jut from the back - which are built with DV Generators to shunt the waste into the radio spectrum to avoid causing discomfort. Or cancer.

Governmentally, the Huntress Union appears to be a series of interlocking 'Clades' - organizations made up of bands of Huntresses operating semi-independently from the others, each focused on a singular goal. Clades form and collapse as need be, with minimal input from the Union itself. Currently, there is an Ambassadorial Clade in Geneva to maintain peaceful relations with the local upstarts and dozens of Mercenary Clades offering their unique services to anyone who will pay.

And humans *love* to pay for things - something the Union is more than happy to take advantage of. For now.

THE MUMBLER AND THE SHEAR.

The midpoint between the Ventar Hegemony and the human sphere, the Mumbler sits as an enigma, a promise and a barrier. But what *is* the Mumbler?

The Mumbler is a black hole that emerged *from nothing* approximately thirteen years ago and began to emit regular radio waves - as well as creating a series of bizarre gravitational stresses that have a nasty habit of ripping ships apart, even those that travel carefully and try to avoid any strange lensing effects. It is situated approximately twelve light years from Wolf-349 and the shear effects stretch nearly two thousand light years rimward and spinward. Getting to the Hegemony now requires months, if not years, of sidetracking out of the ecliptic. This has prevented war between us and them - war that had seemed inevitable.

The Hegemony is a meritocratic society of militaristic space lobster-centaurs. Meaning they had a humanoid lobster's top, connected to a bigger lobster's body, with six claws, four manipulator arms, and little antenna. Their Hegemony holds sway over six solar systems, two other alien species (the V'kor and the Loaem) and has a fleet nearly as big as the United States and China combined. Culturally, they're basically Prussians. They're so Prussian that a lot of them have learned German since First Contact and the beginning of them assimilating our cultural databases.

Needless to say, we would have immediately started a massive war if it weren't for the Mumbler and the Shear.

And, of course, the Shrouders.

It's obvious that the Mumbler and the Shear weren't natural. After several years of research by the Ventari and a joint European Union/Indian research project, the emissions from the Mumbler were decoded...and they were a sales pitch. Communication devices were constructed using

the pattern transmitted - and when the Shrouders were met, they explained themselves. They existed in a nearby universe and wished merely to exchange information. They take information and they return, in turn, technologies - often one use, exotic technology that no one else has even come close to cracking. The information they wish is often odd or inexplicable. It can be as bland as census data or as esoteric as a fan fiction written by a random Earther.

Now, Shrouder Station - ostensibly a German station, but with enough civilian sectors to make it deeply multicultural - is the place to come if you wish to bargain with the Ventar or dicker with the enigmatic Shrouders. Travel advisories about visual hallucinations, small but noticeable upticks in sudden onset schizophrenia and memory loss, and enigmatic nightmares keep most people from setting up long term habitation...but some people are immune from the Mumbler's effects.

Or they can't...or won't...leave.

CAPFED

Once, this world of equatorial peat bogs and marshes and arctic taiga everywhere else was known as Sheldaraime. But ever since the Sel-Ban Confederacy was formed, it had a new and a bit more prosaic name: The Capital of the Confederation. Or, for short: CAPFED. All caps. CAPFED was, before the opening of the Mumbler and the creation of the Shear, engaged in a protracted naval and land campaign with the Hegemony - the Confederacy, in fact, had formed entirely in resistance *to* the Hegemony. The Sel-Ban had gathered together allies and like minded among various minor powers and signed a big defensive treaty that had then morphed into a true unified government.

With the ending of the war and the emergence of humanity on the galactic stage, the Confederation is in a hazy and dangerous position. Will they switch away from their security and defense standpoint, or will they get more bellicose against the potential new danger probing into their trialing border? Or will they simply collapse back into the minor powers that they were before? No one is quite sure - especially not the Sel-Ban themselves.

From a certain perspective, the Sel-Ban are extremely human. They live about the same length of time as we do, they find similar things aesthetically pleasing (sunsets, clouds, cute kittens.) They have similar family units, similar sexual proclivities (heterosexuality, homosexuality, asexuality, demisexuality...) and gender feelings (cisgender, transgender, agender, all of these terms are totally used on and by the Sel-Ban.)

On the whole, our two species are remarkably alike, mentally. The fact that they're gigantic tree-frogs with six tentacles on their back seems to make no nevermind. The kitten thing is they find the eyes very similar to their species' baby-eyes.

The rest of the Confederation range from the inexplicable - the Methrans, a species of jellyfish that live in gas giants and communicate through enigmatic aural poetry that causes most

humans to bleed from the ears - to the simply vile - the Cepts, a species of fungal parasites that hijack the nervous system of the megafauna on their planet to use them as biological power armor. According to the Sel-Ban, their differences are their strength. According to cynical humans, the Sel-Ban are the president, a majority in the senate, own most of the major economic power, and are all the ambassadors to Earth.

Currently, CAPFED is held up as a shining example of interspecies togetherness. How long that will persist - doubly so with the CIA sniffing at their resource rich worlds and eying their species, sectarian and social differences - remains a serious question.

CHARACTERS

PREMISES

“Hey, this is Mass Effect. So, where the fuck are the fucking Specters, you piece of shit?” whoa, okay. Firstly? A bit confrontational! And secondly, they’re right here: The D.E.V.I.L Rig Commando, a new innovation created by the human race and now propagating through the Hegemony and Confederacy, is the Disunited Front riff on the Specter. It stands for DeVilbiss Engine/Virtual Intelligence Linkage Rig.

The basic idea is you saturate a human (or alien) body with micro-sized DV Drives, wire them to the nervous system so that somatic gestures can create and direct warp fields. This allows for teleportation, telekinesis, force fields, artificial gravity, invisibility, and other fun party tricks. However, the math involved is so sophisticated and complicated that if a human (or Ventar or Sel-Ban or Shockpod or whatever) tried to do this alone, they never would.

Hence why they have ‘Virtual’ Intelligences integrated with their rigs. Most people think said intelligences are semi-sentient math crunchers. That’s actually a lie, because the truth is considerably more ethically fraught.

It takes true artificial general intelligences - gestated in quantum blue box computers and fast evolved through accelerated learning programs - to handle these rigs. This is the real limiter on the Devil Commandos: Anyone can get the implants. Only a select few are good at going from a single person in their body...to two.

Or if you want, you can ignore the premise of being badass superpowered space soldiers doing cool missions and be a space trucker! EV Nova this bitch! The galaxy is yours for the taking!

...Elite this bitch, if you don’t know what EV Nova is.

SPECIES

Human: You know them! You love them! They're everyone's pugnacious bipedal simian from Africa (and other places, I guess.) In most space operas, humans are special for some reason and in *Disunited Front*, our specialness has more to do with sheerest happenstance. Most other species didn't have a small collection of capitalists hijack society and turn their planets into a 'make tiny computers' factory at gunpoint. This means that most species do not have the industrial ecology to create micro-sized D.V engines like humans do. This, combined with the fact we developed the D.V engine both recently *and* prematurely means that humans have more ships, more guns, more colonies, more, more, more! This has nothing to do with our biology and a lot more to do with our culture, history and the random chaos of history.

Ventar: A Ventar looks a bit like what if you make a lobster into a humanoid, then turned that humanoid lobster into a centaur and then equipped with one of those beak shaped medieval helmets. So, their upper torso is still lobsterish (red, blue, green or black colored, with both huge claws and tiny manipulators) but their lower torso is *also* lobsterish. But just not anthroformed, they have multiple legs and a huge finned tail. They are known for their exceptional sense of smell (due to extra receptors formed in the spike-like conical "beak" of their faces) and being unstoppable on a charge. They usually design guns so they can be aimed and fired using their big claws while being reloaded by their manipulator arms. They have four sexes (two distinct kinds of neuter, a fertilizing male, and an egg layer) and at least twenty genders. The Ventar Hegemony is a meritocratic military autocracy formed around militia-units of related Ventarise. How *actually* meritocratic they are is debatable.

Shockpods: A Shockpod is a genetically engineered warrior species crafted by a now extinct species that learned to their horror that they had succeeded preposterously well. A Shockpod looks like a three meter tall incredibly muscular dolphin with legs, arms, no tail, and a mean attitude. Their bodies are specially designed to withstand G-forces that would kill most normal people, meaning that even losing agrav systems doesn't stop their ships from being able to murder the hell out of you. They are stuffed with a preposterous amount of redundant organs, adrenaline glands, reinforced bones, and have a metabolism that requires them to eat just an *obscene* amount of calories every day. Because of this, Shockpods do not live very long.

Huntress: A Huntress is a quasi-crystalline lifeform whose natural state of being is the same temperature as Helium-II (approximately -300C.) They evolved on planets so far from their home stars that they took centuries to even realize they were in orbit around anything at all. Their neurons run on superconducting crystals and they have (thanks to centuries of genetic engineering) naturally occurring biological D.V drives built throughout their bodies, meaning that *every single* Huntress is capable of creating and manipulating warp fields through hand gestures. To interact with other species at all, Huntresses dress themselves in environmental suits that are easily recognizable as being more than normal space suits because of their facial projectors (glass screens that project rough approximations of their facial expressions, translated to whatever species they're interacting with) and by their wing-like fins, which use micro-sized D.V engines to blueshift the infrared light they're bleeding into space into radio waves. Curiously, before contact was made with humans, Huntresses were largely seen as being analogous to the Methran's sessile sex. But after consuming our media, a mass adoption

of the human gender commonly accepted as “female” was taken by the Huntresses. They just think it suits them. Their actual reproduction is a closely guarded secret.

SIDEBAR: HOW DOES A HUNTRESS SMILE?

:D hehe :P =^_^= >:3

Sel-Ban: A kind of large quadrupedal tree frog, the Sel-Ban are capable of manipulating their surroundings via the use of back tentacles. While they have more tentacles than we have hands, they manage to get the same amount of stuff done because said tentacles are less, on the whole, dexterous than our fingers. Despite seeming to be quite alien, the Sel-Ban are the species that are the most similar to our own in terms of temperament. Sel-Ban have men and women, queer couples, trans people, similar religions (Catholicism has caught on with some of their fringe members and the Sel-Ban faith known as Treesplitting has gotten a toehold in Utah.) On the whole, it's easy for humans and Sel-Ban to forget the other isn't one of them and more than a few Sel-Ban and humans have even gotten married. It's a funny old universe.

I MEAN...

Lets be honest, each alien species has been married by and fucked by humanity at least once or twice. You know how we are.

SPOT RULES

Disunited Front uses wealth and cybernetics but it *does not use improvisations*. D.E.V.I.L Troopers get incredible powers, but they're extremely focused, extremely specialized ones that are only useful in set, small situations!

However, Disunited Front has a very special kind of PC. As you may recall, each D.E.V.I.L trooper is a two part unit. There's the biological person with hands (or tentacles) who is studded with cybernetic implants that are all full of D.V Drives that then create the warp fields that they need to do their cool badass powers...and then there are the artificial intelligences that *run the cybernetics*.

So, if you want this AI to be more than just a quiet helper that mostly takes the back seat, then you can have a PC take this unique Negative Trait!

NEGATIVE TRAIT: GHOST

You exist on another plane of reality. You may be in the afterlife, cyberspace, the aether, whatever, but there is where you exist and you can *only interact* with the world using anything that intersects with that method. In a fantasy world, you could cast spells and influence magical artifacts, while in a cyberpunk world, you could only interface with

computers and machines. You can also always apply narratively important oomphs to help your physically incorporated buddies!

The AI lives inside of your cybernetics, but they can hack, they can target enemies with your HUD, they can use powers (in effect giving your character *way more powers* than normal) and generally be helpful dudes!

GEAR

This setting uses modern weapons, obviously, and lots of the gear as established elsewhere. You can buy the esoteric gear from the Star Walkers chapter at the low low cost of “going on a quest for the Shrouders.” But here’s some specialist gear only available in the Disunited Front setting!

Infinite Pockets (™) (5 Dollars): Actually more of a vambrace, the Infinite Pocket is produced by Apple meaning it has a really annoying proprietary charging system, their retro 80s aesthetic, and more importantly, contains a set of D.V drives that create a space that is both larger on the inside than it is on the outside and reduce the mass of anything within to negligible levels. They scan for it at the TSA and it emits a pretty obvious energy signature, so don’t think it’s an easy ticket for terrorism and smuggling.

Space Armor: This is the most common form of clothing worn by adventurers, space explorers, soldiers and, yes, D.E.V.I.L troopers. Space Armor covers a preposterous range of fits, styles, and gear, but they all share three commonalities: They have a communication system that allows for team coordination, an articulated powered exoskeleton for enhanced strength and reflexes in the field for battle, and integrated DV shields for defense. The quality of each will change based on the cash money you want to drop on yours. Wearing space armor in non-frontier situations generally gets you side eyes. Or arrested.

To make Space Armor, you start with a Scale 0 Vehicle, then start adding stuff. However, no scale modifier can go above +10 without making it a higher scale vehicle. The technology in Disunited Front cannot get higher than that. There is another unique rule for Space Armor: They have some stuff that adds to evasion (because you can lower their shields with oomphs by pouring fire onto them.) If a PC is wearing them, treat it as if they’re in armored vehicles, and just handle the bonus evasion as armor, mechanically.

Zebra Class Light Scout Armor (19 Dollars)

Scale: 0 | Slots: 3

Jumpjets: +10 Flight speed

Stealth Systems: +3 device (hours, fails when you attack.)

Shield Belt: +3 evasion

Damage Silhouette: 0/1 (the exoframe), 5/10 (jump jets), 2/3 (stealth systems), 2/3 (shields)

The Zebra class light scout armor, preferred by those who don't foresee much in the need for muscular enhancement, is a relatively inexpensive suit of space armor that has high mobility in and out of atmosphere and is capable of rendering the wearer invisible for hours via carefully distorted warp fields. With a standard shield belt, the Zebra is capable of holding up against heavy fire when augmented by cover and mobility

Ticonderoga Class Technical Armor (26 Dollars)

Scale: 0 | Slots: 4

Manipulators: +6 Mass Scale

Drone Bay: carries 5 scale 0 drones

ECCM Suite: 0-20 range.

Shield Belt: +3 evasion

Damage Silhouette: 0/1 (the exoframe), 3/6 (the strength enhancement), 2/3 (the drones), 5/10 (the ECCM suite), 2/3 (the shields)

The Ticonderoga technical armor is a force multiplier and support suit of space armor, equipped with a sophisticated suite of hacking and ECCC gear. Most importantly, it can carry five detachable drones (purchased separately) that are launched and commanded by a suite of sophisticated war-AIs running on the Ticonderoga's proprietary computer system. Capable of lifting a boulder over their head using both hands, they are as useful in disaster relief as they are in combat situations.

SIDEBAR: THEM DRONES?

Use minions for them! Tee hee, interlocking systems functioning how they're designed too! Buhuhuhu!

Moloch Class Heavy Combat Armor (36 Dollars)

Scale: 0 | Slots: 3

Enclosed Cockpit: 0 Scale, keeps the wearer safe

Manipulators: +10 Scale

Legs: +10 land movement

Shield Belt: +6 Evasion

Armor Slabs: +6 Armor

Damage Silhouette: 0/1 (the exoframe), 0/1 (the cockpit), 5/10 (the strength enhancement), 5/10 (the mobility systems), 5/10 (the shields)

The Moloch is the biggest, strongest, most dangerous suit that the human species has run into yet. They don't even build the damn things - Moloch is the classification for it provided by CIA intelligence analysts. They're Shockpod made and are part of why

Shockpods remain incredibly dangerous, even if raw biological strength no longer matters so much. Capable of throwing boulders single handed and sprinting faster than a groundcar, the Moloch is a nightmare both in and out of a spaceship. Worse of all, the wearer is entirely enclosed - making them very difficult to actually kill until the whole suit has been dismantled - and they have actual armor slabs on top of the shields. Fun!

THREATS

The biggest threat in the Disunited Front are *other humans*. While there exists the possibility of us starting a war with another species, the end of the story is that humans remain a deeply quarrelsome species, more likely to rope alien assets into their own interactions than to have plots be about the big bad aliens doing stuff. All three “major powers” have their own reasons to not want to directly engage with humanity - be it separation via the Shear, the fact that the Huntresses just do not care about planets that to them are boiling hellworlds, or the Sel-Ban’s own focus on their own internal politics (again, we’re a very similar pair of species!)

Common sources of danger are the intelligence agencies of all the major powers: the CIA, the Okhrana, the Ministry of State Security, Research and Analysis Wing, and more. Everyone is trying to spy on everyone else at all times - and there’s loads of reasons why! Each colony that an Earth power gets its hands on is a huge resource...and Earth is still trapped in a constant cycle of growth, booms, and busts, which are only sustained by those extrasolar resources.

Basically, we’re in a capitalist machine that can *only go faster* and each state on Earth is looking outwards for the coal to shovel into that furnace...while also eyeing everyone else.

So.

Hey.

What else is new?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: STAR WALKERS

First, there were Men.

Then, the Men made Machines.

Then the Machines made Miracles.

And the Miracles made the Chain.

Then the Chain was broken in war, strife and ruin. The Machines left, and their Miracles died.

Now, there are only Men once more - dwelling in a shattered cosmos, their potential narrowed to the space between flint knapped arrows and fusion power plants. Despite this, there is hope. There is a dream. There are stories...stories of the **Liminal Knights!**

Knights are heroes who walk the Chain, traveling ever upwards towards Home, bearing blades of pure light and bringing forth the Miracles of old at a touch. Standing against the Knights are fallen worlds of rad-scoured ruins, asteroidal cities populated by screaming tech-ghosts that inhabit skinsuits wrapped around their long dead astros, sprawling megalopolis moons ruled by bloody handed tyrants, and the everpresent grip of the Hegemony.

Blades will clash!

Worlds will burn!

Will the Chain be shattered forever - or will mankind once more become masters of their own destiny?

THE MACHINES

The story always begins with the Machines. And the origin of the Machines begins with a thought: What if we were *better*. Once it became possible to create a mind that can be modified in human timescales - be it by changing programming, altering a genetic sequence, or inserting new hardware - then the transition from Man to Machine was inevitable.

It is possible for a robot to be a Man. Simply don't upgrade and modify them until they become more intelligent than the beings that created them. Many robotic and synthetic creatures are still Men. Many biological entities became Machines, by augmentation and genetic engineering. The source of the mind is not what determines the signifier, only the end product.

At the beginning of history, the Machines produced many miracles. Antigravity. Perfect matter synthesis. Longevity Treatments. Simulated Universes. And, of course...The Chain.

THE CHAIN

The Chain is the byproduct of general relativity and the inability of even hyper-advanced superintelligent machines to get past it. The speed of light limit is hard and fast, in part, due to causality violations. If you travel faster than light, you will arrive before the information of your travel reaches your destination - a paradox, rendering the attempt impossible. Fortunately, the Machines realized that there was one area of space which was liberated from this requirement: The space *beyond* the light cone of your beginning destination.

Telescopes can see to the edge of the known universe. Beyond that point, light has yet to reach, and there is no information, no causal links to fray and twist in on themselves. And so, the first faster than light jump ever made leaped beyond Home's nearest stars, beyond Home's nearest galactic companions, beyond Home's supercluster, beyond the grasp of light itself, and arrived in a cosmos just at the edge of Home's light cone.

These two destinations became inextricably linked - any jump backwards came to Home, and any jump from Home came to We Made It. Rather than creating an infinite number of destinations, the **jump drive** (as it was soon named) created but one.

It was only a matter of time before the next jump was made and a new link was forged in the Chain. The links remain permanent and linear - Home goes to We Made It, We Made It Goes to Thalestar, Thalestar goes to Backgammon, and so on, and so on, and so on.

And, for a time, it was good.

THE FALL

No one knows why or when, exactly...but the Machines, eventually, left.

One day, when Men went to their oracles, or logged into their extranet, or bowed before their statues, or picked up their comphones, they heard nothing but a howling silence. Some worlds, already teetering on the edge of stability for political or environmental reasons, collapsed almost overnight into violence and warfare as Men sought to claim the surviving miracles before they could be destroyed, or used by their enemies. Others, more stable and secure in their construction and situation, managed to weather the storm.

Those worlds turned, soon, to dreams of Hegemony.

HEGEMONY

The Hegemony has had many names and many forms. Sometimes, it is a republic of glittering light and heroism - where rot grows and gnaws at the foundations. Eventually, that Hegemony will fall and in its place will rise something new and gleaming and brutal, an empire of jacketed

neutronium and gilded skulls, held aloft by the might of a hundred hundred thousand troops and the fury of fleets of worldkilling starships.

Whether it is in the noble or the villainous mode, the Hegemony is omnipresent and seemingly unstoppable. Cross them at your peril.

RESISTANCE

And yet, there is always resistance. In the noble face, the resistance is that of power hungry barons, corrupt merchant princes, dark cultists who worship maddened machines from beyond the depths of space, and worse. They seek, forever, to undermine the oppressive light of the Chain and claim power for themselves or for their masters. In the villainous face, the resistance is that of plucky starfighters, wandering knights, and republican revolutionaries who want to usher back an era of peace and prosperity - often an era that they can barely recollect, let alone recreate in totality.

Between these two fulcrums, the Chain will forever pivot.

KNIGHTS

Often, the change between Hegemony and Resistance is a slow, grinding thing. Wars of ideas and commerce, of grinding attrition and invasion - in the Chain, the defensive will always have the advantage over the offensive due to the fact that invasion will always come from a single direction and will always require a sundive to even arrive.

This is not so when the Liminal Knights take the field.

A Knight is not chosen by genetic sequence or determined by merit or spark. There is no bloodline, there is no method, there is no tool that you can wave at someone and go 'aha, a knight!' The only people that know why a Knight is chosen are the Machines...and they're not telling.

To be a Knight is to have the Machines take an interest in your future and your fate. Through means and methods beyond the comprehension of Man, Machines are able to influence reality around a Knight. This is primarily through activating and guiding miracles - long defunct antigravity devices spring to life, ancient doorways creak open at their touch, crackling threshold blades bring forth their terrible power, and simulspace worlds long thought to be nothing but inert tombs draw their first breaths and bequeath their own dark secrets. Machines can make the simple technology of Man dance to their whims as well - communication networks, simple robotic drones, fusion reactors, and even carefully hoarded atomics can be turned on, off, or to strange new purposes with the snap of a Knight's fingers.

The price of these miracles is subtle, at first.

Machines, it seems, expect Knights to be *interesting*.

Not noble. Not virtuous. Not *good*, nor kind, nor merciful.

Interesting.

Some Knights yearn to be free from the weight of the Machines. But the only escape thus found is death...and for a Liminal Knight, death rarely comes in a hospice bed surrounded by a happy, long lived family.

GAZETTEER

The Chain is too long, too vast, too unimaginably ancient for any Gazetteer to scratch the surface. Whole novels could be written about Atom City and Stumble and Byzantine and The Dalmation World and still not have covered enough. So, instead, pick up your motherfucking dice because we're *going to roll some shit*.

Yes! After hundreds of pages of diceless action, we're going to use d6s for more than just determining how much Heat your character has!

DETERMINE STAR

Roll 2d6!

- 2: Black Hole
- 4-6: Singleton
- 7-9: Binary
- 10-11: Trinary
- 12: Artificial Construct

The first die value (read left to right) determines the first sun's hue, while the second determines the second's hue. The order the dice fall determines the Trinary

Type

- 1: Blue
- 2: White
- 3-4: Yellow
- 5: Orange
- 6: Red

Trinary

- 5, 6: Brown Dwarf
- 6, 5: Red Giant

DETERMINE PLANETS

Roll 3d6!

The first die value (read left to right) is the rocky planets, second is gas giants, and third is Asteroid Belts

Terrestrials

- 1: None!
- 2: two to three
- 3-4: four to six
- 5: Seven to ten
- 6: More than ten!

Gas Giants

- 1: One!
- 2: Two to Three
- 3-5: Four to Six
- 6: Seven to ten

Asteroid Belts

- 1-5: One or Two
- 6: Three or more!

DETERMINE HABITABILITY

Roll 1d6!

Habitability

- 1: Once habitable, fallen to ecocollapse or war
- 2: Failing terraforming - the waning days before the end
- 3: Seemingly utopian, has secret and subtle danger (pollens, radiation waves, nanomachines)
- 4: Terran Normal, slightly polluted
- 5: Completely Inhospitable
- 6: Terran Normal, Garden

DETERMINE TECHNOLOGY

Roll 1d6! If the technology does not make sense, either alter it to make sense (I.E, a low tech world + inhospitable planet doesn't really make sense...unless they have ancient technology that is barely hanging on!) However, it can sometimes make sense to have the world be dead. Dead worlds are common on the Chain and serve their own narrative point.

Technology

- 1: Post Collapse Stone Age to Early Modern

- 2: Post Collapse 21st Century Par
- 3-5: Barely Hanging on, Modern Tech
- 6: Prosperous

DETERMINE HOOKS

Roll 2d6 and form them into sets - rolling a 1 and 5 would be 15! You can roll this once, twice, three times. However many times you need to create something fun!

- 11: An ancient battleship floats in the Kuiper belt, waiting to be salvaged.
- 12: Battlestations hover above the only inhabited world, armed within worldburners.
- 13: Local wildlife is parasitic and deeply enthusiastic at trying new vectors for spreading.
- 14: Ghost cities in the asteroid belt, full of screaming computer-spirits.
- 15: a glowing crater, hit by dozens of atomic bombs...but the target is still intact...
- 16: A Hegemonic/Republic naval base, bustling and stocked with ships
- 21: Smugglers Den on a hollow moon.
- 22: Oceans full of plastic and horizons full of soot
- 23: Titanic terrestrial beasts - dalmatians the size of horses, cats the size of buildings!
- 24: A Liminal Knight interrupting their pilgrimage rules with an iron fist
- 25: There is a cave that whispers dark truths on a desolate corner of the system
- 26: Tidally locked world
- 31: A planet full of deserts and secrets and mysterious ruins - ruins of a prior age.
- 32: Two fleets battled here, centuries past. Their corpses still dangle in space.
- 33: We don't go to the third planet anymore...
- 34: A transmitter continually emits the same, repeating signal: *Do not listen to Beacon-491! Repeat! Do not listen to Beacon-491! Repeat! Do not-*
- 35: "This is free-trader Beowulf, calling anyone! Mayday! Mayday! We are under attack...main drive gone...turret number one not responding! Mayday! Cabin losing pressure..."
- 36: A deadly game dominates popular culture in this system - all comers can test their might and mettle in the arena!
- 41: Why do the locals never take off their masks?
- 42: They say that anyone who orbits the ringed gas giant for more than 13 hours never returns...
- 43: The sword of Damocles - approaching asteroid, climate change, nuclear war - hangs heavily over the habitable world of this system.
- 44: Star Dragons!? Can it be true?
- 45: Gigantic asteroids made of glittering diamond - perfect, faceted gems the size of mountains...
- 46: A deadly or strange plague wracks this system.
- 51: The dead don't stay dead in this system.
- 52: A screaming monolith sits on a plain of riven glass, surrounded by still glowing corpse cities.

- 53: A seeming utopia, caught in an endless cold war fought entirely by genophagic spies and vat-bred clone soldiers.
- 54: A princess, fleeing from an arranged marriage, is caught around a black hole.
- 55: Knights of the Dalmation ride massive mutated spotted hounds through a verdant jungle, laser-lances readied!
- 51: Mountains float, caught in some ancient miracle, and filled with strange arboreal life.
- 52: Crystalline caves, riven by the long, slow thought of slumbering worldbeasts.
- 53: A neural net sustained in the glittering nanotech nebula shrouding a world of primitive beasts.
- 54: A perpetual storm swirls above a city populated entirely by robots.
- 55: Millions of children sleep, cocooned by machines, and sustained perpetually...but for what?
- 56: An ice age creeps in towards a planet, panicking and desperately trying to prepare.
- 61: A massive kinetic bolide has turned the most hospitable world into hell. Now, the refugees eek out a living in orbit.
- 62: Immense genengineered reefs that grow perfect replica of human organs and pump fresh blood into the surrounding wine dark seas.
- 63: A world covered with mountains and inhospitable wilderness, where the skies are conquered by daring pilots, flying scrap built relics and prop driven planes.
- 64: Something sleeps beneath the ice caps - and it sings to all who listen. Will you go to him?
- 65: A Hegemonic cryovault, buried in the depths of the crushing metallic hydrogen oceans of a gas giant. Within lurks the wealth of worlds...
- 66: The skies are bleeding...

CHARACTERS

In Star Walkers, character creation requires a few extra questions and the use of several spot rules. The first question is: *How many of you are Liminal Knights?*

Knights are powerful, but they are always joined by fellows who are equally as potent and are often able to forgo the intensive focus of the setting's metaplot. If you want to play a game where you're scrappy smugglers trying to make a living hopping from starsystem to starsystem, then your party may not have *any* Liminal Knights at all! If you want to play a game about Knights in service of a grand but decaying Republican Hegemony, seeking to preserve the light against the onrushing darkness, then you might want everyone to be Knights.

There should be little to no balance concerns between Knights and non-Knight player characters. Knights will have slightly more narrative power due to their access to the Machines, but they have significantly less choices in how their characters are built due to required power choices. Furthermore, in the HEAT system, it's relatively difficult to make an underpowered character due to implicit assumptions about skill level and ability.

MAKING A KNIGHT

Knights are simple, really! They have access to Improvisations, which are **specialist** and **corrupting** - the corruption is called Destiny and is described later. The only mastery is “Miracles”, as described below!

Miracles: The ability to tap into your connection to the Machine and bring forth wonders from a bygone era.

- Technopathy: The art of enforcing your will upon modern machines. Redirect missiles, shut down bulkheads, reverse air vents, and detonate fusion cores.
- Reawakening: Bringing ancient Miracles (simulation universes, advanced FTL drives, antigravity, longevity machines, Threshold Blades) to life.
- Probabilistic Modeling: Foretelling the future through both prophetic dreams and, moment to moment, on the battlefield.
- Fuzzy-Quantum Biomorphic Enhancement: Pushing the human body beyond its normal capacity - leaping several meters, surviving at abysmally low oxygen levels for extended periods, and dodging bullets.
- [SIGLOC] ////!!!Error!!!!\ [See Setting Secrets]

Knights tend to bear Threshold Blades but little else. If making a Knight, you can take a Threshold Blade as a signature item. Technically speaking, anyone can take a Threshold Blade, but you can only use it if you have the Reawakening sub-skill.

SPOT RULES

DESTINY

Improvisations in this setting accrue “Destiny” - a form of corruption. Each point of Destiny counts as another Player Character for the purposes of Shock during combat and piloting encounters. Destiny also narratively ‘weights up’ the consequences of failing an Intrigue. In general, Light (1-2) Destiny will bring extra heat down on your head, while Moderate Destiny (3-4) will mean an entire planet is after you, and High Destiny (5+) means that a major power will want your head due to your Intrigue’s actions. Sometimes, these events will seem contrived...but it’s just the plight of being a Liminal Knight.

Unlike corruption, Destiny doesn’t remove you from play once you hit 7+. Instead, if the total Destiny of the party ever equals 5 x Knights (So, 15 for a party with 3 Knights), then the Chain *breaks*.

Any simmering civil wars erupt into full scale conflict. Genocides that are threatening boil over. Worlds on the edge of climatological collapse hit their final terminal stages. Riots depose kings and bloody handed Emperors launch their doomsday projects. In a word, shit gets *real* and the heroes are thrust immediately into the middle of it.

SHEDDING DESTINY

Destiny is shed by one of two methods. The first is to reach Home, the final world in the Chain, the ancient planet once known as Earth, and complete your Pilgrimage. What you find there depends upon your gamemaster. The second is to cast off your knightly duties and tasks for a time and simply *relax*. This is taken in the form of a comedic or light hearted intrigue with minimal stakes and no reward beyond some frivolity and relaxation for the players involved.

Such intrigues are impossible on any solar system that has major problems - even if your Knight is one who might ignore the plight of the less fortunate, anyone with enough Destiny that they need to shed it won't have any *choice* in the matter.

Beach Episode Intrigues (as they are called) shed 1 Destiny per Knight involved, max. Pilgrimage sheds *all* Destiny. Also, it may end the game.

SIGNATURE EQUIPMENT

Characters in Star Walkers don't really track wealth. Instead, they have three pieces of Signature equipment. In general, these are a weapon, a suit of armor, and some kind of utility. These can be combined - for instance, a Threshold Blade is all of the above - and you can always swap them out if you want. If you want two weapons and armor and no utility, you can do just that!

During play, acquiring a new item is an Intrigue, since anything of value is held by other people.

WEAPONS MOST DIRE

A Hegemonic Hellwhip

Adds: +0 | Range: 0-5 | Speed: Slow [x2] | Base Damage: 2

Enflamed Entangling: When using this, you may add Entangled or Enflamed Oomphs.

Also allows generic whippy things you can do with it (swinging around, whipping buttons to turn them on, and so on.)

Entangled: The target cannot move any range bands while entangled.

Enflamed: The target is on fire. If they would take damage from fire, they take your Base Damage every time this oomph decays. This damage ignores evasion but does not ignore armor.

A deadly weapon beloved by the Gentek Hegemony, the Hellwhip is a blunt baton with a silvery tip and a recess for the thumb to go. When the thumb is inserted, the Hellwhip generates a plasma whip, contained with a hideously complex magnetic field. By attuning the whip's magnetic field, the whip can grip, hold, throw, and even ensnare enemies. By being less discerning, the plasma bleeds out of the magnetic field and causes horrible burns.

A Rusted Pneumatic Fist

Adds: -2 | Range: 0-1 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage: X

Whirr CRUNCH!: Gain access to the *Wind Up* oomph.

Wind Up: Expend the *Wind Up* to add +1 to Base Damage.

This weapon, long forgotten at the bottom of the Battle World of Anquillas XI, was once borne by a Liminal Knight who eschewed blade for raw, steel fury. Her gravitic impellers and pneumatic pistons still function - but they take some time and momentum to build to a world shattering crash. Warriors bearing this weapon are known for charging, headfirst, into the most deadly of situations and emerging unharmed.

A Weapon Beyond Horror - The Silver Screamer

Adds: +0 | Range: 2-10 | Speed: Medium | Base Damage: 2

Eye of the hurricane: This weapon applies its damage in an AOE equal to its range in a circle around you - meaning anyone in an adjacent hex is fine, everyone else is about to have a *really bad day*.

The Silver Screamer, once believed to be the favored weapon of the Laughing Masque, is a chrome orb roughly the size of a human head. Seemingly without blemish, the Screamer in fact has dozens of concealed slits on the sides and a small manafont within that is coded to manufacture a single thing: Disk shaped flechettes with monomolecular edges. As the Screamer hovers above your head and spins, the slots catch the wind and create an endless, eerie screaming sound - a screaming sound that is only interrupted when the slots begin to spray everything in a 360 degree arc around you with death.

But by then, the people around you are usually screaming enough...

Elegant Railgun Pistol from a Bygone Era

Adds: +2 | Range: 5-10 | Speed: Medium | Base Damage: 2

A Civilized Weapon: This weapon is designed for gentlemanly duels - and as we all know, the man who fires first, wins. Whenever in a combat situation, even when ambushed or surprised, this weapon fires first. If one was so uncouth and ungentlemanly to, say, fire it through the table into the heart of your unsuspecting enemy while you two parlay...it would do that too. This feature works but once per scene - and the report is always loud enough to waylay any future attempts at subterfuge.

The DX-901 series was manufactured by the million for the Gunstar, a frozen world of the outer reaches of the Tuvinian System. Not many civilizations ever reach ramscoop capacity, and not many systems are a mere half a light year from their nearest neighboring star, but the 2nd Wave of Tuvinia managed both, and from the Gunstar flowered a healthy tradition of kinetic dueling, often on the airless asteroids that run as trojans before and after the Gunstar.

This is the last of those pistols - well maintained and deadly now as it was twelve thousand years ago.

Long Forgotten Agonizer

Adds: +2 | Range: 0-1 | Speed: Fast | Damage: 1

Agonies Without End: Rather than slaying enemies, the Agonizer leaves them prostrate and groaning. One may forego the adds on this weapon to render them unconscious without pain, for the merciful warrior.

The Sepulchar Vastness, a Hegemony from the 2nd Eternal Cycle, left little behind save for obsidian monoliths and a few screaming torture-world simulspaces (all, thankfully, long defunct and quieted) and...as a last piece of their arts, the Agonizers. Called also the Obsidian Sleep and the Iron Maiden, the Agonizer is a glove of midnight black fabric with red talon tips. The gentlest caress is all that is required to set a nervous system alight with the pain of a thousand years. The Sepulcher Vastness must have manufactured them in the billions for they are the most common of their artifacts left behind.

Rugged Munition Pauldrons

Adds: -1 | Range: 10-15 | Speed: Slow [2] | Base Damage: 5/10

Boom!: These weapons hit with a medium AOE (first base damage) or a small one (second base damage.)

A pair of heavy pauldrons, once part of the Stygian II Class of mobile infantry power armor, produced by Atom City. Long since fallen out of favor due to their reliance on kinetic munition resupplies and the fact they just look kind of silly to the ever mercurial and endlessly fashion obsessed styles of Atom City, these weapons have been removed from the heavy duty combat armor and are now sold as their own weapon system, often jerry rigged onto rifles or, in one case, born upon the amazonian shoulders of Joanna the Pirate Queen of the Ravening Deeps as she reaved across the world ocean of Skar.

The Last of the Shrike Gloves

Adds: - | Range: - | Speed: Special | Damage: Special

Final Fate: When used, the Shrike Glove's doom is pronounced upon an enemy and the doom will come to pass anywhere between a nanosecond to sixty one hours (Bladeworld time) later. The target must be able to hear the pronouncement of doom verbally for it to be used. This, without fail, causes heat to your character equal to the Danger of the target which cannot be negated through *any means* - including relationships, armor, other forms of heat, traits.

In the year 901 of the Empire of the Evercresting Wave, the Sea-Empress herself heard her name called out from the crowd and a voidsuit clad astro stepped from the stunned onlookers, holding aloft this oversized chrome glove, with its bladelike finger-tines and its glittering, intricate knuckle blades. The astro proclaimed that the Empress would die in four days, and for her pronouncement, she was imprisoned and interrogated. Her

relation to the Empress was discovered by the Empress' interrogators just before the Empress was found, her body drawn, quartered, and skinned alive by an unknown force.

The ascension of the new Sea-Empress was uncontested and for sixty years, her enemies spoke softly of their terror of the Shrike Glove.

Worldbreaker Herself

Add: -2/+4 | Range: 0-1 | Speed: Fast | Damage: 5/-

Worldbreaker: In the first mode, the Worldbreaker is used as an inaccurate but devastating sword. In the second mode, the Worldbreaker can create an Double Dice of Doom (see environmental) with a shock cost equal to the total value of your "attack."

Forged from the heart of a neutron star, the Worldbreaker is a blade of preposterous density, sustained by a barely functioning miracle of antigravitic force. The Machine that crafted her - known as the Singer of Songs - either made a mistake or built her deliberately to unleash the full force of its gravitic power every time she was swung. Any force not transmitted directly into a target will be transmitted elsewhere. Ironically, she is far safer to be wielded by a guileless swordsman, who will not know to hit weak points on enemy armor - and thus, allow more of the Worldkiller's destructive power to crack the planet they stand upon.

Your Family's Dependable Lasarm

Adds: +1 | Range: 5-10 | Speed: Medium | Damage: 2

Dependable: Shift Overheating result one step down the chart - light overheating becomes not overheating (still ends your turn), heavy overheating becomes light overheating and so on. Death, however, compels the wounding result of 'Item Destroyed' as one of the wounding options, with this weapon being the chosen device. This applies in Intrigues, Piloting and Combats. Work with your GM to figure out how you survived and why your lasarm was lost - was it in the shuffle, or did the fatal bullet strike your weapon instead?

A humble tinkerer on Stumble, the 999th world of the Chain - rediscovered the ancient kindling of gas and crystal and brought forth coherent light once more. From this tinkerer's hand came laser wands, gloves, and pistols. These devices were prized by the Junkers of Stumble for their prestige, but the tinkerer crafted each with such love and attention that they persisted beyond their role as curios and status symbols. Now, centuries later, they still function. For those who care for the soul of things, that love persists.

AEGIS FOR ASTROS AND ADVENTURERS

Bandolier of Ultrachaff Grenades

Ultrachaff: Three times per combat, pilot encounter that is of a reasonably similar scale, or applicable Intrigue, create a number of small AOE's with -3 Cover or "clouds of ultrachaff" props equal to your ranks in the Tech skill.

A bandolier with a brace of CO-PP8 multiuse ultrachaff grenades was the standard compliment of the Legion of Light during the fifth Shattering. Under the cover of the full spectrum antilaser diffusion clouds and smart munition disrupting nano, the Legion was able to come to melee with any longarm equipped force along the Chain and bring them low with holoaxes and mono-bayonets.

Blinkspace Helm

Where'd He Go?: Upon taking Heat from Damage, you can, as a free action, move 2 hex per heat taken. You may choose to take less heat if you wish. The GM determines your exact direction. The direction will never end in an instantly lethal location (inside of wall, star, hard vacuum without a suit, over an infinite pit, ect.)

A helm of softly singing coral, the Blinkspace Helm was discovered in the final days of the Deepsounding Races, where the most unlikely contender of the race, Fionne Fioire, reached the bottom of the crushing depths in zir scrap built submarine. The Helm is of no known human manufacture, but the Machine that has crafted it remains enigmatic and obscure. How local violations of causality affected by the helm are accomplished is unknown, but some believe the causality violation comes from tapping into nearby parallel universes where, in one, the bearer has died.

Displacement Cloak

Spread the Fire: Once per combat, as a free action, you may move any amount of Damage Oomphs within 1 hex of you to anywhere within 10 hexes of you. Yes, this can be placed on enemies, why do you ask?

A staid, dark cloak that looks as formal as it is elegant, the displacement cloak is able to be snapped out with a gesture and then flutter dramatically - drawing fire and shot from your enemies. While seemingly simple, closer examination shows that the displacement cloak has been threaded through with smart fibers and patches of intelifabric, which are controlled by a somnambulant intelligence. In the bearer's dreams, the cloak's intelligence whispers to them and if their goals and aims align with the cloak's, their dreams will be the sleep of the just. If they diverge, then their dreams become troubled, dark and choking.

Perdition Device

Future's Pain: Every time you take a Wound from Overheating, note it down. Whenever you take damage after this point, you may (if you wish) inflict 2 Damage per Wound noted to an enemy that is *about* to attack you within 1 hex. This can be used only on human scale enemies. The Perdition Device does not negate the wound taken. This *stacks* no matter how many wounds you've taken over the course of the campaign.

A small emerald pin with a curious cetatinoid motif on it, the Perdition Device doesn't seem to be a device at all. However, when a being wearing it is hurt or injured or even almost hurt or injured, the device will flash and for a second, deja vu will fill the mind. For many, that was quickly forgotten...until they were threatened again. The Device's eyes flash and the very same injuries (even those that hadn't happened) would be inflicted upon their enemies. Further research has identified the creator of this weapon as The Shadow that Laughs, a Machine known for their perverse sense of humor and deep understanding of quasi-probability mechanics.

Rylia's Reality Piton

Stuck Fastness: Once per scene, you can proclaim the words "Rylia, we're in this now!" using whatever language you speak. Once you have done so, this fifteen centimeter, four centimeter wide chunk of nondescript gray metal fixes itself into the substrate of the universe, remaining stuck in place relative to the Big Bang's central location. It cannot be moved by anyone for the rest of the scene (at which point it dissolves into quantum foam and reconstitutes itself in your keeping.) If used on a ship accelerating at any kind of speed, the RRP will cause *preposterous* amounts of damage.

This chunk of metal is utterly unremarkable - save that, when activated, it becomes rooted in the substrate of the universe and is inextricably bound to your quantum signature. No one is quite sure who Rylia is.

Scrapmound

Sniff It Out: Activating Scrapmound will, in narrative situations, lead to it discovering and returning (if possible) an item that it can reach, no matter what it has to burrow through or sneak past. In an Intrigue, it can be used as a free action to steal any appropriate prop (it can steal a set of keys, but not the love of anyone. Unless they're the kind of girl who falls in love with small robot bugs.)

A small antlike creature of silvery synthmetal with a nanotech multitool for a head, Scrapmound can find just about anything and bring it back. Or, failing that, bring back the location of whatever it was you sent them into. As far as anyone can determine, Scrapmound was once the pet and best friend of a Hegemonic Knights, one of the fabled Dark Striders of Lord Thale Drak. When she retired from the Chain to a recursive simulspace, Scrapmound was left to mourn his amethyst haired mistress.

Shimmerweave Finery

Finer than the Finest Kings: Begin all intrigues with the Prop "Dressed for Success." Your clothing can be set to anything you want, from basic voidsuit to the finest gown to a crude parachute.

Shimmerweave is the fabulously rare nanotech material woven by the Dreamspinner Operatics of the Yaleten System - wanted throughout the Chain, most Shimmerweave is

worked into parts of other sets of clothing, allowing for a sleeve of multipurpose use, or a hemline that adjusts to suit you from day to day. This is rarer than the most wild dreams of kings and demarchies - a full dress made of Shimmerweave, bearing the makers mark of Tine-Sings-Upon-Collapsing-Manifold-Nexus.

The Force Bangle

Tiny, Intricate and Invincible: By holding out your hand and concentrating (a free action, if it matters) you can create anything that can be held in a single hand - made out of solidified semi-stable quarks. This effectively gives you a tool for any circumstance, represented in intrigues with the Prop of "Multivarious Tools" that you begin with for free.

The Force Bangle, constructed by a Machine known as The Terror of Yesterdays, is an elegantly designed wrist bracelet with a small green gemstone set on the back, surrounded by figures cringing in terror. When used, it creates a small construct of stabilized gluons and quarks, suited to your exact imagining.

Ur-Shield

The Shield of the People: When used, it can block one source of damage once per scene - but it can be extended outwards to cover a wider AOE. Each step of AOE adds a number of blocking until it hits the maximum level (approximately the size of a single small city) where it creates an unbreakable shield. This shield only blocks damage coming from *outside* the shield and requires the Ur-Shield to remain in place. Discord and violence within the Ur-Shield degrades it: Disagreement causes it to fade slowly, while active violence causes it to fail utterly within a few days, hours, or seconds depending on the level of violence and the size of the shield.

Using this intricate, swirling mass of interlocking crystals, the asteroid-citadel of Kamlan stood strong against the 5th Hegemony, the Stygian Throne, for sixty three years. However, as the Stygians sought weaknesses, their memeticos were able to worm their way into Kamlan's comnets and spread discord with whisper campaigns, sabotages, false flag incidents, and similar vile, underhanded tactics. When Kamlan fell, it was already burning.

USEFUL TOOLS FOR SUNDIVING

A Scroll of Wanted Names, Hated Bounties, and Known Villains

Plot Hook!: Upon entering a system, name a villain, criminal, or bounty jumper and their supposed crimes. They now exist! Do with them as you please.

This document is exactly as it says. They go out of date swiftly, but you have a very recent one - issued by the Hegemony itself. Whether this means it is full of enemies or allies depends a great deal upon the Hegemony at this time.

A Surviving X-2, Hung Together By Bailing Wire

Hull: Size: +6, contains six slots (five are used)
Cockpit: A cockpit, containing the pilot and life support system.
Main Fusion Drive: +28 Realspace Speed Scale
Armor Cladding: +10 armor scale
Offset Mass Driver Cannon: A high powered, heavily offset coaxial mass driver cannon.
 Adds: -1 | Range: 11-16 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage (AOE): 7 (None)
 Suppression!: Can apply one off balance and pinned oomphs even on a miss.
 Armor Piercing Ammo: Ignores 7 armor.
Targeting Scanners: +10 to scan at ranges 1-6

Damage Silhouette (damaged/destroyed)

Hull: 6/12 | Cockpit: 0/1 | Drive: 14/28 | Cladding: 5/10 | Mass Driver: 3/6 | Targeting Scanner: 5/10

Penalties

Fuel Requirement (-10x2): burns through more fuel than anyone likes to admit.

Skill Penalty (-10x2): Whenever sudden, erratic turning is required, the heavily offset main gun can produce wild instabilities that can make piloting extremely difficult.

The X-2 is that most rare of all devices - an actual snubfighter. Long out of favor due to the difficulty of storing and transporting them, they have been replaced by flashfabled drones in modern ages. Even if said drones can be misled by Liminal Knights and their technomancy, who cares? If they're focusing on your drones, they're not focusing on the ships that actually matter. However, for some daredevils or nostalgics or terminal suicidals, the X-2 promises that most elusive thing: A chance to become a legend, to be the first to take down a Worldkiller. It's only a one in a million shot...

Eerie Black Box, Attached to the Jump Drive

I Don't Know...: When in desperate situation, and in a dire fate, activate this. We'll see what happens.

Discovered in the graveworld of Oncewas, the Black Box has been passed from captain to captain over the years. Beyond emitting a constant low level field of neutrinos, the Black Box doesn't seem to do anything save for extruding cables that can be connected to the average jump drive. It has been activated only in legends - and those legends are often contradictory. The tale of Tanner Trimuvier state that the Black Box effects a twenty six hour time jump to the past. The tale of Galendost says that the ship bearing the Box becomes an obscenity - a singularity capable of swallowing a whole solar system on the Chain. The tale of Fierwan says that it opened a gateway, allowing the Glorious First to arrive guns blazing in the nick of time.

SIDEBAR: The Big Black Box

Go nuts! But whatever it does, make sure it makes for an interesting and cool story. Remember, a PC decided that they wanted an Omega-13 device on their ship! Reward them for this foresight and cleverness by being really super duper amazingly cool. Best of all, even if they turn it on when situations *aren't* dire, it can then be used to catapult in new plot circumstances. Cause PCs who push the button when they're bored are just that. Bored. Throw the Yuuzhan Vong at them. It'll be funny!

Stolen Hegemonic Frigate

Hull: +10, contains eleven slots

Bridge: a bridge for the command crew to give orders

Main Fusion Drive: +28 realspace speed scale

Hyperdrive: +45 jump range (other solar systems)

Armor Cladding: +21 armor cladding

Crew Quarters: room for the 50 person crew

AC-90 Heavy Mass Driver: a heavy mass driver, mounted in a fore mounted turret (x4)

Adds: +0 | Range: 15-20 | Speed: Slow (x1) | Base Damage (AOE): 10

(none/medium)

Autoloader: Can either fire AP (ignore 5 Armor, reduce AOE by 1) or HE (gain +1 AOE shift) shells.

ONI "Dervish" 101 Plasma Bomb Launcher: a twin linked plasma bomb launcher

Adds: +1 | Range: 1-12 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage (AOE): 5 (None)

Like Butter: Ignore 12 armor

Long Ranged Scanners: +6 to scan at ranges 1-28 (narratively, to other planets)

Damage Silhouette (damage/destroyed)

Hull: 10/20 | Bridge: 2/3 | Main Fusion Drive: 14/28 | Hyperdrive: 23/45 | Cladding: 11/26 | Crew Quarters: 5/10 | Autocannons: 5/10 (x4) | Plasma Bomb Launcher: 5/10 | Sensors: 14/28

Penalties

Fuel Penalty (-28x2): Requires hundreds of tons of water between each sundive for the ice armor.

Speed Penalty (-28x1): It goes only the crew's base speed in combat scenes

Crew Penalty (-10x2): requires 50 crew

Environmental Limiting (-10x1): The jump drive requires you to fly directly into a sun at high speeds.

The Raeighle class Flag Frigate was designed from the ground up for flag showing ceremonies in the 11th Hegemony, the Libertine Republic. Painted the colors of the Libertine Revolution - red, gold, and black - it has mounting points for ice cladding for when it is going to do a sundive, but is not rated for more than a single trip in and out of a star before needing resupply. Armed with a quartet of AC-90 Heavy Mass Drivers and a pair of ONI plasma bomb launchers, the Raeighle is capable of punishing entire intersystem fleets by its lonesome. When formed up into attack squadrons by the Libertine Republic, the Raeighle was their most feared flanker for fleet actions until the

fall of the Republic to the 12th Hegemony, the Gentek Omniempire, which replaced the Raeighle for the iconic Gentek Worldkillers.

The Oracle Sphere

Timing: Once per session, gain the truthful answer to a single question posited - but this answer must be within two hundred and fifty characters of whatever language you want to use. Most of you are using English, but you can use Chinese or Farsi or French or whatever, if you want and can speak it.

The Oracle Sphere circumvents the normal impossibility of faster than light communication by simply already having every single message ever written already stored inside of its spherical body. When they are meant to arrive, they will arrive. Fortunately, a lot of these messages are, in fact, written by you, the current holder of the Oracle Sphere and are keyed to show up when they would be most useful.

What a Piece of Junk!? Look again...

Size: +10 | Slots: 6

Damage: 10 (Totaled) 20 (exploded into fireball)

Fusion Torchdrive: +28 Realspace Speed Scale

Damage: 14 (Out of Commission) 28 (Gone!)

Jump Drive: +45 Hyperspace Speed Scale

Damage: 22 (No jumpdrive now), 45 (No jumpdrive, ever!)

Armor Cladding: +6 Armor Scale

Damage: 3 (hull at 50%!), 6 (hull plating offline!)

Control Cabins: A bridge for piloting and commanding the ship. (0)

Damage: 1 (After This Point, You Are Now Being Shot)

Sensors: +0 up to a range of +28

Damage: 1 (Your sensors aerial is gone)

Nose Mounted Laser Machine Gun

Adds: -2 | Speed: Fast | Range: 1-12 | Base Damage: 7

Brrrrrarrapt: This weapon has a small AOE.

Damage: 3 (Jammed!) 6 (Your gun is gone)

Dorsal Beam Turret

Adds: +1 | Range: 1-12 | Speed: Fast | Base Damage (AOE): 5

Like Butter: Ignore 8 Armor.

Damage: 3 (the turret's cracked!) 6 (the turret is gone!)

Crew Cabins: Cabins for the captain, pilot, navigator, engineer, and doctor. Comfy!

Damage: 3 (life support offline), 6 (there's no more atmosphere)

Cargo Container: Carries a few hundred tons of cargo.

Damage: 14 (cargo hold venting!) 28 (We don't have a cargo hold anymore!)

Penalties

Crew Requirement (-3x2): Requires 5 people to run.

Speed Penalty [Realspace] (-10): Shockingly swift for its sluggish size.

Fuel Requirement [Jumpdrive] (-21x2): Requires a few tons of ice water for cladding before it can do a sundive.

A seemingly slow and sluggish Mass Hauler from the orbital yards of Xonthanth, this huge freighter is capable of carrying immense amounts of raw material hither, thither and yon - but best of all...rather than having a classic ionic drive, it has been upgraded to have a perpetual steady-state stabdrive, running off a pocket universe concealed within the housing. This means that it is capable of going MUCH faster in realspace than most people would ever expect...

A KNIGHT'S MOST TRUEST POSSESSION

Threshold Blade

Adds: -1 | Range: 1-10 | Speed: Slow [1] | Damage: 1

Rarer than Diamonds: A Threshold Blade counts as a weapon, armor and utility for starting equipment.

A Blade For All Worlds: A Threshold Blade is infinitely adaptable. You have 1 point per rank in Melee, Tech and Magic. Each point can be spent to add to the Adds, Range, or Speed (bumping it from slow to medium to fast) or to Damage. This takes a free action to reconfigure.

Desperate Creation: A Threshold Blade is capable of defense as well as attack. If you have Free Actions available, the points from above can be turned into Cover or defensive Oomphs of your choice. Doing so resets the stats to their baseline (adds -1, range 1, slow) until they are reconfigured.

Bounty For A World: So long as you have the background to make it or the schematic acquired via intrigue, the Threshold Blade can produce any item you can easily hold in your hand instantly. For larger objects, it will take more time to create the sub-components, then combine those components together. In general, anything larger than a car is beyond what a single Threshold Blade can accomplish in a reasonable length of time. Furthermore, you begin all Intrigues with the Threshold Blade as a claimed Prop that can be used.

A miracle and a symbol alike, the Threshold Blade is so named for it sits upon the threshold of human understanding. Within the unique hilt (no two blades look alike) beats a River of Mana - an energy to matter replicator - keyed to a zero point energy fluctuation generation system that allows a Threshold Blade to produce...essentially anything from its hilt. It is a weapon, a suit of armor, a perfect tool - the feats and capacities of a Threshold Blade are limited only by the skill and imagination of the Knight bearing her.

The most infamous of all Threshold Blades was the terrible golden sword of Lord Drak Thale, the masked Knight of the Gentek Hegemony, which it is said struck down thousands of rebels in his reign. The only more famous was the ruby red blade of Wotan Hohmann - the most heroic Knight to ever walk the Chain, and long thought lost.

SPOILERS BEYOND THIS PAGE! DON'T READ! ...OKAY, I KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO READ IT. BUT DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU!

The Star Walkers setting is, unlike the others, built around a singular central mystery: What the *fuck* is up with the Machines. Why are they doing this? Why are they perpetrating what amounts to a perpetual cycle of warfare, slavery, genocide and fleeting golden ages? Why do they take a few individuals to elevate to the highest levels of personal power then set them loose against one another in epic configurations that set planets ablaze and kill billions of people?

Simple!

They think they're doing us a *favor*.

They are giving us lives that mean something - without their intervention, we would just be nonentities living in a bland, unchanging utopia, with our every want and need provided for. In exchange, they make us into heroes, villains, masters and monsters and everything in between.

This can only be discovered by reaching Home - the long abandoned and holy homeworld of humanity, a planet once known as Earth. This is where the Machines still dwell. Well, the parts of the Machines that interact with our reality, at least.

The question posed at the end of Star Walkers is this: What, exactly, do you do to forces beyond your comprehension that think your life exists only to be *plot fodder*?

If you reach the 5th level of Miracles, you can take the final skill: *Machine Ender*. Using this skill on Home will sever the connection between the Machines and Man *forever*.

...yes, Knights of the Old Republic 2 is my favorite Star Wars, why do you ask?

AFTERWARD

The HEAT system began with one simple question...

“Why the hell don’t the rules work like the guns?”

It was after I had gotten a truly *awful* fan-made Mass Effect d20 game system and had read all the rules and realized it would take about 5 rounds of concentrated fire to kill a single Geth trooper. 2d4 damage per shot from the fucking Locust SMG my ass! I said, as a gag, that the central mechanic should work like the guns in Mass Effect, wherein you gained heat with every shot and then needed to pop into cover to let the heat cool off.

That then led to me realizing that the best way to simulating that shoot/use power/take cover system was to have powers cost Heat, then let enemies act.

Yes.

This entire game came from a twitter shitpost.

From there, I took out the Mass Effect stuff (annoyingly, I don’t actually *own* the IP) and broadened the possibilities, adding in bits and pieces until, at last, we have the multifaceted system you have now read.

I’d like to thank Erika Chappel for encouraging me in this folly, Lucrecia "Lu" Ludo for forcing me into the Graberzone, Lucithana Paro for being my cutest loveliest most wonderfulest girlfriend ever, and Greg Stolze for being a huge inspiration (and also, I shamelessly riffed on his combat chapter opener for my combat chapter opener) as well as Leaf and Devi for being my best trans girl pervert friends (hi guys!) and, finally, Jason for always encouraging me! Oh, and can’t forget Jay Durant, who adopted me in the first year of college.

No, I’m not kidding, we hung out so much at college that people thought we were siblings and I see no reason in disputing them at this point. Her big RPG brain has guided much of this, as has her infinite ability to hear my rambling and go ‘hmmm!’

Oh, and I shouldn’t forget, the authors of Diaspora: Hard SF Roleplaying in FATE. While zero other people remember their game, *I* do, and their social combat system is so good that I took liberally from it for my intrigue system. Thanks guys!

Now go, play, have fun! And now you know *exactly* what overheating sounds like!

Deet deet deet deet deet!

David “Dragon Cobolt” Colby