

# DREADLORE

## Getting Started Guide



# FORWARD

This **Getting Started Guide (GSG)** works in tandem with the following materials:

- Pregenerated Characters (website) / Pregenerated Characters pack
- the DreadLore Character Sheet
- "Astasi's Brew pub" Quick Encounter / "The Keeping" Adventure Module

You can download two (2) Pregenerated Characters, a copy of the DreadLore Character Sheet, and the Quick Encounter "Astasi's Brew pub" from the [Official website](https://dreadlore.com): <https://dreadlore.com>. The DreadLore Character sheet took us forever to make – use it.

*Paid content* includes: the DreadLore Core Book, the Pregenerated Characters pack, and "The Keeping" Adventure Module. Contact us on the [Official website](https://dreadlore.com) if you would like to pre-order them. They will be officially available Spring 2022.

The **DreadLore Core Book** for a (much) more in-depth look at Character Creation, the world of Craster, running the game, a lengthy list of Abilities (including Magicka and Theurgy), and mechanics for Antagonists and how to build them. You will find some references in this GSG to features of the game which can only be found in the Core Book; while these features play a significant role in the DreadLore System of mechanics, they are not immediately necessary to run a game.

**"The Keeping" Adventure Module** provides lore about the world of Craster and several Antagonists with stat blocks. **The Pregenerated Character pack** includes five (5) built out Characters with suggestions for how to [Advance] their Abilities. These Pregens include Backgrounds, Abilities, and Ninja Gear specific to each Character and many of which are also not found in this GSG.

# Authorship

A tabletop role-playing game for dreamers by Bill and friends.

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# INTRODUCING DreadLore

*"The peak of civilization has come and gone - passed you by as you slumbered, unborn, in the cosmic primordium. The loathsome sun, looming heavy and reluctant in the sky, red and abominable, makes plain this is the end of days. The stars are but prey to the Void, devoured by stygian night, and the gods, curiously absent, distance themselves from their failures. Despair takes root and urges on obstreperous thoughts and pernicious deeds.*

*How will you respond, oh 'Zen, to these omens? Will you give in to dark desires of despotism and warmongering ways, slaking your lusts upon the miseries of your victims? Will you stand vigilant and unrelenting against the coming darkness, a hero, or something else entirely? It matters not, they say, in the end. We will winnow away our lives, glutting ourselves on the horrors of a broken world for the sake of a precious apotheosis.*

*Welcome to Craster, dear, ill-fated wanderer."*

*- Mutterings of Ridley, a Mule*

## The Age of a Dying World

The world is Craster. The world is olde but not yet finished; decadence encapsulates the once-great kingdoms and empires, lines of war are drawn as the chaos of Magicka and science of Theurgy contend for a victor; mortals, such as yourselves, search the stars and chance great deeds in the hope for escape and immortality.

In this The Age of a Dying World travel is fraught with dangers of all sorts. Whether it be impromptu militia, raiders lying in wait on the roadside, corrupted beasts, or **dæmons** \dā-mons\ drawn from some forgotten Realm, the wayward traveler and would-be hero best be vigilant. As hope perishes, so too the stars are winking out and the sky grows darker and dimmer with each passing Season. The lands and 'Zens can somehow feel that the end of all things draws near. The end will not come in a day, a few months, or within many Seasons (hundreds of years) – perhaps it will end long after we are gone, but the end ebbs closer; all things can feel it's grim approach.

Such is the world of Craster in The Age of A Dying World. The overwhelming, grey morality of The Veil casts a weird hue upon all creation. It is said that the god-like beings known as Greater and Lesser Powers achieved their status by writing their great deeds amongst the stars, that through their sheer willpower they were able to achieve greatness that manifested as stars reborn into their very own constellations. Through these acts, the Powers achieved a *kind* of immortality – an escape from the doldrums of Craster. The Players seek this goal.

Players will often find themselves in difficult, sometimes hopeless, situations. It is up to the Players to make purposeful decisions, to rise above and fight against the wretched miasma of the world's dying conscience. Whether they choose a path of selfishness or selflessness Players must become aberrant to achieve greatness and write their names and heroic deeds amongst the stars. Many will try, few will succeed.

# What is DreadLore?

DreadLore is a tabletop role-playing game that focuses on **immersive** roleplaying. It has its own, unique **Fantasy Punk** setting with which we flavor everything in this book. That said, the DreadLore rule system can be (and has been) used to run several sorts of settings: cyberpunk, steampunk, high fantasy, dark fantasy, noir, horror, etc.

What is *Fantasy Punk*? It is a setting-specific idea. DreadLore system can be used for most any setting. The world of Craster (explained below) is Fantasy Punk. “Fantasy” refers to the idea of being “not ordinary” – think of magic, weird science, otherworldly terrain, races, etc. “Punk” refers to the world being deadly. Craster is grim, dark, touts the horror of the unknown, and punishes those who do not respect it. If you think of something like "medieval steampunk," your mind will be in the right ballpark. As for “immersive” roleplaying, that coincides with, and is explained in, the *Expectations* of anyone playing the game.

↪(Refer to INTRODUCING DreadLore > Expectations)

# What is a TTRPG?

New to tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs)? No problem. TTRPGs are board games where those who play use their imaginations, along with a handful of dice, to wander through a storyline and attempt to achieve their Character’s goals...to the bitter end! They are a form of cooperative storytelling.

One person takes on the role of the referee, we call her the Arbiter. The Arbiter does many things: she projects the illusion of a world and setting, she roleplays the Non-Player Characters (NPCs), also called Antagonists, and she arbitrates (get it?) any uncertainty that may arise. The Arbiter has the final word on what happens in the story. The rest of the Players each take on a single Character within the story, often an intrepid adventurer of some sort. These Player Characters (PCs), also referred to as the Party, interact with the scenes presented by the Arbiter, exploring ruins of the bygone ages, battling adversaries, solving puzzles, engaging in political intrigue, and likely sowing chaos. Much like the PCs must react to what the Arbiter presents, the Arbiter reacts to the choices of the PCs, narrating consequences leading into the next exciting scene. In this way, a compelling story organically unfolds between the group of friends.

↪(Refer to INTRODUCING DreadLore > Read Me)

# How is DreadLore different?

There is no real “winning” or “losing” in DreadLore, just degrees of achievement, and there doesn’t have to be a predetermined end to the story either. The game focuses on the journey of your Players rather than the destination. The limelight is on the **Player Characters (PCs)** – they are the story! Even if the Players are playing the dregs of society, those who do not matter to the world, they are still the focus of a DreadLore game and the action is on them. Oftentimes a new story picks up where the olde one left off. Characters change and grow through their experiences, both tragic and triumphant. Their personalities, goals, and motives may change over time due to these experiences, and they may also accumulate wealth, power, or influence as well. Reaching goals, in victory or defeat, allows Characters to [Advance] (get more powerful) and push the story’s plot forward. Failures often lead to the most exhilarating chapters in stories, like the hero who attempts to stem the tide in a flash of heroic effort only to fail...and, their attempt is both great and remembered long after their passing. The point is to tell the *story* rather than only its outcome.

# Who is this game for?

Dreamers, storytellers, creatives, actors, artists, game masters, philosophers...DreadLore is for people that use their brains and desire to explore their imaginations through the lens of a “Fantasy Punk” world. It is a setting that is not for the faint of heart, for those who are easily offended, or for those who shy away from tough ideas, decisions, and life. We want everyone to be included, however that does not mean everyone wants to be included! This book assumes a certain level of maturity in its player-base.

## Expectations

DreadLore uses a different play style from modern-style TTRPGs; it is new to many people and takes some time to get used to. We call it “**immersive narration**” and understanding it will get people in the right “headspace” for playing and running a game using this system. Basically, your Characters are the story, it’s their story, they have both the limelight and the Action. Think about being in your Character’s shoes, like a first-person (or Point of View) perspective rather than a third-person (or Over-the-Shoulder) perspective. We care what and how you do what you do – not really why. If part of your action is to literally tell others why you are doing something then, by all means, do that. Otherwise, keep the game focused on the fiction and the action.

There are mechanics for gaining some degree of narrative control. You gain a modicum of narrative control when you [Bid] a [Character Trait] – your intention becomes reality, when you spend Breath and forgo all rolls, or when you spend Cunning and go before your opponents (they normally go first, by the way).

Characters are mortal. They are not epic, demigods (even at Tier 4 and with Incandescent souls...although, that gets pretty close). The world of Craster is absolutely deadly and will murder Characters if they are not prepared and willing to think creatively. There are times to run away and regroup, or just run away! Despite this, Characters are striving for greatness, to figuratively (and sometimes literally) write their names in the stars and gain a kind of immortality. This is the epic struggle of the game: the world is dying a slow death and the Characters are looking for escape through achieving greatness that will be remembered.

## Headspace

Regardless of the setting of your game, this system attempts to allow everyone engaged in the game, whether they are running the game or playing it, the ability to have a ton of *Agency*. The Arbiter has most of the *Authority* in the game – it is basically a monarchy. That may sound contradictory but is not so. The Arbiter has the final say in most situations so that they are free to be impartial, to “arbitrate,” without being antagonistic with regard to the story or to the rule set. The Players, on the other hand, have paramount *Agency* when deciding what sort of Character they’re playing, e.g. choosing their [Character Traits] and [Bidding] them. Everyone can thus have the same *expectations* – a DreadLore game is about the fiction; it is about Players *immersing* themselves in their Characters, being involved in the story arc, and in helping create and move the fiction that follows. This is the *headspace* that the system attempts to achieve. Lose the rest and get involved. If you find yourself in that *headspace* then you are doing it right!

↪ (Refer to INTRODUCING DreadLore > Read Me)



# Formatting

- Pronouns are handled somewhat strictly: barring specific examples, the Arbiter is a *she*, an Antagonist is a *he*, a Player is a *they*, when in doubt, we use a *they*. On that note, we often refer to "you," "a Player," "a *berk*," "a *fob*," and any number of silly terms; we are probably talking to the universal "you" who might find themselves in a particular situation.
- **Bold** text is not only for emphasis but also indicates the first time you see the term in the Book in a way that is going to explain what the term means.
  - **Bold** text is also used for the Arbiter's voice in examples.
- Capitalized and *Italics* text denotes names/terms of *importance*.
- Words in BLOCK-CASE always indicate [Traits].
- **Red-lettered and underlined Titles** are special terms within the Setting, and within Chapter IV: Abilities, they often designate the names of Abilities themselves. Neither are [Biddable].
- Words in [brackets] refer to game mechanics that are dependent on other mechanics, or they are used by Players. For example, Proficiencies are game mechanics but are not used by Players. [Mulligans] are types of Proficiencies, and [Character Traits] are resources – and both they *are* used by Players.
- [Traits] are noted throughout the book in two (2) ways: SMALL-CAPS and also within [BRACKETS]. [Traits] that are listed in SMALL-CAPS appear in descriptions and should be added to your sheet after you've gained that Ability, Ninja Gear, etc. [Traits] listed in [BRACKETS] are there as a quick reference, so you can easily know if and how many [Traits] and are granted. In the example below, **Authoritarian Presence**, within the Codex of Mastery grants two (2) [Traits], AUTHORITY and RETHINK, but not four (4).

## EXAMPLE: "Formatting for Abilities"

### **Authoritarian Presence**

[AUTHORITY, RETHINK]

Great commanders realize that their physical presence can be used as a formidable tool. Use your AUTHORITY to bolster your presence and cause comrades and foes alike to RETHINK their course of action. While an Antagonist may not change their mind entirely, they will certainly take notice of you.

- 4+, 8+, 10+ refer to "four up," "eight up," and "ten up," respectively. These terms apply to the results you get when rolling your dice, specifically to when you are trying to gain [Successes]. The terms mean that if you roll 'that number' or anything above it, then something happens. For those who like to feel "mathy," the numbers are *inclusive* and so could also be written as  $\geq 4$ ,  $\geq 8$ ,  $\geq 10$  – we, however, do not inflict this formatting upon anyone.

## EXAMPLE: "Formatting for dice"

Let's say there's a rule which says that you get a cheese sandwich on a 4+, in other words, a 'four up,' and you happen to be rolling a (d8). If your die rolls any of the number following numbers: 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8, then you get the sandwich. If you roll a 1, 2, or a 3, you do not get the sandwich.

# EXAMPLES

This book's replete with **Examples** which (hopefully) aid you in understanding how the rules and narrative-style work as one. Examples highlight specific rules, showing how they might work in different encounters and tend to be more straight-forward and "mechanical" in nature than other sections. They're written so as to introduce and follow the (mis)adventurers of a group of custom DreadLore Characters, with whom you'll soon be acquainted!

## The Voice

While mechanics-heavy sections of the book are written with Bill's voice, much of it's written from the perspective of a curious vagabond known as **Sai Cedric Kidder** (Sai is an honorific). Some of what Sai Kidder has to say isn't entirely accurate, as you may find out. While many of his exploits weren't done in the most legal of manners, his unique perspectives on the world of Craster can be very useful for the canny 'Zen (that is, a *denizen* of Craster). Portions of the book were "acquired" by Sai Kidder, e.g. the "Diary of Agrimbar" within Traditions of Mysticism, and are presented in their former owners' voices.

## A SAI's WISDOM

**A Sai's Wisdom** are side notes written in Cedric's voice that he want to pass along to you. These side notes are provided in addition to Examples and the Arbiter's Dark because they pertain to how the "crunch" of rules/mechanics actually manifests and is understood by the people of Craster. Cedric also offers his various opinions about the subject at hand.

## ARBITER's DARK

The **Arbiter's Dark** are side notes containing bits of information and explanations about the world and rules that are directly (mostly) towards the Arbiter. They're written from Bill's perspective, with his voice, and are "out-of-game."

## Lexicon

Cedric uses a slew of words and terminologies native to Craster. You should be able to understand most references through context. Also, this is how 'Zens of Craster speak. Try and use these terms in your own games to elicit the feel of the world. A complete list of them is in Appendix: Languages & Lexicon.

## Read Me

Whether you are a seasoned gamer, a newcomer, or somewhere in between, it is best to start learning this game with an open mind that is free of assumptions. If you have not already, read the entirety of INTRODUCING DreadLore – it walks you through the basics of gaming. In this *Read Me* section, we are

going to recap on some of what has previously been said in the effort to give you an exhaustive list of what you can expect from this *game* and a play-by-play of how it functions. We will cover:

- What you specifically need to play the game.
- Roles and responsibilities for the Players and the Arbiter.
- Instructions for setting up a [Game Session] and playing.
- Instructions for taking your [Turn].
- Guide you through examples of what a DreadLore game should look like as you play it, in other words, the “mindset” that the Players and Arbiter should have.

The rest of the book will:

- Lead you through making a Character.
- Provide you with ample DreadLore setting material – most of the book is dedicated to this effort.
- Give in-depth descriptions and examples about DreadLore’s various rules and play styles.
- Present a descriptive list of flora, fauna, and monsters which are setting-specific.
- Give some pointers on how to adapt DreadLore system to other settings.

For a quick list of all of the significant mechanics in the DreadLore system, drop down to the **Rules Cheat Sheet**.

↪(Refer to Rules Cheat Sheet)

## What You Need to Play

In order to play DreadLore, you’ll need the following:

- One (1) person who wants to run the game, called the Arbiter.
- A Group of Players! A typical game has four (4) to six (6) Players, though games could be as small as one (1) Player and one (1) Arbiter, or as large as the Arbiter thinks she can handle.
- One (1) Character Sheet per Player (either a Printed copy or a Pre-generated Character).
- Something erasable to mark Character sheets (such as a pencil).
- A set of dice per Player and a set for the Arbiter. If you need to share dice, that won’t cause any problems, lest you’re superstitious.
  - You will need a (d4), (d6), (d8), (d10), and a (d12). It is a good idea to have at least (2d10) and is even better to have two (2) sets of all the dice.
  - A standard polyhedral dice set is a great option if you don’t have any dice yet.
- Access to the DreadLore Core Book (this book, so you’re already on your way!)
- Time. DreadLore is a game which normally spans several [Game Sessions], the entirety of which is called a [Campaign]. Or, if the Arbiter has one (1) [Game Session] in mind, called a "one-shot," then your entire game could span a single evening. Each [Game Session] lasts between three (3) and six (6) hours, though your group could do more or less as desired.

# Roles and Responsibilities

The point of a DreadLore game, and most any TTRPG for that matter, is to cooperatively tell a story, i.e. the **fiction**, over the course of several [Game Sessions]. In order to achieve this end, you must first understand the roles and responsibilities of the Players and of the Arbiter.

## What do Players do?

Each Player builds their own Character using the Character Creation steps (Chapter III), and they act as, e.g. roleplay, those Characters during game play. The "why" of what Players are doing is determined by the [Goals] they've created for their Characters, which are cleared with the Arbiter beforehand. So, Players are roleplaying their Characters in accordance with their [Goals] which follow the Arbiter's story. Achieving one's [Goals] allows them to [Advance], e.g. gain power, more Resources, and expand what their Character's capable of doing.

## What does the Arbiter do?

The Arbiter runs the game. She writes a story arc, sets the mood for the fiction's setting, roleplays every Character other than the Players' Characters, and dictates when [Scenes] and Encounters begin and end. She also has the final decision on any element of the game. *The Arbiter is playing the game too*, trying to join in with the Players to fashion a compelling story. The game plays out as a conversation between everyone at the table.

## Bringing it all together.

Players describe to the Group and Arbiter what and how their Characters are doing, how they're responding to the fictional world around them. "Winning" could be defined as successfully telling a compelling story which includes all of the Players' Characters, honors the Arbiter's story arc and the mood of the setting, and above all, was fun to do so.

Everyone's involved in telling the story, all of the Players as well as the Arbiter. It's up to the Arbiter to set up the world and maintain the setting. She describes the overall story arcs and scenes, and she referees and arbitrates any questions or disagreements which might arise.

# The Setup / Instructions

All Players must have a finished Character and a (mostly) filled out Character Sheet before game play can begin. Character Sheets can be added to and completed as the game ensues. The first [Game Session] often takes the form of a "**session zero**" where all of the Players sit down together with the Arbiter and create Characters. This can also be done away from the table, one on one between Player and Arbiter, or at any point before the first [Game Session]. Regardless, the following should occur:

- The Arbiter outlines the expectations for her game: the general attitude and feel she wants at the table, where "in-game" the Characters will start and be able to explore, how many [Game Sessions] there will be, when and where it will take place, and so forth.
- The Arbiter describes the Prologue of her story so her Players can get ideas for the kinds of Characters they might want to play. This description can be a kind of narration, like the opening crawl for a movie, or it can be a short scene or two wherein she introduces the world at hand, the Player Characters, and any pertinent Antagonists.

- Players create their Characters and discuss their choices with the Arbiter and one another, as well as their Character's [Goals]. Characters might have secrets from, or be at odds with, one another. It is up to the Arbiter and those Players if these facets of their Characters are known out-of-game.
- Sometimes, the Arbiter will have the Players simply listen to their narration; other times, they will play through this Prologue. In the case of the latter, the Arbiter must announce if it is *The Montage* or *The Dread*, both of which are discussed below.

The setup for your first [Game Session] differs from those thereafter:

- If it is the first [Game Session], the Arbiter will narrate what the world is doing, i.e. the [**World Action**], and introduce the Players' Characters as needed. Introductions can happen all at once, or one-by-one, as the story progresses.

For [Game Sessions] after the first, several stages of the game can take place. Which one comes first depends on where you are in your story, and how the Arbiter decides to direct events.

- The Arbiter, a Player, or the group as a whole, recaps the previous session's story, seminal events, and so on.
- The Arbiter sets the scene by describing what the Players see or know, the world around them, and any Antagonists which might be around. At this point, she announces whether the Party is in **The Montage** or **The Dread**.

↳(Refer to **Mechanics > Modes of Play: The Dread and The Montage**)

- If they are in *The Montage*, Players can interact with the world, roleplay with other Characters, and so forth. The Montage is also the only time Players can [Advance] their Characters to become more powerful, gain new [Traits], and so on. The Montage can be used to represent a time-lapse or scene change, e.g. travel time, training, sleeping, healing, and so forth. It can also be used to roleplay impactful, seminal events in the fiction. Characters cannot, however, [Bid] any [Traits] during The Montage; it is a time to focus on story movements rather than determining success or failure of actions (which is the purpose of The Dread).
- If they are in *The Dread*, Players describe their Characters as they interact with the world, other Player Characters, and Antagonists. They do this by announcing to the Arbiter "what they're doing." If what they're doing involves taking over some narrative control, i.e. impacting the story in a meaningful rather than mundane way, then they must [Bid] one (1) of their [Traits] for the action. [Bidding] a [Trait] means the "action is on" that Character. The Arbiter, in turn, determines if the Player must Throw Down (roll dice) to succeed. Either way, she describes how the action plays out and also how the world and other Antagonists respond to it. The Dread is the time for Players to use the mechanical bits of their Characters through [Bidding Traits] to activate their Abilities, taking Special Actions by spending their various Resources, e.g. Cunning, Breath, Pips, and so forth, Throwing Down, using their equipment, and using their Proficiencies.
- The game bounces back and forth between The Dread and The Montage to tell a story. When there needs to be conflict, or the possibility of success and failure, then the Arbiter uses The Dread. Otherwise, she can use The Montage.
- Moments that are meaningful and impactful to the story are called **Encounters**. Encounters are seminal moments which begin and end as they need to and as the Arbiter dictates. They can occur during The Dread or The Montage. Encounters have no bearing on game mechanics, but instead exist to provide the Arbiter and Players with a method of talking about different moments within the story.

- The Arbiter controls the Players' ability to [Recover] their Resources and [Traits], and so is able to "pace" her story, through [Scenes]. [Scenes] begin when The Montage ends, which all occurs when the Arbiter says so. When a new [Scene] begins, Players [Recover] all of their [Exhausted Traits].
- [Rounds of Bidding], or [Rounds], occur when the Players encounter conflict. [Rounds] follow one (1) of two (2) orders of events and continue until the conflict is resolved.

## Rounds type 1:

The world goes, i.e. [World Action], then the Antagonists take their [Turns], then the Players they take their [Turns]. This is the standard model which can be altered if either the World or the Antagonists have anything meaningful to do.

- [World Action] occurs
- Antagonists' [Turns]
- Players' [Turns]

## Rounds type 2:

This is a special action (discussed later in the book) where one or more Players spend a point from their Cunning Pool and go at the same time as the Antagonists.

- [World Action] occurs
- Players who spent one (1) point of Cunning take their first [Turns]
- Antagonists' [Turns]
- Players' [Turns]

## Taking a Turn

The mainstay of DreadLore is Players [Bidding] their [Characters' Traits], hereafter [Traits]. It is about how you do what you do. The [Traits] that you [Bid] affect the environment in a meaningful way, not necessarily a successful way, but a meaningful one. The **Arbiter** (storyteller) listens to your [Bid] and your description and then folds it into the fiction, and the narrative is changed. Even if your Character is doing something passive, when you Bid a [Trait], that decision moves the story along. Mundane tasks, e.g. those that are simple or unopposed, require no [Bidding].

Think of it like a movie: when the camera pans across the crowd of faces, your Character is one of the actors who gets face time when you [Bid] a [Trait]. The bandit who [Bids] MASTER-THIEF might slink into the shadows so that no one sees her, but the camera would see her – she gets face time, and because of this, her story matters. The action is on you. This can mean that it is your chance to do something or that the story demands you make a decision. Usually, the Arbiter prompts her Players when the action is on them but not necessarily. Players can speak up and ask the Arbiter if they can [Bid] a [Trait] to exact their intentions. But, let us get down to it: What does a DreadLore game look like? What's supposed to happen?

## The Action is on Me

The "action is on you" when you [Bid] a [Trait] or when it is your [Turn] during an Encounter. Players take their [Turns] during the [Round of Bidding] and must decide who goes first among them. When the "action is on you," you may do the following:

1. [Bid] one (1) [Trait] to do something or activate an Ability, and unless it is opposed or difficult, it is done! Describe to the Party and Arbiter how you accomplish your goal.

↪(Refer to Mechanics > Modes of Play: The Dread and The Montage)

2. The Arbiter may prompt you to Throw Down (roll dice) against a [Threshold] if your intention is opposed or difficult. At this point, you may [Bid] one (1) [Trait] to activate any Abilities you might have which reduce the [Threshold] for your Throw Down.
3. The Arbiter determines your degree of success or failure based on the results of your Throw Down. If you beat the [Threshold], you gain a "Clean Success," and the Arbiter, or you, describes how your action plays out. If you meet the [Threshold] something unintended happens, i.e. *Limbo*. If you fail to meet or beat the [Threshold], some degree of failure happens. In both cases, the Arbiter normally describes the fallout.
4. Choose to not [Bid] and perform an action without affecting the narrative.

↪(Refer to Rules Cheat Sheet > Dice)

## Examples of Game Play

A handful of friends sit around a table to game. As the game starts, the Arbiter describes the scene to the Players. **Jacob** plays *Domni*, a Siblín who's a retired soldier and Mage of the 6th House. **Emyris** plays *Heiðr*, an Edlen assassin of the Red Hand of Doom. **Ty** plays *Laz*, a Saolta who's a roguish, Underdog that gets away with (almost) everything. **Chuck** plays *Grothrutt Sull*, a Duoven who's a renowned, if not somewhat *barmy*, tinkerer and Life Mage. **Hulker** plays *Murad Hatun*, who hasn't been introduced into the story yet. *Murad's* an Ard Abhac Ranger from the beaten fields in the north and former confidant of *Heiðr*.

*The Arbiter:* **You all wake up in a cold, dank prison cell. There's a strange mist, or fog, that's swirling around you as you notice you're without any of your accoutrement** (\*groans\* from the Players.)

*Domni:* How'd we end up here? The night before we were drinking at "Just Ale" Tavern and looking for a Weaver who might be in town. Now, we're suddenly locked up?

*The Arbiter:* **Yes.**

*Laz:* Really?

*Heiðr:* **Lame.**

*The Arbiter:* **Calm now, my lovelies. At least you know you're alive...and, when you get to this point in the story, you'll be in The Montage.**

*Grothrutt:* Seriously, though. Do we know how we got here?

*The Arbiter:* **Indeed. We're going to do a "flashback." It's the previous evening...same [Scene] as when we ended last [Game Session] so you've not [Recovered] any of your [Exhausted Traits]. You're now in The Dread and can [Bid Traits] to affect the narrative.**

*Laz:* We're in "Just Ale" Tavern then?

*The Arbiter:* **Yep. Same as before. You notice several *berks* sitting inside: an elderly chap who's probably with the city guard sits by the door, a couple brotherly-looking Draoidin talking amicably over more than a couple empty glasses are at a table with a riding dog sleeping beneath it, a rather dour-looking woman sits by herself in the corner studying a large book, and finally, a sour-smelling, dark-clad Myroshi stands behind the bar and is presumably the barkeep.**

*Heiðr:* Hmm, I'm also Myroshi, do I know this guy?

*The Arbiter:* What do you [Bid]?

*Heiðr:* Not to be stereotypical, but Myroshi are usually mercenaries. I'll [Bid] my Background MERCENARY to see if I've heard of him.

*The Arbiter:* **Oh yes. You [Bid] MERCENARY and immediately recall his face from a poster you'd seen in your travels. This is "Meirn the Liar."**

*Heiðr:* I whisper to Laz, "The barkeep's a 'wanted' man, in both Asraylia and all of DaLune for all sorts of mischief."

Laz: (to Heiðr) "Worth a lot of Coin?"

Heiðr: (to the Arbiter) Do I know any details?

**The Arbiter: Sure. Your [Bid] is appropriate to know that Meirn's an infamous charlatan who's impersonated various members of the Merchants of Karr and has ripped off plenty notable aristosi. Specifically, he's wanted for stealing weapons forged in Lapis Regnum and bound for Prime. Oh, he's also a known murderer.**

Domni: I check out the woman sitting by herself. She seems like a fellow Mage. What's she doing?

**The Arbiter: Are you [Bidding] anything to do this surreptitiously, or are you just looking?**

Domni: Just looking.

**The Arbiter: You lean over rather obviously to get a better vantage at the woman. She seems to be jotting down notes in a massive journal – probably Runes.**

Domni: Probably a Mage.

**The Arbiter: Probably.**

Grothrutt: I scurry up to the end of the bar and find a seat. I'll open my satchel and pull out one of those Elixirs...

**The Arbiter: The one you're pretty sure is illegal?**

Grothrutt: Yeah! I doubt anyone in here knows Alchemy. I'm going to [Bid] my Background APOTHECARY to figure out what it is.

**The Arbiter: Sure. You're an Alchemist, so you can figure it out easily. Describe how you do it.**

Grothrutt: You all might see me as I uncork this little vial with a purple fluid in it. I dip my pinky finger in and taste it. (to the Arbiter) What is it?

**The Arbiter: You taste the coppery-wine flavor of Lifewine.**

Grothrutt: Uh-oh. That's *definitely* illegal!

**The Arbiter: One of the Draoidin pops off his stool, on his way to the bar, stumbles into you Grothrutt.**

Grothrutt: "Excuse you?"

**The Arbiter as Cap'n Puck (NPC):** "Scuse me, friend. 'Dats me fault. Jus' gettin' another drink for me pals and me'self. Me name's Cap'n Puck! Ya want one? A drink 'dat is."

Grothrutt: I'll [Bid] FRIEND-OF-NO-ONE to see if he stole anything.

**The Arbiter: You check your pockets; nothing's missing.**

Grothrutt: "Sure! I'll have an ale, since we're at "Just Ale," friend!"

**The Arbiter:** Cap'n Puck

Heiðr: (to Laz) "Hey Laz, see if you can get behind this guy (referring to Meirn)...all sneaky like."

Laz: "Of course, I can get behind him without him knowing, but you're the assass-..."

Heiðr: Heiðr glowers at you (Laz) as you're about to finish your sentence. "I'm a what?"

Laz: "So pretty. Sure thing, I'll do the deed."

Heiðr: No, you're right. I'm better at it; I'll do the sneaking.

**The Arbiter: Are y'all just having this conversation in front of the bar in front of Meirn, the gods, and everybody?**

Heiðr and Laz: Nope.

**The Arbiter: What are you trying to do?**

Heiðr: I want to get behind this guy while Laz distracts him.

**The Arbiter: All right. What do you each [Bid] to do it – there's no need to Throw Down because you're both sneaky, sneaky people.**

Heiðr: I'll [Bid] ASSASSIN (glances at Laz).

Laz: I'll [Bid] one of my five free [Traits]; I hadn't filled them all out. Let's call this one...SMOOTH-TALKER.

**The Arbiter: Great, Heiðr [Bids] ASSASSIN and Laz [Bids] SMOOTH-TALKER; those are your "jumping off points" for roleplay. Your [Bids] style how you do what you're doing...so describe to everyone how you two get this done.**

Laz: Okay, you all see me slide up to the bar with a big ol' smile on my face. I'll pop my arm around this gentleman, *aristosi* guy who's sitting there...

**The Arbiter: Who?**

Laz: Uh...can I spend a Pip to say there's a gentlemen, *aristosi* guy sitting at the bar?

**The Arbiter: Why not? Upon arriving at "Just Ale" Tavern, you all happened to notice an empty seat at the bar. While you've been talking, plotting, and planning, you see a "gentleman, aristosi" guy walk down the stairs and plop into the seat. Laz and Heiðr, you're both nearby. You see that the seat has a bronze nameplate set into it which reads, "Lord Adrian Eggars."**

Laz: Right. I slide up to the gentlemen. Seeing the nameplate, I cop the best smile that I know how and try to con this guy. (to Adrian) "My Lordship, your cup is dry. Allow me the honor of refilling it."

**The Arbiter: You're a conman and have no trouble conning people – the [Bid] will suffice. Lord Adrian looks up at you with a curious look on his face, almost like half-amused and half-confused.**

Laz: Can I tell if he bought it?

**The Arbiter: Oh, you already [Bid] SMOOTH-TALKER, so he bought it.**

Laz: Well, can I tell why he's amused and confused then?



*The Arbiter:* **What do you [Bid]? In the meantime, Heiðr, what are you doing?**

*Heiðr:* I had [Bid] ASSASSIN, so you all *don't* see me slip behind a customer who's getting up from the bar; I'll use their movements and the fact that Laz's making a bit of a scene to slink behind Meirn.

*Domni:* I approach this woman who's sitting down. (to the woman) "I see you're schooled in Runespeak. Which Mage's College did you attend?"

*The Arbiter:* (to Domni) **Do you [Bid] anything?**

*Domni:* Nope.

*The Arbiter:* **She sighs at your interruption but continues to ignore you.**

*Laz:* I'll [Bid] my Nature NERVES-OF-STEEL as I look this guy over. I've certainly seen *berks* that have been shell-shocked from battle or drugged perhaps.

*The Arbiter:* **[Bidding] NERVES-OF-STEEL, you can tell Lord Adrian's neither. Instead, you see something in his eyes that seems like amnesia.**

*Laz:* Excellent! (to Adrian) "Buddy! Don't you remember me?" (to Meirn) "Barkeep! Get my bestest buddy, Lord Adrian Eggars, here the best stuff you've got. One for me too! In fact, everyone at the bar gets a round on us!"

*The Arbiter:* **You see Meirn balk for a moment, clearly not knowing where things are in this bar, before he cops a smile of his own and reaches for a random bottle.**

*The Arbiter as Meirn the Liar (NPC):* "Ah-ha!, yes...yes! Of course, Lord Eggars can have whatever he wants at this...bar."

*Laz:* "Of course, we can, good sir! Don't be shy with that pour. A little more for us fine gentlemen."

*Heiðr:* I pull out my dirk and try to slide behind Meirn. I'll [Bid] ASSASSIN...

*The Arbiter:* **You've already [Bid] that [Trait], so it's [Exhausted].**

*Heiðr:* Right! I'll instead [Bid] my Nature KILLER to get my dirk at Meirn's ribs – I want to be able to slide this blade into his heart and kill him if he moves the wrong way.

*The Arbiter:* **All right, you've got him by surprise, so you do it.**

*Domni:* Okay, as they're doing all of this, I'll [Bid] my Background MAGE. (to the Woman) "Okay, seriously, not just any *berk* knows Runespeak. We heard there was a *Weaver* in town. Is that you or not?"

*The Arbiter:* (to Domni) **What are you trying to do here?**

*Domni:* I'm trying to get her to see that I'm a fellow Mage, one of authority. I'm of the 6th House, in fact. If she's the Weaver we've heard about, she'll tell me.

*The Arbiter:* **Fair enough. Though, your [Bid] doesn't compel her to tell you her identity, but you definitely get**

**her attention. She slowly sits up straight and closes her eyes. A wry smile appears, as she closes her book, and then looks at you.** (As the woman) "And, who might I be speaking with, Sai?" **She uses the 'Sai' honorific letting you know that she got your point.**

*Domni:* "About time. Listen, we don't have all day, okay? Are you the Weaver or not?"

*The Arbiter:* **She stares at you unimpressedly.** (As the woman) "There's more going on here than meets the eye, Sai, even to a trained eye such as yours."

*Domni:* (to the woman) "Cryptic much? We're on a very important mission. Are you who we're looking for or not?"

*The Arbiter:* **With your initial [Bid], you can tell that she's not going to tell you. Also, Domni knows that Weavers rarely announce themselves, being hunted outlaws and all. That said, it's clear that she's at least a Binder and has studied the "Scroll of Runespeak." By your count, she's probably Magickal Control 4 or more – quite possibly 6th House.**

*Domni:* So, she's definitely a Mage, either who we've heard about or she's also looking.

*The Arbiter:* **Maybe...You've sunk some [Bids] into it, so probably.**

*Domni:* Can I [Bid] something to make or convince her to actually talk to me, give me some real information?

*The Arbiter:* **No. She's not easily swayed or intimidated. Though, you can deduce that she's trying to tell you something but can't say it plainly.**

*Domni:* Alright, I activate the **Counterpoint** Ability that I have from Codex of Mastery.

*The Arbiter:* **What do you [Bid] to activate it?**

*Domni:* Might as well [Bid] COUNTERPOINT; the Ability gives it to me.

*The Arbiter:* **What are you trying to do?**

*Domni:* Make her tell me what's going on.

*The Arbiter:* **Haha, okay, since you activated an Ability which literally uses your foe's words against them, you can Throw Down to see if you can convince her. The [Threshold] is really high, it's a 6!**

*Domni:* (to the Arbiter) Hmm, that's a pretty high [Threshold]. Let me think about it for a sec – might want to drop Breath instead of rolling.

*Laz:* Can I see Heiðr getting into position to shank this guy, Meirn?

*The Arbiter:* **You're right there, so yeah.**

*Laz:* As he's pouring the liquor, I lean in and whisper to Meirn, "we've got you, sir, no need to make a fuss." I'll [Bid] my Demeanor BELIEVABLE.

*The Arbiter:* (to Laz) **He leans in and grabs your arm.**

*Heiðr*: I poke him to make him stop.

*The Arbiter*: **He stops. You're able to interrupt his action because you'd already set up for it.**

*Laz*: "See, buddy? You'd best come along with us. We've got a reward to collect."

*The Arbiter as Meirn (NPC)*: "Ha-ha, nice, little lady. You've got some skill sneaking up on me."

*Heiðr*: "Wasn't hard."

*The Arbiter as Meirn (NPC)*: "Be that as it may, I've got a counter offer for the both of you...and your friends, if you're interested?"

*Laz*: "An offer, you say? And, what's your offer?"

*The Arbiter*: (to *Laz*) **Meirn's eyes dart over to the right of the tavern. (To Heiðr) You can't see his eyes because you're behind him, but you see him point with his thumb under the counter in that same direction.**

*Heiðr*: What's he pointing towards?

*The Arbiter*: **Domni and the woman who are kind of just staring at each other.**

*Grothrutt*: Seeing all of this happen in front of me, I look over to the elderly guy, the one that looks like a city guard. What's he doing?

*The Arbiter*: **Oh? You remembered him! Grothrutt, you get a Pip.**

*Grothrutt*: Sah-weet!

*The Arbiter*: **You notice that the guard's now standing next to the door. He's got a grim look on his face as he's paying very close attention to Domni and the woman.**

*Grothrutt*: I pop out of my seat and scurry over to the guard saying, "Hey friend! I'm new in town and you look like just the person that could help me out. Why don't you come sit with me? I'll buy you a beverage for your troubles." I'll [Bid] GREGARIOUS to convince him.

*The Arbiter*: **As you amble over near the front Tavern window, you can see a handful of armed guards heading across the street towards the Tavern. You also see someone else heading this way, a rough-looking fellow, most likely a warrior. By his build, you can tell that he's an Ard Abhac.**

*Grothrutt*: Are they grabbing their weapons, looking for combat? I'll [Bid] EAGLE-EYE to notice.

*The Arbiter*: **With your [Bid], you can tell they aren't in "battle mode" yet but are certainly coming with a purpose. As for the ranger-looking guy, he's wearing a leather jerkin, worn travel clothes, and has got scars all over his face. At his side is a small war ax; slung over his shoulder's a longbow.**

*Grothrutt*: Well, something's afoot!

*The Arbiter*: **The guard glances down at you, Grothrutt, and inadvertently smiles at your offer, obviously not including**

**you in whatever it is he's about to do. This is the [World Action].** (As the guard) "Ah, hello, little master. I'd love to help...but am a mite busy at the moment."

*The Arbiter*: (to *Grothrutt*) **Your [Bid] didn't work but you got some valuable information for your troubles.**

*Grothrutt*: Oh? Can I tell what's caused this guy to call the guards? I'll [Bid] THEURGIST, the Gift I got from my Apothecary Background. I figure, if I'm able to know the inner workings of Uncommon Sprok, surely I'm smart enough to put *this* together!

*The Arbiter*: **Haha, good point! As you think about all you've seen, you realize that the guard's been listening to Domni's conversation with the woman. Likely, the guard's looking for the Namer too!**

*Grothrutt*: (to the guard) "Hehe, no problem!" (to the Arbiter) I'll quickly wander back towards the bar, as casually as I can.

*The Arbiter*: **The guard seems too preoccupied to notice.**

*Domni*: I'll just spend a point of Breath to go to *Limbo*. (to the Party) You see Domni adopt a pose like a philosopher, one hand on his hip, one stuck out palm up. (To the woman) "You say that something important is going on here, and I've said we're also doing something important. It's likely we're both doing the same thing. Why not cooperate and let me know the details? That way, we don't get in each other's way."

*The Arbiter*: **Going to *Limbo* means you're successful but something unintentional happens, or it's not a "Clean Success." The woman nods in agreement.** (As *Laila*) "My name is *Laila*. You are correct. I too am looking for a Namer, or rather, I'm looking for *another* Namer – as are a great many 'Zens in this area."

*Grothrutt*: "Uh...guys? I think we have a problem."

*The Arbiter as Meirn the Liar (NPC)*: (to *Laz* and *Heiðr*) "That's what we've been waitin' for." (To the Guard) "It's her, it's the Weaver!"

*The Arbiter*: **(to Domni) You notice *Laila* roll her eyes when Meirn shouts.**

*Heiðr*: I kill him.

*The Arbiter*: **You do. What do you [Bid] to do it?**

*Heiðr*: Didn't I already [Bid] KILLER to be able to do this?

*The Arbiter*: **Good point. It's the same Encounter, so it stands. Yep. Describe it.**

*Heiðr*: All you see is me push on Meirn's back, his face contorts, and he drops out of sight behind the bar with a "THUD!"

*The Arbiter*: **At that moment, the old guard cracks the door open and whistles loudly to his buddies outside. Exactly at that moment...**

*Domni*: I spend Cunning to jump ahead of them in the [Turn] order.

*The Arbiter*: **This is technically still the [World Action].**

*Domni*: As the bad guys are going?

*The Arbiter:* **Yes, the [World Action] encompasses anything that's already going on or that's needed to happen to set up the Encounter.**

*Domni:* Fair enough.

*The Arbiter:* **The guards are running in; the elderly guard's whistling, as you all see the Ard Abhac ranger buffalo through the door, body slamming the old guard against the wall. As he does, the door cracks and hangs off its hinges. Boom!**

*Domni:* Cunning. I spend Cunning.

*Murad:* I spend Cunning, too.

*Everyone:* Oh shit! That's a Character introduction?!

*The Arbiter:* **Yep! And, Murad, since you've [Surprised] the elderly guard, you technically get to take a [Turn] without needing to spend Cunning.**

*Heiðr:* I wave to Murad, "Heeeey! Murad, when'd you get here?"

*Domni:* (to Heiðr) "You know this guy?"

Heiðr squees.

*Domni:* "I'll take that as a, 'yes.'"

*Murad:* I ax him a question...to the face.

*The Arbiter:* **What do you [Bid]?**

*Murad:* BLOODTHIRSTY.

*The Arbiter:* **No need to Throw Down. He's on his back, utterly [Bewildered] and [Surprised], and he's injured to boot. Describe it.**

*Murad:* I plant my ax in his face and he dies.

*Domni:* Cunning. I spend Cunning.

*The Arbiter:* **All right. It's your [Turn] as you hear the whistles of the guard's buddies coming closer; you know they'll be here in seconds.**

*Domni:* Don't I go before that happens?

*The Arbiter:* **Nope. They were already coming during the [World Action]. Your Cunning gives you a second [Turn] this [Round] which lets you act on the Antagonists' [Turn], either simultaneously or just before – in this case, you're going at the same time as he whistles.**

*Grothrutt:* I'll also spend Cunning so I can go on the bad guys [Turn] as well.

*The Arbiter:* **Sounds good. Which one of you goes first, Domni or Grothrutt?**

Domni motions to Grothrutt that he can go first.

*Grothrutt:* I hide this Lifewine. It's quite illegal for me to have, you know.

*The Arbiter:* **How?**

*Grothrutt:* Uh...I...

*Heiðr:* Prison pocket?

*Grothrutt:* Yep. I put them in my prison pocket.

*The Arbiter:* **...you'll need to [Bid].**

*Grothrutt:* I [Bid] my Demeanor CALM-AND-COLLECTED.

*The Arbiter:* **Yep. I'm not describing it, but you all see it. Moving on.**

*Laz:* Can I do something?

*The Arbiter:* **This is technically the Antagonists' [Turn]; Domni and Grothrutt get a second [Turn] because they spent Cunning. Do you want to do that?**

*Laz:* Nah, I'll see how this plays out and go as normal.

*Domni:* Okay, I [Bid] my [Flaw] HATES-AUTHORITY to use **Words of Power** to stop time for them as they enter the tavern.

*The Arbiter:* **What Word do you know?**

*Domni:* I've got the Word, *SLOW*.

*The Arbiter:* **Sounds good, though you cannot stop time completely but can only *slow* it.**

*Domni:* Alright, I want to slow it down so much for them that they're almost at a standstill.

*The Arbiter:* **Sounds good. **Words of Power** cost a point of **Breath**, or you can make a [Sanity Roll] with [Detriment]. What's your flavor?**

*Domni:* I'll go with the [Sanity Roll].

*The Arbiter:* **Sounds good...do I say that too much? Sounds good?**

*Laz:* Nope. Just go with it.

*The Arbiter:* (to Domni) **The spell's pretty tough to pull off. The [Threshold] is 4. Also, since you're slinging a spell, remember you've got to roll your Chaos Die.**

*Domni:* Should I use my Mind Aspect for the Aspect Die?

*The Arbiter:* **Sounds good...(to Laz) I definitely say that too much.**

*Laz:* Heh-heh. Yep.

Domni rolls his Chaos Die (d6) and the result is a 4; it's a 4+, so he gets one (1) additional [Success] that will be added to his total. Thankfully, the result isn't a 1, or else his spell would immediately *fumble*. He then rolls his Action Die (d10) and his Mind Aspect Die (d12). He gets an eight (8) for two (2) [Successes] on his Action Die, and he gets a nine (9) for two (2) [Successes] on his Aspect Die, for five (5) [Successes], four (4) [Successes] from his Action and Aspect Dice and one (1) from his Chaos Die.

*Domni:* Five (5) [Successes]!

*The Arbiter:* **Awesome. Now, the [Sanity Roll].**

*Domni:* Oh, right.

Domni rolls his Action Die (d10) and his Mind Aspect Die (d12) together. He gets a three (3) on his Action Die, so zero (0) [Successes], and he gets a two (2) on his Aspect Die, so zero (0) [Successes].

*Domni:* (to the Arbiter) I'm going to use one of my Proficiency uses to get a [Mulligan] on one of my dice...my Mind Aspect Die, since it's a (d12). Will Expression work?

*The Arbiter:* **Sounds Goo---damnit.**

*Laz:* Hehe.

*The Arbiter:* **I really do say that too much. Yes. That's fine.**

*Domni:* No problem. I'll use SLOW to slow down time so much it might as well be stopped. I've got Magickal Control 5: Prime, so it should be able to last for a while.

Domni rerolls his Mind Aspect Die (d12) with a result of 4 which is one (1) [Success].

*Domni:* One (1) [Success].

*The Arbiter:* **That's all you need. As two guards race through the doorway, and the elderly guard turns to shout, time slows to a crawl for them all. (To Domni) Go ahead and describe it.**

*Domni:* You all hear me speaking a language that's indescribable; it's as if the sound goes out of the room. The words don't seem to be in my voice. Then, you see the guards react as if they've been struck by an invisible lightning and pause – even the dirt in the air hangs there unmoving.

*The Arbiter:* **That's all the [Turns] from Cunning. The Antagonists finish their [Turn]. Laz and Heiðr, you see Laila step back from Domni as he uses Words of Power. There's a stern, if not impressed, look on her face.**

*The Arbiter as Laila:* "Then, you are all exactly who we need to find this devil. I guess it cannot be helped now."

*The Arbiter:* Laila touches the tome sitting on the table and Runes which were invisible begin to glow. Domni, you're able to notice that the Runes which appear form into a part of a Word of Power. As Laila utters the rest of the Word to complete the spell, the room goes dark for all of you.

*Everyone:* Whaaat?! Do we get a Dread Point for that?

*The Arbiter:* Of course! Haha. Well done.

*Laz:* I didn't get to go!

*The Arbiter:* **Indeed. But, this is just an Encounter to move things along. There'll be plenty of chances to take [Turns] – better ones, in fact.**

*Heiðr:* Lame.

*The Arbiter:* **Psht. The night ends, and we're out of The Dread and now in The Montage. As described before, you're all in the misty prison cell. You wake to find two figures appear in the mist. One is Laila, the other...a lanky, travel-ridden Siblín whose face is masked by a long, argyle scarf.**

*The Arbiter as Laila:* "Now that we can talk openly. Let me introduce a few other travelers, who I think can help us in our endeavor."

*The Arbiter:* **Laila motions to a separate cell where Murad Hatun stands holding the bars like a guy on death row. (as Laila) "I believe you know this one."**

*Murad:* "Hi."

*The Arbiter as Laila:* "Cap'n Puck and his dog Peaches are there." (the Arbiter) **She motions to a mound of straw next to Laz. (As Laila) "We've two outlanders amongst us." (The Arbiter) She points to a dark figure wearing a mask on the other side of Laz. (As Laila) "That one calls himself, Archangel. And, this is Shandor, an outworlder. With his help, we can together find this Weaver."**

*Domni:* (to the Arbiter) Can I [Bid] to see if our stuff is somewhere around here?

*The Arbiter:* **No need. It's The Montage, so you don't [Bid] but you can roleplay.**

*Domni:* I look up at Laila, "Do you have our equipment?"

*The Arbiter as Laila:* "Yes, it's just over here."

*Domni:* I go over and grab my stuff. (To Shandor) "How're you going to help us?"

*The Arbiter as Shandor:* I'll [Bid] my Nature ENIGMATIC to activate **The Shandor Slip**. (To the Party) You all see the mist envelop me as I pass through the bars of your cell. As I appear on the other side, the mist recedes.

*Domni:* "Nice."

*The Arbiter:* **Laz...**

*Laz:* Yo!

*The Arbiter:* **You notice a fellow sitting beside you in your cell. This berk looks like an interesting fellow wearing a Theurgic mask and a black, leather jacket. The masks' black, has bug eyes, and a breathing apparatus.**

*Laz:* "Who're you?"

*The Arbiter as Archangel:* You hear a muffled but enthusiastic voice, "Hi! I'm Archangel. I'm...not from around here."

*Laz:* "No way..."

*Heiðr:* (to Archangel) "They didn't take your mask?"

*The Arbiter as Archangel:* "They didn't ask for it."

*The Arbiter:* **Grothrutt, you're sitting there in the floor as you notice the riding dog from "Just Ale" Tavern sit up from the straw it was sleeping in. Next to it is that Draoidin, Cap'n Puck. The dog licks Cap'n Puck's face and he wakes up.**

*The Arbiter as Cap'n Puck:* (to the dog) "Peaches!"

*Grothrutt:* "Looks like we're all finally together!"

### **ARBITER's DARK:**

The other Characters introduced are, in fact, other Players which the Arbiter decided to NPC, e.g. she played them because they weren't at the [Game Session]. **William** plays *Cap'n Puck*, a Draoidin musician and lush. **Patrick** plays *Laila*, a Saolta who's an ageless Malenari Namer and Mage of the 6th House. **Brett** plays *Archangel*, an outworlder who passes for Saolta; Archangel's a tinkerer and mystic that seeks to right what's wrong in the Realms. **Nigel** plays *Shandor*, another outworlder who passes for Saolta; Shandor's just passing through trying to leave things better off than when he found them. **Steve** plays *Lord Adrian Eggars*, a Siblín, an experimenter of Mysticism who's self-induced amnesia to forget his sordid past.

## **Learn about the World**

This doesn't make sense yet? No worries. That's how it is for *berks* and *tyros* alike – which one will you turn out to be? We will get more mechanics (Crunch) under our belt, but first, you need to know *the world*. How else can you run the game or hope to make a meaningful Character in Craster? Too soon? Nah, you'll be fine. Ol' Cedric will make an *olde hand* of you yet! I've found it's easier in the long run to jump on into the fire and explain things along the way. Here we go!

# RULES CHEAT SHEET

**Abilities:** Abilities are powers which others cannot do, e.g. working Magicka, splicing the data stream, making people forget what they just heard or saw, etc. Abilities provide Players with new avenues to [Bid] their [Traits] and accomplish great things. Abilities are not themselves [Biddable] but can be activated by [Bidding] an appropriate [Trait] on a Player's [Turn]. They are written in **Red-Underlined Letters** to differentiate them from other mechanics.

- **Grades:** Buying an Ability, i.e. using [Advancement] to gain a new Ability, gains you Grade 1 of that Ability – Grade 1 is the starting point, it gains you the power to do the thing. Subsequent [Advancements] gain you Grades 2 and 3 which each lower a [Threshold] by one (1) to a minimum of zero (0), i.e. Threshold 0 needs only a [Bid] to accomplish.

**Advancement:** Characters become more powerful as they achieve their [Goals]. Your Character has one (1) [Major Goal] (worth 2 XP) and one (1) [Minor Goal] (worth 1 XP) which you choose (and the Arbiter ratifies) and which you can change as the story moves along. Achieving [Goals] gives you XP. See *Recovering & Experience (XP)* for how to gain XP.

With the exception of "Dropping the Load," Players can only [Advance] through the expenditure of XP during The Montage. This also applies to [Group Advancement] gotten when at least twelve (12) [Goals] of any sort are achieved by the Players as a whole.

- Spend XP: Once three (3) points of XP are achieved, you may [Advance] once by choosing a new Grade for an Ability, e.g. Grades 1, 2, or 3, choosing a Proficiency, or by adding a new [Character Trait] to your Character Sheet.
- "Fold the Story": Add one (1) [Trait] to your Ninja Gear (a maximum of three (3) [Traits] per item, and a maximum number of items equal to your Tier).
- "Drop the Load": Players can also spend all five (5) of their Pips to "Drop the Load" and [Advance]. [Advancing] in this way allows them to add a new [Character Trait] to their Character Sheet at any point in the game.

**Aspects:** There are four (4) Aspects total: two (2) physical Aspects: Brawn and Mind, and two (2) mental Aspects: Grace and Wits. Aspects represent how strong a Character is within any of those purviews. They do not change after Character Creation where they begin at Rank 1 "Weak" and max out at Rank 6. Players allocate their Aspect Ranks then, the number of Ranks given by their Arbiter in accordance with their Tier of Play, and these determine their Aspect Dice and their Attributes. Rank 1 "Weak" has no die associated with it. Rank 2 is a (d4), Rank 3 (d6), Rank 4 (d8), Rank 5 (d10), and Rank 6 (d12).

**Attributes & Resources:** [Plot Armor], Wounds, Sanity, Cunning, Breath, Pips, and Experience (XP).

- **Breath:** You have Breath points and if you spend one (1) then you immediately forego Throwing Down and to achieve your action, at *Limbo* – a "yes, but..." result. Breath can also be [Burned] to survive a near-death experience. [Burned] Breath is forever subtracted from your total Breath Pool, reducing your maximum. The Arbiter decides how you survived not perishing. Your maximum number of Breath points is equal to your number of Backgrounds plus one (1).
- **Cunning:** You have Cunning points and if you spend one (1) then you may interrupt the foes' action and go simultaneously with them, or in some cases, go before them, i.e. you gain a second [Turn] in a [Round] and take it at the same time the Antagonists take their [Turns]. Players can only spend

one (1) Cunning per [Round]. Your number of Cunning points is equal to your Ranks in Grace and Wits added together.

- **Experience:** See *Recovering & Experience (XP)* for how XP is gained; see *Advancement* for how it is used.
- **Pips:** Pips are points that the Arbiter awards Players for inspirational, or just plain fun, roleplay, for figuring out clues, and for being awesome. A Player can have a maximum of five (5) Pips at any given time. Pips can be used in several ways:
  - Spend one (1) Pip to make a “minor” change to the narrative. Making a “minor” change to the narrative could consist of: remembering to bring the rope, recognizing or remembering an Antagonist’s name, having the door open inwards rather than outwards, etc.
- **Plot Armor:** [Plot Armor] absorbs Damage first. Once your [Plot Armor] is gone, your Wounds and Sanity take Damage. Your [Plot Armor] is equal to your Ranks in Brawn and Mind added together, plus any additional Protection you might gain from Abilities or Armor.
- **Wounds & Sanity:** Characters have six (6) Wounds and six (6) Sanity. Taking enough Damage to reach either one results in either death or permanent insanity, respectively. Players can usually dole out Damage across their Wounds & Sanity as they see fit, assuming it makes sense for the situation.
- **Vitality:** Vitality refers to a Character's [Plot Armor], Wounds, and Sanity. Something which heals one's Vitality can be applied to any or all of these as the Character sees fit. Antagonists (NPCs) have a single Vitality score instead of denominations of [Plot Armor], Wounds, or Sanity.

**Backgrounds:** Every Character has at least one (1) Background up to a maximum of six (6). Your Backgrounds don’t change throughout a campaign, although you could gain a new one afterwards, assuming the story and Arbiter warranted it. Backgrounds are chronological ideas for your Character’s past, e.g. a “Street-rat” who became a “Charlatan” who became a “Prince.” Each Background is itself a [Trait], and it grants one (1) Ability or Proficiency, and helps determine your maximum Breath pool (attributes). Your first, and if applicable, sixth Backgrounds grant two (2) specific [Traits] called Gifts. Other Backgrounds grant only one (1) Gift. A Gift is simply a [Trait] associated with your Background. In the setting of Craster, both Backgrounds and Gifts are provided; games in other settings require Players and the Arbiter to create their own tailored for their game.

**Bidding:** When the action is on you, you may [Bid] [Traits] to change the fiction, more specifically you [Bid] one (1) [Trait] to do a single, meaningful action. Once a [Trait] has been [Bid], it is considered [Exhausted] and cannot be used again until it has been [Recovered], i.e. once the Arbiter says a new [Scene] has begun or if the Player Throws Down with [Flair].

**Character Traits (Traits):** Your Character sheet is full of [Traits], descriptive words or phrases that make up who your Character is and how they do what they do. [Traits] are your primary resource as a Player. You [Bid] them to take actions that change the fiction.

**Chaos Rolls:** When a Player does something nutty, brazen, or clever, they may need to Throw Down their Chaos Die (d6) for a [Chaos Roll]. This roll occurs regardless of the [Threshold]. Rolling a 1 results in an [Utter Failure], and a 4+ gain an additional [Success]. Some Abilities, e.g. casting Magicka, using olde technology, etc. and “special actions,” like Called Shots, could warrant a [Chaos Roll].

**Conditions:** [Conditions] give the Arbiter a way to inflict negative impact on Character without ridding them of their ability to take meaningful actions. These are sometimes inflicted in lieu of Damage. There are two (2) main [Conditions]: physically [Stunned] and mentally [Bewildered]. A Character who’s either



[Stunned] or [Bewildered] must [Bid] two (2) [Traits] instead of only one (1) to take an action that changes the fiction. [Other Conditions] can be created on the fly if the situation warrants, e.g. EXHAUSTED, TEMPORARILY BLINDED, CONFUSED, and so forth – these are considered “less” heinous than either [Stunned] or [Bewildered].

**Dealing Damage:** You Damage a foe by meeting or beating the [Threshold] to hit them. The Damage you deal is directly equal to how much you exceed the [Threshold] plus any Damage Dice your weapon deals. Damage Dice come in all die-types and are determined by the weapon or Ability used to deal them. Every number on a Damage Die is a [Success], e.g. rolling a 3 adds three (3) [Successes] to your total; rolling a 1 adds one (1) [Success], and so on.

**Dice:** You may Throw Down (rolling dice) if your action is opposed or difficult to achieve. When you Throw Down, you roll two (2) dice: one is called your Action Die and it is always a (d10); the other die is called your Aspect Die. Your Aspect Dice are determined by where you put your Ranks at Character Creation; they range from no die, (d4), (d6), (d8), (d10), or (d12).

- **Chaos Die:** see *Chaos Rolls*.
- **Extra Dice:** Any additional dice that are rolled along with a Throw Down which are not the Action, Aspect, Chaos, or Damage dice. Extra Dice are usually a (d6) and never operate as Damage dice. The Arbiter awards a Player an Extra Die for particularly awesome, daring, or reckless actions.
  - **Bidding Gear for Extra Dice:** As an optional rule, Players can [Bid] an item they carry to gain an Extra Die; once [Bid], the item is [Exhausted] like a [Trait]. The die-type granted is initially a (d4). Players can [Bid] the item's [Traits] to [Boost] the die-type to a maximum of a (d12).

**Encounters:** Encounters are moments when the Players interact with the world, Antagonists, and one another, during either The Montage or The Dread. Encounters are not mechanical in nature but are used by the Arbiter to structure her story arc with individual [Game Sessions]. They provide the Arbiter and Players with a way to talk about meaningful moments in the story.

**Narrative Points:** If you exceed a [Threshold] by two (2) or more, or if you miss the [Threshold] by 2 or more, then something “extra” happens in the fiction, i.e. you or the Arbiter gain a [Narrative Point], respectively. Whomever gets the [Narrative Point] decides how things change. Usually, failing the [Threshold] causes something negative while exceeding causes something positive.

**Proficiencies / Rerolls:** You may purchase Proficiencies when you [Advance] that allow you to reroll any one (1) die when you Throw Down. There are six (6) categories of Proficiencies that you can take, and you can have a maximum of four (4) uses in each of them (therefore, a total of twenty-four (24) uses if you bought every rank in every Category). You may only use Proficiencies on actions that have to do with their category, e.g. “Violence” can only be used while doing something violent.

#### **Recovering & Experience (XP):**

- When a new [Scene] begins: all [Exhausted] [Traits] are [Recovered], including [Plot Armor], and Characters may heal one (1) Wound or Sanity that they've lost.
  - Depending on the time lapsed, medication, surgery, and so on, a Character can "heal" as many Wounds or Sanity as the Arbiter allows.
- When the result of any die is ten (10) or higher: the Player who rolled gains [Flair] which allows them to [Recover] one (1) [Trait] that they have [Exhausted].



- When a [Minor Goal] is achieved: that Player [Recovers] one (1) point of Cunning and one (1) point of Breath, and gains one (1) point of XP. The Player who achieved the [Goal] also gains one (1) Pip.
- When a [Major Goal] is achieved: that Player [Recovers] all points of Cunning and Breath (except for points that were [Burned]), and also gains two (2) points of XP. The entire Party gains one (1) Pip.
- When any [Goal] is achieved: the Arbiter tallies all [Goals] the same and counts them towards "Party XP." Once totaling twelve (12), all Party members [Advance] in what's called [Group Advancement].

**Rounds of Bidding:** [Rounds of Bidding], also called [**Rounds**], occur when Player Characters encounter conflict of any sort; [Rounds] follow one (1) of two (2) order of operations: the [World Action] occurs, the Antagonists take their [Turns], and finally the Player Characters take their [Turns]. The process can be changed if one (1) or more Players decide to spend Cunning (*see Cunning*). Whomever spends one (1) point of Cunning gains a second [Turn] in the [Round] which occurs at the same time as when the Antagonists take their [Turns].

**Scenes:** [Scenes] always occur during The Dread; they are the only time when Players [Bid] their [Traits], thus [Exhausting] them, and taking some narrative control over the story. The Arbiter decides when a [Scene] begins and ends.

**Successes:** A result of 4 to 7 on a single die equals one (1) [Success], and a result of 8 or higher equals two (2) [Successes]. When you Throw Down, you roll your two (2) dice, i.e. your Action Die (d10) and your relevant Aspect Die, and you add up all of the [Successes] on both dice. If you have a Chaos Die

- **"Clean Success":** This occurs when you gain [Successes] enough to exceed a [Threshold]. Your action plays out in the manner that you and the Arbiter decided before the Throw Down, or the Arbiter folds your [Bid] and action into the story in a way that coincides with your intention.
- **Limbo:** This occurs when you gain [Successes] enough to meet a [Threshold], or when you spend one (1) point of Breath (*see Attributes & Resources > Breath*). *Limbo* is considered "success," however it is a "yes...but" situation where something beneficial and in line with your intention occurs but with an unintended, possibly deleterious, side effect.
- **Failure:** This occurs when you gain fewer [Successes] than a [Threshold]. Your action still has an effect on the story but does not pan out as you planned.
- **[Utter Failure] & Fumbling:** *Fumbling* occurs when you roll a 1 on a Chaos Die or when you roll double 1's on your Action and Aspect Dice. *Fumbling* results in [Utter Failure] where your action has a significant effect on the story, though one which is contrary to what you wanted.

**Taking Damage:** You absorb Damage taken with your [Plot Armor]. Some types of Armor also absorb Damage as per their description. Once you run out of [Plot Armor], you have six (6) Vitality points. When those are gone, you die unless you can [Burn] a point of Breath.

**The Dread:** The Dread is the normal state of the game, where the fiction plays out, and is where all of the action takes place. The Arbiter decides when each [Scene] starts and ends and so dictates where the tension in the overall story rises and falls. [Scenes] can be as long or short as the Arbiter wishes. If the Players agree, however, they can demand that The Dread ends and The Montage begins, effectively ending the current [Scene]. Doing so grants the Arbiter nearly complete control of the current narrative (she should not be wantonly adversarial but should uphold the narrative) but also provides the Players with a chance to [Recover].

**The Montage:** The Montage occurs when a [Scene] ends and one of the following occurs: narrative descriptions about the world and its happenings, the passage of time, traveling scenes, Character maintenance, improving one's Character through [Advancement], and soft-role play “campfire” scenes.

**Thresholds:** When Throwing Down, you are rolling against a difficulty [Threshold]. The Arbiter decides the [Threshold]. Meeting the [Threshold] means that your action succeeds but not exactly as intended, a “yes, but...” situation called *Limbo*. If you beat the [Threshold], you have a “Clean Success” and your intention occurs.

**Throwing Down:** rolling dice. See *Dice*.

# MECHANICS

At its core, DreadLore's about **[Bidding]** your **[Traits]** in order to achieve your goals, meaningful actions, and to move the story forward. If an action's opposed or particularly difficult then dice might need to be rolled – rolling dice's called *Throwing Down*. It's up to the Arbiter to decide whether a task is difficult or not, or in other words, whether the Player needs to Throw Down or not. The Arbiter decides where the tension of the story lies and acts accordingly. Many times, situations can be resolved more cinematically with **[Bidding]** along. There are, however, situations when *Throwing Down's* more appropriate, or more fun, because people *like* to Throw Down. A Player needn't **[Bid]** to do every little thing, mind you. **[Bidding]** a **[Trait]**, however, lends some weight to their action and always affects the narrative in a meaningful, if imperfect, way. In short, **[Bidding]** a **[Trait]** represents gaining a bit of narrative control over the scene, while *Throwing Down* represents the struggle for it.

## Modes of Play: The Dread and The Montage

**Modes of play.** DreadLore's played in one (1) of two (2) Modes, **The Dread** or **The Montage**. The majority of the game occurs during *The Dread*. This is when Players **[Bid]** their **[Traits]** and roll their dice, i.e. **Throwing Down**. Unless their action's opposed, **[Bidding]** a **[Trait]** accomplishes a Character's intended task. The **[Trait]** that's **[Bid]** serves to define the "flavor" of their action. Once **[Bid]**, a **[Trait]** is subsequently **[Exhausted]** and cannot be used again until it's **[Recovered]**. **[Recovering]** a **[Trait]** can be done in two (2) ways, either the Arbiter declares that a new **[Scene]** begins, or a Player achieves **[Flair]** when they *Throw Down*.

**Throwing Down.** If their action's opposed, then a Player must *Throw Down* against a **[Threshold]**, in addition to **[Bidding]**; *Throwing Down's* synonymous with rolling dice, and it occurs during *The Dread*. To *Throw Down*, Players roll their **Action Die (d10)** and their relevant **Aspect Die** (Brawn, Mind, Wits, or Grace). Their Ranks in Aspects determines which die they *Throw Down*, and the manner in which they're taking their action determines which Aspect they use. Results on their dice determine how many **[Successes]** they achieve which are compared to the **[Threshold]**. What follows is a degree of success or failure, and either way, the fiction's changed in a meaningful way.

*The Montage* represents a jump in time, or a series of events where **Bidding [Traits]** and *Throwing Down* doesn't occur. It could also act as a respite from the "action" of the story. The Montage's important in that it fast-tracks the narrative to where the next "episode" or meaningful bit of story picks up. It also allows Players a chance to **[Advance]** their Characters and make them more powerful – **[Advancement]** normally happens during *The Montage*.

↪ (Refer to Rules Cheat Sheet > Advancement)

## Actions during The Dread:

During *The Dread*, Players can do the following:

- Interact with the world and roleplay with other Characters and Antagonists.
- **[Bid]** any kind of **[Trait]** to perform a meaningful action that affects the fiction of the story.
- **[Bid]** a **[Trait]** to **[Aid]** a party member (hand them your **[Aspect Die]** for that **[Round]**).

- Spend a point of Cunning to gain an extra [Turn] which occurs during the Antagonists [Turn] in that [Round].

↪(Refer to Rules Cheat Sheet > Attributes & Resources > Cunning)

- Throw Down if the Arbiter requires them to do so (if their action's opposed or the task is difficult).
- Spend five (5) Pips to "Drop the Load" and gain a new [Trait].

Sometimes, the World, or a foe, fights back. This is when a Player's [Bid] leads them to Throwing Down. Throwing Down occurs when the Arbiter decides that a Player action cannot be achieved through [Bidding] alone. The Arbiter sets a [Threshold] number of [Successes] that the Player must meet or beat. Meeting the [Threshold] means *success* but with an unintended outcome, **Limbo**. Beating the [Threshold] means success as intended – a "**Clean Success**."

↪(Refer to Rules Cheat Sheet > Successes)

## Actions when Throwing Down:

When Throwing Down, Players can do the following during their [Turn]:

- Roll their Action Die (d10) and their Aspect Die (determined by the Aspect they're using for the task)
- Spend Proficiency uses to reroll a single die that's been rolled. They may spend as many uses as they've got and that are appropriate to the action.
- "Forgo" the need to Throw Down to immediately ignore all rolls and go to *Limbo* by spending one (1) point of Breath.
- [Bid] items of Ninja Gear to gain Extra Dice (if the Arbiter allows).

↪(Refer to Rules Cheat Sheet > Aspects / Dice)

## Actions during The Montage:

During The Montage, Players can do the following:

- Roleplay with other Characters.
- Move through the world and interact with Antagonists through "soft roleplay" without Throwing Down or [Bidding] [Traits].
- Declare what they'd like to accomplish over the course of the time-lapse.
- Spend three (3) XP to [Advance] their Characters.
- Spend five (5) Pips to "Drop the Load" and gain a new [Trait].

↪(Refer to Rules Cheat Sheet > Advancement)

## Scenes

[Scenes] always occur during The Dread; they're the only time when Players [Bid] their [Traits], thus [Exhausting] them, and truly *affecting* the story. [Scenes] are where the *power* of the Arbiter lies. A [Scene] is however long or short as the Arbiter wishes. It can span several [Game Sessions], or there can be a handful of [Scenes] within a single [Game Session]. [Scenes] are usually, but not necessarily, made up of many Encounters. [Scenes] are “crunchy,” meaning they affect the mechanics of the system. *Berks* [Recover] all of their [Traits] and [Plot Armor] when a new [Scene] begins. A handful of *Abilities* rely on new [Scenes] beginning or concluding to use or to [Recover] after use, e.g. “Kobayashi Maru” from Treatises of War or “Loosing the Spirit” from Traditions of Mysticism. [Scenes] are the “meta-pacing mechanism” that the Arbiter uses to *pace* her [Game Sessions] and the overall feel of each [Chapter] of her [Campaign].

## Turn Order

There's no rolling for *initiative* or “numbered” turn order. There is, however, an order to follow when running an Encounter that includes [Rounds]. The [World Action] occurs first, then the Antagonists (who're opposing the Party) take their actions, then the Players (and any allied NPCs) act. All of the Players act at the same time, or in whatever order they organize amongst themselves; each Player has a [Turn].

1. The [World Action] occurs.
2. Antagonists (foes) take their actions.
3. The Players take their [Turns] and act (the action's on them). Antagonists who're allied with the Party, i.e. Notable and Narrative NPCs, also take their [Turns].

**Further explanation.** No 'Zen (except perhaps the gods) go before the World, every 'Zen reacts to it. After the [World Action], the Antagonists take their [Turns]. A Player can “bend” this rule by spending one (1) Point of Cunning. They then go *before* or *at the same time* as the Antagonist, but not the [World Action]. This offers Players a chance to see what their foes are planning to do as spending Cunning *interrupts* their foe's action. It essentially grants that Player two (2) [Turns] in a single Round: one (1) [Turn] when they spend Cunning to go before (or at the same time as) the Antagonists, and one (1) [Turn] during the normal Player [Turn].

Once a foe's action has been completed, Players cannot retroactively spend Cunning. Some Antagonists of great power, such as the gods, can supersede a Player spending Cunning.

## Bidding Traits

Players [Bid] a single [Trait] to perform a meaningful task; sometimes a task is actually a series of actions. The [Trait] describes the most major or important part of the action, the “heroic” action, or simply the action that the Player thinks matters most. When a Player [Bids] a [Trait], it is as if the World stops for the blink of an eye, or it yields to their Character's wishes, and they change the fiction.

↪ (Refer to Rules Cheat Sheet > Dice / Successes)

Players must [Bid] an “appropriate” [Trait] to accomplish their action. For example, it makes little sense to [Bid] INTELLIGENT when trying to muscle open a locked door. However, if the Player can rationalize their [Bid], perhaps saying that they [Bid] INTELLIGENT to look for a weakness in the lock, then the [Trait] makes sense; instead of muscling open the door, their Character picks the lock!

# Only Traits are Biddable

Only [Traits] are [Biddable]. You could [Bid] your Name, e.g. *Julian* or *Wanda*, because your Name is a "titled" [Trait], in other words, it's a [Trait] which has a title. You don't literally [Bid] "name," nor could you [Bid] "Tier of Play" – these are the *titles*, not the [Traits]. You'd instead [Bid] COMING-OF-AGE, which is a [Trait] that can be associated with your Tier of Play. You cannot [Bid] Aspects, Attributes, or Resources. You cannot [Bid] Abilities but could [Bid] any [Traits] that they might provide as listed in their descriptions. As Derangements are "titled" [Traits], they're [Biddable].

## EXAMPLE: "Bidding an 'appropriate' Trait"

*Kaptan Buck Mudd*'s unfortunately in the basement of a building as it begins to collapse. He might [Bid] FLEET-OF-FOOT to race out of the basement and make it as far as he can. Of course, *Kaptan Buck* must cross the room, open the door, climb the stairs, etc. These actions are a part of the narrative but the *main action* is on moving quickly. If *Kaptan Buck* instead [Bids] TOUGH-AS-NUTS then he might instead bulldoze his way through any obstacle that confronts him: falling rocks, the door, the debris crowding the stairwell, and so forth.

# Danger Levels & Mishaps

**Danger Levels** are the magnitude for harm of an action; in other words, they're loose examples of how *bad* things can go if things go bad. If a *berk* makes bold decisions then they might reap amazing rewards, however if things go sideways for the *fob*, then they've got a longer way to fall, if you catch my *drift*. Arbiters consult Danger Levels in the event of a failed [Chaos Roll], in the event of [Utter Failure], and in determining the **Efficacy** of certain actions and Abilities, namely the Damage Dice for the Scrolls of Magicka.

**Determining Danger Levels & Efficacy.** Efficacy's determined by the Danger Level. For the most part, Arbiters determine the Danger Level for an action; they accomplish this by comparing the potential harm of an action with the descriptions for each Danger Level, or by deciding what makes the most sense for the situation. In the case of Magicka, a Mage can attempt to achieve a particular Efficacy but may fall short, or overshoot, for several reasons. Usually, it's because they've not enough Magickal Control, or they *fumble* their [Chaos Roll]. At any rate, the Arbiter dictates what the final Danger Level, or Efficacy, is for any case as the story and she see fit.

↳ (Refer to Abilities > Art of Magicka > Casting > Damage & Efficacy)

**Mishaps.** When a *fob* rolls their Chaos Die and *fumbles*, or a roll results in [Utter Failure], Arbiters can consult this table as a guide for how to proceed but should also feel free to get creative. That is, the figures in the Danger Level table are suggestions for the Arbiter. Typically, a Mishap's detrimental effects will center on whomever causes them, and if appropriate, all bystanders, and objects within range. Sometimes, a Mishap dealing Damage isn't appropriate, e.g. a thought-to-be-witty quip that *fumbles*. For these situations, ignore Damage dealt and instead gain [Narrative Points] as indicated. The Arbiter can dole out how the fiction's changed, or she can even give the task to the Players, especially the poor *fob* who *fumbled*!

**Efficacy.** The greater the potential danger, the greater the effect of an action. Efficacy should only be considered for Magicka and for actions which require a [Chaos Roll] but don't already have a system in place for dealing with them, e.g. [Called Shots]. Some Theurgy, *barmy* actions that "just might work," and so forth, are good candidates for Efficacy.

The Damage Dice associated with Magicka are directly impacted by the Danger Level of the spell being cast. Efficacy from previous Danger Levels don't stack.

↳(Refer to Abilities > Art of Magicka > Casting > Damage & Efficacy)

### EXAMPLE: "Calculating Efficacy from Danger Levels"

The Damage Die from the Efficacy of Danger Level 2 is a (d4), not the (d4+1) which would result if the Levels were able to be stacked – they don't stack, so the Damage Die is a (d4). The Efficacy of Danger Level 4 is only one (1d8), not a (d8) + (d6) + (d4+1). By the same token, [Narrative Points] gained don't stack. Danger Level 5 would grant three (3) [Narrative Points] for you to spend how you wish, not nine (9).

### Table 1: "Danger Levels, Mishaps & Effects"

- **Danger Level 1:**

**Mishaps:** "Set-back" – Magicka fizzles without harm or effect. Theurgy "jams" or simply does not work. An action occurs but falls short of its goal. This relatively harmless Mishap occurs dealing zero (0) to one (1) Damage to all involved. Or, incur one (1) [Narrative Point].

**Efficacy:** an additional one (1) Damage, or one (1) [Narrative Point].

- **Danger Level 2:**

**Mishaps:** "Unintended" – Magicka and Theurgy might fail entirely or instead act erratically. An action ends in an unpleasant feeling or circumstance at best. This Mishap could deal zero (0) to a (d4) Damage to all involved, as appropriate. Or, incur one (1) [Narrative Point].

**Efficacy:** an additional (d4) Damage Die, or one (1) [Narrative Point].

- **Danger Level 3:**

**Mishaps:** "Unfortunate" – Magicka inverts and injures the caster as well as temporarily [Reduces] one (1) of their Aspects by one (1) Step. Theurgy breaks and is lost, or is damaged and needs to be repaired as well as injuring whomever is nearby. An action ends in tears. This Mishap deals a (d6+1) Damage to all involved. Or, incur two (2) [Narrative Points].

**Efficacy:** an additional (d6) Damage Die, or two (2) [Narrative Points].

- **Danger Level 4:**

**Mishaps:** "Lethal" – Magicka warps into lethal energy, with its intended affect totally missing the mark. The intention's lost and only Damage and tears remain. In addition to Damage, one (1) of the caster's Aspects is temporarily [Reduced] by one (1) step. Theurgy breaks, its components lost, and injures those around in glorious ways. An action works against what would be "good," and in fact, causes something unequivocally "bad" to occur. The Mishap can be random, having nothing to do with the original intention, and far worse than one would expect to the point of causing jaw-dropping disbelief. This Mishap can deal (2d6+1) or more Damage to all involved. Or, incur two (2) [Narrative Points].

**Efficacy:** an additional (d8) Damage Die, or two (2) [Narrative Points].

- **Danger Level 5:**

**Mishaps:** "Mortal" – Magicka and Theurgy not only explode but chaos reigns within the acceptable AoE. Actions fail like a train wreck in slow motion. Death, or an appropriate "black ball" or exile,

isn't uncommon for any *fob* who *fumbles* in this way. This Mishap can deal (2d8+1) Damage or more to all involved. Or, incur three (3) [Narrative Points].

**Efficacy:** an additional (d10) Damage Die, or three (3) [Narrative Points].

- **Danger Level 6:**

**Mishaps:** “Shitting the Bed” – As Danger Level 5, but the effect harms all within the maximum AoE that the caster or Theurgy can effect, centered on the *fob* who *fumbled*. An action of this magnitude reflects poorly on all. Weeping and gnashing of teeth, tearing of cloaks, and shaving of heads is not uncommon. This Mishap can deal (3d10) or more Damage to all involved. Or, incur three (3) [Narrative Points].

**Efficacy:** an additional (d12) Damage Die, or three (3) [Narrative Points].

- **Danger Level 6+:**

**Mishaps:** “Cataclysmic” – Get creative. Magicka, Theurgy, and chaotic actions act the same. The caster, and potentially every ‘Zen within a conceivable distance, most likely need to [Burn] Breath unless they’ve stock in the gods. This Mishap can deal (4d12) or more Damage to all involved and maybe some ‘Zens who know them but aren’t even present. The merciful Arbiter rolls Damage but is well within her right to ask for the [Burning] of many ‘Zen’s Breath. Forget the [Narrative Points]...have fun with the “fog of failure” into which you have just walked.

**Efficacy:** an additional (2d12) Damage Dice, each rolled with [Upperhand], or four (4) [Narrative Points].



# ABILITIES

**Abilities** are powers that you possess which the average *berk* does not – these powers separate the wheat (you) from the chaff (most ‘Zens). A Mage isn’t much of a Mage without possessing an Ability associated with Magicka, are they? The same applies to a warrior attempting to perform some feat of battle which only a master swordsmen would know.

## **ARBITER’s DARK:**

Abilities become a part of your Character – they are “passive characteristics” that you can now perform like any other meaningful action.

**Categories.** You’ll notice that Abilities are organized into *categories* and even *sub-categories*. The Codex of Mastery, the Art of Magicka, Weird Astronomy within the Manuals of Theurgy, and Of the Octette within the Traditions of Mysticism, and so on, are categories (and sub-categories) that organize similar Abilities into lists which follow similar rules. The rules for Magicka, for example, differ slightly from those of the Codex of Master, e.g. using Magicka always requires Throwing Down a Chaos Die. The categories themselves aren’t [Traits] nor do they need to be bought with [Advancement]. That said, they do provide a guide for how a Character might progress with their [Advancement] and roleplay; after Character Creation, *berks* need a good, story-based reason for thematically “unlocking” a category and grabbing Abilities.

## **ARBITER’s DARK:**

Abilities are noted throughout this book with titles that are **Red-Lettered and Underlined**. Other titles referring to an Ability are categories or sub-categories – not the Abilities themselves. Abilities and their Grades are not [Biddable], though they might grant [Traits] which *are* [Biddable].

## How Abilities Work

Abilities grant you new routes for taking actions when [Bidding] your [Traits]. In other words, they allow you to do “new” stuff. You must *activate* an Ability to use it, and you do so by [Bidding] a relevant [Trait]. You can activate as many Abilities on your [Turn] as makes sense (or as many as the Arbiter allows) – each Ability *activated* requires another [Bid]. You can only activate your own Abilities. Activating an Ability could act as the meaningful action you’re making, or it could simply be a part of your intention, either one. There must always be a clear, singular intention, however, that you’re trying to accomplish when taking your [Turn], i.e. making a meaningful action.

As with all meaningful actions, if the action’s difficult or is opposed, Throw Down against a [Threshold]. The difference is, possessing, and then activating an Ability, “unlocks” the possibility for a *berk* to accomplish some tasks and affect the fiction in a new way that they otherwise wouldn’t be able to do. Each Ability has a description which reveals the “spirit” of how it can be used. **Abilities aren’t [Traits] themselves and so cannot be [Bid]**. Some Abilities, however, grant [Traits] which can be [Bid] in the normal fashion.

**Exceptions.** Craster’s full of exceptions and so are Abilities – all exceptions are listed in the descriptions for Abilities and categories. To name a few exceptions, some Abilities must be bought multiple times, e.g. **Of the Pact Lords** (featured in the Core Book), only applies to one (1) specific Pact Lord. *Magickal Control* isn’t an Ability but is a part of the system for Magicka. Both Theurgy and Magicka require [Chaos Rolls] anytime they’re activated, but most Abilities don’t have these requirements.

Some Abilities grant you “special effects,” such as inflicting a [Condition] on your foe, or granting you a [Reaction Roll], or extra Damage, or a [Boost] to your Chaos Die in certain circumstances. All of these are detailed within their specific Abilities and are exceptions to the general rule.

## Art of Magicka

Abilities featured:

- [Scroll of Air & Flame](#)
- [Scroll of The Void](#)

The use of Magicka’s called “casting intentions,” “slinging spells,” “casting,” or any derivative thereof. In order to use Magicka, a Mage first has to have an Ability for it, e.g. [Scroll of Air & Flame](#), [Scroll of Pacts](#), and so on. Gaining a Magickal Ability’s done through [Advancement] and roleplay. It takes time and effort to learn and improve, and not just any *berk* can do it. As to the specifics, there aren’t any – this is entirely a narrative decision.

**Chaos.** Slinging spells is treacherous, albeit awe-inspiring, and so requires a gamble to be made on behalf of the caster. Whenever a Mage unleashes Magicka, she also makes a [Chaos Roll]. She rolls her Chaos Die, which is a (d6) unless otherwise altered. *Anytime* she uses Magicka, she makes a [Chaos Roll].

**Magickal Control.** It takes control to wield Magicka, and this comes in the form of *Magickal Control*. Magickal Control’s a mechanic specifically for casting Magicka – it’s not an Ability nor is it a [Trait]. Thus, there’s no Grade associated with Magickal Control. There are five (5) levels of Magickal Control, and every Ability in Magicka begins at Control 1: Humble. That is, when you gain an Ability within Magicka, e.g. [Scroll of Pacts](#), you *also* gain Control 1: Humble for Magickal Control. Magickal Control can be increased through [Advancement] but needs to be done for each Ability in question. For example, the Abilities, [Scroll of Eorthe & Aegis](#) and [Scroll of The Void](#), each have different Magickal Control; one could be at Control 1: Humble while the other’s at Control 3: Proficient. Abilities are [Advanced] separately from one another; their requisite Magickal Control’s also [Advanced] separately.

**Conservation & Material.** Magicka always comes with a cost, what Mages call **Material**. This is one of the unarguable precepts of casting Magicka and is known as the Law of Conservation (Conservation). What constitutes Material differs and is described within each Scroll. Biomancers and Deathmiks use *ethos*, Hotheads and Slurries use energies of The Natural, e.g. heat, water, eorthe, Arkaynists use the *chaos* energies of The Void, and so forth. The point’s that something must be exchanged, and it’s dictated by the Scroll used. When Mages work their craft, material’s gathered from *somewhere* randomly within the Mage’s proximity and is manifested, hopefully, as they intend. As per the Law of Conservation, Material is required to sling spells, or more plainly, something cannot be conjured from nothing. Without the necessary Material, e.g. convection for [Air & Flame](#), *ethos* for [Biomancy](#), a *promise or blood* for [Pacts](#), and so forth, there’s no fuel to cause Magicka to occur.

**Instrumentation.** Mages have the knowledge and skill to sling spells but need tools to perform their craft properly. A Mage without her Instruments is like a painter without her brush, or a sculptor without clay. She can perform some tasks on her own, of course, but is noticeably hindered. Hindrances come in the form a greater chance for a Mishap. Without an Instrument, such as a Mage’s Staff, Mage’s Wand, Resonate Crystal, Relic of Focus, etc., a Mage casts her Magicka recklessly (like a savage) and gains [Detriment] on her [Chaos Roll]. Using an Instrument while casting avoids [Detriment]. The Instrument need not be [Bid] but must merely be “equipped,” or in hand, and ready to be used.

# Casting

Assuming she has the Ability, the requisite Magickal Control, Materials, and Instrumentation, all a Mage has to do to cast is to declare her *intention* for the spell. Casting a spell's always a meaningful action. As with any other action, it's got to be as specific as possible. This specific intention's her first **Effect** (explained below). She then [Bids] a relevant [Trait] to perform her meaningful action, Throwing Down if necessary, and at the least rolls her Chaos Die.

**Effects.** A single spell might include several Effects and must include at least one (1) – the intention itself. Each Scroll of Magicka has its own description for how it can be used, but the sky's not the limit. The complexity of what can be done with the Scrolls is based on a Mage's imagination and their Magickal Control. That said, a Mage can attempt to touch the sky all she wants! Each Effect past the first increases the [Threshold] by one (1). Thus, casting a simple spell with one Effect could have a [Threshold] zero (0), depending on the circumstance.

**Distance and AoE.** Casting past a [Medium] Range or [Medium] AoE increases a spell's [Threshold] by one (1) per Range Increment.

## **ARBITER'S DARK:**

During The Dread, the Arbiter might ask a Player for multiple [Bids] to achieve the necessary requirements to cast over distance or affect a larger AoE in lieu of raising a [Threshold]. This tactic works well for "ritual" type casting or cooperative casting to achieve more difficult distances and Effects.

**Damage & Efficacy.** The Danger Level of a spell determines its **Efficacy**, whether that be its Damage Dice, the overall effect it can have on the scene, or both. The higher the risk, i.e. Danger Level, the greater the Efficacy. This is because Danger Levels and Efficacy go hand-in-hand and directly correlate with one another. When a Mage announces that they're casting a spell, they also announce which Efficacy (and so which Danger Level) they're trying to achieve. If they don't, then the Arbiter decides with or without telling them (the Arbiter has the final word on this notion as best befits her story).

The Mages level of Magickal Control directly determines the maximum Efficacy. That is, if they've a Magickal Control 3: Proficient in the Scroll they're using, then the highest Efficacy they can achieve is that of Danger Level 3. They needn't do their maximum if they so choose but could instead choose a lower Danger Level for their spell – not all spells need "full power." When multiple Scrolls are involved in casting a spell, the Scroll with the lowest Magickal Control is used; the "weakest link" determines their maximum Efficacy for a "mixed spell." In the event of a Mishap, consult the Danger Level to determine the fallout. Of course, Mages are sometimes wily, and I've never met one without hubris. If a Mage attempts to cast a spell that overreaches their understanding or their skill, if they use powerful Relics and Instruments, or because of circumstances that might occur when casting, all of these could increase or decrease the Danger Level for a spell (as dictated by the Arbiter). That is, the Arbiter has the final say as to which Danger Level, and thus which Efficacy or Mishap, applies to a spell.

↪(Refer to Mechanics > Danger Levels & Mishaps)

**Concentration.** Mages learn quickly that bending reality to their wills isn't easy – extending one's will beyond her person and across distance's especially hard. Above all else, performing Magicka requires [Concentration]. If she loses her [Concentration], or her will's interrupted, dire consequences could befall the Mage and all surrounding her. Maintaining one's [Concentration] across multiple [Rounds] generally requires a new [Bid] per [Round]. Alternatively, [Successes] gained on the initial roll to cast the Magicka can be "spent" towards an effect's duration instead.

# Magickal Control

When a Mage learns a new Scroll of Magicka, they're only able to use it in simple ways. It takes time and effort to increase their command over the Scroll. The manners in which they can command and manipulate a Scroll, and their accuracy for doing so, are all determined by their level of **Magickal Control (Control)** over that Scroll. In other words, Control dictates what they can do with a Scroll when they're slinging spells. This includes crafting and shaping effects as well as the duration of those effects. Every Scroll has its own Control which can be increased individually through [Advancement].

**Using Magickal Control.** Mages begin their study of each Scroll at **Control 1: Humble**. They may [Advance] into greater levels of Control, to a maximum of **Control 5: Prime**, as they learn and experiment. If there's a question of which level of Control's available to use, such as when mixing Scrolls, the *lowest* Magickal Control possessed in the Scrolls involved is used.

## ARBITER'S DARK:

The following descriptions are supposed to act as guides for Mages on how to craft their Magicka, to give Players and Arbiters an idea of what scope of power any Ability might have. Included with each level of Control are your degree of control over relevant phenomena, how long the Magickal effect can last, i.e. duration, and some example effects which could be cast with a Scroll in mind. Especially in regard to duration, these guidelines should be read in the context of the Scroll being used; casting Magicka should always ensure there's a semblance of continuity with the situation and power level, e.g. stone's more permanent than fire, water and air are ambient and alive rather than fixed, Beings of Power aren't all-powerful, and so on.

## EXAMPLE: "Mixing Scrolls of Magicka"

*Domni* possesses the **Scroll of Eorthe & Aegis** with a Control 5: Prime and the **Scroll of Runes** with a Control 3: Proficient. *Domni* attempts to sling a spell which uses both Scrolls. He uses **Runes** to carve a Circle of Protection, and using **Eorthe & Aegis**, he tries to make the carving into a pool of water. *Domni*'s Control of **Eorthe & Aegis** allows him to sling semi-permanent spells which would only fade on his demise, however his Control of the **Scroll of Runes** limits him. He could cast this spell which amazingly carves runes into water, however the effect could only last a few moments, or if *Domni* succeeds on a [Threshold], a few days.

## Control 1: Humble

**Manipulation:** Mages with Humble Control can slightly bend, warp, or nudge pre-existing, relevant phenomena. This is mostly used for flair and prestidigitation effects.

**Duration:** Magickal effects are fleeting and last only as long as the Mage [Concentrates]. They've little to no lasting impact on the environment or phenomena itself.

## EXAMPLE: "Usages of Humble Control"

A *Dynamicist* could amplify or dampen sounds in the area but cannot change what's being heard, nor its origin. They can cause sparks with their fingernails or cause flames to move or bend against the wind, perhaps to contact or avoid a nearby fuel source, but they cannot grow, shrink, intensify, nor weaken the flames by effort alone. *Surgeons* could use their own *ethos*, or another's, to ease pains or heal minor scrapes and bruises, while *Slurries* might center themselves to gain extraordinary balance.

*Drudges* could sense ambient souls in their environment, perhaps glean a measure of the emotional atmosphere of an area, maybe even ease it for a moment if the spirit world's turbulent. An *Arkaynist* could

attune themselves or others to experience the latent whispers from across The Veil, but not send messages. They could nudge the trajectory or speed of objects in motion, but their telekinesis is quite limited. *Phantasmists* could play tricks of the mind through smoke and mirror that'd rival most magicians.

*Witches* might grab the attention of a Being of Power, and a *Binder* might trip one up, but neither can hold the effect for long.

## Control 2: Gross

**Manipulation:** Mages of this level can adjust, sway, or make small alterations to pre-existing, relevant phenomena. Gross Control's characterized by waves and pulses of energy, amorphous or shapeless structures, and stumbling or harsh movements.

**Duration:** Magickal effects linger for a short period after the Mage ceases [Concentrating], but shortly thereafter, fade into their former structures.

### EXAMPLE: "Usages of Gross Control"

A *Hothead* could grow a campfire into a raging bonfire and throw it at what irritates them, or steal the fire's heat to shrink it. *Surgeons* could momentarily bolster their strength to pry open a door, or do the same for one of their patients who's not fairing well. While *Slurries* could feel and communicate through seismics or weaken an earthen structure that impedes them.

*Drudges* could begin to glean information from a corpse or *Glatad*, or they could perform simple exorcisms. An *Arkaynist's* telekinesis could move small objects about in clumsy, unsubtle ways. A *Phantasmist* could communicate telepathically with others, or create simple, moving illusions.

*Witches* could gain a fleeting favor or boon from a deal, or curse a *berk* to feel an environment somewhat different than it really is for a while. A *Binder* might dampen a more powerful spell, or temporarily fidget with a weaker one.

## Control 3: Proficient

**Manipulation:** Mages with Proficient Control can draw upon their surroundings to produce or compel into being wholly new phenomena of the relevant type. Conjured structures can have minor detailing. This level of Control's characterized by the Mage being able to use more precise movement and direction when casting their intentions.

**Duration:** Magickal effects may stick around for a few minutes or persist for several days with enough effort.

### EXAMPLE: "Usages of Proficient Control"

A *Dynamicist* could cast lightning from their fingertips or could glide through the air. With enough effort, they might command rain clouds to retreat from somewhere else to arrive early, or the opposite. *Surgeons* could move *ethos* from one *berk* to another, healing veritable wounds on the mind and body. *Slurries* could create earthen structures of their own, liquifying or solidifying that which surrounds them.

*Drudges* could summon spirits to them to command or cast them away, perhaps even gain *ethos* from consuming them. A *Phantasmist* could create shadow puppets and amplify or dampen desires in others' minds. A *Voidgazer* could teleport others through or into The Between or Realms to which they've access.

*Witches* might gain insight into the near future or recent past. They could fashion a contract that's uneasily broken. A *Binder* could warp a spell being slung enough to produce a moderately different effect.

# Scroll of Air & Flame

**Materials:** convection (difference in pressure), Heat, Fire, Air

Known to those who practice it as “**Dynamic**” Magicka, the **Scroll of Air & Flame** combines the more volatile of the natural elements to manifest different effects. Mages who specialize in Dynamic Magicka are called **Hotheads**, **Flame-Seekers**, and **Dynamicists**. Other Colleges sometimes tease Hotheads for concentrating on what’s easily observed and obtained. Naysayers often forget how difficult the **Air & Flame** is to master and are quick to silence themselves when the sheer power of Dynamic Magicka’s unleashed. Hotheads use Dynamic elements, like heat and wind, to create currents of convection which they can manipulate in a multitude of ways. Expertise in **Air & Flame** could allow a Mage to draw in surrounding heat to spark a fire, to ignite dry objects, or to bolster ongoing fires. Alternatively, a Hothead might prevent the combustion of objects by stealing their heat. Mages might manipulate heat to alter or create sounds around them in order vex their enemies, or create a thunder clap, or to allow them to relay information to friends in loud or far away environments.

Once in The Bonestone City, I saw a Dynamicist seem to defy gravity, gliding long enough on air currents which she controlled, to “fly” from one Half of the Mid Rim to another. I’m sure the patience and focus required was immense, and surely the wind was at her back, but she did it. Never saw her again – I’m sure the Morðingi (a.k.a. Sheriffs) were *not* pleased. At any rate, changes in heat can cause a number of effects limited only by the creativity and Control of the caster.

# Scroll of The Void

**Materials:** Sanity, *chaos*, energies of The Void

**The Void** is the general term **Arkanysts**, or **Gazers** as they’re otherwise called, use to describe the slippery places that exist outside of The Natural Realm and the interstitial spaces between them, e.g. Realms such as The Between, The Veil, The Aether, micro-Realms too obscure to be named, and so forth. Mages of this ilk attempt to peer into The Void using teachings from the **Scroll of The Void**. They’re never quite sure which “place” they perceive (or slide through) – it’s simply “elsewhere.” Particularly advanced Arkanysts sometimes discover the Dark of the other Realms, even gaining some proficiency in tapping and navigating them. Of course, mortal ‘Zens were probably never meant to tap into such “unnatural” places. Doing so eventually renders them utterly *barmy* or worse. Arkanysts either ignore the advice of their level-headed peers in The Salon or decide to brave the *chaos*. Doing so offers rewards both exciting and powerful. A *horror*, however, that’s dark and very real, looms ominously over even the most brazen of Arkanysts. They know that someday they might peer too deeply, touch something too fearful, or worse become entangled in The Between – and that would be their story. Gazing into The Void irreparably opens a *berk*’s mind to the *chaos* lying between the Realms. One doesn’t simply “look” into The Void – it looks back. The process requires incredible sturdiness of mind, and if you ask me, stoness beneath. **Gazers** hear whispers echoing through the slip-stream between the Realms, into a place of insanity and weird energies called “void channels.” These voices can transmit to them secrets otherwise ineffable and always strange. Void channels grant them clues to what lies beyond an obstacle which they shouldn’t be able to see past, or a modicum of intent lying behind the eyes of their foes. Gazers can learn to levitate objects, cloak them in *chaos* then make them reappear as though from nothing, and so forth. One could even return a recently-broken vase to its undamaged past until it returns to the present and shatters once again.

Those powerful enough hone their skill until they can navigate The Void in small bursts. These bursts are called **Hip-hopping**, a means of teleporting over small distances. Hip-hopping’s safer than the more grandiose version, or proper teleportation, called **Skirting The Veil**. A *berk* who chooses to Skirt The Veil

can find themselves across a continent or quite lost in The Between. In either case, the mage can “move” themselves, others, and small, movable objects, through The Between with limited accuracy. Passengers on these *barmy* voyages are *not* always willing participants, though they may resist the power if they’re strong enough. Of course, the more she takes along, the more difficult the task and the greater chance of error. Physical contact’s required to affect objects or creatures using Hip-hop or Skirt The Veil. There’s also the issue of observing what’s utterly unnatural and losing one’s mind because of it! Sliding through The Between reveals horrors which are almost immediately forgotten; their brains may repress the memory, but it’s still there waiting to be remembered.

### **A SAI’s WISDOM:**

Though it seems nearly instantaneous, no one’s certain how long a teleportation actually lasts. Remember, dear *apne*, that “time” moves differently within each Realm. There’s *chant* about an Arkaynist teleporting only to reappear several Seasons later oblivious that any time had passed. Just so, Arkaynists can lose control of their point of arrival if they fail their [Sanity Roll]. There’s more than one tale of a Mage “hip-hopping” and not reappearing at all.

### **ARBITER’s DARK:**

Sensing The Void in any way requires all who observe or experience it, including the Arkaynist, to make a [Sanity Roll] or to [Bid] a relevant [Trait] to resist it.

## **Codex of Mastery**

Abilities featured:

- **Authoritarian Presence**
- **Blended Existence**
- **Counterpoint**

## **Authoritarian Presence**

[AUTHORITY, RETHINK]

Great commanders realize that their physical presence can be used as a formidable tool. Use your AUTHORITY to bolster your presence and cause comrades and foes alike to RETHINK their course of action. While an Antagonist may not change their mind entirely, they will certainly take notice of you.

## **Blended Existence**

You’re capable of blending in with most any shadowy area. Unless you do something, or are wearing something, that brings attention to yourself, you go visually unnoticed by the average ‘Zen. Even monsters that would otherwise sense you might leave you be unless they’re already hostile towards you. You must maintain the same atmosphere with your body as the shadows around you; if they’re furtive (as per candle light flickering in a wind), then you must attempt to keep up with their movement (which could be impossible for your species), or if they’re static, you cannot move except in an extremely gradual way.



# Counterpoint

[COUNTERPOINT]

Use your foe's words against them using COUNTERPOINT arguments; if they attempt to use Philosophy to adversely affect you, or someone within earshot, you may gain a [Reaction roll] to overcome their attempt and turn it onto themselves instead. Doing so requires speaking and your foe understanding you; it also requires "time enough" to make your argument.

## A SAI's WISDOM:

As it is, there's a time to fight and a time to be quiet. The Codex also includes ways of hiding yourself and your intentions.

# Treatises of War

Abilities featured:

- [Black Agnes](#)
- [Iron Guard](#)
- [Kobayashi Maru](#)
- [Master-at-Arms](#)
- [Nothing Personal](#)

# Black Agnes

[SCRUTINIZE]

The essence of Black Agnes is the using of your mind and charisma to frustrate an enemy and achieve success despite the odds. Knowing your enemy will help you defeat them! After observing your enemy's tactics for an appropriate amount of time, you may activate [Black Agnes](#) to SCRUTINIZE your foe's strategy. Some enemies are particularly cunning and require [Concentration] or Throwing Down to understand their tactics. If successful, you figure out the next best course of action, or their most likely action...for your enemy – as dictated by the Arbiter. It's up to you to determine how you will respond!

## A SAI's WISDOM:

Remember that not all enemies are as smart as you, dear *apne*, and so may not follow the best tactics. Also, remember that some foes are indeed smarter!

# Iron Guard

Combat's exhausting, and taking on a group's even worse. Luckily, you're a *berk* who knows how to handle yourself under fire and how to fight when they're outnumbered. Activate [Iron Guard](#) when defending yourself to lower the [Threshold] of a physical attack made against you by one (1). Take note that "Iron Guard" doesn't apply to attacks which target something other than the physical. [Iron Guard](#) only affects a



single defense or [Reaction Roll], and must be activated, i.e. a new [Trait] is [Exhausted], each time it's used.

**Exception:** Grades 2 and 3 lower the [Threshold] of your foe's attack by another one (1) each, e.g. a *berk* who activates their **Iron Guard** Grade 3 lowers [Thresholds] levied against them by three (3).

## Kobayashi Maru

[NO-WIN-SITUATIONS]

When all seems lost, some 'Zens give up while others persist in futility. You, however, don't believe in NO-WIN-SITUATIONS. Once per [Scene], activate **Kobayashi Maru** to ask the Arbiter for a "way out." The "way out" she provides will usually be the road-less-traveled and offer a less-than-favorable outcome. Achieving success may require Throwing Down and far from certain, but it'll present a light at the end of the proverbial tunnel when there was none before.

## Master-at-Arms

You've a way with martial weapons, of which your knowledge is profound; there are few that remain mysteries to you for long. You know how to maintain and properly use all common, melee and ranged weapons of [Small], [Medium], or [Heavy] Classification. If you're confronted with a weapon like these that's new to you, such as a Theurgic weapon, or one that's unique, activate **Master-at-Arms** to attempt to gain a basic understanding for it. Success means that you understand the weapon enough to use and temporarily maintain, and you can ignore one (1) [Flaw] the weapon might possess.

**Exception:** Activating **Master-at-Arms** at Grade 2 doesn't lower [Thresholds] but instead grants you an additional one (1d4) Extra Die to Throw Down (in addition to your Action and Aspect Dice) when you use a weapon you truly understand. Grade 3 [Boosts] the Extra Die gained to one (1d6) instead. These aren't Damage Dice nor can they be used as such.

## Nothing Personal

You know that violence should be carried out with intensity and with the intent to kill – there aren't half-measures. Activate **Nothing Personal** when you attack your foes with a melee attack, and if you deal Damage, add a one (1) additional point of Damage to the total. On-lookers shy away because of the gruesome and terrible nature of your onslaught.

**Exception:** Grades 2 and 3 don't lower [Thresholds] but instead each adds one (1) additional point of Damage, e.g. on a successful, melee attack that deals Damage, Grade 3 would add three (3) additional points of Damage.

# PROFICIENCIES

**Proficiencies** are rerolls. They represent a Character's skill when attempting certain kinds of tasks and grant the mechanical benefit of being able to reroll a die that's been Thrown Down. Your *Tier of Play* determines the number of Proficiencies you may initially choose at Character Creation.

There are six (6) categories of Proficiencies: **Expression**, **Fabrication**, **Learning**, **Movement**, **Skulduggery**, and **Violence**. Each category encompasses a wide but selective range of actions, e.g. Violence's affiliated with damaging things, Fabrication's affiliated with making things, and so forth. When they're used, Proficiencies should make sense for the story. A Character attempting diplomacy could easily make a case for the use of Expression or Skulduggery, but Violence would take a little more explaining, and Fabrication's right out. The definitions are loose but shouldn't be abused.

Proficiencies grant **[Mulligans]**, which are simple rerolls. Spend one (1) of your uses in a Proficiency to reroll any one (1) die that you've already rolled; you must use the result of the reroll. Each time you **[Advance]** a Proficiency, first choose the category that you wish, then gain a new use of it. Choosing a category for the first time gains you the first use. Each category has four (4) uses, for a maximum of four (4) **[Mulligans]**. Players can spend as many uses as they wish on their **[Turn]**, although the Arbiter can put a stop to incessant **[Mulligans]** if the situation or story wouldn't call for them. Proficiency uses cannot be spent for others to gain rerolls, save for during **[Fate Rolls]**.

## ARBITER'S DARK:

Of course, the Arbiter may change the rules for Proficiencies as she likes for her game and Setting. For example, she could allow Proficiencies to grant **[Upperhands]** at some point, perhaps as a kind of "Grade 2," similar to Abilities, that can be **[Advanced]** for Proficiencies. Or, she could set a different limit to the number of Ranks Proficiencies have – settle on whatever floats your boat.

## Table 2: "Proficiency Categories"

- **Expression:** communication of all kinds: talking, performing, convincing, lying, etc.
- **Fabrication:** manufacturing, assembling/disassembling, jerry-rigging, fixing, sabotage, etc.
- **Learning:** gaining/retaining knowledge, understanding, deducing.
- **Movement:** fine/gross motor skills, piloting/riding, dodging, athletics, etc.
- **Skulduggery:** unscrupulous deeds, lying/cheating, legerdemain.
- **Violence:** damaging things, people, or places with the intent to injure/kill.

## EXAMPLE: "Using Proficiencies"

*Haygen Mudmover* has 2 uses of Proficiency category: Violence. He decides to use his shovel to attack a roadside bandit who's leering at him. *Haygen* **[Bids]** FIERCE to make the action and must Throw Down against **[Threshold]** 2 (as determined by the Arbiter). He rolls his Action Die (d10) getting a 3 for zero (0) **[Successes]** and his Brawn Aspect die (d8) getting a 4, which is one (1) **[Success]**. *Haygen* needs at least one (1) more **[Success]** to meet the **[Threshold]**. He spends one (1) of his two (2) uses in Violence to gain a **[Mulligan]** on one (1) die of his choice. He chooses to reroll his Action Die as it didn't roll any **[Successes]** – if he chooses to reroll his Aspect die then he would lose the **[Success]** he rolled on it and must take the new result. This time his Action Die rolls a 6, which is one (1) **[Success]**. *Haygen* now has two (2) **[Successes]**, one (1) from his Aspect Die result of 4 plus one (1) from his Action Die result of 6. With two (2) **[Successes]**, he

meets the [Threshold] to hit the roadside *berk* and goes to *Limbo*. He rolls one (1d4+1) Damage Die for his shovel, a [Medium] weapon, gaining a 3 and therefore deals four (4) Damage, 3 from the die roll plus 1.

# NINJA GEAR

**Ninja Gear**, also called **Gear**, is your *equipment*: it's the items you carry, use, and so on. Gear serves whatever purpose it was intended for or whatever purpose you can make it serve, e.g. a sword or ax cuts, a suit of armor protects, a book can be read, an airship flies, etc. Ninja Gear lists the following:

- Item description and Classification
- [Traits] and [Flaws] given
- Damage Dice, Chaos Dice, and Danger Level (if applicable)
- Special abilities (powers), effects, or functions
- Range Increments (if applicable)
- Cost and Time to Manufacture

*Named Gear*, e.g. Soldier's Bundle, Snowglobe, Shortrifle, and so on, gives a description of the item and special use-cases. If the item could be used as a weapon (as an *olde hand* must always be ready for a fight) then a **Classification**'s also listed.

Items that are more general give examples of what they might include, e.g. [Light] Armor might take the form of padded clothes, or a [Heavy] Weapon might be a two-handed hammer. More specific Gear gives more specific details and usages, e.g. Shotty [Medium] is ranged Sprok that operates differently from other [Medium] weapons.

Gear sometimes grants [Traits] and [Flaws] which can be [Bid] like any other [Trait]. The descriptions give you a semblance of how and for what the item can be used.

Weapons have *Damage Dice*. These dice are rolled if and only if a [Threshold] is met or beaten, and their result's directly calculated as [Successes] – rolling a four (4) means four (4) additional points of Damage, rolling a two (2) means two (2) [Successes], thus two (2) additional points of Damage, and so forth.

Some Gear, e.g. an *Ulek Spear*, possesses a Chaos Die which should be rolled *each time* the Gear's used. The default Chaos Die is a (d6) unless specified otherwise. Where there's a Chaos Die, there's a Danger Level to boot. When your Chaos Die *fumbles*, a Mishap occurs and you should consult the gods, I mean, *Table 1: "Danger Levels, Mishaps & Effects"*.

Ninja Gear that's *ranged* will have an effective [Range Increment] listed. Gear usually fails or is ineffective past its [Range Increment].

The **Cost** of Ninja Gear's variable, it depends on where and who you are, and when you try to acquire it. The Costs provided are examples for general Gear; as for special Gear, it can cost as much or as little as supply and demand allows, e.g. variable Cost. The **Time to Manufacture** items is also listed; it's to be used as a *guide* and assumes that a skilled artisan's doing the creating.

## **ARBITER's DARK:**

As with all things, the Arbiter can decide to adhere to or completely ignore these stats for Gear and make up her own as she sees fit for her story.

## **Armor**

**Armor's** clothing, or gadgets you don, which helps you survive *physical* attacks by granting you additional [Plot Armor]. Armor can do several other things:

1. Grants additional [Plot Armor]. Add this [Plot Armor] to your Character Sheet if you're wearing Armor. This extra [Plot Armor] mitigates Damage as normal [Plot Armor].
2. Possibly grants [Traits]. Only special sorts of Armor grant these [Traits], and these will be shown in their descriptions. As with all Ninja Gear, Players can Fold the Story when they [Advance] to add more [Traits] to their equipment.
3. Possibly grant [Flaws] which are intended to balance the benefits that “heavier” Armor grants. These are written as examples; you and your Arbiter may choose appropriate [Flaws]. If a piece of Armor shouldn't have a [Flaw], don't give it one.
4. Possibly [Absorbs] one (1) Damage. Depending on what material your Armor's made from, some Damage cannot be [Absorbed], e.g. metal armor doesn't [Absorb] Damage from fire, but Alchemically, fire-treated metal armor might!
5. It (often) looks impressive.

## Armor Classifications

### Light Armor

[**Light**] **Armor's** easier to move around in than heavier armors, and much cheaper to acquire; most soldiers, regular or militia, have access to it. It grants some protection but is more of a “second skin” than a solid barrier. [Light] Armor often protects the torso, arms, and upper legs.

Examples of [Light] Armor include: a padded or quilted jacket; pieces of Alchemically treated or hardened leather (also called *Cuir Bouilli*).

- Grants +2 [Plot Armor]
- one (1) [Flaw], e.g. STUFFY or STIFLING
- Example Cost: Commonplace
- Time to Manufacture: 1 week

### Medium Armor

[**Medium**] **Armor** provides much better protection than [Light] Armor and is also more expensive and time consuming to create. There are a wide variety of armors which qualify as [Medium], each with their own advantages and disadvantages. [Medium] Armor protects the torso, shoulders, upper-legs, and head with a metal helm.

Examples of [Medium] Armor include: a Chainmail Hauberk with *coif*; Reinforced Mail which includes an array of metal plates stitched into chainmail; *Jack of Plate* or *Brigandine* made from stitching pieces of metal into a coat or fastening them with rivets, respectively. These types might employ knee guards, gauntlets, pauldrons, rerebraces, and vambraces to protect joints and vital areas.

- Grants +6 [Plot Armor]

- two (2) [Flaws], e.g. BULKY, WEIGHTY, or STIFLING
- Example Cost: Pricey
- Time to manufacture: 1-2 weeks

## Heavy Armor

**[Heavy] Armor**'s expensive to purchase and repair, and when compared to lighter armors, difficult to maneuver in, but it provides the best protection of the three. It significantly reduces damage taken to the torso and anywhere the plate covers from stabs and slashes. Impacts to the body are lessened by spreading the force generated over a greater area.

Examples of [Heavy] Armor include: a metal Breastplate made of two pieces and placed over chainmail; Full Plate which includes an all-enshrouding suit of shaped and fastened metal plates.

- Grants +8 [Plot Armor]
- three (3) [Flaws], e.g. HEAVY, CUMBERSOME, EXHAUSTING, WEIGHS-ME-DOWN, WEIGHTY, STIFLING, etc.
- [Absorbs] one (1) Damage from *physical* attacks
- Example Cost: Rare
- Time to Manufacture: 1-3 months

## Shields

**Shields** come in various shapes and sizes as determined by their origin and materials. They're normally crafted out of sturdy wood and canvased or painted, or they're sometimes riveted with metal sheets. The heavier the materials, the more exhausting a shield is to use (represented through [Flaws] and roleplay). A 'Zen must have at least one (1) hand, or arm, free to wield a shield. A shield's main function is to increase [Plot Armor].

### Light Shield

**[Light] Shields** are simple and often made of wood. They are used to parry attacks and can be held by a central handle or attached to the forearm (freeing the hand). Examples of [Light] Shields are: small "round" shields, and bucklers.

- Grant +1 [Plot Armor]
- Example Cost: Commonplace

### Medium Shield

**[Medium] Shields** are larger in diameter than [Light] and made of wood slates or metal. Round Shields are large and sturdy enough to double as a stretcher but do not have the weight of [Heavy] Shields. Examples of [Medium] Shields are: Heaters, Round Shields, and Targe Shields (over-sized bucklers).

- Grant +2 [Plot Armor]
- one (1) [Flaw], e.g. HEAVY, WEIGHTY, etc.

- Example Cost: Commonplace

## Heavy Shield

**[Heavy] Shields** are tall enough to protect a ‘Zen’s entire body and are made from wood or metal. They're weighty as well as cumbersome but provide the most protection and can be fully hidden behind. Examples of [Heavy] Shields are: Kite shields and Pavise “Wall” Shield.

- Grant +3 [Plot Armor]
- two (2) [Flaws], e.g. WEIGHTY, UNWIELDY, CUMBERSOME, etc.
- Example Cost: Pricey

## Weapons

All weapons are included in one (1) of the following **Weapon Classifications**: [Light], [Medium], [Heavy], and [Great]. Each Weapon Classification has a Range Increment associated with it; this only pertains to weapons that are made to be *thrown* or used at a distance. Gear that's not meant to operate at a distance has no Range Increment; while weapons of this sort could be *thrown*, dropped, shot out of a cannon, and all that jazz, their effect (if any) is entirely up to the Arbiter to decide. Not all Ninja Gear are weapons, although, some can be weaponized. For these, you'll find a Weapon Classification within their descriptions. Other types of Gear cannot be used to deal Damage, and these are listed as **[Negligible]** where appropriate. Ammunition's listed as **[Ammunition]**. *Loading* and reloading a weapon requires one (1) [Turn] to complete, unless noted otherwise.

## Weapon Classifications

### Light Weapons

‘Zens who travel (and *aristosi* who fancy themselves warriors) are typically armed with at least one (1) [Light] Weapon. These weapons are one-handed, light-weighted, and easy to manipulate; many are also easy to conceal and throw. *Melee* weapons of this sort include: small swords (for jabbing and dueling), daggers, knives, dirks, small hammers and axes, batons, blackjacks/saps, and so forth. *Ranged* weapons might include: hand crossbows, slingshots, blowguns, and so on.

- Light weapons are often easily CONCEALABLE
- Some Light weapons are WELL-BALANCED enough to accurately throw a [Short] range.
- Deals one (1d4) Damage Die
- Example Cost: Commonplace
- Range Increment: [Medium]

### Medium Weapons

The prominent weapons used by warriors and mercenaries alike are [Medium] Weapons. These are weapons which have some weight and are uneasily thrown. It'd take too long to mention all the types, but here are a few a 'Zen will assuredly encounter: short swords, arming swords, scimitars, broadswords, rapiers (for dueling), spears, war axes and hammers, clubs, whips, as well as *melee* or *ranged* weapons, like crossbows, short bows, javelins, and so forth.

- Deals one (1d4+1) Damage Die
- Example Cost: Pricey
- Range Increment: [Long]

## Heavy Weapons

Certain types of infantry (and 'Zens who've a feel for the dramatic) will sometimes outfit themselves with [Heavy] Weapons. These are two-handed *melee* or *ranged* weapons that require both skill and strength to heft, maneuver, and use; you're more likely see these weapons on the battle field than being carried about in town. These items have mass, are cumbersome, and are rarely meant to be thrown. They include: large hammers, morning stars, pikes, polearms, double-edged axes, zweihänder, and long "hand and a half" swords.

- one (1) [Flaw], e.g. HEAVY, UNWIELDY, or LARGE
- Deals one (1d6+1) Damage Die
- Example Cost: Pricey
- Range Increment: [Far]

## Great Weapons

[Great] Weapons are usually siege weapons or *Emplacement* weapons that are *mounted* upon vehicles. They cannot be carried and used effectively by any normal 'Zen. [Great] Weapons are commonly *Theurgic* as well. The Damage dealt by [Great] Weapons is fierce, if not horrific, to behold and harder still to forget. Tinkerers are always coming up with new forms of these items, but to name a few: ballista, Proper Cannon, Dragon Cannon, trebuchets, catapults, mortars, and so on.

- one (1) [Flaw], e.g. NEEDS-POWER, NEEDS-FUEL, MASSIVE
- Deals one (1d10+1) Damage Die
- Example Cost: Variable, e.g. Pricey or Rare for common
- Range Increment: [Far]
- Chaos Die (d4) with [Detriment] / Base Danger Level: 3

(ADD)

Ulek Spear



Shotty

Shortrifle

Soldier's Bundle

Snowglobe

Catnip

Draka Fyre

Lifewine

# ANTAGONISTS

Antagonists, or Non-Player Characters (NPCs), work somewhat differently than Player Characters (PCs). They might could possess the same Abilities as PCs, or some which are disallowed to PCs and only available for "bad guys." The Adventure Module, *The Keeping*, provides several stat blocks for Antagonists and Monsters which you can use to run your adventures.

## Antagonist Vitality & Armor

Unlike Players, Antagonists don't have Wounds, Sanity, or [Plot Armor], per say. They instead have a single **Vitality** score. Once their Vitality's exhausted then either the Antagonist dies or they're defeated as appropriate to what happened. The average Antagonist has four (4) or more Vitality depending on how tough they are. A child would have one (1) to three (3), a city-dweller might have four (4), whereas a farmer might have five (5), and a warrior might have six (6) to eight (8). Antagonists who're Monsters, on the other hand, could have much more Vitality. Antagonists also gain the benefits of wearing Armor or using other forms of Protection. If an Antagonist employs Armor, simply factor that number into their overall Vitality.

### Table 3: "Antagonist Vitality"

- 1 to 3: a child, someone who's under-developed or weak
- 4 to 5: the average 'Zen, a city-dweller or *aristosi* noble
- 6 to 8: a *berk* who's hardy like a farmer or dock worker
- 9 to 16: warriors wearing armor, tough animals, and some monsters
- 12 to 18: tougher beasts and monsters, the supernatural
- 18+: incredibly tough or supernatural monsters, e.g. dire beasts, giants

### EXAMPLE: "Antagonist Vitality"

A foe's Vitality's left up to the Arbiter's interpretation. Taking the True Dæmon, *Sangavida*, as an example, these monsters are described as being "extremely tough to kill." It'd be within reason to give them twelve (12) to eighteen (18) Vitality, let's say the Arbiter splits the difference and decides on fifteen (15). *Sangavida* are also intelligent and are able to masquerade as normal *berks*, so they might don Armor, e.g. a [Medium] Armor like *Jack of Plate* which grants +6 [Plot Armor]. That creates a very potent foe with twenty-one (21) Vitality, i.e. the *Sangavida*'s fifteen (15) Vitality plus an additional six (6) [Plot Armor] from wearing [Medium] armor for a total of twenty-one (21) Vitality.

# Antagonist Classifications

Antagonists' die types, defenses, and general challenge rating are derived from their **Classification**. Classification's a number (shown on *Table 4 "Antagonist Classifications"*) that gives you a quick reference for building NPCs.

**Table 4: "Antagonist Classifications"**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>*Aspect Dice</b>	<b>**Base Defense</b>	<b>***Maximum Successes</b>	<b>†Average Threshold</b>
0	Below Average 'Zens	–	0	2	1
1	Minor to Average Threats	d4	0	3	1
2	Above Average to Major Threats	d4	1	4	2
3	Very Threatening	d6	1	4	2
4	Formidable	d6	2	5	3
5	Very Potent	d8	2	6	4
6	Inspiring Fear	d8	3	7	5
7	Deadly	d10	3	7	5
8	Doom	d10	4	8	6
9	Legendary	d12	4	8	5
10	Legendarily Epic	d12	5	9	6
11+	We don't even talk about it	d12 + d4	5	10	6

*\*Classification 11+ roll two (2) Aspect Dice in addition to their Action Die (d10).*

*\*\*Base Defense's calculated as half the Classification rounded down; this is the foe's de facto [Threshold] for avoiding Damage / effect and can be added as additional [Successes] to their Throw Down when they attack.*

*\*\*\*Maximum Successes is the sum of the possible [Successes] from an Antagonist's Aspect Dice, their Action Die (d10), and their Base Defense combined.*

†Average [Threshold]'s calculated by the probability a foe will get [Successes] on their Throw Down plus their Base Defense. These approximations 1) give you an idea of how tough and lethal these foes can be and 2) can reduce your need to roll.

## Base Defense

Antagonists with Classification 2+ have a **Base Defense**; the higher their Classification, the higher their Base Defense. Base Defense represents an Antagonist's *de facto* [Threshold] to avoid being affected by Damage or other effects. It's also added as additional [Successes] Antagonists might gain when Throwing Down. This benefit can be circumvented through various means, e.g. they're tied up, unconscious, or otherwise unable to defend or react.

### EXAMPLE: "Using Base Defense"

An Antagonist who's Classification 6 has a Base Defense 3. Attempting to stab him when his back's turned and he's unaware requires a *berk* to Throw Down against a [Threshold] 3. If he's aware and able to make a [Reaction Roll], he'd Throw Down his Action Die (d10) and Aspect Die (d8) and add three (3) to any resulting [Successes], with 3 coming from his Base Defense, i.e. his Base Defense acts like a bonus to his normal [Threshold].

## Antagonist Dice

Just as with Player Characters, Antagonists may need to Throw Down to accomplish their tasks. This most often occurs when reacting or defending themselves from Players. They don't [Bid] [Traits], though. When Throwing Down, an Antagonist possesses an Action Die (d10) and an Aspect Die as determined by their Classification. Antagonists' dice work the same as Players' dice, they roll both and add [Successes]. When defending, add any [Successes] from their dice results to their Base Defense. Note that once an Antagonists' Classifications reach 11, they begin to roll two (2) Aspect dice simultaneously in addition to their (d10) Action Die; in other words, Antagonists of 11+ Classification roll three (3) dice and add up their [Successes], e.g. one (1) Action Die (d10) and two (2) Aspect Dice.

If you choose to forgo rolling for an Antagonist, feel free to reference their Average [Threshold]. In the event you do so, you'd not add any bonuses nor would you Throw Down their Action or Aspect Dice. Of course, the statistics in *Table 4: "Antagonist Classifications"* are suggestions; they're there for your convenience, not to hem you into mechanics.

## Other Stats

### Vital Spots

Antagonists, objects, monsters, and so on, might have one (1) or more areas on them which are called **Vital Spots**. Damage dealt to a Vital Spot bypasses any Wound Levels, "Resistances," or "Immunities" that a being (or a thing) possesses and directly subtracts from its Vitality – Vitality reaching zero (0) results in destruction or death. Vital Spots are only used with regard to things that have *Wound Levels* or that cannot

be Damaged through any other means than attacking a specific area, e.g. Achilles' heel, or with a specific material, e.g. the olde wise tale that silver injures Changelings. Of course, sometimes a *berk* needs a specific weapon, situation, or other sort of knowledge to even affect a Vital Spot. More oft than not, a monster's aware of any Vital Spots they possess and so go to great lengths to obscure, protect, and mitigate them.

↪(Refer to Antagonists > Other Stats > Wound Levels)

## Resistance & Immunity

Some monsters, e.g. Glatað (roaming souls), Creatures (vampiric monsters), and so forth, have “**Resistance**” or “**Immunity**” to certain kinds of effects or Damage. Mechanically-speaking, “Resistance” [Absorbs] half the Damage dealt (rounded down) from a specific source, e.g. Magicka, fire, mundane weapons, and so on. A monster with “Resistance” *always* takes at least one (1) point of Damage when injured, e.g. Creatures “resist” all mundane physical attacks, so a sword dealing five (5) Damage only deals a Creature two (2) Damage, and if it dealt one (1) Damage instead, the Creature'd still be injured for one (1) Damage. On the other hand, monsters with “Immunity” are entirely immune to specific kinds of effects or Damage, e.g. Glatað "immune" to mundane, Physical attacks within The Natural, so a sword of any sort would slash right through dealing them zero (0) Damage.

### ARBITER's DARK:

“Resistance” and “Immunity” are not mechanics for Player Characters, per se, which is why the terms remain unbracketed. These are “monster abilities” that make monsters more monstrous. If the issue arises, and it shall, that Players seek to make a Pact, or gain an item, that grants them “Resistance” or “Immunity,” be very careful! The price for gaining such a boon should far outweigh the benefit (which should be temporary at best) – these abilities are designed to be aberrant and monstrous, and oft as not, are ill-suited for Player Characters.

## Weakness

Some Antagonists have one (1) or more **Weaknesses**. Weakness represents a narrative condition or situation that adversely affects them, e.g. Creatures disdain sunlight, and some might even be destroyed by it, Long-leggers need to keep warm lest they disintegrate, a musician might be utterly distracted by the sound of people eating and so be unable to play, and so on.

Weaknesses can *also* affect an Antagonist's stats. Tasks for which they've got a Weakness might have a [Reduced] Aspect Die. The [Reduction] could be one (1) or more steps depending on your decision of the severity of their Weakness. Weakness could also affect their Base Defense, lowering it by one (1) or more as you see fit.

↪(Refer to Antagonists > Antagonist Classifications > Table 4: "Antagonist Classifications")

A simple rule of thumb for enacting Weakness is to drop an Antagonist's Base Defense by one (1) to a minimum of zero (0) and also [Reduce] their Aspect Die one (1) step. A [Reduced] (d12) becomes a (d10), a [Reduced] (d10) becomes a (d8), a [Reduced] (d8) becomes a (d6), and so forth.

## Wound Levels

Some baddies are *really* tough and have **Wound Levels**. Wound Levels represent Damage that affects the Antagonist but doesn't defeat or kill them. Generally, only specific types of monsters will have Wound Levels, those that are particularly "resistant," or "immune," to weapons or that can only be injured by attacking *Vital Spots*. When a Character damages a monster with a Wound Level, they deal Damage which subtracts from the extra Vitality that monster gains from their Wound Level. Directly attacking a Vital Spot the monster possesses, or affecting the monster in a way in which it has Weakness, however, deals Damage normally and against the monster's actual Vitality. A single Wound Level doubles that monster's Vitality. A second Wound Level triples it, and so on. Whether or not a monster possesses one (1) or more Wound Levels, and what bypasses it, will be hinted at in their description, e.g. Changelings are "nigh impossible to destroy," or Mountain Men are as "tough as mountains." As always, how many Wound Levels a *berk* has or doesn't have is up to you, the Arbiter.

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## 6<sup>th</sup> House Mage

Steve (Steven Than)

Capt'n Puck n' Peaches (William Krueger)

The interdimensional Archangel, AKA Brett Strassner

Jacob Woosley

Chuck Salmon (Erik Seaman)

Laz (Ty Saylor)

Punksicle (Nigel Miller)

Patrick Courtney

Daniel Hulker

The Incredible Cox (Ryan Cox)

## Among the Stars

Logan Nance AKA "Vaelar, The Dæmon Hunter"

Bryan "Cybershaman(X)" Logie

Floki the wanderer (Robert Killian)

## Mystic of 12 & 7

Tim Roberts

Patrick Higgins

Harrison Hark Levans

Marc Dotson

Steven Kendrick

# Version 1.x to the Official “Relapse”

Many of our friends were responsible for helping successfully finish version 1 of the original gaming manual, the Crack System. While a different undertaking altogether, Version 2 Redux/Relapse would not have happened without our Version 1.x peeps. Through long hours of imbibing fancy drinks and vehemently arguing about the best solutions, these gals and guys have helped us brainstorm, playtest, and create what has become DreadLore. Bill is thankful for the effort given from the people listed below.

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Emrys (Conventions, Cosplaying, Playtesting, Proofreading, Social Media, Website-stuffs)	Lauren Seaman (Cosplaying)
Jason Fancher (Beer&Food, Brainstorming, Playtesting)	Waquar Shabir (Brainstorming, Lexicon)
Richard Feenstra (Playtesting, Brainstorming)	Alexander Southard (Beer&Food, Mechanics, Number Crunching, Playtesting)
Daniel Hulker (All the jokes, Character Sheets, Cosplaying, Playtesting, Research)	Chris Stopper (Mechanics, Number Crunching, Playtesting that one time)
Telvin Ishtar (Playtesting)	William Stull (Brainstorming, Number Crunching)
Steven Kendrick (Playtesting)	Derek Thomas (Brainstorming, Number Crunching, Playtesting)
Savannah Massey (Beer&Food, Betrayal, Playtesting)	Chad Webb (Arbitrating, Brainstorming, Mechanics, Number Crunching, Playtesting)
Jeffery McNeil (Brainstorming, Playtesting, Reinvigorating-the-dream)	Cameron White (Arbitrating, Art, Beer&Food, Playtesting, Proofreading, Mapping, SplatStuff)
Nigel Miller (Adapting Settings, Arbitrating, Brainstorming, Number Crunching, Playtesting, Proofreading)	Chris Williams (All the jokes, Beer&Food, Playtesting)
Logan Nance (Brainstorming, Playtesting)	Jacob Woosley (Beer&Food, Cosplaying, Playtesting)



# CONTACT & INFORMATION

The official **DreadLore Core Book**, the Adventure Module, "The Keeping," the full Pregenerated Characters pack, as well as more materials, are *available now* for Pre-ordering. They will be available for direct, online purchase Spring 2022. For information on how to procure your own copy of the Core Book (print or PDF), or any other *paid* materials, inquire on the Official DreadLore website:

<https://dreadlore.com>.

Information about upcoming events and releases will be provided on our Official website and on Instagram. Join the DreadLore community, engage in debate / conversation about the game, and join games, on our *Discord Server*, **Dreadies** (the *invitation link* is on the Official website). For other inquiries, feel free to message us on *Instagram*: **@dreadloresystem**, to chat with us on **Twitch**, or to visit the Official website.

- **Official Website:** <https://dreadlore.com>
- Instagram: @dreadloresystem
- **Twitch:** <https://twitch.tv/dreadlore>
- Discord Server: Dreadies (invite on [Official website](#))
- YouTube: DreadLore

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