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UⴸG
GUIDE BOOK

character creation, rules, equipment, powers
for UVG 2E & other games in the dream machine.

Luka Rejec

This page is certified safety yellow.

UVG Player Guide Book

For would-be heroes of the Vast Lands.

Terraformed Moon Edition v2.10
February 2024

ω

Knights Grammarian: Madeline, MoonRawrr, myownlittlworld

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For every patient traveler on a cruel road.

https://patreon.com/wizardthieffighter

THEY WORKED TOGETHER TO SLAY THE
DRAGON, NOW THEY FIGHT EACH
OTHER FOR ITS GOLDEN GUTS.

CONTENTS

They're okay, the last days of May, but I'll be breathin' dry air
I'm leaving soon, the others are already there (All there...)
Wouldn't be interested in coming along instead of staying here?
It's said the West is nice this time of year, that's what they say

—*Then Came the Last Days of May*, Blue Öyster Cult, Blue Öyster Cult (1972)

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome, curious explorer, to the Ultraviolet Grasslands. To a time beyond the end of time. To the psychedelic steppes beyond the edge of civilization. The utter west, the deep, vast, mythic steppe littered with the detritus of time and space and memory.

The UVG is a point-crawl setting inspired by psychedelic heavy metal, the Dying Earth genre, and Oregon Trail games. It is a world colored by new wave science fiction and inspired by artists from Moebius to Miyazaki.

This updated guide book for the 2nd edition of the UVG covers character creation, rules and mechanics, equipment and powers, refereeing and cocreation, adventures and encounters, and more.

You can get the Ultraviolet Grasslands in deadwood via Exalted Funeral Press and a number of friendly local gaming stores. The electronic paper version is also available online at DTRPG and itch.io. Several translations are also available (or in progress).

Map labels:

MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON

THE BLASTED FIELD

BLUE LAND OF THE DEAD GOD

DIM GRASS

THE ULTRAVIOLET GRASSLANDS & THE BLACK CITY

Grass Colossus

Last Serai

STEPPE OF
THE LIME NOMADS

The Right Road

Ruins
of Azure

PURPLE
LAND
OF THE
CAT

The Low Road
and the High

Porcelain
Throne

VIOLET CITY

THE RAINBOW LANDS

THE CIRCLE SEA

THE DARK HILLS

Reddened

The Right Road

Red Land
District

THE SOURCE OF THE RUSH

THE RED HILLS

RED LAND OF THE VINE

MOUNTAINS OF THE SUN

1.1. The World's Edge

A world begins when it emerges from the mists of time. So it is with the civilizations of the Rainbowlands—which mark their count from when the Long Ago ended and the Now began.

The Rainbowlanders are the humans of a later era, undisputed masters of the fertile lands around the Circle Sea, dwellers in the Eye of Creation, in the Garden of the Given World. They come in many shapes, colours, creeds, and faiths. They pile unkempt technology and misremembered lore together into a teetering whole. They rule the settled lands under their polychrome deities of ill-repute.

1. Introduction

This story is not theirs. This story begins at the edge of their world, at the Left End of the Right Road. At the westernmost outpost of humanity, the Violet City: bastion against the hordes, entrepôt to the exotic sunset lands, and last port of civilization before the trackless steppe studded with the detritus of the Long Ago.

The last glimmer of the Rainbow before the skin-blistering glow of the Ultraviolet Grasslands.

1.2. The Synthetic Dream Machine

Creation and destruction, an endless cycle, looped so many times the history's become a fog. No apocalypse remains. No post comes anymore. Eras upon eras, worlds upon worlds, like grains of sand upon the beach of cosmic awareness.

Optimism. Life. New beginnings from the primordial ooze of barbarism. From the planetary vents of life. Again, again, again.

Rain falls on mountains. Streams become rivers. Lakes meet seas. Tribes become cities. Prophets found kingdoms. Explorers cross horizons. Merchants bind cultures. Empires cross continents. Shamans ascend to the stars. Life spreads from fast star to slow star. Wanderers tunnel the wormways through the ever void.

All must come to pass in the infinite cosmoses.

Eternity eats the unwise.

There is more to the universe than this Circle Sea and the Ultraviolet Grasslands so familiar to the Rainbowlanders.

> Lexicon of the Vastlands — a living glossary of this strange end of time.

> The Wizardthieffighter Patreon — a growing, rambling noöpolis of half-abandoned ruins in the sands of space and rivers of regret.

> Synthetic Dream Machine — a system and an archive for the game.

1.3. UVG Origins

The roots of the UVG are in the Rainbowlands that grew collaboratively from the games I ran for the Golden Goats of Lausanne in the early to mid 2010s. Thank you good players for amazing adventures and delightful dinners.

The UVG and the Rainbowlands and the rest of the Vastlands I've published are not quite the same as those I ran then. They could not be.

But, like all the fine history, art, and wine, they rhyme.

1.3.1. The Anti-Canon Reader

As the referee, your job is not to master a vast setting and bizarre lore, but to present scenes and pose challenges, to apply rules and arbitrate outcomes. You're the bass player, setting the rhythm of the game.

In the UVG, in the Vastlands, you are on the journey together with your players: discovering the world and what happens in it. There is no one proper UVG. No one canon. No true, proper way to play it.

The game at your table belongs to you all, players and referee. Through play, you discover a world and create a canon of your very own.

Safe travels beyond the edge of the last safe world.

1.4. Our Shadowy Companions

A group of exemplary ... er ... example characters joins us to illustrate how the rules and procedures work.

Example: When the referee Cat and the intrepid characters Noë, Onion, Safir, and others demonstrate how the rules work to lay waste the best laid plans of mice and houses. And humans.

Our sacrifices to the oracle of the dice are as follows:

1.4.1. Cat

Our referee, a mighty games-mistress and acolyte of the Ceiling Cat.

1.4.2. Noë

A wizard of the dark electronic arts. A scholar in search of the forbidden mysteries of the never-mentioned war.

strength 0, endurance 1, agility 2, charisma 5, aura 4, thought 5

1.4.3. Onion

A merchant and wide-ranging traveler. A trickster with a coin in every sock and a soothing white lie for every ear.

strength 1, endurance 0, agility 4, charisma 5, aura 0, thought 3

1.4.4. Safir

A fighter of the caravan-protecting sort. An exile from the Blue Lands with a bloodline prone to corruption.

strength 5, endurance 4, agility 3, charisma 0, aura 1, thought 2
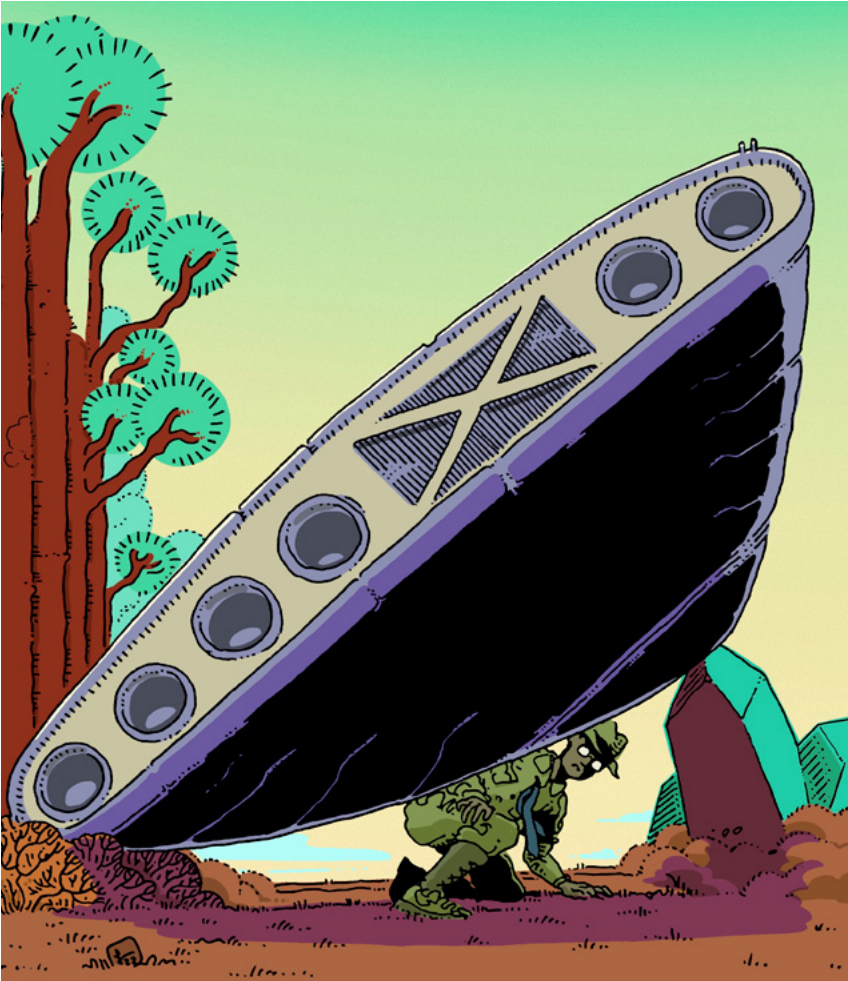
History shows again and again
How nature points out the folly of men

—*Godzilla*, Blue Öyster Cult, Spectres (1977)

2. CHARACTER CREATION

Players experience the fantastic world of the Ultraviolet Grasslands through their character(s).

In this chapter, you will:

> name your character (2.1.)
> generate their ability scores (2.2.)
> generate traits (2.3–5.)
> equip them (2.6.)
> generate remaining attributes and motivations (2.7–8.)
> learn how to level them up (2.9.)
> review your character and set off on your adventure (2.10.)

Later, you can acquire other characters: pets, sidekicks, secondary PCs and more. Their adventures, their defeats and victories, are yours to chart.

2.1. Name Your Character

A name says a lot. It says where a character is from, who they want to be, what they want to achieve. Choose or roll or invent a name you find funny, meaningful, or interesting. Above all, choose one you enjoy.

1. High Common, upper-class names: Elsedéz Diës, Ennui a'Sheval, Jai Ping-Noun, Oelan Outani, Ouestin Haus, Phædred Enshin, Vruit d'Ajai, Yuin a'Romeö.
2. Vulgar Common, middle-class names: Alba Nigra, Equreis Liber, Nutra Griza, Paloma Blanka, Qalen Vegeta, Solo Carburetto, Urora Squra.
3. Purple names: Arha Skivayi, Buqa Loban, Hoc Uindea, Kalis Elfbayi, Stebra Osta, Turi Uma, Yasa Furfurea, Yilis Olorka.
4. Blue names: Aleia Unomor, Gorto per Cultur, Halaver pre Lapan, Imssi bra Cupa, Muria bra Salsur, Qephi per Linter, Qarno Azur, Via Alpin.
5. Green names: Axil i'Eliseis, Eralda Fiusc, Fiet i'Muru, Iacum di Vila, Issandir di Metropol, Lun Diralup, Ulfis i'Bosc, Xriso di Ust.
6. Yellow names: Cortez an'Opera, Dona de Cuiyot, Horto 'n Caravan, Limon an'Vest, Pansa de Rancho, Saldo an'Nanc, Yaro Despolie, Ylva 'n Vusta.

7. Orange names: Amber' Osscale, Presid' Uniuersal, Ranalo Fianviye, Safauzi Vruje, Sofixa Vulja, Tifixa Boscaneve, Uale Xerive, Xuli' Ueronesi.
8. Red names: Amfo s'Teran, Cozarin s'Berberin, Dolon duc Marbec, Imbic Terminal, Namur Rinfosc, Perin duc Piñor, Torron Valpin, Zinf Ander.
9. Kriol & Cant names: Anater En-Ein, Hors To-Burk, Lama Denk-Zen, Munti Trul, Pilk Bagato, Sembet Kuat-Lun, Ski Senk-Karti, Tosk Perfors.
10. D.W.A.R.F. names: Amdt 'Logistic, Del 'Machinist, Kur 'Notcurrentlyined-ucationortraining, Pem 'Cleaningspecialist, Ru 'C, Tam 'HR, Vek 'Driver, Yon 'Engine.
11. Steppe names: Acid Spirit, Citrus Elevator, Forth Bone, Newt Incor-poreal, Rise Ghost, Sevenfold Epicenter, Starfall Perimeter, Wayfarer Sanctum.
12. Timelost names: Cryocasket 523-Amber, Eggs Perimiter-4, Kloen Offlord, Ohn Smit, Oï Yu, Settler Unitschild, Sidhe Reäl, Winterbird.

There are more names in the appendix (II.A.).

Now generate your ability scores in section 2.2.

2.2. Generate Ability Scores

The function of a hero's corporeal and spiritual and personal form is measured for the pleasure and understanding of the player.

> **Roll for your abilities in order**. Strength, endurance, agility, charisma, aura, thought. This is the maker's way.

d100	ability score	
1–30	0	unremarkable, mediocre, ordinary human ability
31–55	1	promising, useful, potential
56–75	2	talented, apt, good
76–90	3	gifted, very good
91–99	4	excellent, amazing
00	5	incredible, optimal, a pinnacle of human ability

Now proceed to 2.3. to generate your first trait.

2.2.0.1. [Option 1] Assigned Ability Scores

Assign 7 points to your abilities as you like, with a maximum of 3 in any one ability. This is the way of those who mistrust chaos.

2.2.0.2. [Option 2] One Roll Ability Scores

If you want to submit your fate to a single roll, the centennial table of abilities has you covered (II.B.).

2.2.0.1. Higher Ability Scores

Those who are inhuman may diverge, those who are not, do not.

2.2.1. Abilities and Their Effects

The abilities represent the natural, inherent aptitudes of a character. Traits and education build on top of them to expand a character's possibilities. They break down into three colors (active, dynamic, static) and two flavors (mind and matter).

2.2.1.2. Static Abilities

Resisting things. Body, matter, structure, form, persistence, courage, *ha*.
The resolve and stamina to bear and withstand.

1. Aura is the mental static ability. The mental and psychological resilience to withstand the outrageous slings of fortune. It is not wisdom (that is a trait). It may allow a character to use powers beyond mortal ken longer than usual.
2. Endurance is the physical static ability. How much pain and strain a character can take. From marathons to staying in a fight longer than other humans.

2.2.1.1. Active Abilities

Doing things. Fire, drive, energy, vigor, thrust, movement, *ka*.
The will and force to dominate and overcome.

1. Charisma is the mental active ability. Like classical Greek *khárisma*, it represents divine fortune. The gods and reason hate the uncharismatic, and Charisma also serves as a luck stat. When a hero tries to batter down resistance to their arguments through force of personality, this is what they use.
2. Strength is the physical active ability. Lifting bars, bending gates, punching guards, throwing rocks, climbing ladders one-handed. It also increases how many items a character can carry.

2.2.1.3. Dynamic Abilities

Changing things. Psyche, intellect, change, dexterity, path, speed, *ba*.
The wit and flexibility to adapt and adjust.

1. Thought is the mental dynamic ability. It captures how a character absorbs, processes, and manipulates information. It is not education (that is a trait). The naming is also a reference to the Egyptian god Thoth. It also increases how many traits a character can have.
2. Agility is the physical dynamic ability. It represents the speed and precision and speed with which a character applies their body in their environment. Dodging, aiming, manipulating, balancing, flexibility, etc. Agility provides a bonus to defense.

2.2. Generate Ability Scores
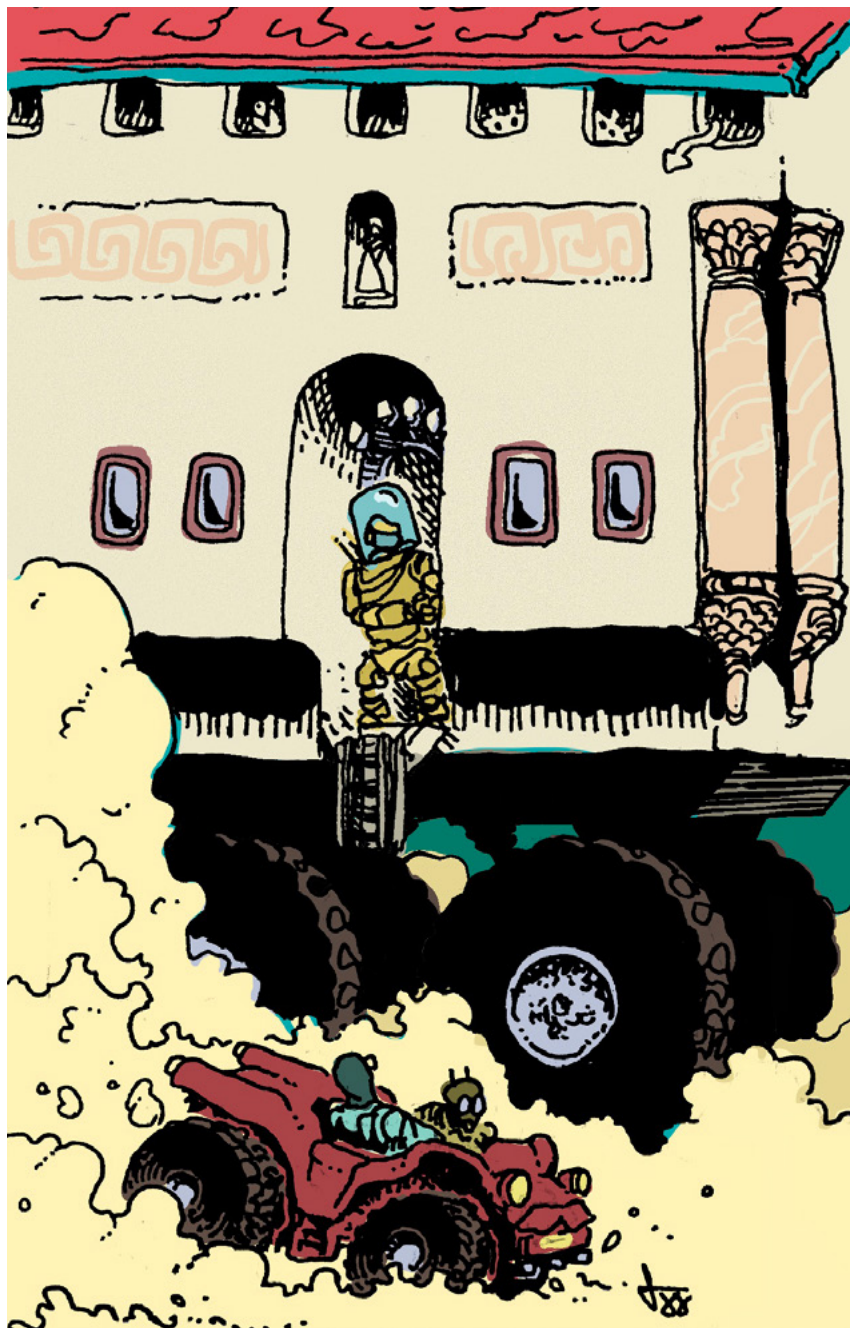
2.3. Generate a Background Trait

Traits are the innate, acquired and inherited, qualities and characteristics that make a character unique. This includes characteristics such as backgrounds, professions, mutations, downloaded skill packages, implanted prosthetics, corruptions, and memorized powers.

Individual traits may provide various benefits, including community membership, skill modifiers to actions, social standing, specific mechanical benefits, and new game options.

You have **7 + thought** inventory slots for traits.

Each trait occupies a trait inventory slots. Other traits, items, and events can increase the number of trait slots.

At level 1 you **start with three traits**.

A level 0 character has two traits. Characters can choose to gain a new trait every time they level up.

2.3.1. Your Background

Roll d40 or choose your background. Note it in a trait inventory slot along with its modifier (+3).

1. Apothecary. Mix poisons, potions, and medicines. Run a pharmacy.
2. Archaeologist. Discover lost artifacts, climb, jump, dodge boulders. Shoot pistols and use a whip.
3. Big Game Hunter. Shoot big guns, order lackeys about, ride a burden-beast, chomp cigars, talk turkey.
4. Biomechanic. Modify living organisms with body-horror technomagic. Run a pet store.
5. Cat Groom. Make cats happy and receive their love. Crack skulls and shoot kneecaps when the catlords demand it.
6. Chemist. Or all-chemist, ha-ha. Analyze ingredients, make explosives, cook drugs … er … elixirs. Teach high schoolers.
7. Coffee Maker. Make coffee, grow coffee, run a plantation or a bar.
8. Comedian. Bring joy, laughter, and inappropriate sounds. Stroke emotions and distract guards.
9. Contortionist. Squeeze into small places. Put on circus shows.
10. Crystal Healer. Practical gemology and placebo effects. Some small skill with focus magics.
11. Dice Maker. Make dice. Carve small things. Cheat at dice.
12. Fisherperson. Catch fish. Also, hooks, boats, nets, and things.
13. Forager. Find berries and nuts and mushrooms. Know which ones are good to eat and which will kill a person.
14. Gun Runner. Shoot guns, hide things, bribe officials, sell illegal goods.
15. Hallucinator. Travel in your dreams. Talk to spirits and chairs.
16. Legume Farmer. Grow beans. Wake up early. Till fields. Work long hours. Pay onerous taxes. Sell legumes. Run a farm.
17. Marketer. Make presentations. Sell magic legumes.
18. Mason. Build buildings. Shape stones. Understand dungeons.
19. Mule Whisperer. Get pack animals to get along. Have animal friends. Keep them happy. Your one special animal friend will carry an extra sack for you. Expert: gain another friend; master: two more.
20. Narco-herbalist. Know and find and smoke and dry and preserve your inappropriate berries and herbs.

21. Navigator. Find your way by stars and winds and waypoints.
22. Necromancer. Talk to the dead. Sometimes walk them, too.
23. Nomad Raider. Ride like lightning. Steal cattle. Shoot guns and bows. Skirmish. Use guerrilla tactics.
24. Oldtechnician. Use Long Long Ago technomagic. Understand emoji.
25. Packmaster. Carry, pack, load, unload, and transport stuff really well. Things you pack rarely break and your well-packed sack holds an extra stone. Expert: another stone; master: two more.
26. Phytomancer. Talk to plants. Make them move for you (very slowly). Also, probably, know different plant types very well.
27. Profiteer. Also known as business administration. Squeeze bonus cash from your underlings.
28. Project Manager. Consummate middle managerial skills, organized time sheets, excellent key performance indicators.
29. Protocol Specialist. Coffee ceremonies, modes of address, titles and such. Very good for first impressions.
30. Puppet Theater Actor. Theater. But with puppets. Your incredible business success probably drove you into the grasslands.
31. Safe Driving Instructor. Rally, drifting, stunt driving, how to crash safely.
32. Showfighter. Swords, halberds, whirly blades! Dancing! Excitement!
33. Soul Juicer. Read people's intentions. Possess their bodies. Milk them of energies and information.
34. Spelunker. Venture into deep places. Climb, rappel, dive.
35. Storyteller. Tell good stories with satisfying endings. Like the kind where the unremarkable character who did nothing has the best story and so gets to become the king.
36. Surgeon. Medicine with a focus on knives and sewing needles.
37. Tactician. Find and use strategic advantages for war or business. Praise the little rainbow book of Meow.
38. The Business, Acolyte of. Know the corporations, banks, and self-help associations that lubricate the world. Shake up recalcitrants.
39. The War, Scholar of. History or pseudo-history. Recognize ancient ruins. Use legendary war machines.
40. Vome Technician. Adapt and use vomish implants. Manage their side-effects. Enslave vomes.

2.3.2. Trait Skill Modifiers
If you select the same trait multiple times, its skill modifier increases.

Skilled	+3 bonus to rolls	good enough to make a living
Expert	+6 bonus to rolls	good enough to teach
Master	+9 bonus to rolls	a rare master of this art

A trait selected multiple times does not take up additional trait slots. Note a trait's bonus to record how many times you have selected it (+3 / +6 / +9).

2.3.3.1. Applying Trait Skill Modifiers
Trait descriptions list some situations where skill modifiers apply. Players and the referee can use dialogue and common sense to figure out if a trait could apply in a new or unexpected situation.

2.3.3. Other Trait Benefits
If traits provide other benefits, note them down.

Example: mule whisperer lets you designate a special pack animal as your friend, and it will carry an extra sack of goods for you. An expert mule whisperer can designate two such animals, and a master mule whisperer can designate four. Mark such animals with a smiley face and a name.

As with other traits, mule whisperer may also grant a skill modifier, such as when rolling to soothe startled pack animals or guide them across a narrow bridge.

2.3.4. Inventing New Traits
Players and referees can make up new traits together. Any profession, quality, background, mutation, or space oddity that sounds fun to the players is fair game.
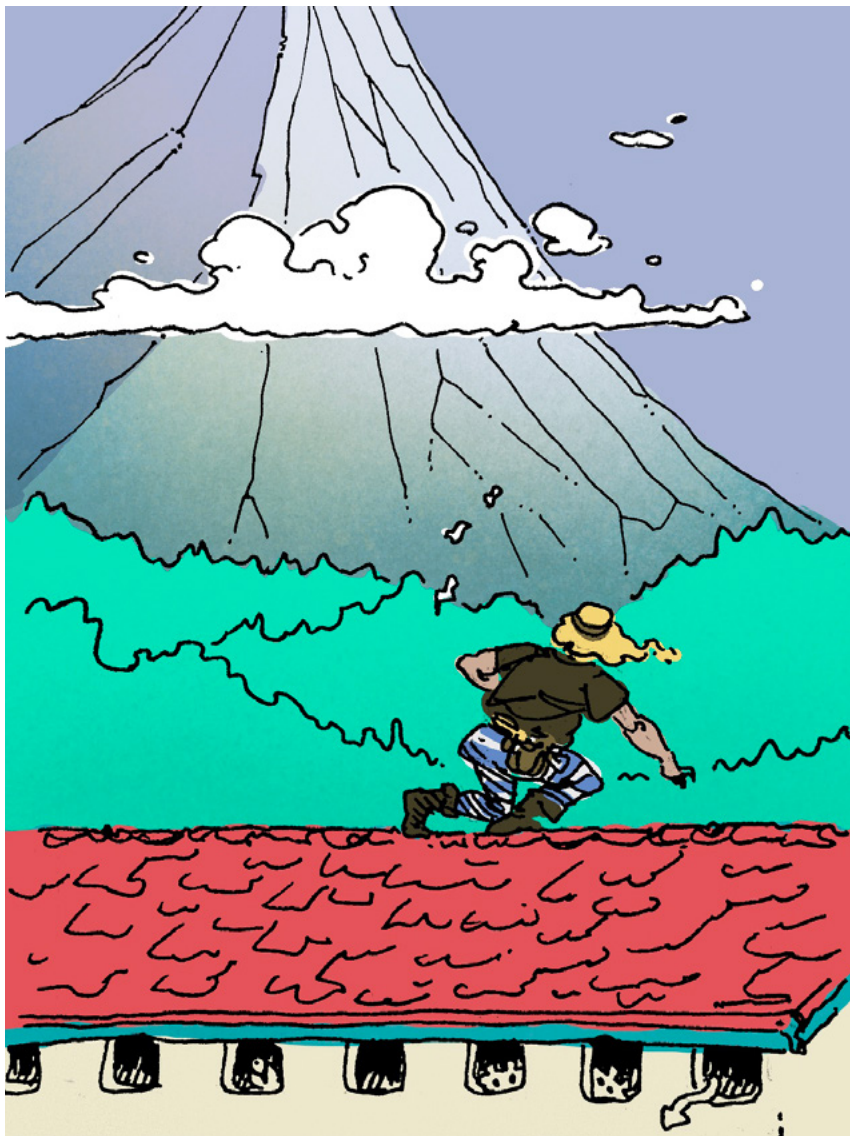
Next, pick a path trait (2.4.). This provides some adventuring competence your random background trait may lack.

2.4. Pick a Path Trait

Paths are compilations of traits that create archetypal characters.

Review and **choose a path**:

- *Path of the Wizard (2.4.1.)*
- *Path of the Traveler (2.4.2.)*
- *Path of the Fighter (2.4.3.)*

2.4.0.1. Not Classes

Paths are not classes. A character is not bound to one path. They can choose traits from any path, in any order, mixing-and-matching as they level up.

2.4.0.2. No Prerequisites

Some traits complement one another, but they can be selected in any order as a character levels up. A character can even skip the basic path trait.

2.4.1. Path of the Wizard

A scholar who uses the old technologies.

> Wizard. You call yourself a magus, maker, or mechanic. You are skilled at casting spells and using oldtech powers.

2.4.1.1. More Wizard Traits

To interrogate, to learn, to master, perhaps to create:

1. Burner. Once per turn, you can spend an ability point to overcharge a spell, regardless of its power.
2. Chronic. Spend a hero die to cast a second spell this round.
3. Exuberant. Each of your life points is worth double when paying for powers.
4. Mind Palace. Memorize a number of spells equal to your level for free, ignoring inventory. Draw the memory palace on the back of your character sheet.
5. Oblique Reality. Spend one life or one hero die to deflect a spell targeting you (or an adjacent target) to the left or the right (or up or down).
6. Recast. When your spell fails or a target makes its save, you can cast the spell again for free. Once. Recharge your recast with a hero die.

> *After choosing a path trait, generate your third trait (2.5.).*

2.4.2. Path of the Traveler

A merchant focused on overland voyaging. A trickster?

> Traveler. You call yourself a vagabond, a wanderer, the wind. You are skilled at managing a caravan, navigating with maps and stars and waypoints, making and concealing camps, finding water and food, and the etiquette of the vast open lands. You wield the marching staff and the dagger and the traditional rifle.

2.4.2.1. More Traveler Traits

To hear, to see, to convince, perhaps to lead:

1. Escapist. You're skilled at being lucky. That's a +3 bonus to all saves.
2. Friends. You can have a number of pets or sidekicks equal to your level who don't take up an inventory slot. Draw a friends box on the back of your character sheet.
3. Hunter. Track, trap, and shoot game with bow, rifle, and javelin. Hide in the wilderness and move unseen. When you shoot from ambush, your critical hits deal triple instead of double damage. Expert: x4; master: x5.
4. Pleasant. Charming conversation and an easy demeanor. You're skilled at getting people to like you. That's +2 to reaction rolls. Expert: +4; master: +6.
5. Pocketmaster. Conceal a number of small objects equal to your level for free, ignoring inventory. A knife is small.
6. Swift. Spend one life or one hero die to get one extra action this round.

After choosing a path trait, generate your third trait (2.5.).

2.4.3. Path of the Fighter

A caravan guard who wears armor and wields weapons.

> Fighter. You call yourself a warden, warrior, or weaponmaster.
> You are skilled at using all the traditional weapons, from knife to sword, blaster to rifle.

2.4.3.1. More Fighter Traits

To struggle, to fall, to rise, perhaps to succeed.

1. Armiger. Carry a number of weapons equal to your level for free, ignoring inventory. Draw a weapons box on the back of your character sheet.
2. Defender. You're skilled at physical defense. That's a +3 bonus to armor, even if unarmored.
3. Grit. Gain 1 life per level and advantage when you roll endurance.
4. Irresistible. Every round you deal damage equal to your level to one foe you attacked, whether your attack roll hit or missed.
5. Second Chance. When you would fall to 0 life, you fall to 1 life instead. Once. Recharge second chance with a hero die.
6. Terrifying. You're skilled at frightening people. That's also a +2 bonus when breaking your foes' morale. Expert: +4; master: +6.

After choosing a path trait, generate your third trait (2.5.).

2.4. Pick a Path Trait
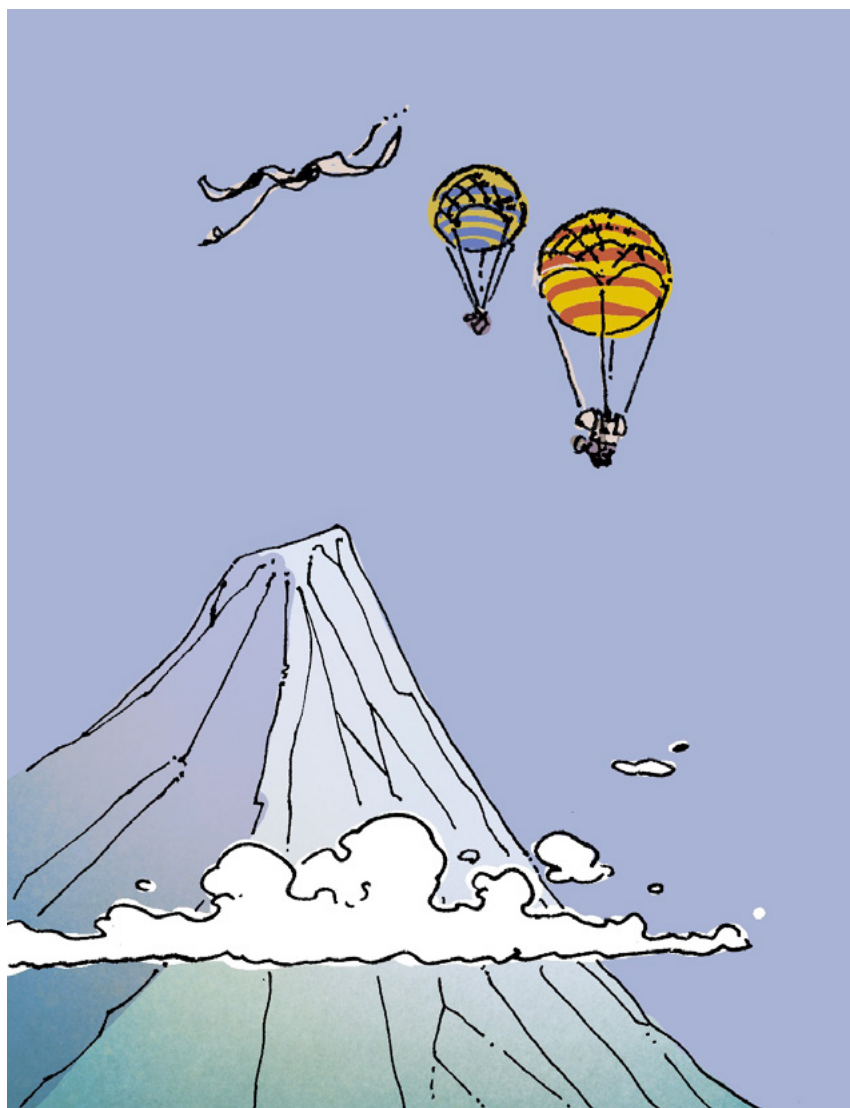
2.5. Generate a Third Trait

Characters start with 2 traits at level 0 and gain one per level. Since PCs start at 1st level, they get a third trait. You may:

2.5.1. Roll a Random Trait

Roll a d6 and gain a random ...

1–3	background trait (2.3.)
4	wizard path trait (2.4.1.)
5	traveler path trait (2.4.2.)
6	fighter path trait (2.4.3.)

2.5.2. Choose a New Trait

Choose any new trait you like.

You can find additional traits in appendix II.C.

2.5.3. Choose an Existing Trait and Become an Expert

When you select the same trait a second time, your trait's skill modifier increases from +3 (skilled) to +6 (expert). Depending on the trait, expertise may provide additional benefits. Selecting a trait twice does not increase the number of trait inventory slots it occupies.

As you progress, you can select the same trait a third time, becoming a master and increasing its skill modifier to +9 (master).

Now go to 2.6. and equip your character.

2.6. Equip Your Character

Items are all the tools and treasures that expand a character's abilities and possibilities. From a mundane wrench to a magitechnical spell anchor, from a suit of pleather armor to a biomechanical crab-head, all are items.

You have **7 + strength** inventory slots for items.

Each loose item or package occupies at least one item inventory slot. Other traits, items, and events can increase the number of item slots. Each item inventory slot is 1 stone in size.

At level 1 you **start with two items** and some **starting cash**.

A level 0 character starts with one item and less cash. Higher level characters start with more items and cash.

To get your starting items, go to 2.6.1.

2.6.0.1. Sizes

Item sizes in the Vastlands are measured in abstract units that combine weight and bulk.

1 sack (sk) = 10 stones: a basic cargo unit, about as much as a human.
1 stone (st) = 10 soaps: a significant item, like a saber or spear or shield or shovel. About 7 kilograms.
1 soap (sp) = 25 cash: a small item, like a signal whistle or signet ring or spike. Or a bar of soap (surprisingly useful in the grasslands!).
1 cash (€): a standard unit of currency equal to a laborer's day wages. Named as a nod to ancient Chinese cash (文).

Unless otherwise specified, an item takes up 1 stone of inventory space.

2.6.0.2. Packed and Loose Items

Items can be packed in backpacks, pouches, purses, ammo belts, and other containers. You can draw a box for each pack on the back of your character sheet. Packing items is efficient for transport, but you need at least one action to unpack and ready them for use.

Loose items take up at least one inventory slot each, but a character can use them immediately.

> *Example: A dagger (5 sp) takes up a whole inventory slot (1 st = 10 sp) when carried ready for use. Packed in a bundle, two daggers take up a single inventory slot and are treated as one item.*

Some traits allow more efficient packing or quicker access to items.

2.6.0.3. Dropping Items

A character can quickly drop one item or pack as a free action on their turn, reducing any penalties suffered from encumbrance. A quickly dropped item may break, get damaged, roll away, or otherwise suffer the consequences. The referee decides on a suitable save target.

> *Example: A pair of shoes chucked onto a grassy slope may roll downhill, a sack of stolen glass statuettes dropped on a marble floor may produce a lot of sharp glass caltrops.*

A character taking an action to carefully put down an item or pack avoids any risk of damaging their precious property.

2.6.0.4. Improvising With Items

Items are not just bundles of game mechanics. They improve a character's performance and let them do new things. Use common sense and imagination to figure out how to take advantage of your PC's equipment.

> *Example: Rafts let characters float, climbing gear helps scale surfaces that are impossible to free-climb.*

2.6.0.5. Human Clothes

Baseline humans have evolved to wear clothes. Any garments suitable for a tropical or temperate climate that such a character is wearing take up no inventory slots. You can describe them on the back of the character sheet.

> *Example: boiler suit, ship overalls, field loincloth, civilian sarong.*

Additional sets of clothes, or special garments that provide benefits or modifiers do occupy inventory slots as usual.

> *Example: a corporate suit (1 st) provides status benefits and access to temples of finance, a classical toga (3 st) blocks one arm and marks the wearer as a member of the ruling class in some Decapolitan republics, nomad robes (1 st) provide an armor bonus, very warm clothes (2 st) are useful in the domains of Winterwhite, an environment suit (1 st) may protect against radiation ghosts, etc.*

Characters who are not evolved to wear clothes, such as cat lords, spectrum satraps, some golems, and other strange creatures, do not get a free inventory slot for the garments they wear.

> *Example: a cat lord wearing a cute little jump suit (1 st) and knit cap with foopy antennae (1 st) may not look annoyed, but they can't carry quite as many sacrificial mouse victims as they might wish.*

2.6.1. Select or Roll Starting Items

A 1st level character begins with two items. One is a useful kit related to their background. The other is strange and alien. There are more items in the UVG and other books.

2.6.1.1. One Useful Kit

A kit is a packed bundle of mundane tools that let a character do their job. A settled character can use their kit to make a living.

> You have **a kit for one of your background traits**. Draw a kit box on the back of your character sheet.

The kit measures a whole sack (10 stones) in heft and includes up to 10 individual items. You don't need to choose in advance exactly what is in your character's kit—the items are in a quantum superposition until you define them as you play.

> *Example: Noë has a background as a plumber (don't ask) and starts with a plumber's kit. Noë doesn't list exactly what is in the kit.*

> *As she adventures, she finds produces useful O-rings, allen wrenches, lengths of pipe, and sealing tape from her kit. She lists these in her kit box, leaving space for 6 remaining quantum items.*

The starting kit includes nothing better than a civilian weapon (1d6 damage, see 2.7.6.1. for examples) and no armor. You can buy more weapons and armor with your starting cash (see 4.0.).

The starting kit will leave most characters burdened. Stash it before exploring a dangerous location or entering a fight. A beast of burden may help transport your kit (see 4.5.).

> *Now roll for one strange item overleaf at 2.6.1.2.*

2.6.1.2. One Strange Item
Roll a d50.

1. One black metal vertebra (1 st).
2. Half a white porcelain skull (1 st).
3. Green brick with the light and warmth of a candle (1 st).
4. Pink bottle with a singing spirit (3 sp).
5. Three machine beetles with gem eyes (3 sp).
6. Precious yellow plastic tablet with four truths (1 st).
7. Silver book proclaiming revolution (1 st).
8. Cabochon ruby with a regal hologram inside (1 sp).
9. Intaglio red pearl of a lingish trader (1 sp).
10. Violet bone crystalized in soulfire (1 st).
11. Copper star incised with naughty limericks (5 sp).
12. Four brassy cogs from a soul mill (4 sp).
13. Dusty positronic rat brain in a crystal case (5 sp).
14. Small lavender plant that cannot die (1 st).
15. Translucent dinner plate-sized force disk (1 st).
16. Gray healing lichen culture in ceramic jar (1 st).
17. Manual of the vechs, annotated with scribbles (1 st).
18. Stainless steel thermos of blood wine (1 st).
19. Glass tub of vampire-grade sunscreen (1 st).
20. Platinum necrogoggles that reveal undead (1 st).
21. Small furry brown vome that giggles when petted (1 st).
22. Machine horse in dappled shades of rust (level 2, carry 2).
23. Crystal personality box to create ka-zombies (1 st).
24. Yellow-orange weightless rock—an aerolith (1 st).
25. Blue and white mechanical hand (5 sp).

26. Quartzite tooth of a space worm (1 st).
27. Animate furry chitin kite (1 st).
28. Carmine cactus that secretes drops of blood (1 st).
29. Cogwheel monocle with small pits (1 sp).
30. Seven strands of unbreakable silver wire (7 sp).
31. Citrine soul stone with a third of a hero's soul (1 sp).
32. Gourd fetish with cowrie teeth (1 st).
33. Teal warlock helmet with three white stripes (1 st).
34. Yellow cape of pure steel silk (1 st).
35. Unaging plastic travel cutlery (2 sp).
36. Rainbow unicorn horn (1 st).
37. Grey cube that weighs five times more than lead (1 st).
38. Lime green onion-and-skull cup (1 st).
39. Clear crystal heart of a V.I.L.E. (1 st).
40. Red staff made of fused ancient pistols (1 st).
41. Sentient donkey (level 1, carry 2). Greenish plastic hat (1 st).
42. Liquid metal shapeshifting executioner's blade (2 st).
43. Preserved and revived heart of a beloved (1 st).
44. Vantablack propaganda reduction sunglasses (2 sp).
45. Tempting intelligent gun-wand of porcelain and jade (1 st).
46. Faceless terracotta helmet with no name (1 st).
47. Self-playing zither with seventy tunes (1 st).
48. Ivory set of Zu Complex ignition tables (1 st).
49. Undying replacement organ (1 st).
50. Source-bonded replacement clone seed (1 st).

Exactly what this item does is a mystery. It could turn out to be an item of prophecy, linked to your character's destiny or your community's fortunes. Will you figure out what it does or sell it for some quick cash?

If you sell it to …

... a random merchant, you net €1d6* x 10 (Exploding die! See 3.2.2.2.).
... a knowledgeable patron in a remote location, you net €1d6* x 100.
... a legendary collector of artifacts hidden in a secret, dangerous location found only after a difficult quest, you net €1d6* x 1000.

Now get some starting cash at 2.6.2.

2.6.2. Starting Cash

Many kinds of cash are possible, from the traditional high-end plastic Casino gold piece to the prized ferroceramic puck-and-triangle of the Emerald City or the completely spiritual noöspheric digital cash of the Dream Canopy.

> You have **€100** in physical currency. Enough to live on for a few months, if you are careful and boring. You're not, though.

A level 0 character starts with €50. Higher-level PCs start with an additional €50 per level. That's not much for their level, frankly.

2.6.2.1. What Cash Buys

Cash (€) is an abstraction and does not have to be a coin: it can be a luminous cowrie, a duraplastic chit, or a sky-dragon scale. Precisely how much it buys varies from place to place (and the whim of the referee), but a reasonable baseline is 100 theoretical convertible imperial universal dollars from Finite Earth A.D. 2025. Example purchases:

- €0.1   common meal or ingredient, mass tourist souvenir
- €1   day's food and lodging for two proletarian baseline humans, basic tool, uncommon ingredient, fancy meal
- €10   a day's food and lodging for two mildly-enhanced bourgeois humans, a professional tool, a rare ingredient, fine opera ticket
- €100   day's food and lodging for two betterfolk aesthetically-augmented humans, rare or expert tool, very rare ingredients, basic vehicle, hut, small farm
- €1k   day's food and lodging for two abmortal oligarchs, an uncommon vehicle, a small cottage, a middling farm
- €10k   hour's rock-hitting trip by an imperial executive unit, rare vehicle, comfortable residence, large farm or ranch
- €100k   nearly super-heroic augment, luxurious residence, plantation
- €1m   abmortality, seat on the neo-imperial shadow parliament, modest palace

A character can dream, right? Now the final attributes (2.7.).

2.7. Determine Remaining Attributes

Your character is nearly complete! Just a few final attributes to figure out.

Proceed in order, starting with 2.7.1. Level.

2.7.1. Level

An abstract measure of power.

Start at level 1 and go to level 9.

Monsters and other NPCs range from level 0 to level 17. Some creatures by level to get a sense of scale:

0	rat, wretch, rabbit
1	human, horse, hagbird
2	soldier, snake-jake, river snapper
3	elite rider, king eland, electric hound
4	separatist hero, steppe wolf, sentinel golem
5	biomechanical queen, bloodosaur, broodmaker
6	epic nomad hero, hunter golem, skinchanger
10	bone roc, redmeatwood, house mimic
13	vome autofac, biomechanical catamaran
17	demiurge, void crawler, the Rebuilder

Next, your life score. Proceed to 2.7.2.

2.7.2. Life

Hylospheric persistence, hit points, embodiment? More like narrative resilience and plot armor. A measure of how long you'll stay in action and a resource you spend to use your powers. Burning the candle at both ends and all that.

Start with 8 life at level 1.

PCs gain 4 life per level. Traits may grant more life. NPCs range from 4 life at level 0 to 666 life at level 17.

At 0 life, a character is in trouble but not necessarily dead. Killing requires a conflict with deadly stakes, an accident (or critical success i.e. a natural 20), or an additional killing blow. Even then, death is often not the end.

Next, your hero dice. Go to 2.7.3.

2.7.3. Hero Dice

Six-sided dice (d6) for adjusting rolls and regaining life. Each PC gains one per session and one more every couple of hours. The referee can grant additional hero dice for inspired roleplaying and prosocial behavior like bringing cookies to the game session.

You can **store HD equal to your level**.

Roll hero dice to do two things:

1. Adjust any roll, whether it is a d4 or a d20 or a d100. The adjusted roll counts as a natural roll (see 3.2.2.1.).
2. Regain life equal to the roll. This is always an action.

   Next, go to 2.7.4. to note your saving throw target.

2.7.3.1. More Uses for Hero Dice

Traits and items may provide other uses for hero dice. For example, to modify powers or provide additional effects.

2.7.3.2. Modified Hero Dice

Rare traits can modify the number or type of hero dice.

2.7.4. Save

When nothing but blind luck will save a PC, they roll d20 + ability over their saving roll target (or simply, their save). If they succeed, they are saved.

Your save is 13.

As with other rolls (see 3.2.2.), there are three possible outcomes:

Under 13	Doom. What was, will be. No save.
Exactly 13	Sacrifice. Lose something precious to save.
Over 13	Save. Disaster averted, fortune appeased.

2.7.4.1. Relevant Abilities

3. Endurance applies under duress, in harsh environments, and against diseases or injuries.
4. Aura applies against threats to psychic integrity, spiritual pollution, daemonic possession, and mental injury.

Agility does not provide a save bonus. As soon as a character is aware of a threat, for example a landslide, it is no longer a blind luck situation. They are taking action, using traits and abilities to overcome a threat.

2.7.4.2. Wards

Some Long Ago oldtech artifacts and corrupted modern fantascience trinkets provide a bonus to saving rolls. A ward provides a general luck bonus to all saves or specifies when it applies.

Example: the violet cat egg is an amulet the catlords embed in the necks of their favored grooms. Within their domain, these grooms gain ward +5, receiving a great bonus to their saves. However, outside the Purple Land, this amulet provides no benefits.

2.7.4.3. Saving Traits

Traits can provide a bonus or modify a character's saving roll target.

Next, calculate your attack modifiers (2.7.5.).

2.7. Determine Remaining Attributes

2.7.5. Attacks

When a character attacks a foe, they roll d20 + ability + skill over the foe's defense target number (or simply, the foe's defense score or defense). If they succeed, they deal damage or otherwise impact their foe's existence.

You have four basic attack types:

1. **Melee** - attack with a weapon, like a ghost bone axe or a machete.
   d20 + ability (strength) + skill (if applicable)
2. **Ranged** - attack with a weapon, like a heat rod or a wand pistol.
   d20 + ability (agility) + skill (if applicable)
3. **Oldtech** - attack with an artifact, like a brain-slaved auto-turret.
   d20 + ability (thought) + skill (if applicable)
4. **Fantascience** (also psychemagic) - attack with a power like a mind whip or brain shackle.
   d20 + ability (charisma) + skill (if applicable)

List your modifiers for each type of attack, even if it is 0. This way you will be ready to improvise with whatever tool your PC has to hand.

Ranges and areas of effect are covered in (3.4.7..).

Now proceed to 2.7.6. to calculate the damage your attacks deal.

2.7.6. Damage

When an attack succeeds, it deals damage.

> dXX (item) + ability (if applicable) + bonus (if applicable)

Item descriptions list how much damage they do.

> **Review your items** (2.6.) and note their damage values.

2.7.6.1. Unarmed Damage

If a PC does has no suitable item for a type of attack, they can [almost] always make an unarmed attack.

> Your improvised or unarmed attack always deals at least **1d3 damage**.

Example unarmed attacks:

1. Melee - a punch, a kick, a head butt.
2. Ranged - a thrown clod, rock, or bar of soap (close range).
3. "Oldtech" or other thought attack - a conveniently deployed trick, a subterfuge, a sudden burst of song from a speaker.
4. "Fantascience" or other charisma attack - a terrifying boast, a believable curse, an evil eye, a false incantation.

Traits can modify a character's unarmed damage.

> **Option:** a PC who rolls a natural 13 when making an unarmed attack also deals an equal amount of damage to themselves. Punching armor hurts.

2.7.6.1. Improvised Damage

A PC can improvise a weapon from their environment or other equipment.

Compare an improvised weapon to typical weapons to figure out how much damage you deal. The referee has final say.

Examples of typical and improvised weapons:

1. Small personal weapon (knife, 1d4 damage): a beer stein, throwing pan, oldtech mechanidoll, blast of alien poetry.
2. Civilian weapon (fire axe, 1d6 damage): a chair, fire extinguisher, improvised electric trap, porcelain prince pheromones.
3. Military weapon (lance, 1d8 damage): a parking meter, water cannon, jury-rigged flash-blast mine, feline tele-empathetic mind control.

Traits can modify a character's improvised damage.

Improvised items will often have drawbacks. Fragile items break after landing a blow. Clumsy items penalise attack rolls.

The effects of damage are covered in (3.5.)

Now figure out your defense score in section 2.7.7.

2.7.7. Defense

When a character defends against an attack, foes must overcome their defense target number (simply, defense) to hurt them.

7 + ability (agility) + **bonus** (if skill applies) + **armor**

Characters use a single defense attribute against all kinds of attacks in the physical world, the so-called hylosphere. Some specific attacks may have modifiers against mundane targets (which most PCs are).

Example: Safir squares off against a malevolent radiation ghost. Normally, Safir's defense would be 18 (7 + 3 (agility) + 3 (fighter trait) + 5 (chitin cuirass). Unfortunately, the radiation ghost's gentle touch ignores physical armor, so the target for its attacks is just 13.

2.7.7.1. Armor

Modern equipment to soften blows or ancient machines replacing the body. Armor takes many forms and may give additional modifiers, benefits, penalties and mechanics.

Example: many golem armors increase a character's ability score (usually strength) and give a bonus life score.

2.7.7.2. Other Defenses

Other defenses are possible. For example, when a character's soul-mind duality (ka-ba) travels like a butterfly between the dreams of divers cosmic lords, plumbing the ancient noösphere, spiritual defense guards against injury in this realm as physical defense does in the base material cosmos.

7 + ability (thought) + **bonus** (if skill applies) + **ward**

A spiritual defense may even apply in base reality when one is assailed by noöspheric creatures, such as daemons, nightmares or lucid spells.

By analogy, a social defense could apply in contests of conspicuous consumption, legal intrigue, and reputation assassination.

Add a special defense box on the back of the character sheet as needed.

Next, a quick inventory review at 2.7.8.

2.7.8. Inventory and Burdens

A character's inventory slots are a key game resource. Though a character might want to carry everything, the cruel laws of their synthetic reality forbid it. Every human PC has three basic inventories.

Traits: 7 + ability (thought) slots   *(see 2.3. for more details)*
Items: 7 + ability (strength) slots   *(see 2.6. for more details)*
Burdens: 20 slots

Non-humans may bear more or less.

Example: a cute little cat lord PC has just 2 + ability (strength) item inventory slots. They use a cat groom to carry things for them.

Some traits may expand inventory slots.

2.7.8.1. Pets and Sidekicks

Each of a character's pets and sidekicks occupies a trait or item inventory slot. This represents the character's care and attention.

2.7.8.2. Powers and Spells

Each power or spell occupies a trait or item inventory slot. This represents either a magical anchor or the engraved psycho-physical channels that grant the character access to this unnatural power.

2.7.8.3. Prosthetics and Augments

Each implant or modification occupies a trait or item inventory slot.

2.7.8.4. Afflictions

Curses, diseases, mutations, corruptions and other afflictions also occupy inventory slots. Spiritual and psychological afflictions generally occupy trait slots, while diseases and physical injuries occupy item slots.

2.7.8.5. Burdens

Every occupied slot beyond a character's trait or item inventory limit is a burden. **Each burden imposes a -1 to all rolls**. A character with 20 burdens can no longer take any actions.

> *Example: Onion is carrying his equipment (8 st) and an armoire (10 st). With a strength of 1, he has 8 item slots. The armoire takes up ten burden slots, putting him at a -10 to all rolls.*
>
> *Unwisely, or desperately, he tries to chase off a ligneous skeleton (L1, corken) with a blast of hot plasma from his wand-gun. He might still overcome the penalty with his attack roll (a d20), but he may well deal no damage (the plasma wand-gun deals d12 damage).*
>
> *Still, even a glancing blast from the hot plasma might frighten the ligneous skeleton. After all, cork burns so well, does it not?*

Some dangerous monsters may impose burdens with every successful attack, or even with their mere presence.

Dropping cumbersome items is a quick way to reduce a character's burdens. Removing afflictions is harder, usually requiring rest and care.

2.7.8.6. Additional Inventories

Traits and containers can create new inventories. Players draw these on the back of the character sheet or in a notebook.

> *Now some motivations, perhaps false. Go to 2.8.*

2.8. What Led to This Road?

Why leave the lovely cement greatcoat of tradition and civilization behind? Why abandon the embrace of hierarchy and rigor of etiquette? Why head out into the waste lands, the strange lands, the Vastlands?

1.   Sent by a grim corporation.
2.   Glory, like in the great romantic novels.
3.   Blood memories of a great patrimony.
4.   Tracking a missing ledger.
5.   Seeking new converts.
6.   Rumors of a fabulous autofac.
7.   Found clue to abmortality.
8.   Ordered by an ominous disembodied voice.
9.   Map to an unclaimed aerolith.
10. Soul of loved one stolen by a horror.
11. Stories of a secret healing vegetable.
12. Portents of a deadly machine demon.
13. Paintings of a gorgeous cyan seaside.
14. Pursued by loving enemies.
15. Grandmother's lost autowagon.
16. Sibling was stripped into a ba-zombie.
17. Master boneworker sent an invitation.
18. Delivering a letter of inheritance to a count.
19. Cure for a plague that killed your child.
20. Biomantic bible in a lost library.
21. Repaying debts to the butcher bank.
22. Visions of a world ending in falling fire.
23. Bearing a priceless pearl for a princess.
24. Tracking a vile intruder from the void.
25. Mind entwined with a dying sentience.

26. Nightly dreams of a lost world.
27. Seeking a prosthetic body for mother.
28. Ordered by the clan quest golem.
29. Keeping tabs on a rival explorer.
30. Exploring clues to the great forgetting.
31. Possessed by a demon in childhood.
32. Seeking allies for a revolution.
33. Looking for new lands for lost tribe.
34. Compulsion after meeting a seer.
35. Sheer industrial greed.
36. Determined to end a crippling disease.
37. Found the testament of a dead god.
38. Pursued by furies and a dark fate.
39. Visions of glory and rebirth.
40. Queer unease after reading a metal book.
41. Experience of a tragic vomish outbreak.
42. Their aged clone whispered prophecies.
43. Hallucinatory star, guiding, leading West.
44. Songs in the blood of a Flesh God scion.
45. Mystic manual talked of a divine workshop.
46. Post-mortal messenger gave a portal key.
47. Bone-deep ennui at an unchanging order.
48. Dying grandparent's oath to a lacquer queen.
49. Promise to take a friend's ashes to the last sea.
50. Dream quest order to destroy an invisible ring.

You're nearly done. Learn how to level up and advance at 2.9.

2.9. Levelling Up and Advancement

PCs start their careers at level 1, because they are special.

Your PC **starts with 300 invested experience**.

If you want to start immediately, go to the final checklist (2.10.). You can review how to invest experience and change character(s) later.

2.9.1. Earning Experience

As characters accomplish adventures, visit new places, see strange sights, and overcome harrowing challenges, they earn experience. Sources of experience include:

a. Novelties. When you explore, braving danger to see something new. Earn 1d6 x 10 xp per discovery or experience.
b. Quests. When your PC makes progress on some terrible quest. Earn 1d6 x 100 xp per session's worth of progress.
c. At the referee's pleasure. When you do something extraordinary, act in character, help the other players, and generally make the session memorable and fun. 1d6 x 10 per prosocial deed.
d. Session attendance. At the end of a session, earn 500 xp for showing up and being a good egg.

The referee can set other sources of experience. For example:

e. Scavengers. Earn 1 xp per €1 of treasure recovered from an ancient ruin.
6. Picaresque heroes. Earn 1d6 x 100 xp after spending that much cash carousing for a week and risking strange setbacks.

2.9.2. Investing Experience

All experience earned is banked until you decide to invest it to level up your character(s), their pets and sidekicks, or their hallmarks. Higher levels require more experience.

Xp	Level	Life (human PCs)
0	0	4
300	1	8
750	2	12
1,500	3	16
3,000	4	20
6,000	5	24
12,500	6	28
25,000	7	32
50,000	8	36
99,999	9	40

2.9.2.1. Investing in the PC(s)

With every new level, a PC chooses one:

1. Gain a new trait of their choice
2. Improve a trait of their choice (skilled +3 → expert +6 → master +9)
3. Increase an ability score by 1

Each level the PC also gains 4 life and 1 hero die.

2.9.2.2. Investing in Pets and Sidekicks

Levelling up secondary characters is exactly the same as with PCs.

> After investing in a pet or sidekick, draw a box to track their experience, traits, and other attributes.

Pets and sidekicks start as level 0 characters unless specified otherwise.

2.9.2.3. Investing in Hallmarks

Anything that belongs to a PC can become their hallmark. This might be a vehicle, a sword, a power or something more unusual. Heroism rubs off on belongings. A PC can own a number of hallmarks equal to their level.

All hallmarks start as level 0 items unless specified otherwise.

Levelling up hallmarks costs as much xp as with any character.

Each level, a hallmark gains one of the following:

1. a +1 bonus to every damage die rolled (so 2d4 becomes 2d4+2)
2. a +1 defense bonus (for example, a vehicle or shield)
3. a new trait, power or complication (for example, an added resistance)

For more hallmark traits see Hallmark Items (4.10.).

2.9.2.3. [Option] Hammerspace Hallmarks

Besides their other benefits, hallmarks do not occupy ordinary inventory slots. Draw a hallmark box on the back of your character sheet with one slot for each of your character's levels.

2.9.3. Growing Through Play

Player goals for their character's development and growth provide excellent fuel for the referee to build tailored quests and adventures. The referee may, of course, provide some twists and turns.

Noë dreams of becoming a terrible and powerful wizard to prove to her mother that she is not a failure.

The referee provides rumors of an electrical brain holding albums of great power, and Noë excitedly pursues them. However, the more she learns of the brain named Ata'ari, the clearer it becomes that the price of ultimate mastery is the destruction of her physical human body.

Will she go this far? Or will she take some of her knowledge and pawn off the rest to fuel further escapades?

2.9.3.1. Gaining New Traits

Characters can also gain traits through play. Some may be acquired with careful study, others from strange ancient powers. In both cases, becoming skilled (or an expert or master) requires more work.

1. Write down the new trait in a suitable inventory slot.
2. Figure out how many people and/or other sources you must study and absorb to acquire the skill (usually three to become skilled).
3. Each mentor, library, knowledge stone, or what have you is at a different location. Some sources may be found as treasures in the course of adventuring.
4. When you find a source, absorb its essence over one week of focused study (or meditation or bonding or mind surgery), then roll thought to beat a target of 11 (a moderate thought roll). If you fail, you can try again after a further week of study. If you fail a second time, this teacher is not suitable for you.
5. After tallying three successes, your PC is skilled in the new trait.

Progressing from skilled to expert requires 4–6 successes, from expertise to mastery 5–9 successes. Some traits may require more successes.

Players can invent new traits for their PCs to learn based on their experiences during play. The referee then peppers sites and mentor NPCs around the map, creating a personalized quest.

> *Onion has observed the porcelain princes' masterful crafting of masks and faces, and wishes to become a facemaker, so he could create new faces for himself and pass as other people with ease.*

> *The referee agrees this could be a worthy trait. The first place to start learning about masks as faces would obviously be the Porcelain Citadel. This is enough of a hook for the player to write down the facemaker trait with space for three tallies.*

> *It will take Onion at least 3 weeks of travel to reach the Porcelain Citadel, then find a mentor, then another week of travel. Plenty of time to seed clues for other locations to visit and study in future sessions.*

2.9.3.2. Increasing Ability Scores

Traits, items, mutations, oldtech upgrades, and fantascience boons may permanently increase characters' ability scores. Such artifacts make great treasures to motivate character quests.

2.9.4. Changing With Adversity

Characters do not only become stronger. Through age, injury, and magitechnical mishap they may acquire burdens and traits that weaken and wear them down.

The referee should be clear with players before their PCs take a course of action that may result in permanent injury. Permanent changes should be the result of risks freely taken by the player. A referee may provide quests to stave off a character's inevitable decline and demise.

Alternatively, a player may decide to retire their character and promote a sidekick or create a new character. A fair option is to give the new character fewer xp than the lowest-level character or the highest-level available sidekick (whichever is less).

> *Now to review your new character (2.10.).*

2.10. Final Check and Summary

Your starting human PC should have the following attributes.

a. One or more (1+) names. (2.1.)
b. Six (6) ability scores ranging from 0 to 5. (2.2.)
c. Three (3) traits that may provide a +3 bonus to rolls (if skilled) or +6 (if expert). Including at least one (1) background trait and at least one (1) path trait. (2.3. to 2.5.)
d. One (1) kit of quantum gear associated with their job. (2.6.1.1.)
e. One (1) strange item. (2.6.1.2.)
f. One hundred (100) cash. (2.6.2.)
g. One (1) level. (2.7.1.)
h. Eight or more (8+) life. (2.7.2.)
i. One (1) hero die. (2.7.3.)
j. A save target, usually 13. (2.7.4.)
k. Four (4) types of attack with a bonus to rolls ranging from 0 to +11 (or so) and associated damage dice. (2.7.5. and 2.7.6.)
l. At least one (1+) defense score ranging from 7 up. (2.7.7.)
m. At least three (3+) inventories for traits (from 7 to 12), items (7 to 12), and burdens (20). (2.7.8.)
n. At least one (1+) reason for going a-venturing. (2.8.)
o. Three hundred (300) invested experience. (2.9.)

A non-human PC, such as a cat or a golem, may start with other attributes.

You are ready. Your PC stands at the edge of the civilized world, at the start of the Vast, where the thrum of history has not quite stopped. It is morning and the cat coffee is nearly brewed. Share a thought with your fellow travelers, for soon the referee will pitch you headlong into turmoil and temptation, into the epic of adventure.

As you travel and share stories over campfires, you may reveal more of your PC's backstory. Till then, this is enough. Start.

We all live in a golden age.
Everyone tells us so.
This is the best of all possible worlds.
Everyone tells us so.
"I believe in overkill," whispers the silver ship.

—*Golden Disc of Safranj*, Deadworld Lemon Delirium, Visions II (2031)

3. RULES & MECHANICS

In the UVG, the rules are summarized with a single page. In the Eternal Return Key they are given more pages. Here, they are given examples, too.

In this chapter, we'll cover the synthetic dream machine rules and mechanics for how characters interact with the world.

core mechanics: dialogue, dice, concepts (3.2.)
action mechanics: combining abilities and skills, doing stuff (3.3.)
conflict mechanics: fights, disagreements, movement, time (3.4.)
damage, defeat, death: the consequences of failure (3.5.)
rest & recovery: getting back into play (3.6.)

3.1. System Introduction

The synthetic dream machine (SDM) system is a fast and loose OSR system. It assumes familiarity with other traditional roleplaying games, like the original game with 20-sided dice, OSE, Mothership, ItO, Knave, Cairn, etc.

3.1.1. Prerequisites

1. A group of friends or friendly players. One takes the role of referee (or GM), the others play characters (PCs) in the game.
2. Someone who has skimmed this book.
3. The UVG book, another adventure, or one written by the referee.
4. Classic polyhedral dice (d20, d12, d10, d8, d6, d4) or a dice-roller app.
5. Record-keeping tools (clay tablet, stylus, paper, pen, computer, etc.).

3.1.2. Dice Notation

Dice are dXX, where XX represents the number of faces. Also:

- Natural Roll - The number shown on the dice, without any modifiers.
- Exploding Dice - On its highest natural roll, roll this die again and add the result. Keep rolling when the highest face shows. D20s always explode. Other exploding dice are marked with an asterisk (d6*).

3.2. Core Mechanics

The mechanics keep the machine alive.

3.2.1. The Dialogue

The most basic of all mechanics is the conversation between the referee and the other players.

1. The referee describes the situation facing the PCs.
2. The players say what their characters do.
3. The referee describes the outcome.
4. The players say what their characters do now.
5. Et cetera.

3.2.2. The Roll

When a PC wants to try something risky, the referee describes the risk and offers a target number. If the player proceeds, they roll d20 + ability (if applicable) + skill (if applicable) to exceed the target number.

Typical target numbers are:

3	Trivial, casual, banal
7	Easy, simple, routine
11	Mediocre, moderate, average, medium, [null]
15	Hard, challenging, tasking
19	Very hard, confounding, risky

Risks may include:

Resources wasted (money, time, fuel, etc.).
Gear lost or damaged.
Enemies alerted or advantaged.
Injury (life or ability score damage, burdens).
Death.

Trivial (and even easy) targets can be skipped in most situations. However, when failure carries a substantial risk, even a trivial target can build tension.

Noë runs from the slow-moving ba-zombies, jumps into the autogolem, and makes to roar away.

Cat interrupts her and asks for a trivial roll, lest she fumbles the keys.

Noë, the nimble wizard, smirks and rolls … a natural 1. The keys fall to the bottom of the autogolem and the ba-zombies draw closer.

Cat offers a dilemma, "Make sure all the doors are locked, but get surrounded; or a moderate agility roll to grab the keys and rev the engine before one of the decayed ex-humans gets in through the passenger side door."

Noë picks up the fateful die.

3.2.2.1. Magic Numbers
Some natural rolls on the d20 are special.

    1   Fail and equipment notched. Mark.
            Mark again, it is broken.
   13   Only one ammo or power unit left. Mark. One use left.
  20   Always succeed. Double effect or additional stunt (trip, trick, trap),
           then roll a second time. Yea, the d20 always explodes.

Safir runs in pursuit of the bolted pack mule. Cat rules this a hard test of endurance. Safir is confident this will work out.

The fighter rolls 13. With an endurance of 4 and a survival skill adding 3 more, that's a 20. More than enough to easily catch the mule. However, the 13 …

Cat suggests that the chase has depleted Safir's archaic golem armor, leaving it with enough juice for just one more fight. Safir blanches, but cannot come up with anything else that might have been depleted in the chase and agrees.

3.2.2.2. Exploding Dice
Some dice explode. They are marked with an asterisk.

When you roll the exploding die's highest face, roll again and add the results together. Keep rolling as long as the die keeps showing its highest face.

Onion goes to a merchant to sell the liquid metal shapeshifting executioner's blade his quick fingers 'inherited' from the sad space knight. Cat rules this is a random merchant, who is willing to pay €1d6* x 10 for the square blade.

Onion rolls a 6. The die explodes and Onion rolls again. A 5. The merchant would offer €110 for the blade.

The cunning Onion grins and spends a hero die, bumping the second roll to 6 and exploding it again. How long can the die keep exploding? Depends on Onion's luck and hero dice …

3.2.2.3. Bonus and Penalty

The referee assigns a bonus [+] or penalty [-] when circumstances favor or hinder a PC.

+1/-1   a tiny bonus or penalty
+6/-6   a rather large bonus or penalty
+1d6/-1d6 a pretty random bonus or penalty
roll 2 dice ... and take the better or worse

Traits, items, events, burdens, and more also give [+] or [-]. The referee decides when and how different bonuses and penalties combine.

> **Option:** Limit modifiers to a d20 roll to no more than +/-13. When modifiers would exceed 13, the referee may rule an automatic success (or failure), or assign an advantage or disadvantage die to the roll.

3.2.2.4. Roll on Target - Force a Situation

When a player rolls precisely on target, they can sacrifice something to succeed. The referee may suggest a sacrifice, including:

- Extra ammo, charges, or other resources.
- Damage or destroy the equipment used.
- Spend life or suffer a burden due to exertion.
- Alert the enemies or benefit them on their turn.
- Hurt an ally or put them in a dangerous situation.

Onion whips out his electric pistol wand and fires off a volley at the onrushing firewater-maddened rabbit clansman. He rolls a 10, adds his agility (4) and skill with wands (3) for a total of 17.

Precisely the same as the rabbit clansman's physical defense score. Cat suggests Onion can hit the swift clansman if he discharges the whole omnibattery. Onion agrees and rolls for damage …

3.2.2.4. Suitable and Unsuitable Equipment

Under pressure, the referee can impose a penalty on characters without suitable equipment for tasks they are otherwise skilled at. Conversely, having precisely the right equipment can provide a bonus. The referee makes the final decision.

> *Example: Onion sidles up to a smart door and prepares to hack it. With a start, he realizes it is a White City brand security door—the same as his 'borrowed' security root kit.*

> *Cat agrees to let him roll 2 dice and take the better result, since he has the perfect tools for this hacking job.*

3.2.2.5. Automatic Success With Suitable Equipment

A character with suitable equipment and few time constraints can succeed at tasks of an ordinary difficulty without rolling.

The party comes upon a swift, turbid stream. Nearby, an old rowboat is tied to a tree stump. Noë wants to use it to row across.

Cat decides the swift stream is not exactly easy to cross, but if the PCs take their time they should have no trouble. She suggests to Noë that she can row across without rolling if she spends two turns.

Noë ponders. More time passing gives Cat more opportunities to roll for random encounters and depleting resources, but the risk of a bad roll and tumbling into the water ... she decides to cross carefully.

3.2.2.6. Roll When It Counts
With long duration activities, only roll when it counts.

These are things like hiding, moving stealthily, gossipping politely, participating in society dance, standing guard over a prisoner all night, etc.

Onion sets an ambush for the moss-covered elf spawn. He covers himself in cool mud and bark to hide from the elf spawn's infrared vision and prepares a swinging spiked log trap to take out the deadly hunter. Then he waits.

Cat does not ask for a hide roll from Onion yet. Instead, she waits to see if and when the elf spawn enters the vicinity.

"First hour. No spawn," says Cat, rolling encounters, "Second hour. No spawn. Third hour. No spawn. You feel the mud drying, your concealment must be weakening. Do you take the risk of breaking cover and reapplying it, or stay hidden? If you stay hidden, the roll will be harder, but there's no chance of the elf spawn catching you unawares."

Onion stays still and hidden.

"Fourth hour. The spawn pads into view, silent as a smilodon. Roll to see how well you've hidden yourself. Its infrared eyes glow yellow in the night. It's a pretty hard roll now. 17, not 15 like before."

Onion's player whispers a ritual prayer over the d20 and rolls. With +7 from agility and skill, this calls for every bit of dice magic ...

11. Plus seven, it's 18. The concealment worked.

Onion releases the spiked log and yells. The moss-covered elf spawn looks at Onion, double jaws working hungrily. It does not see the spiked log swinging swiftly from behind.

The surprised spawn takes a log into the back and Onion rolls 1d20 for damage.

3.2.2.7. Group Roll

When the whole group is trying to accomplish something risky, a random PC rolls for the whole group.

The party decides to quietly sneak through the Craquelure Queen's crypt to reach the ge-yao golem and access its sleeping mind. The security golems look dead, but one can never tell with this Vile oldtech.

Cat judges this a hard roll. She rolls a die to decide which PC should roll and it falls on Safir, the fighter.

Safir looks uncomfortable in its archaic golem armor. That powered contraption is shouting for a hefty penalty. A classic disadvantage, two dice and pick the worse result.

Safir rolls 20 and ... 2. Even after adding its skill (3) and agility (3), the bluelander fighter's roll is a sadly lacking 8. The party blunders.

Cat asks what happened and Safir mumbles about a vase. Cat nods and elaborates how the party mistook a stack of celadon pots for a plinth and knocked it over, awakening ...

3.2.2.8. The Dice Oracle

When a player, including a referee, does not know what might happen in a situation, and there is little risk, rolling dice on a table gives a working answer. This table is a useful stop-gap when no suitable table to hand:

1–3   Common or expected outcome (50% odds)
4–5   Uncommon or unusual outcome (~35% odds)
6   Rare or exceptional outcome (~15% odds)

Example: The caravan pulls up at a gas house near Three Sticks Lake. Noë's player wonders what the weather is like.

Cat, the referee, decides to consult the dice oracle and rolls a die six-sided. The result is a 5: uncommon. She ponders a moment. It's autumn and the area has a continental climate, so the usual weather is cool. She decides it is a gloriously warm indian summer.

The referee can set up oracle die tables to suit the the odds they want. 2d6 offers a bell curve, 1d10 offers more options, etc. Most random tables in the UVG work as oracles. Another example follows.

3.2.2.9. The Skilled Dice Oracle

When a PC asks questions and their skill or ability would play a factor, roll d20 + modifier on a table such as this:

3 or less	Nay and woe!
4 to 7	Nay
8 to 13	Perhaps, for a price
14 to 19	Yea
20+	Yea and more!

Example: Onion wonders if there is a group of rubes in Umber who'd be willing to play Sunder Mister Shield or Spin the Golem's Head. Cat asks Onion to roll with charisma or thought to see what he sniffs out.

Onion rolls a 7. His charisma is 5. Cat reads the skilled dice oracle and tells Onion that perhaps he could find some gamblers, but there would be a price. A week's supplies as a buy-in.

Onion casually offers Noë's supplies as the price of his gambling 'investigation'.

3.3. Action Mechanics - Ability and Skill

The PCs can try to do anything that makes sense in their situation. They are not limited to the abilities and traits and items listed on their character sheets. A PC's character sheet represents the resources they bring with them to the situation. Their local environment may offer other resources.

After crawling through a purification-era storm sewer, our heroes find themselves in a hole with a skylight far above. The path forward looks blocked, the ground covered in windblown dirt.

Reviewing their equipment, they find they have rope, pitons, and a geologist's hammer. This could help them climb out.

Noë decides to take the time to carefully search the walls of the hole for any clues. Cat notes this will take about ten minutes and asks the other players if they want to do anything as well. Onion decides to scour the dirt for anything valuable, while Safir resigns itself to hammering in pitons and broadening handholds to climb out.

Cat rolls for random encounters (since time passed and the hammering was noisy), but no atomic remnants come to check on our heroes. Cat then asks Noë and Onion for skilled oracle rolls using their thought abilities to see if they find anything useful. She has quietly decided that a roll of 14–19 will find some marginally useful debris, while 20+ will find actual useful equipment secreted here long ago.

Onion rolls 7+3, a 10. Nothing in the dirt. Noë, however, rolls 16+5. A 21. Cat describes how Noë's careful probing of the walls finds a cabinet obscured by rust and drip stone. A few strikes with the hammer opens it, revealing a handwheel labelled "ladder" in White City pictographs. Safir's strength and the magnificent build quality of the purification era turn the handwheel and the corroded remnants of hand and footholds emerge from the wall. Not an excellent ladder, but it makes the ascent easier.

3.3.1. Possible Approaches

The referee presents a challenge. The PCs choose their approach. The referee then gives clear feedback on the costs and odds of a chosen course of action. Actions usually fall into one of five categories.

3.3.1.1. Impossible

If a roll is impossible without a certain skill (or even with a skill), the referee may **disallow any roll**. Characters are not utter fools and the referee should advise the players that they need a different idea, possibly even suggesting an unimaginative and costly alternative.

> *Noë thinks her ability to speak with crabs might let her sway an eight-legged vomish abomination. Just because it has eight legs, doesn't mean it was ever a crab; indeed, this abomination used to be four people. Cat makes this clear and suggests running away instead.*

> *Example 2: Onion argues that he could convince a Cat Lord to give him its cute fluffy pants. Since these are an integral part of the catlord's aura of cuteness and winter resistence, the referee decides it is impossible to convince the catlord to give up the fluffy polkadot wonderpants. The ref further implies that badgering the catlord for its pants may cause it to 'misuse' its tele-empathetic prowess.*

> *Onion accepts that words will not succeed and begins to plot how to steal the wonderpants while the little catlord takes its milk bath.*

3.3.1.2. Pure Luck

The course of action leaves no room for skill or natural ability. The character **rolls a bare d20**.

> *For example, Onion spending a night on a casino's one-armed bandit. There is no skill involved here.*

3.3.1.3. Natural Ability Alone.

When skill isn't a factor, or a character lacks any suitable skill. The character **rolls d20 + ability**.

Safir wants to stoically endure a biomechanical upgrade, however it lacks the biofeedback skills of a cogflower accountant monk required for such pain resistance. Still, Safir adds endurance to their roll: d20+4.

3.3.1.4. Skill and Ability.

Players will aim for this situation, since it gives the best odds. The character **rolls d20 + ability + skill**.

Onion is trying to maneuver a bulky regeneration pod holding Noë's plasma-burned body into a storm shelter. He benefits from his strength (+1) as well as his background (+3) as a debt collector, where he had to efficiently dispossess criminal debtors of their furniture to better pay back their kindly loan-shark creditors. Safir looks on unimpressed.

3.3.1.5. Sure Thing

The outcome is certain and a roll is a waste of time. The referee suggests an outcome; if the player accepts, there is **no roll required** and play moves on. If the player wants an even better outcome, the referee proposes a risk and lets the player decide to roll or not.

Noë wants to impress a dirt farmer with her neon wizardry. Cat rules that the farmer has never seen electricity before and it's a sure thing.

Noë asks if she could use her display of power convince the farmer to part with their mule. Cat snorts and says that will be very hard and that if Noë fails, the farmer will run back to the village shouting about a dangerous witch.

Visions of torches and pitchforks in mind, Noë sticks to a positively impressed dirt farmer who will offer some local information, but keep their beloved mule. The mule's name is Pringles (L1, dapper) and it loves turnips.

3.3.2. Relevant Abilities

Common sense usually dictates which abilities apply and which don't. Strength helps with lifting heavy objects, agility with dodging boulders, endurance with long marches.

3.3.2.1. Multiple Abilities Apply

Sometimes multiple abilities apply. PCs can choose which ability to use.

Safir looks at a rough slope. It's a climb, but not particularly hard. Cat agrees that both strength and agility could apply, so Safir opts for its higher strength. Using its synthetic musculature, the bluelander hauls itself up with brutal efficiency.

The referee may apply penalties or bonuses to a particular ability.

3.3.2.2. Specific Abilities

Some situations prescribe specific abilities.

For example, in combat, melee attacks use strength, ranged attacks use agility, oldtech uses thought, and fantascience uses charisma.

Traits may also describe the specific abilities they use.

3.3.2.3. Alternate Abilities

Traits or items may allow alternate abilities in specific situations.

An intuitive sword lets a character use aura to make melee attacks. A sentient oldtech mortar lets a character use charisma to make long-range attacks. A mind-interfaced autogolem lets a character drive with charisma instead of agility.

3.3.1.1. Missing Skill

When the PC lacks a required trait for a task, the referee assigns a penalty as they see fit.

Safir is trying to land a gyrocopter while being shot at by savages in souped-up autogolems. Cat rules that Safir's background as a caravaneer is a trait that warrants some general familiarity with vehicle controls, but hardly enough to give a bonus to complicated maneuvers with a flyer. Cat disallows any skill bonus and asks Safir to roll two dice and take the worse result. A harsh penalty, but fair.

Safir rolls a 2 and a 17, and crashes the gyrocopter into a sour water distiller. Oops.

3.4. Conflict Mechanics - Attack and Defend

When words have had their day, the struggle begins. This may be a fight with plasma machetes and ghostbreaker guns, but it can also be more abstract.

Since conflicts are risky for the PCs, their procedure is more defined than most other game mechanics.

1. The referee outlines dangers before a conflict breaks out.
2. Conflicts are rarely inevitable. Often, reaction rolls determine how NPCs react.
3. Conflicts unfold in rounds. Each round, the sides roll initiative to determine who goes first. The sides then take turns to act.
4. After a few rounds, one side or another will usually try to flee, retreat or surrender — either because of a morale roll (the opponents) or the players' decision (the party).
5. The winning side may get one final shot.
6. The conflict ends and they survey the spoils of their victory.

If the PCs are not involved directly in a conflict, the referee can simply consult the Dice Oracle (3.2.2.5.) and narrate the results.

Our heroes are walking carefully through the growth at the edge of the Limbback Wood. Cat rolls an encounter between a posse of vampire knights and a group of feral false humans—falschers. She calls for a stealth roll, and Onion draws the rolling straw. Lucky for the party, the sneaky Onion rolls 17 + 4 (agility) + 3 (skilled). 24. Neither side has seen our heroes.

Cat narrates how the vampire knights open up on the falschers with their electric lances, felling a handful of the soulless automatons and sending the other human-like creatures running about in panic.

Noë, Onion, and Safir see how the wind is blowing. They stay hidden.

Cat shrugs and rolls the oracle dice to see what happens. She expects the knights to prevail, but there's always a chance. The d6 flies through the air and …

3.4.1. Before the Conflict

In the vast majority of situations, the referee ensures the players know when their characters face a potential conflict. The referee also clarifies the possible stakes: death, dishonor, robbery, capture, etc.

3.4.1.1. Dangerous Environment

The referee clearly communicates when the characters have entered a high-threat environment, whether this is a dungeon, a war zone, or an abandoned warp factory.

> *Cat narrates, "After a week's relatively uneventful travel through the Burnt Umber you have now come to the Chitin Woods, where the feral biomantic experiments of the Planter Lords still hold sway. Your hackles rise and you can almost feel the alien, pain-ridden eyes on you from the shadows of the strange forest of organisms that seem to have been bred from a nightmare half crustacean and half fungus or tree. You are aware that foes and dangerous creatures could spring from the undergrowth at any time. How do you proceed?"*

3.4.1.2. Dangerous NPCs

The referee clearly communicates when the characters encounter a creature or person who could be a threat if they become hostile.

> *Cat narrates, "The bulky enforcers of the Piebald Paw swagger into the bathhouse. Their chitin armor is grown to fit and their blasters are polished and maintained. A fight with them could be deadly. Other patrons quietly make themselves scarce. If these armored grooms find out that you had anything to do with the Wicked Turnip job, you could be in trouble."*

3.4.2. Reaction - An Oracle of Behavior

Sometimes, it is unclear how a group of NPCs should react to the player characters. This is particularly often the case with random encounters while traveling. In such a circumstance, the referee's best friend is the reaction roll.

> A **random PC rolls 2d6 + cha** to see how the NPCs behave. If the PC wants to provoke a conflict, they may subtract their charisma from the reaction roll instead.

Nice, manipulative people get into fewer unchosen fights.

Under 2	They come at you, like raving agents of cosmic corruption.
2	Aggressive, hostile. They attack, given half a chance.
3–5	Thanks, they hate you.
6–8	Unsure, waffling, complicated, suspicious.
9–11	Polite, understanding, sympathetic.
12	Friendly, interested. They'll help, given half a chance.
Over 12	They insist on helping, even if you don't need help. Rude to say no, but they will waste your … Oh, dear. Cup of tea?

Some traits may modify reaction rolls. The referee may apply penalties or bonuses depending on the PCs' appearance and behavior.

3.4.2.1. Flee & Freeze & Fawn

Most NPCs are not mindless abominations out for bile and blood. People and creatures who feel threatened by the PCs may flee instead of attacking. Creatures that feel particularly overpowered may cower in terror, beg for mercy, or offer to serve their new tyrants.

3.4.3. Rounds - Time Enough

When a conflict breaks out, play proceeds in rounds.

The length of a round is cinematic, not precise. It's long enough to do something meaningful. In a duel, a round might last mere seconds, with submarines chasing each other, it might last hours.

1. A round begins with the sides rolling initiative: who acts first.
2. Then, the side that won initiative acts.
3. Next, the side that lost initiative acts.
4. If one side suffered badly this round, the referee may decide they need to roll morale.
5. Then, the round ends.

3.4.4. Initiative

Each side rolls initiative every round. For the players, a random PC rolls every round. High roll goes first.

d6 + agility

The players decide their characters' turn order when their side acts.

3.4.3.1. Chaos Reigns

When initiative rolls are tied, chaos reigns and everything happens at once. The PCs and their opponents take their turns, but damage and afflictions only take effect at the end of the round.

This is how two swellswords stab one another right dead and proper.

3.4.5. Turn

Each round, each character gets a turn when their side acts.

On their turn they **do something**.

Characters need to be aware of where they are, what locations or creatures they can reach, and what they can target.

Traits and items can give additional or special turn actions.

3.4.6. Action

On their turn, a character can do nearly anything the player comes up with. The referee adjudicates whether it requires any die rolls and whether bonuses or penalties are called for.

> Most turns, a character does some reasonable combination of **movement** through space **and interaction** with the environment and other characters.

This may mean walking over to an enemy and giving them a solid what for. Or any of a number of other things:

> *Climbing a ladder, disarming a bomb, picking a lock, resuscitating a fallen comrade, planting a secret message, inflating a balloon, filling a gas tank, scrawling a warning. And, yes, diving from a doorway to the cover of a bulky sofa while firing a volley from two fully automatic ancient* pulii pacificatores.

The following actions are ideas for things characters *could* do in a conflict and how to adjudicate some situations.

3.4.6.1. Movement [Actions]

You're mostly moving around, maybe doing something else not too involved, like unholstering a carbine, reloading a carbine, or wondering whether you left your stove on when you left your house this morning to explore the sewers.

- Disengage. Carefully, guarding against counterattacks, you back away from close combat. You move nearby, just out of reach.
- Flee. Carelessly, you turn your back on your melee opponent and head far away. Your foe gets a free attack. Probably with a bonus. Foes with guns may also get free attacks. Beware.
- Move. You move nearby. Right there. No sweat, just a nice easy walk. You could combine this with a weapon readied to catch foes doing funny stuff.
- Sprint. You move somewhere further away, over there. Just as fast as you can. Look out, you might trip on some obstacles and if there are enemies about, they may get a free attack.
- Charge. You rush a nearby creature, getting a bonus to your attack. Attacks against you also get a bonus until your next turn.
- Swing on Chandelier. Or other swashbuckling affair. Lovely use of the environment. Roll agility. Success: get a bonus with your next action (probably an attack you're combining with the swing). Failure: your foe gets a reaction attack with a bonus or you're put into a humorously compromised position.
- Climb a Ladder. Depending on ladder length, that's probably the only thing you'll reasonably do this turn.
- Drive. Or direct a riding ostrich. Steering and not crashing.

3.4.6.2. Attack Actions

Attacks are actions taken to directly damage your foes.

Section 2.7.5. (Attacks) mentions four types of attacks: melee, ranged, oldtech, and fantascience. Other types are possible. Traits and gear can unlock attacks with special effects, bonuses against certain kinds of targets, in certain environments, or from a character's abilities.

- Attack. An adjacent foe with a melee weapon, or a more distant enemy with a suitable ranged weapon.
- Skirmish. You hop from behind cover, get off a round, and hop back. The mobility isn't great, but cover protects.
- Careless Attack. Attack with no regard for your safety. Get a bonus on your attack, but if your enemy survives they get a free counterattack.
- Ready Attack. Prepare to counterattack if a foe comes in range. If that happens, your attack resolves before your enemy's. If it doesn't come in range, your attack is wasted. The referee can use oracle dice to decide what enemies do, to keep things fair.
- Suppressing Fire. Lay down arrows, bullets, or maser blasts, imposing a penalty on your foes' rolls.
- Furious Attacks. Roar as you unload your magazine into the monstrous rabbit of Blaargh. Spend your turn hacking away like a human pos-sessed. No moving, no tactics, and your foes get a bonus against you on their turn. But you attack twice.

3.4.6.3. Tactical and Support Actions

- Take Cover. You dive behind suitable terrain. Ranged attacks against you suffer a penalty.
- Hide. Make yourself discreet, so you can't be targeted. Requires suitable cover or camouflage gear and a successful agility or thought roll.
- Sneak Away. If enemies can't see you, you can move to a different location and surprise them. Or flee without getting attacked.
- Reload. Some complicated or big weapons need a full action to reload.
- Grab On. Grab hold of a target. Probably requires a strength or agility roll. It can't move away without dragging you along.
- Hang On. A kaiju lumbering away? Roll endurance or agility to hang on.
- Hold Down. Smaller? Make a strength roll to pin down a grabbed target. A pinned creature can't move or attack anyone except you.
- Help Hold. Rush in to help an ally hold down a pinned target. It suffers a penalty to breaking loose.
- Shake Off. Attack an enemy that has grabbed or pinned you.
- Defend. Turtle down and don't attack this round. Attacks against you suffer a penalty.
- Protect. Bat away blows against a target. Attacks against it are rolled with a penalty.
- Drag Away an Ally. Get your friend to safety. If they are conscious, they might struggle, forcing a strength roll.

3.4.6.4. Other Actions

- Use Power. Also sometimes known as casting a spell.
- Control Power. Not all powers are fire-and-forget affairs. Some, such as *Waxni's Magic Cruise Missile*, require active control.
- Chug Potion. You drink a potion. Or apply an ointment. Or slap on a healing parasite.
- Communication. Command a golem, convey a complicated plan, or check instructions in the nöospheric post you have received.
- Swap Tools. Carefully stow the gear you're using and ready something else. You can rush it: toss your current gear to the ground, pull out a hidden pistol, and use it with a penalty.
- Pick a Peck of Pickled Peppers. Or a pocket.
- Activate Magic Door. Or unlock a regular one that doesn't say whoosh.

3.4.6.5. Free Actions

Some actions, such as dropping a carried sack or responding to an opponent's folly (such as their critical failure), are free actions.

A character can take **at least one free action per round**.

Typical free actions in an ordinary conflict:

- Amble nonchalantly.
- Chew gum.
- Concentrate on one thing.
- Drop a held object.
- Drop to the ground.
- Jab the exposed flank of an oblivious foe shoving past you with your elbow (or a shiv).
- Spit out a curse (or a grunt of pain).
- Release your ka-ba spiritual form from the prison of your flesh (die).

The referee uses common sense and the conflict time frame to put a stop to nonsense like stacking a dozen free actions to time lock an enemy and explode it from the inside out with some obscurely argued item edge case.

Onion has a trait that lets him hide as a free action. He is also carrying a round bomb in one hand and a pistol in the other.

He wants to take a shot at the lead froglin, then drop a bomb as a free action so it rolls towards a group of froglins, then dive behind a pillar and hide as a free action.

Cat rolls her eyes and points out that's really a bit much. The way Onion is trying to drop the bomb is more of an attack than a "drop". He can either shoot or roll the bomb, but not both. Alternatively, he can stay where he is, shoot and roll the bomb, but not dive behind the pillar. Does Onion feel lucky enough to face a bomb blast?

Of course he does. He's a PC.

Traits and items may provide additional free actions.

3.4.6.6. Adjudicating Action Ideas

Not only can the players come up with new actions, they are encouraged to. Fortunately, most player ideas fall into one of four categories, making improvisation a little easier for the referee.

1. Great Idea. Give the PC a bonus on their attempt. For a bit of temptation, you can offer extra options (with extra dangers).

    Safir has figured out the Grand Golem's weak spot: the red control crystal in its head. Cat rules that reaching it will be a hard climb and the golem will get a free stomping attack first.

    "We can pilot Onion's magic pocket hang glider through its empty eye socket," says Safir, deadpan.

    "That's a great idea. Roll with advantage to reach the head, but if the golem swats you, you'll take extra damage hitting the ground."

    "Maybe we can distract the golem in some way," wonders Onion.

    "You could sing and dance in front of it," suggests Cat dubiously.

    "Brilliant! I'll airhorn it, so it won't try to swat Safir!"

    Cat wonders if Onion is aware that the Grand Golem will try to splat him instead ... and could well succeed. Surely he is?

2. Interesting Idea. Give the PC an extra effect or flavor if they succeed. To spice things up, give their opponents a free counter if the attempt fails (or a bonus on their turn).

    Onion thinks it'll work just fine to put on a spectrum satrap's fine enviro-suit and run their voice through the modulator. That'll put the fear of the Un-God into the local merchants!

    Cat ponders, then says, "We-e-ell, ok. If you succeed, sure, they'll be floored with the majesty of your presence. But if they see through you, they'll try and haul you up in front of the magister for fraud."

3. Risky Idea. Allow the PC to try with extra effect if they succeed. After that, give their opponents a free counter (or a bonus on their turn).

    Noë is going to slip into the kingpin's dreams and incept an idea to make the kingpin see Noë as their long-lost daughter.

    Cat looks dubious, suspecting this plot is lifted wholesale from some over-complicated entertainment video.

    Still, she agrees … but warns Noë that the kingpin's dream may twist Noë's mind with its hopes and desires immediately after. A save will be on the books.

4. Terrible Idea. The PC can attempt their plan, but their opponents get a free action first.

    "And then I'll surf the floating force-field disc into the vomes, terrifying them with my display of magical prowess!" chortles Onion.

    Cat looks blankly at Onion.

    "I'll give them all a save to see through your false divine pretenses and a free attack if they are unconvinced."

    "Would my charisma apply?" asks Onion.

    "Fine, I'll add your charisma to their save target. Remember, there's eight of them."

    "It'll be fine!"

    Dear readers, it was not fine.

3.4.7. Space - Movement and Range

Space is relative to each character.

Here	Melee range. Close combat. Adjacent. Next to you. The thick of things. A small area, a few meters across. Indoors, this side of the table, in arm's reach. You may make a free attack against an adjacent enemy that disengages carelessly.
There	Short range. Nearby. A middling area, maybe ten meters across. Indoors, the other side of the table, out of reach. If you win initiative you can close for melee combat with a nearby opponent. Alternatively, you can retreat in good order, keeping them at range while firing.
Over there	Long range. Far. A large area, maybe a few dozen meters across. Indoors, through a doorway or at the far end of a hall. Usually, you need two rounds to close with an opponent this far away. The first round to reduce the range to short range, the second to charge in for close combat.
Off stage	Extreme range. Distant. Very far. A massive area, possibly 100m across. Indoors, audible a couple of rooms away, downstairs, or behind a closed door. Not visible. At this range you need three or more rounds to close with an opponent. Reaching them is more a chase than a conflict.

Exactly how a character moves, where they can go, what they can reach, depends on the specific conflict—where it is happening, how it is being fought. Fighting on a moving train will be different from squaring off in the Electronic Crypt of Saint Baastet will be different from a running skirmish on horseback with cyber centaurs in the Ivory Plains.

The referee notes distances and ranges as they describe a scene and narrate events. Sketching a scene and clarifying when players ask is helpful.

> *Cat narrates, "the abandoned void ship lock swings open and a great vaulted chamber greets you.* **Nearby***, on the ground, you see dessicated … remains. Organic, bone-like columns support an invisible ceiling. The dark … warehouse? cargo hold? … recedes into the dark.* **Far off***, where you can barely see … is that movement?"*

3.4.7.1. Relative Movement and Range

When a PC takes their turn, the referee gives summary of their situation to help the players stay oriented. REDO EXAMPLE ART WITH NOË, ONION, and SAFIR.
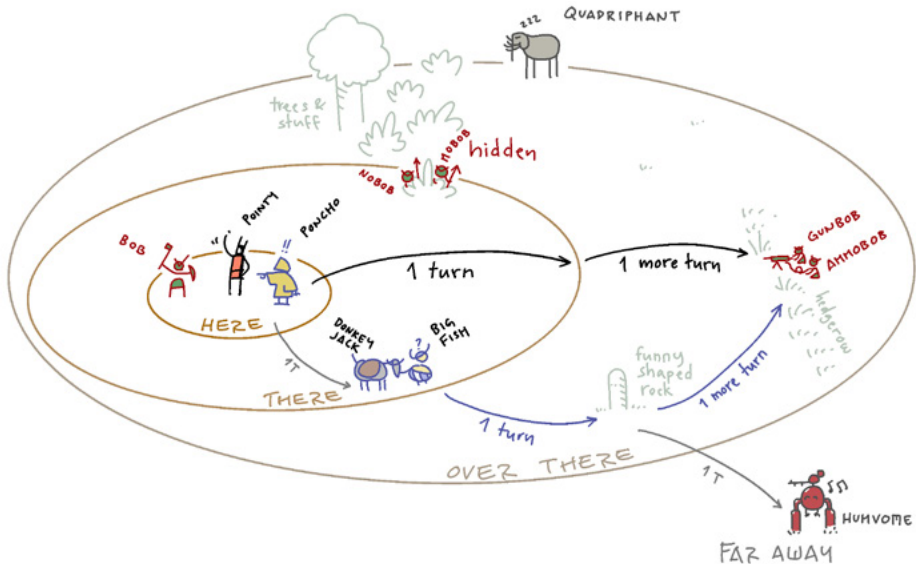
Cat narrates, "Ok, so Noë and Safir went up to the little quarterling with the jade axe to see if they could convince it to trade it away for some paste jewelry and a bottle of vodka. The quarterling was enraged by the suggestion and shrieked some sort of war cry and a few quarterlings over there in the hedgerow replied. They seem to have some kind of tripod-mounted magic staff."

"You're right here, next to the quarterling with the axe. Let's call 'im Bob. The other two are a ways off, two turns let's say. I'll call 'em Gunbob and Ammobob."

Noë's player, "Your naming is really top notch, Cat."

Onion's player asks, "I wasn't next to Bob the Quarterling, I was taking care of Donkey Jack nearby. Could I reach Gunbob and Ammobob in a single turn?"

Cat ponders and answers, "Ye-es, but you'd be charging the gun over open ground and I'd give them a free attack against you. There is a funny shaped rock you could run to for cover, but then you'd need two rounds. Still, if you got initiative next round, too, you could make it without giving them an open shot at you."

Onion nods, "Ok, that sounds good."

Cat adds, "Still, it'll take you close to the confused, humming vome in the cabbage patch ... that could be risky ..."

Onion grumbles, "Are you trying to say I should just hunker down and do nothing?"

Cat, "No, no ... not at all!"
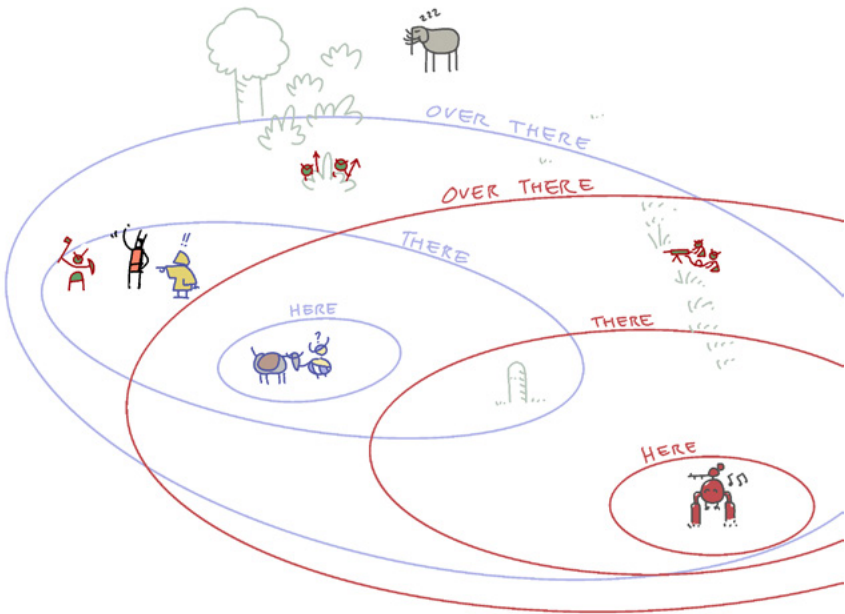
3.4.7.2. Indoor Movement and Range

Indoors and in other confined areas, the movement and range zones may become smaller and more contingent, depending on doors, obstacles, stairs, ladders, passages, traps, and the like.

Cat narrates, "Right, you enter a large hall … well, largish. Maybe eight, ten yardmeters wide and thrice as long. The four big cyclopean columns in the center make it feel smaller. Uncomfortable, arachnoid carvings cover every inch of its organic surface. Your eyes alight on an uncomfortable scene at the far end: some kind of scuttly crawling shadow human bowing and scraping before what looks like a car-sized vegetable bulb with six thick cephalopod arms. The bulb is on a raised sanctuary, like some kind of sacred divinity, **too far** for you to reach quickly. You also see a hint of a doorway just off to the right of the sanctuary, and of course the heavy doors that swung shut behind you as you entered."

Noë mutters, "Of course they swung shut as we entered …"

3.4.7.3. Using Images for Movement and Range
You don't need maps for every conflict. Often, a picture is all it takes.

The PCs are attending an art show at a noble estate and, either through PC folly (likely) or an unscripted zombie attack (strange encounter tables, but ok), a conflict breaks out.

*Cat snags a convenient picture of a noble house, divides it into several sectors and points to the grand reception hall, saying "you are **here**. The zombie peasants are pouring from the outside into the gardens **there**. What do you do?"*

Onion asks the obvious question, "Where did you say the noble fellow, the one with the red hat, keeps the bearer bonds?"
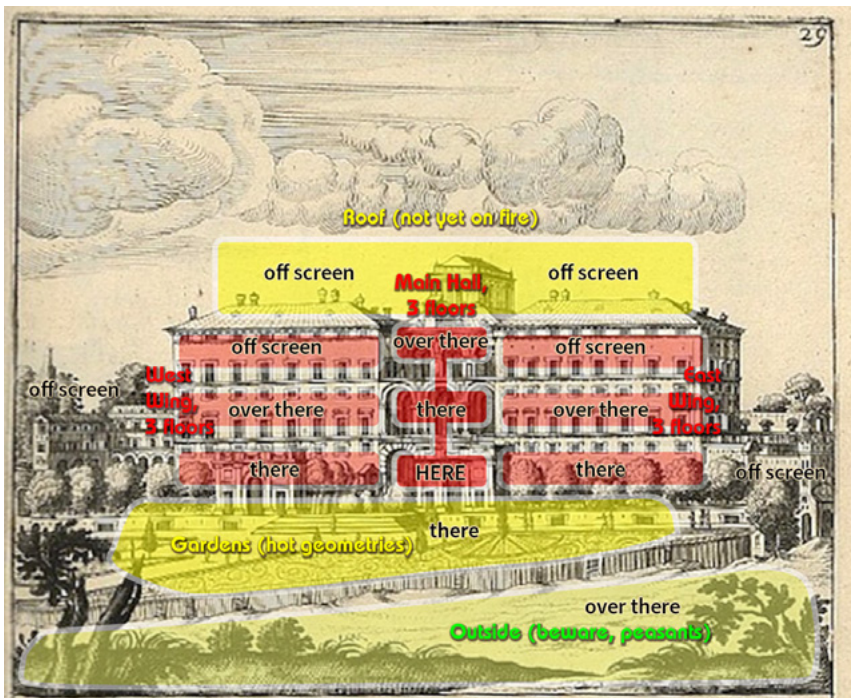
Source: Palace of Jules Mazarin Lustgarten in Georg Andreas Böckler's *Architectura Curiosa Nova* (1664)

3.4.8. Attrition (Optional)

Conflicts wear participants down.

The referee decides when a conflict has gone on long enough. Thereafter, each strenuous action saps a participant's resilience.

- Strenuous physical action temporarily **saps endurance by 1 point**. For example, fighting, shooting, rooting, tooting.
- Strenuous mental action temporarily **saps aura by 1 point**. For example, using, misusing, and abusing powers or spells.

If a PC has 0 endurance or aura, **they instead gain an attrition burden**.

Each attrition burden increases the life damage suffered from each successful attack, trap, fall, injury, or other misfortune by 1. Attrition burdens stack.

NPCs, without the convenience of endurance or aura scores, sap their level scores instead. When their level is 0, they start gaining attrition burdens.

A turn spent performing light activity removes one attrition burden.

Safir has racked up 3 attrition burdens holding off the horde of clackler vomes at the Bridge of Suspiria for 8 rounds. It's holding them at bay, for now, but each clackler claw now deals 1d2+3 damage. Things are starting to look difficult.

Safir decides to drop an electromagical haze bomb and retreat to the maze. The bomb should buy him a round to try and get lost, then he can walk slowly to recover from the attrition.

3.4.8.1. Removing Attrition

After a conflict, characters recover all sapped endurance and aura points after a short rest. One attrition burden fades away every hour after that.

3.4.8.2. Adverse Conditions

Not every conflict happens in a stadium, with raked sand and cheering fans. Light may be poor, footing treacherous, mosquitoes exasperating, dust choking, electromagnificent radiation debilitating. The worse the conditions, the faster attrition wears everyone down.

How long before attrition begins to take its toll?

3–5 rounds	bloodsport arena, powerball stadium, fencing ring, open field, sunlit clearing, audience chamber, large cavern, ordinary alley, back garden.
1–3 rounds	small room, cramped path, windy crag, dungeon passage, mountain stair, voidship hull.
0 rounds	sulphurous swamp, noxious gas, voidwhale guts, knee-deep water, dripping acids, bucking kaiju.

The referee can also apply attrition to one side faster than the other.

Example: night-adapted wights will last longer in the gloom of the Dim World than a party of sun-kissed humans, born under the Green Sun.

3.4.8.3. Marking Attrition

The attrition mechanic speeds up fights and increases their lethality. Players can use dice to mark how much attrition they are carrying.

PCs can also use dice to mark their remaining endurance and aura scores.

3.4.8.4. Sapped Ability Scores and Ability Score Damage

Even if a character only temporarily has 0 endurance or aura, additional ability score damage (3.5.1.3.) can force rolls on the defeat table (3.5.2.).

3.4.9. Morale

The end comes first slow, then all at once.

Most conflicts end not when one side is destroyed, but when it decides to stop fighting. Players usually decide when they want to stop fighting. The referee tests the NPCs' morale to find out when they have had enough.

3.4.9.1. What Happened?

A leader was defeated, a horror from beyond the void appeared, the angels were harvested like sheaves of wheat, the levy's spear beams glanced off the monster's shimmery form like grains of millet.

To some, victory seems suddenly impossible.

Morale is tested.

3.4.9.2. NPC Morale

It goes to 11, no higher. By default:

NPC morale = 3 + half their level

The brave have more, the cowardly less; the referee adjusts.

2	the most craven of cowards, rabbits and broken rabble
3–5	sheep, civilians, levies
6–8	militias, professionals, elites
9–10	rare zealots, terrifying golems
11	the mindless and the doomed

When morale is tested, **roll 2d6**.

- Roll over morale: the NPC breaks: flees, retreats, surrenders or breaks off combat in some other way. The better trained, the steadier the withdrawal.
- Roll equals morale: the NPC redoubles their effort, hoping one last push will bring victory. They gain a bonus on their next action.
- Roll under morale: the NPC continues fighting, grimly determined.

In groups, test a random character. Routs start with a single panicked flight.

3.4.9.3 Multiple Morale Tests

Circumstances may test characters' morale multiple times, but not more than once per round.

Optionally, the referee may decide that a character who succeeds at several morale tests in a row is determined to fight to the bitter end. Three successes should be enough.

> *Cat tests the levy's morale a third time. She rolls 2d6 and the result is another 4. Equal to their morale (4).*
>
> *She relates their determination to the players, "the Golden City's soft, untrained civilian levy yet finds something of their ancestors' martial spirit within. They reload their spears and launch another volley of builder beams at your attack skeletons. This levy seems decided to win or die trying. Are you sure you wish to keep attacking them?"*
>
> *Noë sighs, "Unleash the Eater. We must pass."*

3.4.9.4. Player Character Morale

A PC has no morale score. The player, like some daemon from beyond the cosmic veil, rides their mortal shell. Though the PC feels terror, their player needs care not.

"My hero is fearless!" might cackle the player.

Their PC would know better. Bitterly, better.

> Some terrors can force PCs to save or flee,
> but morale is in the hands of their players.

3.5. Damage, Defeat, Death

As attacks land, as powers drain, a character suffers damage. Once a character has suffered enough damage, they risk defeat (and death).

A character's attributes are resources. Life is used to activate powers. Ability scores improve rolls. Hero dice boost results. Sacrifices turn near misses into successes.

However, attributes are also a buffer protecting a character from defeat and death. The more spent to succeed, the greater the risk of sudden defeat.

3.5.1. Suffering Damage

All damage, unless specified otherwise, reduces a target's life. Some powerful items or powers may reduce abilities or levels, deplete defenses, or impose other burdens and conditions.

3.5.1.1. Damage is Abstract

Reducing life doesn't (necessarily) mean sprays of arterial blood. The precise effect depends on the narrative stakes. A creature could be gossiped to death, metaphorically. Once harangues and threats reduce it to 0 life, it might retreat, step aside, or be too brow-beaten to resist a killing blow.

3.5.1.2. Damage in Deadly Combat

In straightforward combat, such as while dungeoncrawling, fighting in a pitched battle, or other classic scenario, the stakes are life and death. The referee makes these stakes clear when the party enters such an environment, or when a conflict escalates. In these circumstances:

- PCs reduced to 0 life **roll on the defeat table** (3.5.2.).
- NPCs become ex-NPCs at 0 life. This does not mean they are dead, but they are out of the fight for the rest of the scene. Most sentient NPCs do not want to be ex-NPCs and flee before.

Example: While crawling through a crypt of the Starfall Big Houses, the PCs come face to face with iron skeletons. The decayed remnants of synthetic golems, the metal endoskeletons attack without thought of mercy. The stakes are survival or death for the party.

3.5.1.3. Ability Score Damage

Some obnoxious attacks, traps, curses, or situations reduce ability scores: strength, endurance, agility, charisma, aura, or thought. These are serious shocks, which always carry the risk of death.

- PCs who cannot reduce an ability score because it is already at 0 **roll on the defeat table** (3.5.2.).
- NPCs without defined abilities who suffer ability score damage reduce their level **and** attack bonus instead. If either would be reduced below 0 by ability score damage, they become an ex-NPC.

Example: Onion lashes the bog shambler (L4, atrocious post-human) with the holy pain whip he stole from the Avatar of Bonds. Each lash costs Onion 1 life, but deals 1d4 physical ability score damage if it hits.

His first blow deals 3 points of damage, dropping the bog shambler 3 levels (L4-3, yowling post-human). His second blow deals 2 points of damage. This would drop the bog shambler to level -1, but that's not possible (not least because L-1 would look weird). The bog shambler is out of the fight.

Cat narrates how, yelping like a scalded cat, it splashes back into the dark lagoon.

Onion asks if he can get a final shot off at the aquatic ape-human with his plasma pistol. Cat sees no reason why not and the bloodthirsty Onion rolls to see if he can bag a trophy for his lodge-boat.

The referee can also apply other penalties and weakening effects to NPCs suffering ability score damage.

The referee may rule that NPCs are immune to some kinds of ability score damage. For example, brainless undead skeletons could reasonably ignore thought and charisma damage, or damage that depends on fear and other psychological effects.

3.5.1.4. Burdens From Damage

Other obnoxious attacks, powers, curses, and circumstances can impose specific burdens on characters. These occupy inventory slots, reducing a character's options, imposing situational penalties, and imposing additional penalties to rolls as they accumulate in a character's burden inventory.

Burdens can be nearly anything. Use this six by six table at your own risk:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	broken	leg	tooth	cough	boil	horror
2	sprained	arm	phobia	throat	blister	posterior
3	crippling	foot	delusion	tongue	ague	anterior
4	aching	hand	anxiety	blood	runs	ear
5	mad	eye	nose	wound	scar	tentacle
6	divine	head	hubris	rupture	rage	rot

Most effects that impose burdens would allow a save. The worst would not.

Noë the wizard moves to open the treasured chest. She caresses its gleaming shipmetal sides. Presses the machined buttons. Bates her breath as it hisses open. And falls back choking as the terrible green gas burns at her throat.

Cat the referee calls for a save. Noë rolls a 7 on the d20. Not enough. She needed at least a 13 to have a chance to avoid injury.

"It's the pulmonary blood rot," whispers Cat

Noë's player writes that down in her burden inventory. She'll suffer a -1 penalty to all rolls until she gets that fixed. And if she waits long enough, she might need a fresh pair of lungs, too.

Noë spits blood into a silk handkerchief, grits her teeth, and looks into the shipmetal box, hoping for something to make it all worth it.

PCs without the inventory space to gain an additional burden **roll on the defeat table** (3.5.2.). Remember that each burden in the burden inventory applies a -1 penalty to all rolls, including defeat table rolls ...

3.5.2. Defeat

When a character has no more resources to absorb damage, no more life to spend as plot armor, no more abilities to reduce, no space to bear more burdens, they roll on the defeat table.

The last blow broke through armor and dealt physical damage:
roll 2d6 + endurance

The last blow broke through wards and dealt mental damage:
roll 2d6 + aura

Defeat Table
Woe!

1 or less	Destroyed. The character is gone for the rest of this session at least. Absent eerie divine magitechnologies.
2–6	Dead. Relife interventions required to rebuild their body (ha) or personality (ba).
7	Knocked out. Brain injury (-1 thought) burden. See you at the end of the fight.
8	Winded. Weakness (-1 strength) burden. Lose next turn, then regain 1 life.
9	Strained. Nauseating (-1 agility) burden Lose next turn, then regain 1 life.
10	Scarred. Defacing (-1 charisma) burden. Lose next turn, then regain 1 life.
11	Stunned. Lose next turn, then regain 1 life.
12+	All ok! Immediately regain 1 life.

Doom spiral: ability score damage caused by the defeat table can force an immediate second roll on the defeat table. Defeat is not pleasant.

3.5.3. Death and Hakaba

Every character, as every living thing in the Given World, is composed of the existential trinity of body (ha), soul (ka), and psyche (ba).

1. Ha. Body, matter, structure, form, persistence, shape. Connects most naturally to the static abilities of aura and endurance.
2. Ka. Soul, fire, drive, energy, thrust, movement. Connects to the active abilities of charisma and strength.
3. Ba. Psyche, personality, change, path, choice. Connects to the dynamic abilities of agility and thought.

The following matrix examines what this means for the concepts of life, death, and undeath in the UVG and the rest of the Given World.

Ha Body	Ka Soul	Ba Psyche	Entity
yes	yes	yes	Full person. Human, animal, plant, etc.
yes	no	no	Corpse. Shell. Statue.
no	yes	no	Spirit elemental. Living energy.
no	no	yes	Echo. Ghost. Digital clone.
yes	yes	no	Living dead. Ka-zombie, falscher, drone.
yes	no	yes	Animate shell. Lich, machine, ba-zombie.
no	yes	yes	Living mind. Daemon, ultra, etc.

3.5.3.1. Concept Background

Ha-ka-ba is adapted from Ancient Egyptian conceptions of the person, as in the *Coffin Texts* and *Book of the Dead*. It also echoes many religious and philosophical ideas on the transmigration of souls.

3.5.3.2. In-Game Metaphysics

The soul provides the motive fire of consciousness, the psyche provides the unique direction of consciousness, and the body provides the vehicle.

> *This trinity affects how the dead, the undead, and the resurrected behave. A creature killed by physical means becomes a classic corpse. A creature whose soul is destroyed leaves a perfect shell, easily turned into a flesh-golem servitor (sometimes called a zombie but actually a soulless automaton). A creature whose personality is annihilated presents the most unusual situation: their soul-body dyad remains physically alive, but completely malleable. They are closest to the classical Haitian Vodou concept of a zombie: entities of human intelligence without volition, loyal to their master or creator. Other permutations abound.*

Indeed, death is not the end. The return voyage from death and destruction is covered in Rest and Recovery (3.6.).

3.6. Rest and Recovery

To rest again, to be free of possession. To enjoy a comfortable bed, a day of ease, soothing circumstance, an end to toil. Ah, every PC dreams to have a satisfied mind again.

3.6.1. Recovery

Living characters recover quite quickly. The bodies of these later humans are blessed with strange powers of narrative healing.

Each week, remove one affliction or insult. This may be:

- regain all missing life
- or fully restore one missing ability score
- or remove one burden
  (terms and conditions apply)

3.6.1.1. Faster Recovery

Options exist if you can find them.

1–3	cheap	common	healing unguents, restorative tonics
4–5	pricy	uncommon	medical packs, repair parasites
6	dear	rare	oldtech replacements, divine blessings
NA	shhh	legendary	S-class augments, builder tech

3.6.2. Relife

Death is not the end of a character's service to their player.

- Body available: use an aspera casket to spin a new soul into the PC's body. Time since death affects memories and modifies personality. Top up the aspera casket with fresh soul-source as required.
- Head available: please use a suitable clone or golem body to restore mobility. An aspera jar may keep just the head alive, though psychological adjustment may be difficult.
- Jewel available: error. Jewel not available. Please contact the canopic jewel service point to install a new synthetic personality backup matrix. Error. Canopic service point map layer missing. Error. Omnimap missing.

3.6.2.1. Relife Consequences

Without specific (and, in the eyes of most Rainbowlanders, deeply immoral) rituals such as *Stoyevod's Irreducible Crystalisation of the Ego Complex*, the character as an individual disappears. The psyche dissipates into the cosmic consciousness, becoming part of the infinite tapestry of creation, returning like a messenger swallow to the All-Mind. The soul merges back into the All-Fire of Creation-Preservation-Destruction. Finally, the body decays back into the All-Green cycle of Life-Death-Rebirth.

Powers such as *Animate Dead*, *Raise Dead*, or the poetic *Supplication to the Rotting God to Turn Back the Wheel of Love and Death* (var. *Resurrection*) permanently alter the returned.

3.6.2.2. This Returned Is Changed

1. They are marked by the Rotting God (see below).
2. Their face is dark with the death they have lived.
3. Their mind is hazy with the fog of the shadow realm.
4. Their instincts are tinged with their fated reincarnation.
5. Their body is dessicated by the cosmic winds.
6. Their hands tremble with the terror of not-being.
7. They cough from the dust of limbo.
8. Memories of unity-with-existence have crushed their ambition.

3.6.2.3. The Seven Marks of the Rotting God

1. First, milk turns sour at the marked one's touch.
2. Then, dogs and cats are repulsed.
3. After, plants wither in their presence.
4. Then, maggots grow in their footsteps and skin.
5. Soon, pestilence follows their breath.
6. Eventually, their eyes turn white, but still see, and their touch bears an uncomfortable curse.
7. Finally, inanimate objects age and decay in their presence.

Some say the marks are gifts, extending the lives of the Blue God's chosen. Wise folks who understand human nature know that these long, decayed lives are but another curse.

4. EQUIPMENT

This world is not like that of the angle-sachsen empire of Old Soil, with its wild west feudalism and deep-delving gong-farmers. Sufficiently advanced technology indistinguishable from magic abounds, if unevenly distributed. The modern human knows that wonders exist, though few can pretend to understand them. Too much knowledge exists even for the hive minds and synthetic intelligences, and more has been forgotten.

What is magic? What mundane? That distinction is impractical. Somewhere in these vast lands nearly every item the human may dream up must already exist. Thus, to list all possible equipment ... hubris!

Yet, some useful things for the traveler, for the voyager into the vast beyond the edge of civilization? That, yes, let us list that. This section covers:

how equipment works (4.0.)
weapons (4.1.)
armors (4.2.)
gadgets and tools (4.3.)
resource replenishers (4.4.)
consumables (4.5.)
vehicles and mounts (4.6.)

Section 2.6 describes items and how to equip starting characters.

4.0.1. General Equipment Mechanics

Equipment has few standard mechanics. Remember the following:

1. Size. Each ready item occupies one stone (1 st) of inventory. Most PCs can carry at least 7 stones of gear without penalty. Stronger PCs can carry more. (see 2.6.0.1.)
2. Damage. If combat breaks out, most items can be used as improvised weapons. For comparison, a small personal weapon like a knife deals 1d4 damage, a civilian weapon like a fire axe deals 1d6 damage, and a military weapon like a lance deals 1d8 damage. Fragile items break after striking a target. Clumsy items impose a penalty to attack rolls. (see 2.7.6.1.)
3. Notched and broken. On a natural roll of 1, equipment is notched. If you roll a natural 1 again before repairing it, it breaks. (see 3.2.2.1.)
4. Penalty or Bonus. Under pressure, characters without suitable equipment may receive a penalty for tasks they are skilled at. Conversely, having the right equipment could provide a bonus. The referee makes the final decision. (see 3.2.2.3.)
5. Force the Situation. When you roll precisely on target, you can sacrifice (damage equipment, deplete ammo) to succeed. The referee may suggest other sacrifices. (see 3.2.2.4.)

4.0.2. Equipment Beyond Mechanics

To enumerate every use for a brick is an exercise in creativity.

To do so for every item in the Vastlands is folly. Use the following guidelines:

1. Natural Language. Equipment does what its name suggests. Use common sense and improvise details as needed.
2. New or Improved Ability. Equipment enables a character to perform tasks they couldn't otherwise.
   For example, a raft allows characters to float, and climbing gear helps them scale surfaces they couldn't free-climb. PCs do not need to make rolls to succeed at a task if they are using appropriate equipment and aren't under pressure or facing time constraints.

To create unique items, reskin or modify existing equipment and powers with the desired effects. Season to taste.

4.0.3. Resources

Some equipment requires additional resources to work: ammo for guns, charges for sorcelectric devices, fuel for golem vehicles. In many situations, tracking your resources is not necessary—you may assume your PCs have enough resources for the scene or session and can replenish their resources between scenes, off-screen.

4.0.3.1. Tracking Resources: Running Out

Often, when tracking resources, the only thing that matters is whether you *have enough*, are *running low*, or have *run out*.

- Have enough: keep using your gear.
- Running low: one use left.
- Run out: can't use the equipment until you replenish it.

Your d20 roll when you take an action using a piece of equipment also determines how many resources you have remaining:

1. Natural 13. You are running low. One use left. *The last bullet slides into the chamber, the O_2 meter reads 5%, the biomechanical war suit beeps ominously.*
2. Replenish #. If you roll the replenish number or less, resources have run out. When it makes more sense in context, this is a reload # or a recharge #. *The sensor is out of juice. The autogolem is out of fuel.*

Often, an action won't require a d20 roll. At the end of the scene make a single resource usage d20 roll for all the equipment used.

If the replenish number is higher than 13, the equipment still has one use left when a natural 13 is rolled.

For a more cinematic feel, ignore the replenish mechanic and only watch for natural 13s.

4.0.3.2. Replenishing Resources

Equipment that is out of resources either does not work or imposes a penalty (for example, an unpowered suit of golem armor). Replenishing requires an action, unless specified otherwise. Skilled characters may reload or recharge or refuel faster.

> *Modify the term 'replenish' to fit the context: reload for most guns, recharge for most powered equipment, refuel for vehicles, etc.*

Characters have three options for replenishing:

1. Replenishing at a store, an autonomous charging station, etc. Costs one hundredth the price of the equipment (or nothing), but is inconvenient.
2. Equipment-specific ammo boxes, charge packs, fuel cans, etc. Each replenish weighs 1 st and costs one tenth the price of the equipment itself, unless noted otherwise. Available in most settlements.
3. Replenishers—expensive portable fabricators, usually fed by sunlight or old energies, that can recharge a limited number of pieces of gear per day for free. Perfect for equipping a base or large caravan. (see 4.4.)

4.0.3.3. Option: Converting Charges to Replenish

In the UVG book, charges (power) and ammo are treated differently. Ammo uses a reload number: if the d20 roll shows the reload number or less, the weapon is out of ammo and needs reloading. Powered equipment (such as golem armors) uses charges the player tracks.

Converting charges to replenish numbers:

20 charges	replenish 1	5 charges	replenish 4
10 charges	replenish 2	4 charges	replenish 5
8 charges	replenish 2 or 3	3 charges	replenish 7
6 charges	replenish 3 or 4	2 charges	replenish 10
		1 charge	replenish 20

Anything with more than 20 charges doesn't have a replenish score. It only runs out after rolling a natural 13.

4.0.3.4. Option: Tracking Resources More Precisely

Sometimes it makes sense to track resources such as torches, oxygen, ammunition, charges, etc. The referee clearly declares situations or locations where resources will serve as a clock or limit on PC activity.

> *Our heroes prepare to explore the bunker of the clockwork demon. Cat taps a pencil to her chin thoughtfully and warns them, "It's dark inside, and the air may be toxic. You'll track clean air and light resources."*

> *The PCs decide how much of their inventory to fill with these resources.*

See 4.0.3.3. for how many charges each replenish number provides.

The referee has two options:

1. Subtract 1 unit of resources (say torches) per unit of game time or number of actions (say every 30 minutes or 3 exploration actions). In the UVG book, which deals with wasteland travel, this is presented as the default for overland travel, with 1 sack of supplies used by each traveler each week of travel.
2. Add resource consumption to the encounter die and roll after each exploration round. For example, if the encounter die is a d6:
   1 - dangerous encounter
   2 - encounter traces (tracks, signs, portents)
   3 - light resource consumed
   4 - oxygen resource consumed
   5 - nothing
   6 - nothing

4.1. Weapons

Bullets, swords, rocks, explosions, fireballs, gouges, and chokes. Attacks hurt the body, but usually spare the soul and status. The civilized frown upon personal firearms, much to the delight of voracious barbarians.

Some have special features, such as reach, throwing, etc. (see 4.1.5.).

4.1.1. Melee Weapons
By machete and ghost bone, the shadowed jungles of lost times must part.

4.1.1.1. Traditional Melee Weapons
1. **Stone.** Man's first weapon. Close, 1d3, throwing, 1 st. €0.
2. **Battle Stick.** Hardwood for hard knocks. Close, 1d4, strength or agility, 1 st. €1.
3. **Burdenbeast leather whip.** Uses strength or agility. Can be used to swing. Close, 1d4, reach, 1 st. €3.
4. **Retractable stun baton wand.** Spend 1 life to stun (save). Close, 1d4, concealed, 5 sp. €20.
5. **Machete.** The blade that overthrew the void tunnel jungle and opened passage to the New Soil. Close, 1d6, 1 st. €3.
6. **Gentleman's Cane.** A short sword in a cane. Perfect for swaggering down portal avenue and giving ruffians a what-ho. Close, 1d4 (cane) or 1d6 (sword), concealed, 1 st. €20.
7. **Spear.** A blade on a stick. Combines well with shields and other spear bearers. Close, 1d6/1d8, versatile, throwing, 1 st. €2.
8. **Wrench Hammer.** The archaic maintainer caste tool for divine doors and holy hatches in the oldtech temples. Today, a priestly weapon of office. Close, 1d10, two-handed, 2 st. €10.

4.1.1.2. Uncanny Melee Weapons

1. **Arzax Lance.** An ultralight energy lance. Switch off the null-field to collapse into a short rod. Close, 1d12*, mounted, reach, stuns on natural 13, 1 st. €200.
2. **Black City Blade.** A blade of obsidian and shadow and error. It whispers to you of lost histories. Close, 1d10, ignores damage resistances, 1 st. €300.
3. **Chain Sword.** An elegant weapon from the time of the great reincarnation error. Decapitates on a natural 20. Close, 1d10/2d8, versatile, fueled, 2 st. €600.
4. **Forty-Pound Uranium Rod.** A heavy metal staff for a heavy metal wizard. Stuns on matching damage dice. Close, 2d10, 2H, slow (loses initiative), 4 st. €900.
5. **Ghost Bone Axe.** Filed from the shoulder blade of a noöspheric daemon, it ignores undead immunities and deals full damage to ghosts of all sorts. Close, 2d8, two-handed, disturbing, 2 st. €600.
6. **Wire-Ghoul Hammer-Axe.** An undead biomech thing, its head overgrown with wriggling, acid-belching flagellae. Deals double damage to heavily-armored enemies. Close, 1d10, necrotic, 1 st. €750.

4.1.2. Ranged Weapons

It wouldn't be a pseudo-colonial-apocalyptic savanna-crawl without guns.

UVG lists the ranges as close, short, medium, and long, whereas the guide book calls them close, short, long, and extreme. Aside from the admirable confusion this naming inconsistency may provoke, they are the same four ranges. For more details on ranges, see 3.4.7.

4.1.2.1. Traditional Bows and Guns

1. **Bow.** First among weapons. A recurved metalbird pinion or laminated lengths of chitin. Its lack of features is a feature. Long range, 1d6, two-handed, 1 st. €20.
2. **Crossbow.** Simple, silent clocktech. Rewind after each shot. Long range, 1d8, reload 20, 1 st. €25.
3. **Golem Lance.** Take a defunct war golem's arm, remove the war golem, and you have an effective heat ray. Short range, 1d10, two-handed, fiery, reload 6, 2 st. €200.
4. **Inquisition Squirtgun.** Originally, an effective tranquilizer delivery device. Now adapted for all kinds of injection-at-a-distance! Short range, 1d6, reload 5, intravenous, 5 sp. €300.
5. **Scavenger Bolter.** The basic recycled rifle. Rugged, tough, easy to modify, and notoriously inaccurate. Long range, 1d10, two-handed, reload 10, 1 st. €100.
6. **Redland District SMG.** The mass-produced firearm of the people. Rare outside the RLD, restricted inside. Short range, 2d6, two-handed, reload 1, burst mode, 1 st. €500.

4.1.2.2. Uncanny Ranged Weapons

1. **Blue God Blaster.** A particle of the divine, subverted and converted into a toxic array for tunnel combat. Very short range, 4d8, two-handed, necrotic, burst, reload 7, 1 st. €3,000.
2. **Golem Killer.** Gray planes and orange stripes. This silent, soundless ray emitter hurts golems and other mechanicals. On a damage roll of 13, the target mechanical shuts down for an hour. Long range, 2d8*, two-handed, reload 4, 2 st. €2,000.
3. **Porcelain Death Mask.** A head-mounted micro-rocket launcher. Uses biomechanical shunts and integrated fabricators to generate new hornet-sized rockets directly from the wearer's tissues (spend 1d4 life to reload). Originally designed for disposable polybody drones. Long range, 2d6*, hands-free, reload 7, 1 st. €1,000.
4. **Satrap Radiant Gun.** A semi-sentient laser weapon designed to interface directly with a satrap's crystal soul. Long range, 2d12, two-handed, blinding, radiant, reload 7, 2 st. €1,100.
5. **Ultra Blaster.** An emitter optimized for non-destructive void use, with fully shielded particle coils that continue to function even in the subspace of the dullways. Short range, 3d6, blinding, radiant, reload 1, 5 sp. €2,000.
6. **White City Matter Creator.** A heavy thing of pale coils, metal whorls, and crystal rods. It creates matter at a distance—about 1d6 stones worth per shot—duplicating the target's dominant material. Matter created within an organic creature may hurt. Short range, 1d12*, two-handed, reload 5, 2 st. €10,000.

4.1.2.3. Throwing Weapons

Fine at close or short range, but suffer a penalty at longer ranges.

1. **Bola.** Corded weights to entangle a target. Popular among herders and nomads. Short range, 1d4, entangling, 1 st. €1.
2. **Builderbang.** The holy hand grenade of elder times, a treasured weapon of the inquisition grenadiers. Short range, 3d6*, large area frag grenade, 2 sp. €250.
3. **Concussive.** A clay pot filled with black powder. A grenade any modern artisan could make. Short range, 1d6*, small area grenade, 2 sp. €5.
4. **Flarestick.** Fruit of the flambén tree, dried and preserved with resin. On impact, it bursts into bright, flaring light. Intended for fuel, it burns for several minutes with a low-heat flame. Short range, 1d4, heat, 2 sp. €10.
5. **Flasher.** A glitch-vome's signaling eye set to *St. Vitus*. Causes blindness, nausea, and/or uncontrolled robot dancing. Short range, 1d6, small area grenade, 2 sp. €30.
6. **Throwing Knife.** The classic combat shuriken of rust landers, back alley dwellers, and all sorts of ne'er-do-wells. Short range, 1d4, 2 sp. €1.

4.1.3. Oldtech Weapons

The eye in the sky hears the PC's electric prayer; it sends a ray of nihilation.

"Oldtech" or other thought attack - a conveniently deployed trick, a subterfuge, a sudden burst of song from a speaker.

4.1.3.1. Limited Oldtech Weapons

1. **Access Flenser.** A less-lethal phantom blade to cut through layers of ego and id. Maximum damage: give the target's soul a direct command (save). Close, 1d6, reload 5, 1 st. €200.
2. **Diagnostic Wand.** Demands a full status summary of intent. The victim's next action takes two actions to complete instead. Short range, 1d4, reload 15, 5 sp. €120.
3. **Dusk Emitter.** Actually, a pure anti-light ray that emits dusk in a 15° cone. Long range, 1d4, blinding, reload 3, 5 sp. €50.
4. **Jetolene Igniter.** A flame-thrower. Sets hearts (and heads) afire. Short range, 3d6, small area, heat, reload 15, 3 st. €250.
5. **Pleasure Thorn.** Related to the neural whip, but more pleasant. Disables with ecstasy. Causes paroxysms on a natural 7. Close, 1d8, reload 5, 1 st. €400.
6. **Transfer Gun.** Originally a medical device. It transfers a burden from the user to the target (save). Short range, 1d8, reload 5, 1 st. €200.

4.1.3.2. Delimited Oldtech Weapons

1. **Crystal Siege Rod.** A quartz disintegration ray amplifier housed in a heavily- glyphed brass and brazilwood casing. A leftover from the rationalist living god wars. Breaks open doors if any die rolls a natural 6. Short range, 1d6 x 4, clumsy, slow, reload 4, 3 st. €2,000.
2. **Fold-Field Array.** Cobbled together from a cracked levi drive. Reduces all spatial dimensions in the target area by 50%. Targets are slowed and weakened (save). On a natural 2, one target's skull folds in on itself instead. Short range, 1d10*, very small area, reload 10, 1 st. €1,500.
3. **Gate Daemon Actuator.** Perhaps this was initially used to spin-up travel gates. Now it's just used to create localized gravity shears. Long range, 1d12 and reorient gravity in a small area, bisect on a natural 13, reload 13, 3 st. €1,200.
4. **Magnificent Fireball Wandpistol.** Converts the dross of mortal life into flashy balls of fire. Hardly a fair trade in the eyes of the noble land barons. The user spends 1 life per shot. Short range, 3d6, very small area, 1 st. €5,000.
5. **Mouth of God.** Portable solid hologram projector manifests a divine progenitor to smite unbelievers. It is loud, bright, sets shrubberies on fire, and terrifying (save). Short range, 3d10, less-lethal, reload 7, 2 st. €4,000.
6. **Radiothermal Horn.** Emits focused hard radiation. Causes severe illness (hard save). Backfires on a natural 1. Can serve as a portable stove. Short range, 2d4*, glowing, reload 2, 1 st. €200.

4.1.4. Fantascience Weapons

They say curses and witchery. We say the science of the Logos unbound.

4.1.4.1. Long Ago Fantascience Weapons

1. **Agon.** A whip that implants a homunculus of the user's personality in the target (save). A target with multiple personalities is conflicted and suffers penalties (but a bonus to attacks against the user). Close, 1d4, reach, reload 13, 1 st. €500.
2. **Ego Echo.** A wandpistol that captures and replays thoughts and emotions, disorienting enemies with their reflected selves (save). A confused enemy (1d6): (1) attacks itself, (2) attacks an ally, (3) sits down, (4) wanders away, (5) does what it planned, (6) pauses, takes a breather and gains 1d6 life. Short range, 1d4, psychic, reload 4, 5 sp. €200.
3. **Phase Cannon.** A heavy handgun that shifts the target creature or a 3 cubit sphere out of phase with normal matter for 1 round (save). Great for passing through doors or floors. Short range, 2d8*, reload 6, 1 st. €1,650.
4. **Psionic Blade.** An onyx and ivory hilt projects a blade of pure psychic energy, slicing through mental and physical barriers. Spend 1 aura to deal triple damage. Close, 1d8, armor piercing, 1 st. €500.
5. **Skip Knife.** Cuts through time, skipping the target forward 1d6 rounds (save). Close, 1d4, reload 1, 7 sp. €1,250.
6. **Telempathy Blaster.** Perhaps once this was some kind of medical device for dealing with psychological anguish. Now it deals lethal emotional shocks. If the damage die shows a natural 1, the target stops fighting for one round and shows a willingness to parley. Short range, 1d10, reload 6, 1 st. €600.

4.1.4.2. Long Long Ago Fantascience Weapons

1. **Hellfire Cannon.** The cool death metal of this handgun projects a part of the target's mind into hell. They experience the colorless fire of pain, the eating acid of despair, the cruel depredation of time (save). The suffering burden dissipates after 1d6* days. Long range, 1d8*, reload 5, 2 st. €1,000.

2. **Mouth of the Void.** Hear the song of the cosmos, experience your insignificance, merge with your existential dread. The terror induced is so profound, it can stop a heart on a natural 13. Creatures adjacent to the target suffer 1d6 damage. Short range, 2d10, reload 4, 6 sp. €3,900.

3. **Reality Flense.** The target glimpses the true, underlying nature of reality. On a natural 20, their mind breaks. On a natural 7, they permanently gain 1 aura and try to stop this pointless battle. Short range, 1d6*, psychic, reload 3, 1 st. €1,800.

4. **Replacer.** The target is replaced with an almost identical copy of themselves (save), but they know they are no longer themselves. Forever after, they are alien to themselves. Short range, 2d4* and 1 thought, reload 7, 1 st. €800.

5. **Solipsism Staff.** Become the world! Experience a perfect reality just for you! Dream a lifetime in a day! This old prayer gun turns out to be surprisingly useful for putting enemies to sleep (save). Short range, 1d8, psychic, reload 1, 2 st. €1,000.

6. **Soul Siphon.** The spear whips like a cobra, drinking life and leaving empty husks. Absorbed souls flare like aurorae as they are consumed by the spear. The spear can hold up to three souls. Spend a soul to animate it as a spear snake (L3/12 life, judgmental) or to regain 1d6 life. Close, 2d6, two-handed, 1 st. €3,000.

4.1.5. Weapon Features

This list is not exhaustive.

1. **Area.** A small area covers a few creatures standing close together, a large area encompasses a dozen or more creatures within tens of meters.
2. **Armor Piercing.** Bonus to attack rolls against heavily armored targets.
3. **Blinding.** If any damage dice roll maximum, the target is blinded for one round. Critical hits may blind permanently.
4. **Burst.** Unload all your charges or ammo to deal damage in a small area. Targets can take cover and forfeit their next move for half damage. Targets already under cover take no damage if they forfeit their next move.
5. **Clumsy.** Penalty to attack rolls, obviously.
6. **Concealed.** It doesn't look like a weapon.
7. **Frag.** Charged with epic energies beyond mortal ken. Slain enemies explode and deal 1d6 damage in a small area.
8. **Intravenous.** Can be loaded with holy or toxic liquids.
9. **Less Lethal.** A bonus to the victim's defeat & death rolls.
10. **Mounted.** Heavy one-handed weapon for use with a steed. Deals double damage when charging.

11. **Necrotic.** Kills living tissue directly. Often toxic.
12. **Psychic.** Causes scars on the inside.
13. **Radiant.** Uses energy rays. May set things aflame.
14. **Rare and Restricted.** Hard to find, overpriced in most places, usually controlled by some faction and may provoke hostile reactions. Zombies are such a thing.
15. **Reach.** Longer, so it attacks first in close combat.
16. **Relevant Ability.** Most ranged attacks use agility, while melee attacks use strength.
17. **Slow.** Goes after the usual initiative order.
18. **Throwing.** Designed for throwing. Fine at short range, but suffers a penalty at longer ranges.
19. **Two-Handed.** Needs two hands (2H) to use properly. Big weapons (two stones and larger) always need two hands.
20. **Versatile.** Can be used two-handed to increase its damage dice one step (1d6 becomes 1d8, 1d12 becomes 1d20).

4.1.5.1. Standard Sizes
Unless specified otherwise, the autofabers create everything to the standard six-cubit height of a truemade god-blessed human.

<1 stone	Small, easily concealed. Daggers and pistols.
1 stone	Medium, one-handed. Swords and blasters.
2 stones	Large, two-handed. Polearms and projectors.
3+ stones	Very large, mounted. Divine rods and autocannons.

4.2. Armors

Shells, carapaces, plates, harnesses, mails, masks, helms, force fields. Armors protect the soft flesh of the human mollusc against the terrors of the great world. The civilized mock the ferals who go about dressed in fur and still, with little faith in the divine guardians who block all injury. The outlanders suspect the divine guardians may be unreliable.

> *When calculating the defense score, the UVG assumes all characters are skilled at defense and calculates it as 10 + agility + armor value. The SDM and this Guide Book allow for characters who are unskilled (or, conversely, masters) at defense, and calculate the defense score as 7 + skill (from +0 to +9) + agility + armor. (see 2.7.7.)*

4.2.1. Shields

Something to interpose between fragile flesh and deadly bullet.

You can sunder (destroy) your shield to negate one attack.

4.2.1.1. Modern Shields

1. **Buckler.** A small brass and plaz shield strapped to your forearm, you can hold things in your hand. Armor +1, shield, 1 st. €5.
2. **Glass Shield.** An oldtech wonder, you can shoot beam weapons through its polarized form. Armor +3, shield, 1 st. €100.
3. **Shield.** The wicker and pleather basic. Armor +2, shield, 1 st. €5.

4.2.1.1. Ancient Shields

1. **Field Glove.** This hard plastic and living-wire gauntlet emits a small protective field. Use your hand as normal! Armor +1, shield, 5 sp. €15.
2. **Hard Light Shield.** A shield of force strapped to the arm. Push a button and it disappears into the wrist-guard. Used as a melee weapon, it deals 1d4 damage and severs the target's limb on a natural 17. Armor +3, shield, 1 st. €950.
3. **Void Infantry Dissipator.** A massive tower shield of ceramic, aerolith, and cryptic coils. If an attack deals 20+ damage, half of it dissipates harmlessly as a polychrome flare. Armor +4, shield, 2 st. €500.

4.2.2. Light Armors
Suits for fighting and even running away.

4.2.2.1. The Six Standard Light Armors
1. **Nomad Robes.** Great in the hot desert. Armor +1, cool, 1 st. €10.
2. **Bullet-proof Silk Vest.** Elegant protection from high-velocity kinetic attacks (half damage). Armor +1, stylish, 0 st. €150.
3. **Pleather Suede.** Cheap, shiny when oiled, great with a wide-brimmed high plateau rustler's hat. Armor +1, hot, 1 st. €10.
4. **Ballistic Linen Suit.** Perfect for the gentleman adventurer. Secret pocket for a nip. Armor +2, cool, 1 st. €100.
5. **Riot Pleather Suit.** With detachable spike, cloak, and skull hardpoints. Armor +2, hot, 1 st. €50.
6. **Syncsuit.** Ancient spandex and living wire for direct proprioceptive control of a vech or void vessel. Armor +3, interfacing, 1 st. €500.
7. **Synthskin Enviro Suit.** Dedicated to the goddess Haz-Maat. Armor +1, enviro, hot, 1 st. €150.

4.2.3. Medium Armors
All-rounder suits.

4.2.3.1. The Six Normal Medium Armors
1. **Dryland Weave.** Woven from the cilia of special dryland coral hybrids, surprisingly breathable. Armor +3, bulky, cool, 2 st. €100.
2. **Scale Suit.** Made from de-extincted iron pangolin scales. Armor +3, bulky, hot, 2 st. €50.
3. **Chitin Cuirass.** Also called lobster armor. Armor +4, bulky, cool, 2 st. €600.
4. **Amber Cuirass.** Strands of ancestral memories trapped in amber. Ghostly memories give +1 thought. Armor +4, bulky, 2 st. €1,500.
5. **GRD Combat Harness.** Ugly semi-organic suit with grasping tentacles to keep gear in easy reach. Armor +5, bulky, hot, 2 st. €850.
6. **Watersuit.** Cool-suit of synthskin over woven bone mesh, with vascular cooling and filtration system. Armor +4, bulky, enviro, 2 st. €1,200.

4.2.4. Heavy Armors

Suits for standing and defending.

4.2.4.1. The Six Armors of the Paladins

1. **Bone Mesh Armor.** Trademark bone wizard product. Armor +6, bulky, pretty cool, 3 st. €500.
2. **Splint Suit.** Cheap and simple design, popular in this fallen age. Armor +7, bulky, hot, 3 st. €400.
3. **Plate and Ballistic Weave.** Modern smithing with old tailoring. Armor +8, bulky, hot, 3 st. €1,500.
4. **Jade Mail.** Stonesung links that also protect against ghosts and immaterial spirits. Armor +7, bulky, 3 st. €2,000.
5. **Assault Suit.** Silver sinews, porcelain plates, undead tissues. Armor +6, hot, 3 st. €1,200.
6. **Umbral Panoply.** Hard shadow and synthsilk weave. Armor +9, bulky, cool, 3 st. €10,000.

4.2.5. Golem Armors

Living armors powered by arcane sources. Exoskeletons for soft humans.

Roll to see if an armor charge is depleted at the end each relevant scene.

4.2.5.1. Six Flavors of Golem Armor

1. **Spectral Combat Suit.** Satrapy steel-glass scales with an environment maintenance parasite. Spend charge: gain +2 strength. Armor +5, bulky, cool, recharge 3, 2 st. €2,400.
2. **Malachite Golem Suit.** Polished semi-magical stone and woven lines of force to counter massed firearms. Gurgling waves ripple round and through the suit as though it were a viscous liquid. Halves damage from high velocity and energy attacks. Spend charge: gain +5 strength or 30 life forcefield. Armor +5, cool, recharge 4, 2 st. €8,000.
3. **Onyx Ghost.** Coiling onyx snakes and shifting spirit stones whispers of lives wasted, dreams destroyed. Spend charge: gain +3 aura or 50 life forcefield. Armor +5, enviro, recharge 2, 2 st. €10,000.
4. **Porcelain Walker Suit.** The best in princely technology, with shiny polychrome ceramic plates. Spend charge: walks itself for several hours. Armor +7, bulky, cool, intravenous, recharge 3, 3 st. €600.
5. **Full Archaic Armor.** This smart suit may develop a personality. Spend charge: gain +4 strength or a 20 life forcefield. Armor +8, bulky, enviro, intravenous, recharge 2, 3 st. €5,000.
6. **Brazen Minotaur.** A monstrosity of godmeat and astral bronze cooked up in the crypt vats of the Living Flesh God. It bonds with the user and removal requires a day of prayer (or 3d6 life). The suit deals 1d10 damage with unarmed attacks. Spend charge: gain +6 strength or a 30 life forcefield. Armor +7, enviro, large, recharge 3, 3 st. €5,000.

4.2.4. Armor Features

More are possible.

1. **Bulky.** Cumbersome. Makes stealthy, nimble action more difficult.
2. **Cool.** Looks good in a hot environment, but a thermal blanket is recommended at night because it gets chilly.
3. **Enviro.** Grants a bonus against environmental effects like acid, toxic clouds and dying of thirst. Often with magical hazmat runes or post-mechanical breathing implants.
4. **Hot.** Good in winter, but terrible in hot environments. After exertion, such as a battle, the hero needs a rest and water. Without such a breather, the hero may become fatigued.
5. **Interfacing.** Allows direct neural control of secondary systems, such as artillery or colossal golems.
6. **Intravenous.** Set up to directly inject potions (free action). Discarding very quickly may cause blood loss.
7. **Large.** The armor makes the wearer large enough to struggle with normal human doors and rooms.

4.1.5.1. Standard Sizes

Modern humans prefer smaller sizes, even half-size equipment in the Orange Lands, but the fabricators refuse to change their blue prince designs, so artisans must adjust even new-fab armor.

<1 stone	Small wards. Bracers and circlets.
1 stone	Shields and light armor. Linen and pleather.
2 stones	Medium armor. Amber and chitin.
3 stones	Heavy armor. Porcelain and chain.
4+ stones	Golem armor. Mobile suits and automatons.

4.3. Gadgets and Tools

More than most other gear, gadgets rely on common sense. They do what it sounds like they do (see 4.0.1. and 4.0.2.).

4.3.0.1. Climbing & Mobility

1. Aerolith anchor. Slows you down if you fall. 2 st. €75.
2. Climbing gear. 2 st. €20.
3. Exoskelegolem. A magical suit of pipes, cables, synthetic flesh, and insectile mind. Increases capacity by 1 sack. 5 st. €500.
4. Grappling hook and 50 cubits of rope. 2 st. €5.
5. Lightweight inflatable raft. Stowed: 1 st, inflated: 10 st. €50.
6. Smart rope. Wonderful stuff. It ties and unties on command. 20 meters long. Cheaper ropes available. 1 st. €10.

4.3.0.2. Surveillance & Tracking

1. Chronometer. Jeweled timepiece, with date, timer, alarm, timezone, and note-taking functions. 1 sp. €25.
2. Clicker box. Handheld electromagnificent radiation detector. Picks up 17 kinds of magical and mundane rays. Long range, 5 sp, €50.
3. Electronic ear. Eavesdropping at a distance. 5 sp. €25.
4. Handheld bioscanner. Detect individual and species traces. 1 st. €200.
5. Holomap. 4D auto-tracking. 1 st. €100.
6. Micro golem, remote surveillance. 1 st. Crawler: €50; flyer: €200.

4.3.0.3. Stealth & Disguise

1. Dampsound shoes. Very chubby. 1 st. €20.
2. Dark-vision goggles. With infrared emitter. 1 st. €100.
3. Soft-hands gloves. Record & replicate fingerprints. 1 st. €100.
4. Unnoticeability mask. Pass unremarked. 1 st. €20.
5. Voice modulator scarab. 5 sp. €30.
6. Wall-blender chameleon suit. 1 st. €50.

4.3.0.4. Security & Infiltration

1. Augmented reality goggles with real-time blue prince (blueprint) generator. 1 st. €100.
2. Disintegrity spray. Dissolve metals or plastics. 1 st. €20.
3. Mechanical and electronic lockpicking set. 1 st. €25.
4. Multi-auto tool. 75 standard mechanical tools in one. Disable traps, pick locks, assemble furniture. Replenish 2, 2 st. €50.
5. Noösphere interface gauntlet. Access magi-electric devices. 1 st. €100.
6. Tool kit with laser cutter and seven other small tools. 1 st. €25.

4.3.0.5. Protection & Safety

1. Emergency flare. Glows brightly and smokes for about 10 minutes. A way of saying, "I am here!" Reload 2, 1 st. €10.
2. Enviro mask. Protect from spores, gas, and toxic spells. 1 st, €50.
3. Glo paint. With applicator nozzle. Mark your way around Long Long Ago ruins! Bright enough to read by. 1 st. €10.
4. High-strength adhesive. Seal doors or immobilize enemies. Reload 4, 1 st. €30.
5. Nasal filters. Stop horrible smells from triggering nausea. Also said to protect against some inhaled toxins. 1 sp. €5.
6. Personal rebreather. Survive underwater. 1 st, €110.

4.3.0.6. Magielectronics & Power

1.	Collapsible signal jammer. Long range, middling area, 1 st. €50.
2.	Golem strength physical augmentation harness. Sets the user's strength to 6. Replenish 5, 1 st, €200.
3.	Invisibility bomb. Throwing, small area, 1 st, €25.
4.	Nanobot repair kit. Repair any item in one hour. Reload 5, 1 st, €100.
5.	Nulla charger. Uses zero-point energy to recharge any item in one hour. 1 st, €300.
6.	Portable EMP pulser. Disable golems and synthetics (save). Short range, 1d3, Reload 4, 1 st. €50.

4.3.0.7. Communication & Control

1.	Alarum generator, loud. 5 sp. €10.
2.	Holographic distraction projector. Short range, reload 3, 1 st. €100.
3.	Human control choke. Does not work on wizards. Reload 19, 1 st. €200.
4.	Jar of encrypted communication ear jewels. 6 pieces, extra-long range, 1 st. €100.
5.	Sympathetic generative credentials card, the ever-believable forgery option. Reload 3, 1 sp. €200.
6.	Universal translator ear slug. 1 sp, €100.

4.3.0.8. Travel & Outdoors

1. Oculars. Techno-optics with 25x zoom, laser rangefinder, and integrated ad-blocker. 1 st. €50.
2. Ray Bane Navigators. Traditional UV-blocking sunglasses. Also a status symbol among travelers and merchants. 1 sp. €100.
3. Solar lamp. Magic lamp of the Long Ago that eats sunlight to emit a short beam of warm light. 1 sp. €100.
4. Starwatcher compass. Displays directions, latitude, longitude, and out-of-date open source map. Requires line of sight to fast stars. 2 sp. €50.
5. Void thermos. Perfect vacuum seals. Maintains tea, soup, or bio slurry at the same temperature for a week. 1 st. €25.
6. Water purification pills. Makes a week's worth of water fit to drink. Kills bacteria and viruses. Removes some toxins. Refill 2, 1 sp. €5.

4.3.0.9. Rest & Recreation

1. Enviro tent. Protects one person from extreme heat and cold and small floods. Recycles liquids and air for up to 1 week.
2. Folding Bed. Chitin cap mesh and synthetic flexi-bamboo makes every night's sleep a joy. Faster healing. 2 st. €35.
3. Folding Chair. Wonder of wicker pipes, mesh, and tubes. With drinks holder. Very comfortable. Makes stake-outs easy. 1 st. €5.
4. Musical Instrument. Guitar, oud, pipa, qanbus, rubab or tambur. Its strings loosen tongues and improve moods at campfires. 1 st. €10.
5. Portable illusion. Vidy crystal projector. Plays full 9D experiences. Non-wizards may be fooled by these phantasms. Recharge 4, 1 st. €250.
6. Radiothermal stove. Provides heat forever (or at least 100 years). Warning! Absolutely do not open! 1 st. €1,000.

4.4. Replenishers

Magnificent devices created by the Builders for the convenience of the good humans of Long Long Ago. These fabricators can replenish many resources.

4.4.0.1. Single Use Disposables

1. Dehydrated Water. Water a 1 sk creature or device. Once. Available in pill form. 1 sp. €20.
2. Fillgut. Synthetic organic food to fill any belly! Once. Available in soylent yellow. 1 sp. €5.
3. Microbattery. Recharge a 1 st item. Once. Available in black. 1 sp. €7.
4. Nanoammo. Reload any weapon. Once. Available in death. 1 sp. €100.
5. Omnibattery. Recharge anything. Once. Comes in 12 cheery colors. Collect them all. 1 st. €50.
6. Power Cube. An enerxxon original. A fragment of divine soul for your vehicle. Refuel any machine. Once. Available in alpha-spark. 1 st. €10.

4.4.0.2. Cradles and Multi-Use Fabricators

Fed properly, each multi-use fabricator replenishes itself in 1 day. Fabricators tend to be large, usually 1 sack (1 sk = 10 st) or larger.

1. Battery Bug. A giant cybernetic beetle, a modified firefly, that lays batteries. Don't think about it too much. Just feed it waste and water and sunlight regularly. Replenish 5, 1 sk. €1,000.
2. Envirogenerator. Not stolen from a void ship. Fill with waste gasses, liquids, and solids. Emits fresh air, water, carbon dust, and other trace elements. Replenish 6, 1 sk. €500.
3. Fuel Condenser. Converts air, sunlight, and a sack of organic matter into fuel. Replenish 4, 2 sk. €1,200.
4. Heavy Metal Ammonite™. A biomechanical ammo fabricator. Keep in a metal-rich soup for best results. Creates an ammo pack in 10 minutes. Replenish 3, 2 sk. €2,000.
5. Pink Slime Emitter. Turn any organic material into healthy Human Food™! Flavor functions sold separately. Drink straight from the teat. Reload with a sack of organic matter. Replenish 2, 2 sk. €1,000.
6. Teravolt Cradle. Golem armor fast charger. With a bit of jiggery pokery also works on other equipment (10 minutes per charge). Bathe in wide-spectrum radiation to replenish. Replenish 3, 1 sk. €660.

4.5. Consumables

Single-use items such as air, drink, food, medicine, potions, poisons, and drugs. Sometimes necessary, sometimes useful.

Effects last a few hours unless specified otherwise.

A twelve-pack gets a replenish score of 2 and costs 10x the listed price.

4.5.0.1. Drinks

1. Cat Coffee. Narcotic from black cat droppings. A pot of the fragrant stuff induces sleep and restores lost mental attributes. Strongly addictive (without it the cat coffee fiend can't stop complaining). 1 sp. €2.
2. Keep It Up Cha. Tea brewed from the Blue God's own mycelium. Reduces dissatisfaction, jitteriness, and initiative. Produces a deep sense of contentment, belonging, and obedience. Reputed to be an aphrodisiac. 1 sp. €5.
3. Photosynth Sap. The condensed juice of the golden tree lets sunlight nourish you for a week. 1 st. €50.
4. Soul Juice. Distilled souls. A wonderful source of energy. Removes 1 mental burden permanently. 1 st. €300.
5. Synthetic Blood. A fine Red Land bottle. For surgery or to feed a vampire for a week. 1 st. €20.
6. You Go. Fizzy drink that lets you ignore a burden for a day. Warning! Excessive consumption may cause petrification! 1 sp. €3.

4.5.0.2. Foods

1. Blue Spacecake. Actually a yogurt and mushroom blend, not a cake. Increases insight, boosts aura, gives a cold glow. Not filled with brain-altering spores. 1 sp. €5.
2. Green Ortholentils. Wafer product. Does not contain ancestors. Reduces cognitive dissonance, makes compliance with the correct and truthful doctrines of the Cogflower easy. 1 sp. €1.
3. Orange Ratgum. Does not contain void rats. Gain resistance to telepathic and mind control effects while you chew. 1 sp, refill 3. €60.
4. Red Nutrislurry. Not made from processed vampire knights. A bar invigorates you like a short rest. Great for sentry duty! 2 sp. €5.
5. Purple Worm Sausages. Not made from giant worms. Provides enough energy for a day's hard labor and lets you ignore 1 physical burden or injury. 1 sp. €3.
6. Yellowbrain Choux. Deep fried pastries that do not contain starmind brainmatter. Gives vision dreams and a bonus to contacting alien entities in the noösphere. 1 sp. €20.

4.5.0.3. Medicines

1. Curative Snake Oil. Generic remedy against venom, bugs, parasites, diseases, rashes, and blisters. Grants one save per week. 1 sp. €10.
2. Flesh Soil. Biomagical substrate that nourishes an organ, such as a liver or a hand or a head, for a month. Jar sold separately. 1 st. €50.
3. Full-Heal Kit. The wide-spectrum regenerators even rebuild a lost limb in mere minutes. Purchase an OTA upgrade to rebuild additional limbs. 1 st. €300.
4. Healmachine. Restores 2d8 life to a machine. Repairs cosmetic damage to vehicle bodies. 1 st. €60.
5. Ultra-Purga. A terrifyingly effective purgative. Lose 2d4 life or ability points and just as many infections, possessing daemons, and other baneful affections. 1 st. €200.
6. Violet City Healing Lotion. Restores 2d6 life or 1 physical ability point. 1 sp. €40.

4.5.0.4. Drugs

1. Black Light Lotus. Glows in the dark and cats love it. Eaten, it cures mental afflictions for a week. Smoked, it brings deep sleep and restores 1d6 life. Smeared on the skin it exudes mind-altering pheromones, increasing appeal for a day. Addictive (without it, the lotus-eater suffers cramps and hunger pangs). 1 sp. €5.

2. Felix Whizz. A popular energy drink. Grants +1d4 life, but makes you a little annoying. Weakly addictive (without it, the whizz-face feels pissy, grouchy, and unfocused). 1 sp. €1.

3. Glitchvidy. A direct neuro-transformer absorbed via comm-goggles. Originally used for reprogramming humans, now used for direct pleasure stimulation. Addictive (without it, the glitchnik loses access to random skills and traits). 1 st. €50.

4. Lemma Worm. A memetic drug enjoyed via asmr and tactile input. Brings a sense of meaning. Overuse causes strange beliefs. Somewhat addictive (without it, the lemon-worm, as lemma worm addicts are sometimes called, suffers paranoia). 1 sp. €10.

5. Purple Haze. The toke of choice for manly folks. The aromatized "*essensa de mors*" numbs pain and emotions. A long spliff helps with pain, grief, fear, and hurt, but makes one slow and weak-willed. Weakly addictive (without it, the haze-head suffers cotton mouth and brain fog). 0.1 sp. €2.

6. Whiskers. Expand the mind, increase perception, cause a weak levitation effect and reduced coordination. Somewhat addictive (without it, the whiskler suffers strong tremors). 1 sp. €10.

4.5.0.5. Potions & Ointments

1. Eggplant Elixir. Your skin becomes thick, rubbery, and eggplant-purple. Gain resistance against physical and electric damage. 1 sp. €50.
2. Octarine Oil. Drip this iridescent liquid in your eyes to see a wider spectrum of EM radiation, from microwaves to gamma rays. 1 sp. €20.
3. Otherface Cream. Look like your favorite influencer! Makes your face soft and malleable. 1 sp. €45.
4. Philip Juice. Transform yourself! Swap two ability scores. 1 sp. €10.
5. Tonic Harmonic. Enjoy your music more! Acquire perfect pitch and a golden throat. 1 sp. €75.
6. UV Lotion. Protects from the UV radiation and provides resistance against radiant damage. 1 sp. €5.

4.5.0.6. Supplies

Food, water, and essentials to keep a person or vehicle alive for a week.

1. Low-Q Diesolene. A cheap way to run big modern autogolems. "Ole Belcher" produces hot, iridescent smoke. 1 sk. €10
2. Oldtech Jetolene. Makes autogolems go fast. Burns white-hot and may explode engines. 1 sk. €50.
3. Premium Basic Supplies. Dwarf bread, water, hempen cloth, and wrapping rags. Penalty to healing and recovery. 1 sk. €2
4. Premium Guzzolene. Basic synthetic dead dinosaurs. 1 sk. €20.
5. Void Paste. Packets of vacuum-packed ever-fresh™ food produced for the voidfarers of old. Just add moisture. Any moisture. 2 st. €50.
6. Voyager Supplies. Tinned meat, travel ale, disinfectant schnapps, novelty items, rough newspapers, socks, gum, and prophylactics. 1 sk. €10.

4.6. Mounts & Vehicles.

Friendly solutions for transportation, logistics, and combat!

4.6.0.1. Mount & Vehicle Mechanics

1. **Capacity.** How much it can carry. Unless specified otherwise, listed in sacks. One sack = 10 stones or roughly one human.
2. **Carting.** Wheels are great. A creature can pull triple its normal capacity. A creature pulling one load can't also carry a second load. Just no.
3. **Dragging.** Using improvised stretchers, ropes, rollers or skids, a creature can pull double its normal capacity.
4. **Flying.** Not a good idea because of the Purple Haze, which rots human minds. At least, that's what natives say. Also, there are fragments of stuckforce littering the sky, an invisible cutting hazard.
5. **Golem.** Golem vehicles use near-inexhaustible radiothermal batteries. Each lasts for decades. They are popular targets for thieves.
6. **Grazing.** Herbivores usually eat grass and other plants. In deserts, they consume a sack of supplies per week. Common supplies cost €2 per sack, like for humans. Camels only consume half, they're cool.

4.6.0.2. Energy—Fuel For Your Fire

Most vehicles burn synthetic fuel. Traditionally, this is refined from biomass by biomagical eating animalcules in alchemical vats, or with a domesticated autofac. Some communities even refine their dead into energy.

- Low-Q Diesolene, "Ole Belcher", costs €10 per sack and produces hot, iridescent smoke. Adds the "smoke" tag to a caravan.
- Premium Guzzolene costs €20 per sack.
- Oldtech Jetolene costs €50 per sack and adds the "fast" tag to a caravan. It burns white-hot and may explode.

4.6.0.3. Speed

The speeds of mounts, vehicles, and character are descriptive.

Very slow   a decaying zombie, a broken human.
Slow   a skeleton, an overburdened human.
Normal speed   a healthy human hiking the highlands.
Fast   horses, hounds, hallowed hollow golems.
Very fast   a metal steed, a racing autogolem.

The referee adjudicates how this applies in play, unless other rules apply.

4.6.0.4. Overloading

Possible, but not smart. Moderate test once a week or something goes wrong (roll d6):

1. Engine dies. Lose a day replacing the engine (if you have one) or pull the vehicle to a machine shop.
2. Exhausted animal. Lose 1d4 days resting or a 1-in-2 chance it dies at the end of the week.
3. Broken axle. Lose 1d4 days to jury-rig a fix. A replacement axle costs a tenth of the vehicle's cost.
4. Lamed animal. It can't carry anything for a week. Force it to carry cargo and it will be permanently crippled.
5. Straps break. Random cargo spills. Fragile things break.
6. Random cargo crushed, loses half value. Badly packed, the fragile black light lotus leaf is now just so much powder.

4.6.0.5. Upgrading

Smaller upgrades can be purchased for larger vehicles and creatures at higher cost. Some upgrades might not make sense (referee's discretion).

4.6.1. Undead

Undead transportation solutions require necromantic maintenance from someone with at least a community-level necromechanical degree. This is usually nothing more than a drop or two of their master's blood per week, perhaps some bolts tightened, and a fresh jolt of magielectric juice. When undead creatures are not maintained, they degrade (speed declines).

1. **Bone Horse.** Could also be a bone mule. Or ox. Hard to tell. It didn't need its head. Level 2, capacity 2, normal speed. €400.
2. **Carcass Blimp.** Take a giant airjelly. Reanimate it and fill it with biogas. Hey, presto, a levitating platform you can pull with a rope! Level 1, capacity 1, very easy to tow. €100.
3. **Meat Crawler.** What do you do if you come across a plague pit and have both a necromancer and a boneworker on hand? Not this. Please, do not do this. Giant meat and bone centipedes are not a good idea. Unlike single-body undead, the meat crawler can go months before it degrades enough to impede its mobility. That said, mobility was never the point of this abomination, was it? Level 8, capacity 24, very, very slow. €2,000.
4. **Sinew Strider.** Dead flesh rewoven into a six-legged camel-sized endoskeletal ant-thing. Please ignore the human skull. Level 2, capacity 3, slow. €600.
5. **Skeleton Porter.** Formerly, a useless nobody. Now a useful … bioma-chine. Level 1, capacity 1, slow. €200.
6. **Zombie Porter.** One day it may become a skeleton and stop smelling. That day is not today. Level 2, capacity 2, very slow. €200.

4.6.1.1. Undead Upgrades

1. **Berserker Gland.** A mechanical combat routine jewel. Insert it into the zombie and activate it later with the remote wand, turning the zombie into a relentless killing machine. The activation is irreversible and the zombie cannot tell friend from foe, so plan carefully. Human-sized. €50.
2. **Chrome Plating.** Say goodbye to stealth. Thoughtful bandits may mistake the skeletons for combat golems, glitterdust ghosts, or something worse. Human-sized. €10.
3. **Dermal Plating.** Up-armored, the meat crawler is essentially immune to small arms and any melee weapon weaker than a chainsaw. Truck-sized. €800.
4. **Fresh Costume.** Makes a rotten steed look alive! Horse-sized. €50.
5. **Geometric Protocol.** On command the skeletons assemble into a prearranged formation or shape. With enough skeletons, you can create an observation tower, a wall, or a bone crab. Human-sized. €20.
6. **Rubberized Coating.** A thick layer of flesh-preserving epoxy. Sealed glass goggles and copper ear-discs keep the smell inside while letting the zombie function at peak efficiency. Human-sized. €10.

4.6.1.2. This Undead Steed

d10	Was Named	Died Of	And It Has	Disposition
1	Borgo	Catfish	Blank mask	Affectionate
2	Caliope	Curse	Charred flesh	Anguished
3	Encleu	Didn't	Duck tape wrappings	Boring
4	Iohn	Disease	Foul odor	Depersonalized
5	Llobi	Error	Ghastly looks	Gnashing
6	Mameleid	Magic	Leather straps	Grim
7	Pavan	Murder	Mold overgrowth	Hateful
8	Sentilopa	Poison	Slimy coating	Moaning
9	Tendresse	Science	Symbiotic worms	Watchful
10	Ugolino	War	Terrible taste	Weeping

4.6.2. Beasts of Burden

In these fallen times traditional work animals, like lopebeavers and honkazelles, are found in most rustic parts of the Rainbowlands. However, for journeys into the Ultraviolet Grasslands, only tried and tested beasts of burden will do.

1. **Biomechanical.** Astonishing amalgams of muscle and cybernetics sheathed in superior skin. These very rare beasts of the Long Ago can be ridden in combat. Most ordinary steeds break before them. Level 6, capacity 6, grazing or 3 supply per week, normal speed. €3,000.
2. **Burdenbeast.** Magnificent, shaggy creatures, biomantically engineered to positively enjoy lugging heavy goods for humans. Many grow intensely, emotionally attached to their masters. Level 5, capacity 4, grazing or 2 supply per week, normal speed. €600.
3. **Camel.** The solution for desolate deserts. Goes farther with less water. Level 1, capacity 2, grazing or 1 supply per two weeks normal speed. €140.
4. **Combat Steed.** Other animals won't go near a melee, but this one will. 1-in-6 combat steeds are carnivorous andrewsarks or other beasts revived from deep time. Level 2, capacity 2, grazing, or 1 supply per week, normal speed. €200.
5. **Pony Mule.** It was supposed to be a pony or mule, but there we go. Eats grass, travels over all terrain in all weather. Also, it's edible. Consumes supplies in places without vegetation or water. Level 1, capacity 2, grazing or 1 supply per week, normal speed. €70.
6. **Quadrodont.** The four-tusked pachyderm of the Yellow Desert is a recent import to the eastern seas of grass and especially popular with Safranian merchants. Level 7, capacity 5, temperamental, grazing or 3 supply per week, normal speed. €3,000.

4.6.2.1. Beast Upgrades

1. **Afterburner.** This convenient surgical upgrade stores gaseous digestive byproducts in a small canister, for use in cooking fires or a sudden burst of speed. The speed may be from fear. Horse-sized, €60.
2. **Babel Gem.** Embedded, gives the beast a voice and human-form personality overlay. Works on most beasts, but increases the chance of vomish infection. Obedience not guaranteed. €100.
3. **Dendric Fur.** Bright green fur, rich with photosynthetic symbiotes, lets the beast go twice as far on each meal! €150.
4. **Plug-In Battery.** A rechargeable golem-style battery for backup power. The beast can go without grazing for up to four weeks (it still needs water). Alternatively, the battery can recharge a suit of golem armor or other oldtech artifact. Recharging the battery takes a couple of hours at any oldtech charging platform or obelisk. Horse-sized. €200.
5. **Stepfall Shoes.** Made from bits of oldtech ur-metal. When moving at top speed, the plates add a tiny bit of lift, letting the beast charge across small dips, avoid holes, and leap majestically. They leave xenon contrails. Horse-sized. €80.
6. **Thagomizer.** The beast's tail is upgraded into a lethal spiked club dealing 2d8 damage. Buffalo-sized. €300.

4.6.2.2. Local Burdenbeast Variants

d10	A Bit Like	Crossed With	And It Has	Disposition
1	Horse	Beetle	Superb night vision	Curious
2	Camel	Catfish	An astonishing odor	Stubborn
3	Yak	Tortoise	Moisture extraction gills	Disease-riddled
4	Antelope	Metal Orb	Sticky climbing pads	Lethargic
5	Bison	Cuttlefish	Phosphorescent spots	Adorable
6	Iguana	Rat	Prehensile nostrils	Loyal
7	Toad	Pig	Delicious skin parasites	Skittish
8	Newt	Cement Mixer	Vestigial wings	Cunning
9	Rhino	Slug	Root-digging claws	Competitive
10	Ostrich	Goat	Hyper-adaptable digestion	Inscrutable

4.6.3. Wagons, Carts, Coaches

Wheels transformed proto-human lives. Truly nomadic lifestyles became possible and the humble wheel became a symbol of humanity. There would be no modern Grasslands without that ancient round machine.

1. **Adventuring Handcart.** This glorified wheelbarrow doesn't need much of a road, but it does need some kind of road. Not recommended for battle. Level 2, capacity 3, requires a pusher, slow. €10.
2. **Aerolith Sled.** Slabs of aerolith bound together and mounted on skids. If you overload this sled, it'll drag and make your life hell. Level 4, capacity 10, requires a draft animal, slow. €1,000.
3. **Battle Chariot.** A light coach designed for a driver and one rifleman. Shock absorbers for a smoother ride, armor to provide partial cover. Level 3, capacity 2, requires a draft animal, normal speed. €500.
4. **Cart, Coach, or Wagon.** A classic for a reason. Wains of this type opened up the steppes to the known Lime Nomads and the forgotten Flour Nomads. Level 4, capacity 6, requires a draft animal, slow. €200.
5. **Heavy Coach or Wagon.** Heavy vehicles for big caravans. With their weight they are unsuitable for rough terrain, poor roads, and deep mud. Level 7, capacity 12, requires 2 draft animals, slow. €600.
6. **Massive Hauling Wagon.** How else are you going to move an obelisk? The immense weight of these wagons means they require well-prepared surfaces. Level 4, capacity 24 sacks, requires 4 draft animals, very slow. €1,500.

4.6.3.1. Wagon Upgrades

All prices are listed for a regular cart or battle chariot. Upgrades for larger wagons cost two- or four-times as much, for smaller ones half as much.

1. **Camo Net.** Not as good as true rainbow silk, but a cheap and waterproof landscape mimic. Lets you hide your vehicle from casual scouting. Just don't wander away from your camp in the dark. €20.
2. **Chitincap Hull.** Fibrous, grown and woven components replace heavy wood. The result is a lighter vehicle that is easier to maneuver in mud and on poor roads. €200.
3. **Hull-Tight.** Designed to float across calm rivers. Seams caulked, wheels detachable, handles convertible into steering oars or push-poles. €40.
4. **Osteoliths.** Living bone growths cover your wagon, offering increased damage and fire resistance. €300.
5. **Rainbow Silk.** Display shifting patterns and images! Communicate at a distance! Activate the camouflage setting to hide in the middle of a field! Please note: rainbow silk cannot hide tracks. €750.
6. **Sails.** Add a tiny bit of extra speed. Not worth quantifying mechanically, but it improves morale (especially if you pass people without a sail). A great way to display your company's logo. €10.

4.6.3.1. Wagon Stylings

d10	Style	Detailing	Feature
1	Bonework	Cloth	Absorbent armor gel
2	Chitinweave	Foliage	Anti-crash foam nozzles
3	Dead Golem	Fur	Gyroscopic auto-leveler
4	Extraherbal	Gelatin	Hydrophobicseat covers
5	Lime Nomad	Glass	Nine-axis suspension
6	Long Ago	Ivory	Retractable flag pole
7	Right Roader	Metal	Self-repairing axles
8	Scavenger	Stone	Swivel seats
9	Sinew & Skin	Tiles	Thermal barrier wrap
10	Sung Wood	Wire	Tuber growth medium

4.6.4. Autogolems

The grandest of vehicles to once ply the Vast: sentient machines fuelled by oldtech magics. Perhaps their time returns once more?

1. **Autogolem.** Slow, self-propelled wagon. Armored, tough, and impressive as heck. It drives itself safely—but beware crossing marshes or rough terrain. Carries 2d3 passengers in lovely bolted-on cabins. Definitely not a decepticrawler. Level 10, capacity 24, consumes 1 supply per week, slow. €10,000.
2. **Evening Golem.** An enormous biomechanical walker golem. Among the most stylish travel systems money can buy. Tuxedo option available. Level 9, capacity 12, consumes 1 supply per week, slow. €6,000.
3. **Metal Steed.** Fast and flash, it roars like thunder when pushed. The chrome horse with optional wheels is a popular look. Level 2, capacity 2, consumes 1 supply per 2 weeks, fast. €1,200.
4. **Road Yacht.** The queen of the Road of the World, the celestial autobahn. A luxury machine for a golden age. Level 7, capacity 6, consumes 1 supply per week, normal speed. €4,000.
5. **War Engine.** It's a tank? To eleven? No. It's a mobile fortress. Ninety* tons of thunder, lighting up the night. Level 11, capacity 36, consumes 2 supply per week, very slow. €20,000.
6. **Wicker Autowagon.** A self-propelled golem of synthetic ivory, iron-reed, and rubber. Level 3, capacity 3, consumes 1 supply per 2 weeks, fast. €2,000.

*Some literary scholics suspect this may be an exaggeration in the original mechanical maintenance poem.

4.6.4.1. Autogolem Upgrades

All prices are listed for a regular road yacht. Upgrades for larger vehicles cost two- or four-times as much, for smaller ones half as much.

1. **Air Conditioning.** Has a magic box that cools the cabin. Probably involves a bound demon. Essential in hot climes. It's impressive. €500.
2. **Big Gun.** Occupies 2 sacks, typically 1 for the gun and 1 for the ammo, maintenance equipment, and blast shields. €1,500. Options include:
   Flambéur: 3d6 fire damage, long range, reload 6. Sets on fire.
   Chaingun: 2d12, long range, reload 3. May propel you backwards.
   Lazor: 3d8, short range, reload 5. Can cut down small trees.
3. **Hover Wheels.** Billowing air-jets, stuckforce discs, or dozens of spinning propeller blades. Ignore mildly difficult terrain. €2,000.
4. **Luxury Seats.** Made of genuine synth-leather (from genuine synth-cows) and stuffed with autofabulous springs. Even folds down into a bed. Hula bobble-head totem doll optional. €300.
5. **Oldtech Golem Heart.** The autogolem now runs on the original truespark of creation. Never refuel again! Please keep heart wrapped in a lead blanket. €4,000.
6. **Snazzy Paintjob.** Shiny and polished. If normal colors aren't good enough for you, options include: scarabeo, pearl-tone, fordite swirl supreme, vantablack, gibbon, taupeamarine, and splunge. €100.

4.6.4.1. Autogolem Specials

d10	Brand	Feature	Disposition
1	<=5H1N3=>	All-atmosphere scoops	Bloodthirsty
2	Aquarius	Anymatter engine	Brooding
3	Feltz & Filtz	Closed cycle scrubbers	Cold
4	Macaroni Integrale	Full delusion pleasure system	Dog
5	Maya Yuga	Living tissue cover	Grumbling
6	Podzol Kozmos	Organometal self-repair bugs	Harsh
7	Singer Metal Humans	Polycrawler treads	Moody
8	Spitz-Schnauzer	Secondary guide brain	Pensive
9	Vanta-Chouette	Telepathic controls	Playful
10	Vega Utopia Ind.	True-Day™ high beams	Tired

5. POWERS

There are powers in this vast land beyond the ken of civilized humans. Rituals for jump-starting autogolems. Handed-down sacred physics. Instructions for drawing the attention of daemons from beyond the frontiers of reality. Formulae that rip reality off the underlying chaotic maelstrom of the void like an over-ripe bandage.

Ferals call these powers magic, fools call individual techniques spells. Sages know them as sciences for mastering the Maker's creation. Dark heretics whisper that the only difference between gods and humans is how much power they possess, and that a mortal who gained sorcerous super-user (super-*usurper*?) privileges could ascend to become a god, beyond life and death, beyond good and evil.

This section covers:

how powers work (5.1.)
some example powers (5.2.)

This section is also available as the first Magitecnica Zine, with additional art, stories, and a wizard's tower. Subsequent magitecnica zines [will? did? when are you reading this?] delve into other categories of powers, from the necromantic to the abmortality medicines of this later time.

5.1. Powers: Oldtech and Fantascience

Some scholars divide powers into two categories: oldtech, the techniques and useful devices given to humanity by the grace of the gods; and fantascience, the mystical permutations of the world made possible when one grasps the root levels of reality itself.

Most mystics laugh at such categorization, pointing out that there are as many types of powers as there are grains of sand on the seven heavenly beaches, but also only one power, the unified benevolence of the Maker.

Game mechanics for powers follow. A strange concept for the natives of this fantasy realm, for whom these are but laws of reality and no more. Still, this is for the daemons they call players and their characters.

This section repeats the rules presented in Magitecnica Codex 1: The Use and Misuse of Powers.

In the wild, powers may come in infinite shapes and sizes. On the page of this volume and others, they are trapped forever in a standard form. Deviation from the standard form is evil heresy. If you encounter any power or person deviating from the standard form, report them to the inquisition for rectification.

This is the standard form:

> *Thornstone Obelisk*
> Razorblade Tree
> **P:** 3 **R:** 10m
> **T:** planted landcoral seed **D:** permanent
> The petromancer spills their lifeblood, forcing the landcoral seed into sudden, explosive growth.
> A medium-sized limestone tree erupts from the ground, dealing 2d6 damage to adjacent creatures. Anyone moving through its thicket of razor branches suffers 1d4 damage. The terrible growth speed kills the landcoral.
> *Overcharge:* the growth is even more violent, dealing 6d6 damage to creatures in a small radius and scattering the ground with stone shards like caltrops. This destroys the landcoral.

5.1.1. Using Powers

Any character can use any power. Using a power may mean reading the fantascientific formulas from an electromagical book, it may involve an interpretative dance routine to summon a daemon, or perhaps just lighting dribbly candles made from the fat of a bona fide angel.

However, a character who knows what they're doing (i.e. has a trait with relevant skills) is less likely to blow themselves up into a giant blueberry or unleash a plague of ear-eating wigs.

5.1.1.1. Paying For Power

Powers impose otherworldly wrongness on the mundane. There is a price to pay for such power and the alien fires of the incomprehensible may consume one's body, spirit, and memories.

To use a power, you must first pay the price.

1 power costs 1 life

A character can also pay with ability score points, where 1 point = 1 life.

A completely clueless character, with no relevant skill or experience, pays double the price to use a power.

Traits can change the price a character pays for their powers.

5.1.1.2. Orders of Powers

All powers are of the first order (1 power or P: 1), unless otherwise noted.

Assigning powers is more art than science:

0 power:	a power that requires no life sacrifice. Weaker than an ordinary action, like running or firing a pistol, but allowing some specialized or unusual effect.
1 power:	a little more valuable and powerful than the mundane equipment of this modern day.
7 power:	a potent effect that changes the fundamental rules of a local reality in interesting ways.
13 power:	a terrible technique that may disable enemies or make very visible and semi-permanent changes to base reality.
21 power:	the stuff of fairytales; decades of slumber, exploding mountains, small iron stars falling from the sky, drastic reality changes.
42 power:	power to corrupt any mortal, rewriting histories and transforming eons.
99 power:	a power the mightiest half-divine magus used a single time, giving their life in the process.

Powers can also occupy every order in between, from 2 to 98.

5.1.1.3. Carrying Powers (Inventory)

A character can use any power in their inventory. They may bear it as a:

- Trait: for example, strange equations locked in their mind, changing their perspective and personality.
- Item: for example, a plastic skull filled with lambent newt juice.
- Burden: for example, the weight of a malign knowledge.

Powers can be used multiple times and do not disappear after use.

Powers can be packed away, like other items, or stored in a library or other safe room. Of course, characters can't use packed or stored powers.

Power albums, technocodicils, and spell books are valuable because they let a character carry a number of powers in a single inventory slot.

5.1.1.4. Range, Target, Duration
Self explanatory. Range (R:), Target (T:), and Duration (D:).

5.1.1.5. Overcharge
Overcharging a power doubles its price and modifies its effect.

Some powers can be overcharged multiple times: x2, x4, x8, x16 and so on.

5.1.1.6. Power Options
Powers may have additional mechanics. For example:

- Anchored Powers: The power is kept active and controlled with a physical anchor stored in the user's inventory. Destroying or losing the anchor deactivates the power (or worse).
- Attack Power: The power is used as an attack against the target's defense score. The defender does not save or make other rolls.
- Focus Powers: The user must focus on keeping the power active. If they are distracted by their own actions or external events, the power deactivates (or worse).
- Fueled Powers: The power requires some kind of consumable component to activate. Life alone is not enough to activate it.
- Imbued Powers: The power remains active so long as it remains imbued with the user's vital essence (the life or ability score price paid by the user). The user cannot recover imbued life or ability scores until they deactivate the power.
- Item Powers: The power locks the user's vital essence (life or ability score price paid) within an object. This is permanent, unless the item is destroyed or ritually powered down. Once an item is disabled, the user can recover their locked life or ability scores.

5.1.1.7. Dangerous Powers

Any power may be dangerous. Powers are dangerous when any of the following is true:

1. a **character has no suitable skill** (for example, a celebrated influencer trying to merge their consciousness with an oldtech war machine);
2. or, **their level is lower than the price of the power** (for example, a 3rd level PC trying to use a power that costs 4 life);
3. or, **a power is known to be dangerous** (for example, playing with a cancer bomb is never safe).

When a character casts a dangerous spell, they must make a danger roll.

> The roll must exceed the **target, which is the price of the power**.

> The character **rolls d20 + ability** (usually aura) **+ skill** (if relevant).

A natural 1 is always a failure.

> *Example: Noë is beset by haggard automatons. She overcharges her second order power,* Ring of Broken Forces*, to knock them down and clear her escape. Using the power now costs 4 life. Since she is a first level character, this makes her use of power dangerous.*

> *She has to roll d20 + aura (+4) + skill (her trait in the dark electronic arts gives her a bonus of +3) over a target of 4. This is a trivial roll for her, but there is a chance of catastrophic failure if she rolls a natural 1, so roll she must. Noë's player picks up the icosahedron …*

> *… and rolls a 17 for a total of 24. A success, indeed, an excessive success and the referee decides to narrate how the wave of barely controlled eldritch technomagic leaves the automatons knocked down and twitching, giving Noë a free round to make better her escape.*

The referee applies penalties and bonuses to a danger roll. For example:

> A PC without a relevant skill suffers a penalty.
> A PC whose level is higher than the power's price gets a bonus.

A character who fails their danger roll is **exposed to corruption** (5.1.2.1.).

5.1.2. Power Corruption

Power corrupts and the powers of the Long Long Ago builders are absolute. Corruption twists a user's body, abrades their soul, and stains their mind. Characters may be exposed to corruption in various ways:

- Failing a power's danger roll.
- Afflicted by a monster's corrupting powers or effects.
- Failing a save against environmental effects (wading through electro-magnificent radiation without an enviro-suit).
- Doing something stupid (drinking glowing blue goo).

Depending on severity, corruption may take many forms.

Example: Onion fiddles with the Long Ago stasis lock and finally flings open the psychophagus. An eerie extra-temporal mist floods out, surprising the wily Onion. Still, this shouldn't be too hard for the lucky (+3 to saves) traveler. Onion's player checks with the referee and Cat confirms it's a standard save: Onion has to roll over 13.

"A dawdle," says Onion and rolls his save, d20 + 3. The big die rolls and it's a 4. Even with a +3 bonus, that's far from the 14 he needed.

He is exposed to the ancient technomagic of the stasis lock and Cat bids him roll for corruption exposure.

5.1.2.1. Corruption Exposure

When a character is exposed to corruption they immediately **gain a burden** (such as a dramatic nosebleed or headache), then **roll 2d6 + aura** to figure out their corruption exposure.

1 or less	Power blowback. The power user's head explodes*, but the corruption keeps them alive until they die of hunger. Severe corruption exposure.
2 to 6	Severe corruption exposure.
7 to 10	Corruption exposure.
11 to 12	Mild corruption exposure.
12+	Mild corruption exposure and the power user regains the full price they paid for the power.

*Or something equally graphic and memorable.

The afflicted character then rolls based on the severity of their corruption exposure (5.1.2.2. to 5.1.2.4.).

Critically failed exposure saves and danger rolls may impose additional penalties to the exposure roll.

Traits, magic drugs, sacrifices, and special items may improve the odds.

Burdens affect the exposure roll.

5.1.2.2. Severe Exposure

Deleterious effects, calamitous mutations; the void peels back and chaos crawls through. The user becomes a warning to would-be meddlers.

> The character falls violently ill, suffering 1d6 points of ability score damage. Over the next day and night, they permanently reduce a relevant ability score by one (1) and gain a new corruption trait.

Roll or choose a relevant corruption trait. It can occupy a trait or item slot.

1. Only bones remain. The character is now a chaos skeleton.
2. Bones become soft or brittle. Gelatinous prognosis.
3. Eyes collapse and evaporate, leaving sockets that see the astral light.
4. Back hunches, fuses, turns into a shell-like carapace over a few weeks.
5. Strange bones erupt into spikes and thorns piercing the skin.
6. Hair develops into ropey keratin tentacles. Not quite snakes.
7. Suffused with the void, shadows permanently shroud the character.
8. Teeth fall out or become needle-sharp.
9. Hand withers and locks into a dagger-like claw (1d4 damage).
10. Skin rots and develops suppurating boils.
11. Secondary brain. It slowly develops independent thought.
12. Lower extremities turn into hooves or paws or bird feet.
13. Personality becomes alien, oblique, orthogonal to humanity.
14. Wings or flagellae. They grow capable of flight over a few weeks.
15. Secrete corrosive fluids, ruining clothes and eating through metals.
16. Strange vampiric metabolism. Consume unusual organs to thrive.
17. Secondary form. Like Jekyll's Hyde or a wolf's were.
18. Vomit up three remote sense organs. One can see, one can hear, one has a different strange sense. They have a range of a few dozen meters. If a remote organ is destroyed, the character permanently loses 1 life.
19. Undying. But not undecaying. This will become dreadful in a few decades, without a steady supply of replacement parts.
20. Psionic evolution. Acquire a power as an innate trait.

5.1.2.3. Regular Exposure

Cosmetic effects, visible mutations; the user's source code is corrupted and they become a living glitch, a reminder of all that could go wrong.

> The character is afflicted with terrible visions, suffering 1d6 life damage. Over the next day and night, they gain a new corruption trait.

Roll or choose a relevant corruption trait. It can occupy a trait or item slot.

1. Face comes ... off. Leaving a living, grinning skull.
2. Flesh and skin become waxy and translucent.
3. Joints become weaker but hypermobile.
4. Ears wither away or turn into bony horns. Or tentacles.
5. Tongue fused to jaw or covered in sharp radulae. Speech is strange.
6. New vestigial arm or tail. It becomes functional over a few weeks.
7. Eyes turn milky and blind. Only ultraviolet light remains visible.
8. Fingers wither, become raw, until only undead bones remain.
9. Gills or gas breathing organs. They're functional after a few weeks.
10. Grow taller or shorter. May become much taller or shorter.
11. Voice becomes posthuman. A cascade of colors and sensations.
12. Skin becomes patterned, shifting, chameleon or cuttlefish-like.
13. Small horns or platelets cover the skin, like armor.
14. Features and skull become animalistic.
15. Body becomes bulkier or gracile, as though adapting to an alien gravity.
16. Alien organ. It activates on death, reviving a version of the character.
17. Eerie new senses: vibration, echolocation, electricity, or magnetism.
18. Labor augmentation: no longer bored with dull, repetitive tasks.
19. Mule. Can carry twice as much as normal.
20. Suffused with sparkly spores, the character now glows.

5.1.2.4. Mild Exposure

Beneficial effects, lucky mutations; the Maker must have interceded to preserve the user and make them a bulwark of the Garden Path.

> The character feels fine. Possibly even a little euphoric. Over the next week and a day, they gain a new corruption trait.

Roll or choose a relevant corruption trait. It can occupy a trait or item slot.

1. Flesh crawls and regenerates, like it is a *Thing* with a mind of its own.
2. Mouth widens from ear to ear or nearly disappears.
3. Vestigial fingers and toes grow. They become functional in a few weeks.
4. Skin or hair color becomes strange and unnatural.
5. Skull becomes rounder or more elongated. Eyes grow larger.
6. Lips or nose or ears grow or disappear.
7. A biological weapon concealed within the body (deals 1d6 damage).
8. Eyes change color or shape, becoming radically weird.
9. A finger or other small appendage disappears and the character gains 1 life. Sacrifice two more for 1 more life.
10. Hair disappears or becomes voluminous and omnipresent.
11. Fingers become elongated multi-tool assemblages of chitin and bone.
12. Metabolic enhancement gives sustenance from any organic substances and immunity to most toxins.
13. Blood changes color, becoming blue or green. Gain 1 endurance.
14. Muscles grow extremely slim or bulky. Gain 1 strength or agility.
15. A sense becomes incredibly acute and sensitive.
16. Tele-empathy, like a cat. Gain 1 aura.
17. Golem-like secondary reason routines. Gain 1 thought.
18. Noble augmentation: health, beauty, and authority. Gain 1 charisma.
19. Precognitive flashes. Mostly harmless, but can spend 1 hero die per session to completely negate any roll.
20. Visions of a higher cosmos. The character becomes convinced that they are living in a synthetic hell, not a true heaven.

5.1.2.5. Other Types of Corruption

The referee may design custom corruption traits to fit the location, item, or story. Corruption traits could also be arranged in paths to fit special themes.

Game modules, locations, powers and items may also specify particular types and flavors of corruption.

5.1.2.6. Example: Blue God's Corruption Path

Cat is designing a path of corruption traits for a cultist of the Blue God, whose increased devotion is marked in their flesh.

She gives the path a name: Blue God's Sign.

And some flavor text: "from rot comes purification."

Then she invents four traits:

First, the oozing mark. The filth of chaos oozes from the hero's pores. They become resilient to disease, but the smell is pestilential.

Second, the blue palmata. Orifices open on the skin and ooze a blood-like serum. Wounds do not fully heal and release a similar fluid.

Third, the new skin. Skin becomes a cratered, heaving, suppurating mess covered in wriggling symbiotes that resemble grave worms. Nose, ears, eyelids, and other delicate areas may rot away.

Fourth, the sacred yogurt. A whitish substance with the consistency of clotted yogurt continually drips from the symbiotes. This milk of the Blue God has strong analgesic and numbing properties. The hero becomes entirely resistant to diseases and poisons.

Cat stole this idea from a grim writer in a strange dream. But she won't admit it.

5.1.3. Owning Powers

Unless a PC rolls a power as a starting item or buys one with their starting cash, they start without any powers beyond their own wits and competence.

5.1.3.1. Getting a New Power

There are five ways, from smart to stupid:

1. Learn it from a wise master, as is tradition.
   No roll to learn to use the power needed!
2. Purchase an original, mint-in-box power, complete with instructions.
   Expensive, but easy to learn.
3. Acquire a pre-loved power together with vague instructions from a power user.
4. Find it on an adventure, while looting burial goods … er … a treasure hoard. Hard to learn.
5. By messing with a strange artifact or aberration beyond human ken.
   This may well corrupt your essence.

Most cities regulate the production and sale of powers, which drives official prices up. Still, an enterprising character might find black markets and wild traders with powers for sale. The referee has final say on what powers, if any, are available for purchase in a locality.

Order of Power	Mint	Pre-Loved	Looted*
1	€100	€50	€25
2	€300	€150	€75
3	€1,000	€500	€250
4	€3,000	€1,500	€750
5	€10,000	€5,000	€2,500
6	€30,000	€15,000	€7,500
7	€100,000	€50,000	€25,000

*always has an unfortunate side effect.

5.1.3.2. Learning to Use a New Power

Any PC can try to use any power.

This is not wise. Without training and study, it could blow up in their face or turn them into a translucent slughuman.

To **use a power safely**:

First, study it for a week.

Then, roll thought (a moderate test) to see how your studies went:

1:	You failed. Roll to beat the power or you are corrupted; *and* if you learn to use it someday, it will have a side effect.
Failure:	You failed. Roll to beat the power or you are corrupted.
Success:	You learn how to use it safely!
20:	Mastery. Your version gets a small upgrade!

If you make longer studies, use an oldtech laboratory, or get special help, you may gain bonuses to your learning roll.

5.1.3.3. Modifying a Power

Any PC may attempt to modify a power know how to use. This requires a few weeks, access to a suitable oldtech laboratory or similar facility, and €50 per order of power. Example modifications:

- Power Hack. Make the power work with one of your existing traits. Very hard thought test.

  Example: hacking a healing power to work with a necromantic trait.

- Power Upgrade. Gain an extra or better effect. Hard thought test.

  Example: upgrading a translation protocol to also improve the user's perceived charisma.

- Power Quirk. Gain a cosmetic quirk or side effect. Thought test.

  Example: making mosses sprout when a hydrotechnique is used.

As with learning a new power (5.1.3.2.), failing to modify a power risks corruption and great success offers added bonuses.

5.1.3.4. Small Upgrades

Improve powers with a bit of whizz-bang oldtech wizardry.

1. Healing. A random nearby creature or object gains 1 life when you use the power.
2. Soothing. Nearby plants, animals, and even humans feel calm when you use the power.
3. Shielding. When you deploy your power, you can shield a creature or object from its effect.
4. Silent. Very stealthy to use. Soundless, even.
5. Enticing aroma. You smell very nice and pleasant after using the power.
6. Nimbus. When you use the power, you gain a small bonus to your defenses for the rest of the round.
7. Warding. Using the power creates a field that weakens adjacent daemons or undead for the rest of the round.
8. Timer. You can set your power to activate 0 to 2 turns after your turn.
9. Retro-probabilistic. After you use your power, you gain a bonus on your next roll. It's weird.
10. Explosive. All dice for your power's effects explode.

5.1.3.5. Cosmetic Quirks

Customize your powers and show that you really own them!

1. Transfer. When you use your power, one nearby creature is left pale and cool, another becomes flushed and hot.
2. Wind. Leaves rustle, and fly as you use your power.
3. Green. Mosses sprout, plants grow, fur shines.
4. Musical. Chimes. Spheres. Tubular bells. Angelic pipes. Fortunately, you can turn this effect off.
5. Odor. Madeleines? Paingeometric scones?
6. Luminous. A gentle glow of an unnatural sort accompanies your power use.
7. Shadowy. Local shadows animate and flap away.
8. Extratemporal. Eternity beckons in an instant. Everyone nearby sees a bit of the far future and distant past when you use your power. The glimpse is cool, not helpful.
9. Whispers. From beyond the cosmic veil. They promise secrets, but never quite deliver.
10. Fourth wall. Phantom dice spin about the wizard.

5.1.3.6. Side Effects

Unfortunately, this power is a bit busted. Still useful, just ... not nice. Sorry.

When you use it, the following effect occurs:

1. Leeching. A random nearby creature loses 1 life.
2. Baleful. Animals howl, plants quiver, humans weep.
3. Leaky. The power also partly affects a random creature near your target. Annoying.
4. Noisy. Louder than it should be. Much louder.
5. Smelly. Rotten dragon eggs? Wet howlbear farts? It's quite unpleasant and obvious.
6. Flashy. A five second holo-advertorial plays before it activates. Oof.
7. Ghastly. Disturbs nearby resting dead. Graves shake. Cloudy with a chance of zombies.
8. Slow. Takes an extra action or 1 more life.
9. Caustic. The mood of everyone nearby worsens. It just does.
10. Juddering. Any effect dice that roll a natural 1 fizzle. If the power doesn't have effect dice, roll a d12. On a natural 1 the power fails to trigger.

5.1.3.7. Becoming a Proper Wizard

To become a proper wizard, the PC must track down a mentor, perform 3 foolish tasks, permanently reduce their life by 1 point per level in a ritual involving strange foods at a harrowing feast, and gain a corruption trait.

Thereafter, each of their own life points spent on a power, or "spell" as they call it, is worth double.

"Proper Wizard®" is a trait and occupies a trait slot.

5.1.3.8. Example: Master Nobolus of the Sixfold Hexacenter

The pupil ascends the folded stair, up the side of the great nameless emperor's visage carved into the obsidian flanks of the Glass Mountain. The postfall locals have quarried away much of the emperor's chin and mouth, but their needs are small and it will be a thousand years before they obliterate the face ... if their molehill culture lasts that long.

The pupil steps sideways through time as she ascends the folded stair, up the side of the emperor's forehead, walking into the cool broken place of the Master Nobolus.

"Master, I have solved the riddle! I have come sideways through time to learn to walk the Sixfold Path!"

A strangely folded head appears from behind a plane of shadow. An origami silhouette of a body follows. Patterns of peonies and ponies chase themselves across the wizard's flat expanse.

"So you have, so you have. That was rather quick! Complete three tasks for me, and I shall teach you."

"Anything!"

"First, sweep the shadow spiders from the Valley of Death. Second, bring me the air bladder of the golden sky fish Nemora. Finally, bake me a golem of clay like flesh, that I may walk you to the Library of Lesions. There, I shall teach you how to embark on the Hexametric Way."

"How could one sweep shadow spiders?"

"I don't know. Maybe try a light broom?"

5.1.4. Inventing New Powers

When inventing a new power for a character:

1. Come up with an idea that creates fun solutions and novel situations.
2. Describe it in three sentences.
3. Make sure it's not a universal 'I win' button.
4. Give it a memorable name.
5. Set its parameters: order of power, range, target, and duration.
6. An overcharge is optional.

Pop culture, books, movies, and songs can all give a good creative jolt. Mix those ideas with other works and concepts to create a unique power.

5.1.4.1. Setting Parameters

This is an art not a science.

- Order of power. Compare your new power to the various orders and other existing powers.
- Range. Start with something that makes sense. See above.
- Target. See above.
- Duration. See above.
- Overcharge. Make it a little less than twice as good or useful.

You can start with a weak version, then create a stronger, advanced, or second edition version. The technowizards of these later times are not perfect rationalists and multiple versions of a power can and should exist.

5.1.4.2. Adapting Spell Levels [from other systems]

Feral schools call the ancients' powers spells and assign to them levels of magical magnitude. This is nonsense, but their ravings imply:

1 power = 0th level spell, such as *Can Trip*
2 power = 1st level spell, such as *Tragic Missile*
4 power = 2nd level spell, such as *Hlod Person* [sic]
6 power = 3rd level spell, such as *Pyreball*
18 power = 9th level spell, such as *Big Wish*

5.1.4.3. Adjusting Powers Through Play

Every group will find powers that are mechanically too useful, reducing the creativity of roleplay or the utility of other characters. When that happens, the players and referee should discuss what to do. There are many options short of banning a power:

1. Make it dangerous.
2. Increase the power's order.
3. Reduce the power's parameters: duration, range, or targets.
4. Adjust the power's effects: modify damage or mechanical impact.
5. Add an additional cost or drawback to the power. Perhaps it requires a strange fuel, like crushed arcane diamonds, to use.

The in-game narrative rationale for this kind of retcon (nerf) is simple. Powers require half-understood fantascience, rare components, old rituals, and goldilocks circumstances. Something has changed, and the power no longer works as it did when a character first learned to use it.

Consider, for example, the ancient and true First Soil story of the great technomancer Jekyll et Hyde, the wizard who invented the electric aerostat and the lead light bulb. Et Hyde experimented with making himself able to toil without sleep, and for a while his new powers worked, but then the batch of rare earth sugar he used to mix his anti-sleep serum ran out and destructive side effects manifested. Hyde then had to hide in a cage from the destructive, hulking rage of his released subconscious Jekyll persona.

Lying scholars suggest that the extant tales of Long Long Ago still known in the Rainbow Lands are garbled. This is obviously false.

5.2. Albums of Power

Powers are often compiled, marketed, sold, and installed as concept albums. Technowizards argue this makes for a better user experience (haha). Contramages scoff that this is simply how the magicapitalists force customers to buy bundles of subpar powers at inflated prices.

A pristine power album in its original packaging will include power recordings and reproduction instructions. To enjoy its powers, suitable equipment may be required (sold separately). For best results, one should invest in high fidelity power activation equipment from a reputable brand. It may cost more, but it has a logo!

Characters can acquire individual powers from different albums. If they grow in fame and skill, they may also create their own albums.

Albums, like trait paths, are optional compilations, not rigid schools. Walled garden fruit stores exist where well-heeled power consumers can pick and choose individual powers to complement their personality and create technomagical mixtapes.

> *Albums are similar to trait paths (2.4.). Optional compilations of powers, not rigid schools.*

5.2.1. This Album

You hold in your hand a mint condition artifact from the Long Long Ago. A wonder whose secrets promise to transport you (or your psychic emanation) to worlds undreamed of in more mediocre philosophies.

Table 5.2.1.a. - Album Format

1. oldtech computer
2. synthskin cyber fiche
3. vials of memory fluid
4. baked clay tablets
5. tattooed skin
6. bundled bone scales
7. parchment codex
8. brazen clockwork
9. mass-market paperback
10. plastic paper scroll
11. preserved head
12. crystal-laced slab
13. compact phonograph
14. artificial mycelial mass
15. knotted net record
16. vomeronasal stimulator
17. pearlescent implant
18. tactile interface cylinder
19. mirrored glasses
20. memory daemon

Table 5.2.1.b. - Distinctive Design

1. howls when accessing underworld cloud
2. fiddly to read on the move
3. reading causes a euphoric high
4. heavy and nigh-indestructible
5. phosphorescent & highly visible
6. iridescent, beautiful, living extra-dimensional appendage
7. silver bonds and cautionary tales
8. played with gears and levers
9. tatty, yellow, with thin sheets
10. ornate ritual reproduction
11. professorial spell slave in a jar
12. ostentatious jadeite matrix
13. highly collectible protective cover
14. produces hallucinogenic fruiting bodies
15. doubles as a scarf or flag
16. bottled with aerosol spray nozzle
17. suggests trepanation for best effect
18. inscrutable vantablack surface
19. holo bubble with AR power codes
20. traditional bronze pazuzu-style statuette

Table 5.2.1.c. - Feature, not Bug

1. demon-haunted
2. requires micro-lens reader
3. needs refueling
4. infested with memories
5. requires reading assistant
6. looks like valuable cash
7. corrupted arcane sigils
8. sings when used
9. disappears and reappears unpredictably
10. keeps coming loose
11. requires host neural network
12. strong opinions on poetic politics
13. corroded by fae memories
14. skips records if jostled
15. prone to overgrowth
16. coded in bureaucryptic triplicate
17. alien tastes
18. autocorrected keyword blocker
19. obscure gesture interface
20. freemium micro-transaction model

5.2.2. Album 1 - The Sixfold Hexacenter

A color theory psychemagic developed by the hypothetical wizard Spectrum Claire-Sin ZX. Also called the prayer of the five permitted colors and the ritual of the unmentioned hue.

If you spin these powers swiftly, they look like white magic.

Red Mist
Tactical Aggression Augment
P: 1 **R:** short, maybe 20m **T:** one creature **D:** a few minutes
Rubra's need overcomes the target. Anger and passion boil, threatening to break its composure.
It rerolls its reaction roll with a single d8. Choose whether they add or subtract your charisma.
Overcharge: affect a number of creatures equal to your level + 1.

Blue Lotus
Maximum Somatic Contentment
P: 1 **R:** short, maybe 5 meters **T:** one creature **D:** an hour
Soma's bliss brings contentment to the target. It saves. Success: it loses its next turn to a blissful reverie. Failure: it sits down, lost in blissful reverie for an hour.
Overcharge: affect a number of creatures equal to your level + 1.

Orange Dream
Forgotten Spider's Labors
P: 1 **R:** whisper **T:** one creature **D:** an hour
A neutral or friendly creature agrees to do what you ask for an hour, so long as it does not appear immediately dangerous or risky.
Overcharge: even a hostile or violent creature will listen, provided you can whisper in its ear.

Green Haven
Arbor Sanctuary
P: 1 **R:** nearby **T:** a 7 meter diameter sphere **D:** a night or a day
Convince shrubberies, grasses, brambles, and other plants to form a hedge igloo, a sanctuary to rest and hide in. Enemies need at least one turn to pass through the hedge. They are vulnerable in the shrub wall. After a night or day, the plants return to their ordinary ways.
Overcharge: sculpt a thorny hedge wall measuring 200 meters square and 1 meter thick. Its thorns cut anyone forcing their way through like daggers (1d4 damage).

Yellow Cloud
Sands of Lost Times
P: 1 **R:** nearby **T:** a 9 meter cube **D:** a few minutes
Fine, obscuring yellow dust rises from the ground and hangs in the air. A veil no sight can pierce. The dust irritates the lungs of air breathers. After a few minutes, it blows away.
Overcharge: summon into shimmering immobility a wall of dust measuring 200 cubic meters.

Purple Memories
Comic Emotional Display
P: 1 **R:** touch **T:** a creature **D:** several minutes
The barest word or sensation triggers vivid memories, thoughts, and emotions. How could anyone keep thought or fact a secret in this state? Or resist a fine, rousing song?
Overcharge: affect up to twice your level creatures.

5.2.3. Album 2 - Dawn's Highway

A compilation of folk road magic by the ethnologist and hedge wizard Fritzu Na (AM/FM). Also called Road Magic by the uninformed, and the Way of Ways by the hobo hieratics of the Right Road.

No album makes the crooked road straighter.

Damp Mass
Nosigoro Logistical Augment
P: 1 **R:** touch **T:** 1 sack **D:** 1 day
A sub-reality field halves the object's interactive mass. An object of 100 kilos acts like one of fifty.
Overcharge: the mass is halved again. Or it affects an object twice the size. Or it lasts a week instead.

Better Pastures
Darehodo Patch Choice
P: 1 **R:** self **T:** self **D:** 1 hour
Meditate at a crossroad for an hour, observe the flow of its energies, the flight of birds, the waft of milkweed seeds. Ask one objective yes / no question of the crossroad, and it shall answer. Will this path reach water within 50 miles? Is there green grass along that path within 20 km?
Overcharge: ask a second question or clarify the first.

Wing And Prayer
Dirty Fixing
P: 1 **R:** touch **T:** vehicle or steed **D:** 1 day
Use your faith to mend an axle or splint a leg. Your vehicle or steed can ignore one failure or injury for a day, but then the damage is worse.
Overcharge: the fix lasts a week; but the damage is even worse after.

Roadfinder
Blacktop Sniffer
P: 1 **R:** a day's march **T:** self **D:** 1 hour
Sniff the world's road fields, 'gard the astral way-lines. Detect the nearest road a day's march or less away.
Overcharge: the detection range is doubled or the sense lasts a day.

Highway Cruiser
Foolself Driving
P: 1 **R:** touch **T:** vehicle or steed **D:** 1 day
Summon a driver daemon from the noösphere and bind it to your vehicle or steed for a day. Lo, the chariot now drives itself! Hopefully, the daemon understands your language to enable voice commands.
Overcharge: the daemon is capable of more complex maneuvers and adapting to changing road situations, like stopped ambling lancers.

Roadmaker
Stradograd's Engine of Civility
P: 6 **R:** one metric mile **T:** rock and soil **D:** 1 day
By the channeled powers of the great converter, Chem Caoutchouc, base reality is rearranged. Over a day, a faststone road grows from the land, theodolite straight, cambered and elevated, a fortunate 7 meters wide and a metric mile long. The road crosses swamps, sways across valleys, and bores tunnels through ridges. Without additional fixatives and preparation, the faststone road surface decays in a month.
Overcharge: the faststone sets into standardstone overnight, creating a surface that will last a century without maintenance.

5.2.4. Album 3 - The Viridian Practice

A traditional projectile combat practiced by the gun monks of the Crater School. Legends say it was founded by the nameless gunslinger named Jill. Also called Gan-Fu by untrustworthy urban fans; bootleg versions have become popular in the Sailing Islands and other dens of disorder.

Does your album include all these powers as well as an ivory-handled peacemaker original? If it does not, it may be a pirated bootleg! Report pirated albums to the Organization of Organized Power. Piracy is theft.

Viridian Practice Album Features
Skill with projectile weapons carries over to the Viridian powers.

The powers are anchored to a hallmark projectile weapon (gun, wand, bow, etc.) of level 1 or higher. You can use a single anchor weapon for all the powers in the album.

> *Mother of Bullets*
> Blood Made Lead
> **P:** 1 **R:** touch **T:** anchor weapon **D:** instant
> Reloads your weapon as a free action, turning life force into semi-real projectiles.
> *Overcharge:* the first semi-real projectile to strike a target deals extra damage equal to your level plus the power's price (2 + level).

> *Dancing In The Hail*
> Dodgebullet
> **P:** 1 **R:** self **T:** self **D:** one round
> Reduce your metaphysical "hit box" to the size of your weapon. All ranged attacks against you suffer major penalties (i.e. disadvantage).
> *Overcharge:* any ranged attacks that do hit only deal half damage.

Ring of Lead
Rapid Metal Spin Cycle
P: 1 **R:** adjacent **T:** all creatures   **D:** one action
Use the buzz saw stance to unload all your ammo at once, attacking every* adjacent creature with a single action.
Overcharge: no attack roll required.
*subject to how much ammunition their anchor weapon holds.

Eyes of the Arrow
Panoptic Projectile
P: 1 **R:** touch **T:** one projectile **D:** a minute or so
Bind a strand of your consciousness to a projectile. It acts like a remote eye (or other sensor).
Overcharge: the projectile maneuvers in flight with the agility of a dove.

Counterfire
Panoptic Projectile
P: 1 **R:** a dozen meters **T:** one attack   **D:** interrupt
Deflect an incoming attack, melee or ranged, with a projectile.
Overcharge: the attacker must save or be disarmed.

Depleted Heavy Metal Rain
Bigger Bang
P: 1 **R:** touch **T:** anchor weapon **D:** a few minutes
Imbue your next shot with an inertial error. Roll damage dice twice. The dice also become exploding (for example, as long as a d6 rolls sixes, keep rolling and adding up the total).
Overcharge: Roll damage dice thrice.

5.2.5. Album 4 - Apocrypha of the O.S.

Powers implied in documents salvaged from the ends of existence. Fine scholars employed by the Institute of Industrial Accountability and Civilian Recycling (Purple Branch) have worked hard to recreate these powers for a modern audience. Not so much as an album, as a box of incomprehensible odds and terrible ends.

Can Trip
Two Left Foot Curse, Clumsy Cat-astrophe
P: 1 **R:** a few meters **T:** someone who can hear you **D:** instant
You wish someone sprawled and humbled and your muttered curse may make it so. The target's shoelaces are suddenly undone or a stone or stick hops to trip them. They save or sprawl.
Overcharge: There's no save. The target is tripping.

Tragic Missile
Antipersonal Guided Force Bolt, Cupid's Cranial Penetrator
P: 2 **R:** roughly 30–50m **T:** anything with a mind **D:** instant
You visualize a channel connecting the local ambient energy fields with the soul-personality dyad of an entity you can see or imagine. Once you release your visualization, the energies fly into the nexus of that entity's mindspace, like a noöspheric homing missile. The effect is quite painful, dealing 2d4 damage plus 1 damage for every level, charisma, aura, and thought point of the target. Yea, the stronger they are, the harder tragedy strikes. The missile leaves no mark.
Overcharge: You visualize three channels at once, striking a single target thrice or three different targets.

Hlod Person
Dyslexic Demon's Binding, Leshnik's Unforeseen Constriction
P: 4 **R:** close **T:** a person **D:** 1 hour
Wave your hand like the six-times folded frond and watch your target become as a log of wood. Hard, stiff, unmoving, receptive to carpentry.
Overcharge: The change is permanent.

Pyreball
Instant Incendiary, Damora's Placid Inferno
P: 6 **R:** touch, or as thrown **T:** 10m diameter **D:** a day, then instant
You take a ball-sized burning ember from a pyre or bonfire and speak the placatory formulas to trap the entire fire within. When the ball strikes a hard surface (or is struck), all the trapped fires suddenly erupt, dealing 5d6 damage to all creatures caught in its blast radius. An unexploded ball dissipates harmlessly after a day.
Overcharge: the ball deals 10d6 damage or its fires keep for a month.

Nihil Est!
Life's End Made Present, Hadi's Self-Immolation Binding
P: 8 **R:** touch **T:** a sentient target **D:** 1 year
Between one step and the next, you flicker between existence and non-existence, you age a year and a creature you touch disappears into the nothing of wormspace for a year. No save.
Overcharge: you age seven years and a kilometer diameter sphere centered on your soul disappears into the nothing of wormspace for a year. Overcharge again to remain behind to watch the sphere disappear.
Dangerous: no matter how powerful you are, this spell imperils your existence.

Big Wish
Keep on Turning, Supplication of the Perverse Demiurge
P: 18 **R:** self **T:** demiurge **D:** a day, then permanent.
You call upon a demiurge, an echo of the Builders, and command it to grant your wish. The demiurge will do its level best to misunderstand you, probably because it is an alien from out of time and space.
The protective circle takes a day to draw, otherwise the spell could be dangerous. The summoning itself takes but three gestures and one shining, reflective object.
Overcharge: you get three wishes in a crystal chalice. Drink its sour liquid to summon your demiurge.
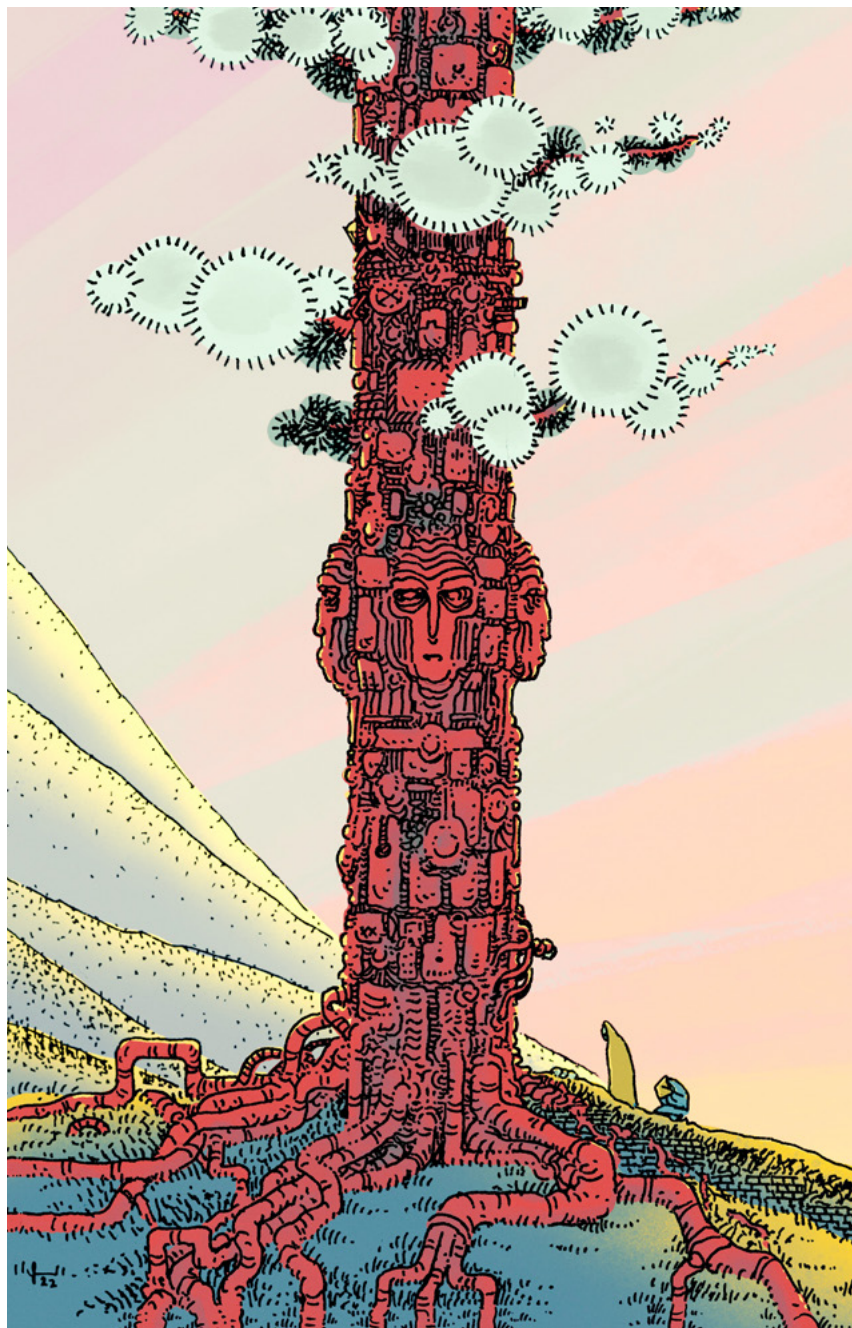
APPENDIX I. CHARACTER SHEET

Lo, behold, though you may write down the shape and form of your character on any scrap of parchment you have scavenged from a book graveyard of the pre-digital age, you may also use the following sheets should you have access to the magical artefact known as a Hit Point Printer and that rare and precious liquid, Authentic Hit Point Ink.

This section contains:

> the standard landscape character sheet.

> *The portrait A4 character sheet is available in the UVG 2E.*

player name

player xp

SDM

friends

enemies

likes

species

looks

name

pc xp

level

defense

life

save

hero dice

strength

endurance

agility

melee (str)

ranged (agi)

charisma

aura

thought

fantascience (cha)

oldtech (tho)

traits (7+tho)
1. . . . .
2 . . . .
3 . . . .
4 . . . .
5 . . . .
6 . . . .
7. . . . .
+1. . . . .
+2 . . . .
+3 . . . .
+4 . . . .
+5 . . . .
+3 skilled / +6 expert / +9 master

items (7+str)
1. . . . .
2 . . . .
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4 . . . .
5 . . . .
6 . . . .
7. . . . .
+1. . . . .
+2 . . . .
+3 . . . .
+4 . . . .
+5 . . . .
2.5k cash = 100 sp = 100 st = 1 sk

overload (penalty)
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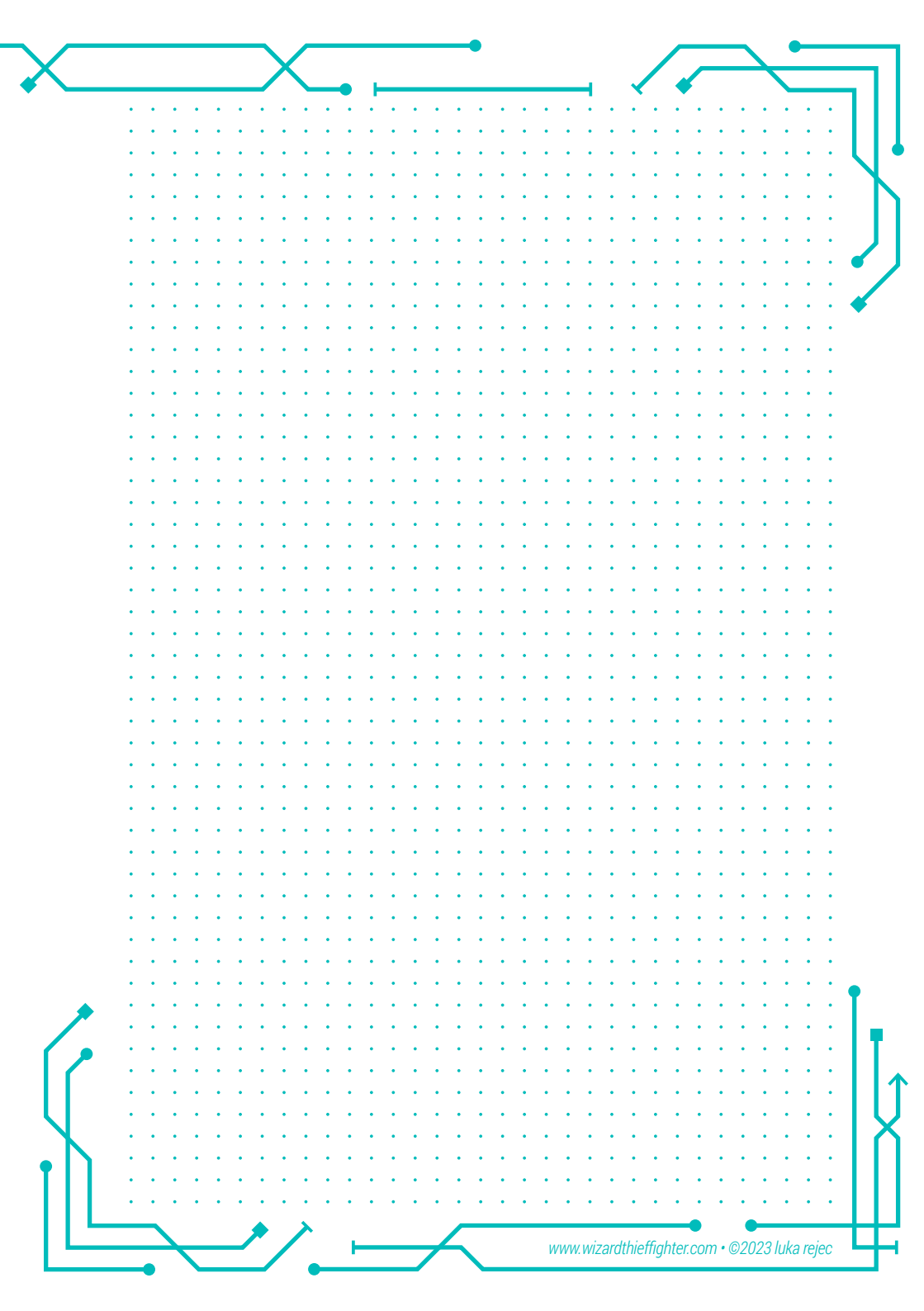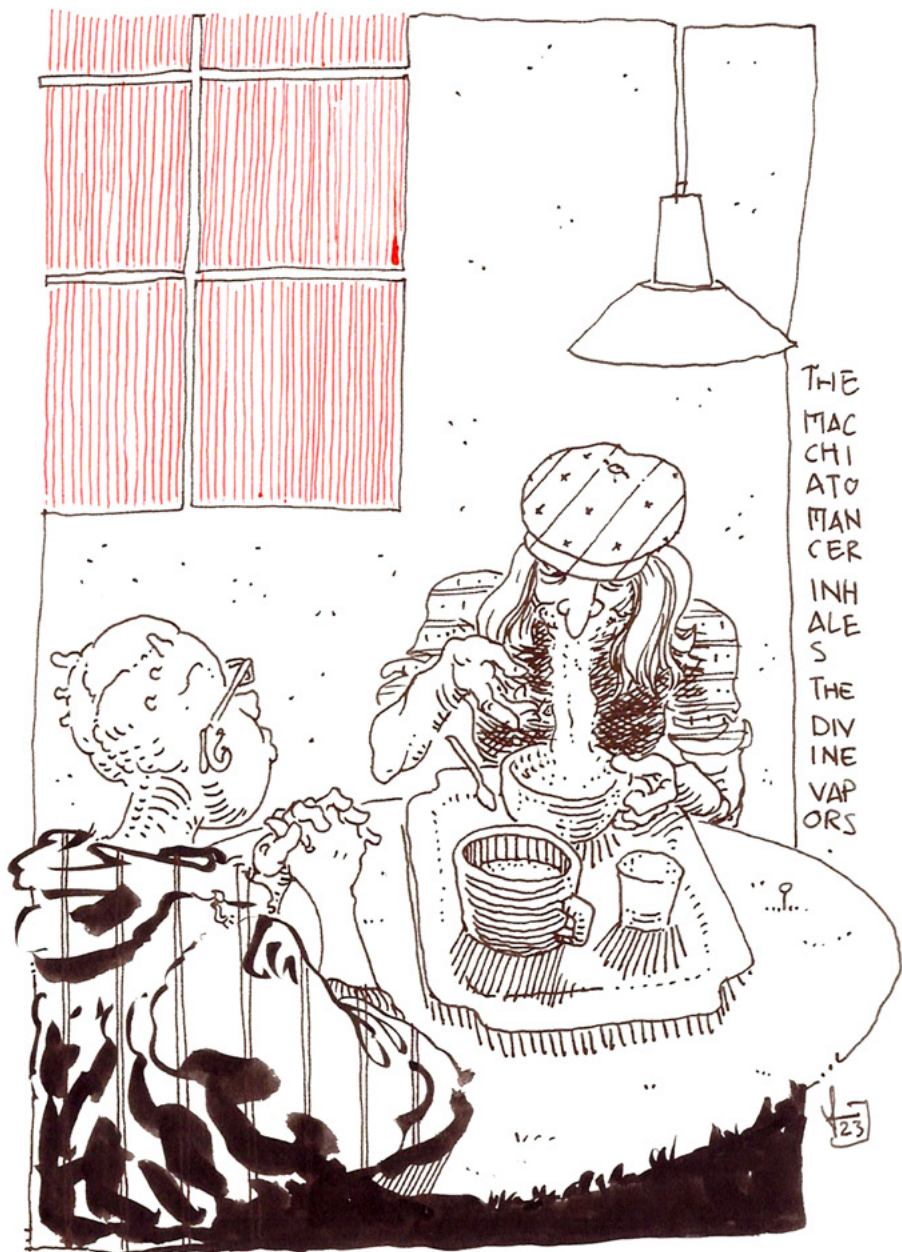
www.syntheticdreammachine.com

revenue/week

wealth

expense/week

debt

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APPENDIX II.
CHARACTER
OPTIONS

"Vermiform appendix. n. Mystic worm-coil conduit bridging Kosmos and corpus through occult pneumatics too sublime for mechanistic minds mired in metaphysical myopia to comprehend."

—*Methasophic Dictionary*. Entry ascribed to Theuvalda of Puorda Indiha.

This section includes:

> more names (II.A.)
> one-roll ability score generation (II.B.)
> more combat and power traits (II.C.)

> *More content may become available in later versions of this text.*

II.A. More Names

1. **Ancestor Names.** Beles Isehot, Dokonosatu, Isekonosetu, Jivivok, Nibok, Od Tamotiya, Osamisin, Tekhetas, Toboto, Zakhenetam.
2. **Beast Names.** Behemot, Blinki, Famante, Fiodor, Hopper, Korvin, Lepec, Pander, Reks, Tirano.
3. **Clan Names.** Engine Mother, Jewelhead, Lemma, Malachite Permutation, New Clone, Regal Ether, Skyfarmer, Stalkwalker, Uplifted Vole, Vomebreaker.
4. **Distributed Human.** Akaula Re-Dust-4, Fordite 14-belt, Hester Carn-27, Jewel 13-drone, Karigali Re-Ink-6, Numero E, Obsidian 5-squad, Simulated Jade 7-colony, Ulbira Head-4, Wlk LN-3.
5. **Divine Names.** A.S.A., Big Dog, Black Obelisk, Fami-Nu, M.O.O.N., Neo-Delphi, OttoCorp, Pear V, Tower, U+.
6. **Golem and Vome Names.** Adama Two, Clay Apostrophe, Clockwork Tangerine, Dons-the-Mantle, Haubize-Vier, Hole-in-the-Sky, John 316, KFT479+ "Fly", Mary Gautama Revelation Child, Unbound Satisfaction.

7. **Quarterling or Parahuman.** Able Wing Sailor ca078 "Carli", Calculator ∑645 "Oorkan", Desert Mouse 5 "Pablo", Satrap 117 "Troubleman", Servitor 55312 "Dell", UA-23x10^4 "Paco", Unit ≈22.6 "Komo komo", Vaulter "Yggdrasil", Wrencher "Holophernes", Z-type 8834-334 "Leech", Zeta Zeta "Agar".
8. **Rainbowlander Human.** Arco Donato, Ana Helianthe, Fico Trocheo, Lama Cocos, Parla Nuvola, Rubi Gino, Semper Virente, Ter deNer, Uoco su Carso, Vino Sepolto.
9. **Reasonable Names.** Administeriä Manu, Anarhiä Stahlya, Karlaä Boya, Kromeä Resa, Loögiä, Metele Granat, Primaï, Publië Soldat, Rayone Feü, Tersiï.
10. **Timelost Names.** Calisca 522 Frozen, Eduard te Sanræl VII, Hex Orphan, House Bartholomew, Igu Builder, Jane Farmer, Occo Hunter, Pendrake Servitor, Runa Vat-canter, Sila Sleeper.
11. **Ultra and Posthuman.** Aspera Mors, Karn Neu, Luta Kontinu, Om Rifax, Penumbra Tern, Prov'Ultim, Salu Fins, Tarqo Rosso, Tris Kelly, Yadri Aurore.
12. **Vastlanders and Steppelanders.** Aranca Fruit, Bino Blanco, Sano Coyot, Ver' Dreyac, Levac Flatbread, Parbei Testavec, Scioc Windwalker, Starte Idoli, Tec Refugio, Urla Ferrevogel.

II.B. A Hundred Ability Arrays

Roll d100 to find a character's ability score.

Abilities are listed by acronym: str, end, agi, cha, aur, tho; scores are given in brackets. When a number is given for an ability, it represents any ability of choice. So, 3(1) means "assign a score of 1 to three abilities of choice.

1. Scattered: 6(1)
2. Musclebound: str(5), 1(1), 4(0)
3. Virile: end(5), 1(1), 4(0)
4. Elastic: agi(5), 1(1), 4(0)
5. Hypnotic: cha(5), 1(1), 4(0)
6. Reserved: aur(5), 1(1), 4(0)
7. Highbrow: tho(5), 1(1), 4(0)
8. Ogreish: str(4), 2(1), 3(0)
9. Lumbering: end(4), 2(1), 3(0)
10. Frenetic: agi(4), 2(1), 3(0)
11. Dainty: cha(4), 2(1), 3(0)
12. Ethereal: aur(4), 2(1), 3(0)
13. Focused: tho(4), 2(1), 3(0)
14. Strapping: str(2), 2(2), 1(1), 2(0)
15. Energetic: end(2), 2(2), 1(1), 2(0)
16. Twitchy: agi(2), 2(2), 1(1), 2(0)
17. Fetching: cha(2), 2(2), 1(1), 2(0)
18. Fierce: aur(2), 2(2), 1(1), 2(0)
19. Knowing: tho(2), 2(2), 1(1), 2(0)
20. Brawny: str(2), 1(2), 3(1), 1(0)
21. Bulky: end(2), 1(2), 3(1), 1(0)
22. Lissome: agi(2), 1(2), 3(1), 1(0)
23. Nice: cha(2), 1(2), 3(1), 1(0)
24. Inflexible: aur(2), 1(2), 3(1), 1(0)
25. Crafty: tho(2), 1(2), 3(1), 1(0)
26. Rugged: str(2), 5(1)
27. Stout: end(2), 5(1)
28. Spry: agi(2), 5(1)
29. Likeable: cha(2), 5(1)
30. Firm: aur(2), 5(1)
31. Schooled: tho(2), 5(1)
32. Doughty: str(3), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
33. Athletic: end(3), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
34. Nimble: agi(3), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
35. Charming: cha(3), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
36. Resilient: aur(3), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
37. Critical: tho(3), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
38. Big: str(3), 2(2), 3(0)
39. Hardy: end(3), 2(2), 3(0)
40. Adroit: agi(3), 2(2), 3(0)
41. Slick: cha(3), 2(2), 3(0)
42. Obstinate: aur(3), 2(2), 3(0)
43. Articulate: tho(3), 2(2), 3(0)
44. Stalwart: str(3), 1(2), 2(1), 2(0)
45. Healthy: end(3), 1(2), 2(1), 2(0)
46. Deft: agi(3), 1(2), 2(1), 2(0)
47. Glamorous: cha(3), 1(2), 2(1), 2(0)
48. Disciplined: aur(3), 1(2), 2(1), 2(0)
49. Clever: tho(3), 1(2), 2(1), 2(0)
50. Vigorous: str(3), 4(1), 1(0)

51. Robust: end(3), 4(1), 1(0)
52. Quick: agi(3), 4(1), 1(0)
53. Alluring: cha(3), 4(1), 1(0)
54. Gritty: aur(3), 4(1), 1(0)
55. Cultivated: tho(3), 4(1), 1(0)
56. Powerful: str(4), 1(3), 4(0)
57. Lusty: end(4), 1(3), 4(0)
58. Limber: agi(4), 1(3), 4(0)
59. Bewitching: cha(4), 1(3), 4(0)
60. Sublime: aur(4), 1(3), 4(0)
61. Inventive: tho(4), 1(3), 4(0)
62. Muscular: str(4), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
63. Hale: end(4), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
64. Sly: agi(4), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
65. Winning: cha(4), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
66. Discerning: aur(4), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
67. Perceptive: tho(4), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
68. Tough: str(4), 3(1), 2(0)
69. Abiding: end(4), 3(1), 2(0)
70. Deft: agi(4), 3(1), 2(0)
71. Provocative: cha(4), 3(1), 2(0)
72. Moody: aur(4), 3(1), 2(0)
73. Original: tho(4), 3(1), 2(0)
74. Mighty: str(5), 1(2), 4(0)
75. Unflagging: end(5), 1(2), 4(0)

76. Winged: agi(5), 1(2), 4(0)
77. Seductive: cha(5), 1(2), 4(0)
78. Oracular: aur(5), 1(2), 4(0)
79. Encyclopaediac: tho(5), 1(2), 4(0)
80. Steely: str(5), 2(1), 3(0)
81. Vital: end(5), 2(1), 3(0)
82. Driven: agi(5), 2(1), 3(0)
83. Irresistible: cha(5), 2(1), 3(0)
84. Devilish: tho(5), 2(1), 3(0)
85. Herculean: str(4), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
86. Sinewy: end(4), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
87. Fleet: agi(4), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
88. Impressive: cha(4), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
89. Single-minded: aur(4), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
90. Creative: tho(4), 1(3), 1(1), 3(0)
91. Olympian : str(5), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
92. Glowing: end(5), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
93. Mercurial: agi(5), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
94. Angelic: cha(5), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
95. Hermetic: aur(5), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
96. Genius: tho(5), 1(2), 1(1), 3(0)
97. Forceful: str or cha(3), 2(3), 3(0)
98. Resolute: end(3) or aur (3), 2(3), 3(0)
99. Tricky: agi(3) or tho(3), 2(3), 3(0)
100. Blessed: 6(2)

II.C. Specialty Traits

For characters who specialize in the traditional adventuring ways.

II.C.i. Power Specialty Traits

One would call them *vedas*. The hidden truths of the powers defying the sciences of these later, fallen times.

1. **Abmortality Mechanic.** Fix damaged humans, diagnose injuries and diseases. Use medical equipment, scalpels and knives. Recognize poisons and potions, even curses and charms. Pay 1 less life when using any medical or healing power (minimum 1).

2. **Allchemical Technician.** Use chemical processesors and matter modification equipment. Make explosives, cook drugs. Transmute refuse into treasures (like guano-poop into gun-powder). Pay 1 less life when using any metamorphic power (minimum 1).

3. **Biomechanic.** Play the living spirit of flesh and bough. Dam injuries and diseases, modify biological processes, sculpt angels and monsters. Wield knives and saws, needles and probes. Dabble in mad science body horror (strictly off the books, though). Pay 1 less life when using any biomorphic or fleshy power (minimum 1).

4. **Cosmic Logician.** Perhaps a priest? Read the omens of wind and sky and water and grass. Divine the desires of the gods and their immutable laws. Adjust those laws to help others and yourself. Pay 1 less life when using any holy or logos power, or reading a written power (minimum 1).

5. **Ecowizard.** One of the Ill-Nano's heretics? Study and adapt natural systems. Read leaves and listen to churning microbes. Hear the voices of the wind. Smell the songs of the ocean. Use biological equipment and handle hunting weapons. Pay 1 less life when using any polymorphic or translation power (minimum 1).

6. **Electric Initiate.** Practice the old rites of electricity. Use heavy energy weapons and soul batteries. Cast spells with blueprint scrolls. Take half damage from electric attacks and pay 1 less life when using any electric power (minimum 1).

7. **Force Fielder.** Unpick the underlying forces of this creation and weave new tapestries of force. Sculpt points, lines, and planes. Create invisible machines. Break entropic principles. Gain +1 defense and pay 1 less life for any force power (minimum 1).

8. **Golemmafex.** Heal and maintain ancient autonomous machines. Follow preserved manuals of ritual assembly to copy platonic golems. Communicate with machines via the ancient art of coding. Use integrated energy weapons and void screwdrivers. Pay 1 less life when using any power on a machine (minimum 1).

9. **Hard Light Magician.** Use placebos and nocebos to change the world. Store and retrieve information with living crystals. Focus and refract magics through oldtech gems. Create plays of light and shadow. Wield crystal wands. You cannot be blinded and pay 1 less life for any light power (minimum 1).

10. **Heavy Metalhead.** A kind of bird? Berd? Bard? Use music to unite and divide, to share and preserve. Make a band and tour the Vastlands. Ignore ingested poisons and shatter objects with sound alone. Wreck hotels, leave heartbreak behind. Gain +1 armor when wearing any metal gear and pay 1 less life for any metal power (minimum 1).

11. **Necromancer Lawyer.** Talk to the dead and interpret their wishes. Mediate between living and dead. Consult the wisdom of past ages. Bring things back from the long sleep where they lay dreamless. You have impeccable taste in candles, perfumes, skulls and gowns. Pay 1 less life when using powers on the dead or when using legal powers (minimum 1).

12. **Oldtech Engineer.** Grasp the old manuals. Activate or deactivate nearly anything. Reverse-engineer ancient artifacts. Jury-rig feeble mockeries of Long Ago glories. Increase the effect dice of oldtech devices 1 step (e.g., 1d6 becomes 1d8) and pay 1 less life when using oldtech powers (minimum 1).

13. **Phantomaker.** Read dark desires, offer ripe temptations. Sell dreams and weave delusions. Promise much, leave hallucinations. Pay 1 less life when using powers of illusion and enchantment (minimum 1).

14. **Phytomancer.** Listen to plants. Encourage verdant growth and opulent fruition. Flower power activism. Harvest strange fruits and odd tuber dudes. Wield sickles, axes, clubs and blunts. Pay 1 less life when using powers on plants or using floral powers (minimum 1).
15. **Portal Architect.** Build buildings. Shape stones. Understand dungeons. Form mystery cults. Tread the boundary between life and death. Play with magic gates. Wield hammers and chisels. Pay 1 less life when using portal powers (minimum 1).
16. **Rightmaker.** Be the law of panhumanity. Feel society and community in your bones. Sacrifice the few for the many. Understand the exigencies of survival beyond morality. Judge with perfect impartiality. Wield great swords and ornate guns. Pay 1 less life when using powers to extract information or give commands (minimum 1).
17. **Serpent Sorceror.** Talk to snakes. Mix poisons, potions, and medicines. Entreat the tiny machines that swim in all living things. Harvest herbs. Wield knives, pestles, and mortars. Pay 1 less life when using powers on serpents, and when creating potions or poisons (minimum 1).
18. **Soulbreaker.** Burn the souls trapped in this world, destroy those sparks of the Maker, consume everything to fuel your ambition, your need, your right, your will to power. Gain +3 to saves against arcane attacks and pay 1 less life when using powers that attack the mind (minimum 1).
19. **Summoner.** Find the dwellers beyond the aether veils and in this dark material reality bind them. Bend, break, and enthrall daemons. Steal their secrets. Pretend to their trust and loyalty. Gain 1 aura and pay 1 less life when using summoning powers (minimum 1).
20. **Voidwalker.** Journey the hidden paths. Brave the madness and fast decay. Dream of of stars and hopes, mistakes undone, futures rewritten, promises remade. Pay 1 less life when using any cosmic or spacey spell (minimum 1).

II.C.ii. Combat Specialty Traits

One could call them *praxes*, if one wanted to play with Ancient Greek. Psychophysical battle techniques honed over millennia.

1. **Big Gun Specialty.** Your love affair with massive cannons, catapults, and null walkers continues. Also, ballistics. Add your thought score to big gun damage and increase your reload speed.
2. **Bow Specialty.** Obviously, practice with the bow makes you a better bowyer. No, wait … Anyway, add your agility score to damage with bows and increase your critical hit damage multiplier one step (usually from x2 to x3).
3. **Chain Specialty.** Wield flails, chains, saws and chainsaws in the saviour style from the Last Zombie Necrocide. Also put on a great show of being a lumberjill or lumberjack. Add your endurance score to damage with chain weapons and increase your reach.
4. **Energy Specialty.** Ancient energy weapons, laser wands, and death orbs. Peruse holy manuals and recite operation mantras. Add your aura or agility score to energy damage and gain the option to deal minimum damage on a hit (set to stun).
5. **Hammeraxe Specialty.** Chop down trees. Hammer down nails. Uphold the diktats of the dwarven worker-aristocracy. Slay with axes, hammers, axe-hammers, dagger-axes, mattocks, ice axes, and more. Also, add your strength score to damage and increase your critical multiplier one step (e.g., x2 to x3).
6. **Knife Specialty.** Chop open coconuts and cut paths through jungle. Hide and throw and twirl. Gut a fish, slit a throat, spread some butter. Add your agility or strength score to damage and all knife damage dice explode (e.g., 1d4 becomes 1d4*).
7. **Pistol Specialty.** Fantascientific pistols and magitechnic wands. Draw fast and shoot tricks, duels and dices, drink fire water and sleep light as a feather. Add your agility score to pistol and wand damage, and reload as a free action.
8. **Polar Specialty.** Polearms in formation or alone. Unleash fire and brimstone with staves of elder power. Fight with spear and shield like a hero of the old days. Add your strength score to damage and gain +2 defense when using polearms.

9. **Rifle Specialty.** Repair, maintain and use long wands, guns, rifles and shotguns. Snipe from a distance or clear rooms with a prayer and a sprayer. Add your agility score to damage with rifles and increase your critical range one step (usually from 20 to 19–20).

10. **Rod Specialty.** Whirl rods, maces, clubs and sticks. Use the spell-rods of the olden battle wizards and crush bones with nuclearlithic uranium-head maces. Add your strength score to damage with rods and increase your critical hit damage multiplier one step (usually from x2 to x3).

11. **Shield Specialty.** It is self-evident that the shield is a weapon. Replace your shield's armor bonus with your skill bonus. As a weapon, your shield deals +1d4 damage per armor point (a shield that gives armor +2 deals +2d4 damage).

12. **Sword Specialty.** Twirl and polish a sword, poke and chop and pommel bash. Parade march and play the dead man's hand. A mean musketeer (don't shoot, please). Add agility or strength score to damage with swords and increase your critical range one step (usually from 20 to 19–20).

13. **Unarmed Specialty.** Understand battle and struggle at a cellular level. Utilize body and environment. Endure stress, hardship and fatigue. Meditate upon falling flowers. Dance through battles. Increase your unarmed and improvised damage one step, for example from 1d10 to 1d12 (minimum 1d6). Also, choose an unarmed discipline:

14. **Drunken dragon.** Add your strength score to unarmed and improvised damage.

15. **Eating, praying, mantis lovers.** Add your endurance score.

16. **Lessons of crane and toad.** Add your agility score.

17. **Shadow illumination paradox.** Add your charisma score.

18. **Styles of the dead cities.** Add your aura score.

19. **Teachings of wicked elders.** Add your thought score.

APPENDIX III. CHARACTER BACKGROUND & RELATIONSHIPS

WILL BE AVAILABLE IN A FUTURE VERSION
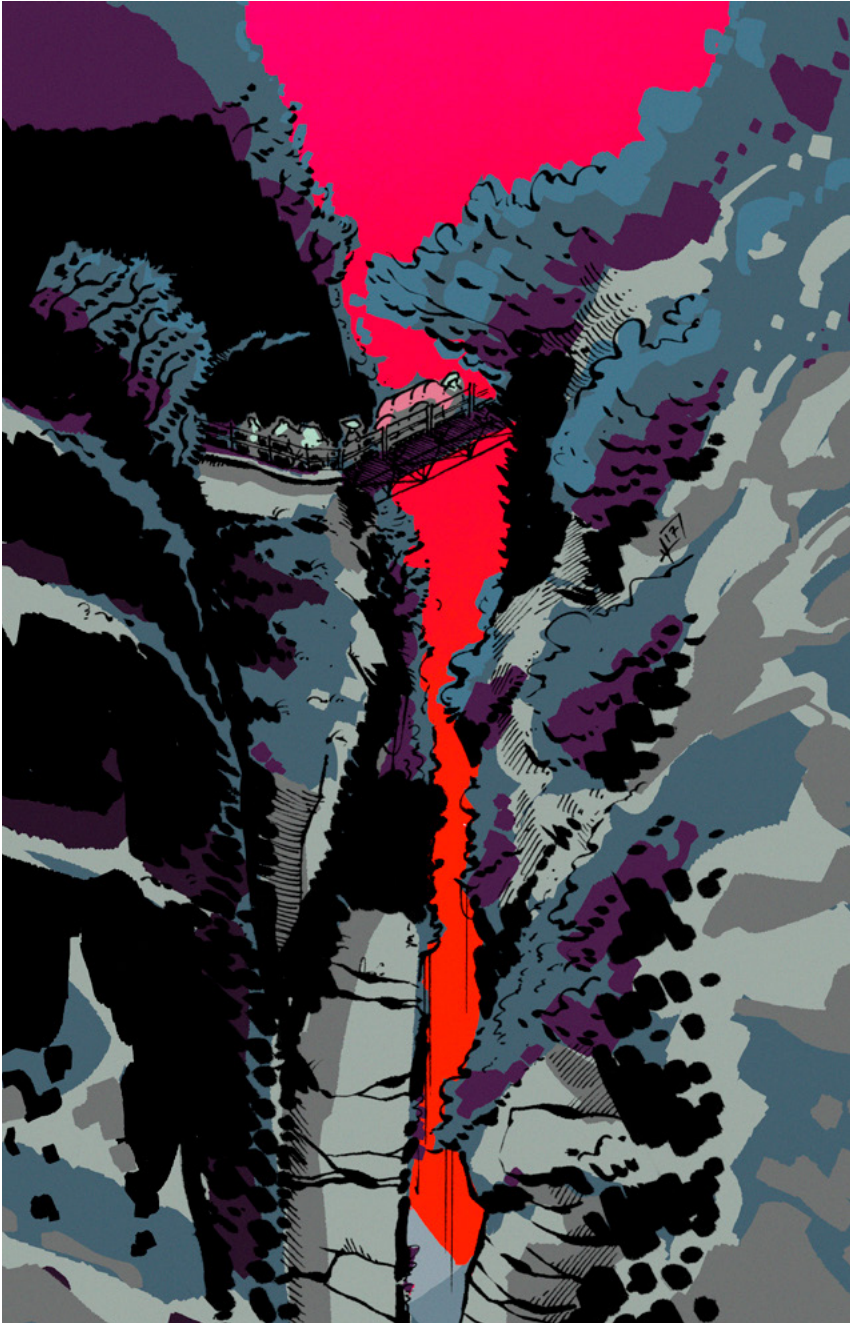
APPENDIX IV: INSPIRATION

THIS SECTION IS INCOMPLETE AND LIABLE TO CHANGE WITHOUT WARNING.

Without music, movies, and more, the Vastlands would be the Notlands.

IV.a. Music

Ayreon - Universal Migrator Pt 1 & 2 (2000)

Black Mountain - IV (2006)

Blue Öyster Cult - Fire of Unknown Origin (1981)

Boris - Mabuta no ura (2005)

Colour Haze - Tempel (2006)

David Bowie - Space Oddity (1969)

The Doors - The Doors (1967)

Earth - The Bees Made Honey in the Lion's Skull (2008)

Egypt - Egypt (2009)

Grateful Dead - American Beauty (1970)

King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard - Polygondwanaland (2017)

Kyuss - Welcome to Sky Valley (1994)

Sleep - Dopesmoker (2003)

Pink Floyd - The Dark Side of the Moon (1973)

The Sword - Low Country (2016)

Tool - Lateralus (2001)

Uriah Heep - Demons and Wizards (1972)

Zu - Goodnight, Civilization (2014)

IV. b. Movies

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
A Clockwork Orange (1971)
Alien (1979)
Alphaville (1965)
Brazil (1985)
Conan the Barbarian (1982)
Dark Star (1974)
The Exorcist (1973)
Gattaca (1997)
Ghost in the Shell (1995)
Heavy Metal (1981)
The Holy Mountain (1973)
Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)
Life of Brian (1979)
Logan's Run (1976)

Mad Max (1979)
Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (1984)
The Omega Man (1971)
On the Beach (1959)
Planet of the Apes (1968+, 2014+)
Princess Mononoke (1997)
Metropolis (1927)
Soylent Green (1973)
The Stepford Wives (1975)
Spaceballs (1987)
Stalker (1979)
The Thing (1982)
Zardoz (1974)

IV.c. Books

Aldous Huxley - Brave New World (1932)
Alejandro Jodorowski and Jean Giraud - The Incal (1980+)
Dan Simmons - Ilium (2004)
Folk - One Thousand and One Nights (medieval, 19th c.)
Frank Herbert - Dune (1965)
Franz Kafka - Das Schloss (1926)
Herodotus - Histories (~430 BC)
Homer - The Odyssey (~700 BC)
Liu Cixin - Three-Body (2008)

Lucian of Samosata - True History (~150)
Mary Shelley - Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus (1818)
Olaf Stapledon - First and Last Men (1930)
Philippe Caza - Arkhé et Laïlah (1982 and 2001)
Philippe Druillet - Le Mystère des Abîmes (1966)
Roger Zelazny - Lord of Light (1967)
Stanislaw Lem - The Star Diaries (1976)

Stefan Zweig - Die Welt von Gestern (1942)

Wu Cheng'en - Journey to the West (16th c.)

IV.d. Other

Concorde (1976)
Göbekli Tepe (~9000 BC)
Great Pyramid of Giza (~2600 BC)
Kyoto Gyoen National Garden (17th c.)
Fallout 2 (1998)
Industrie und Glück (1815)
Lucy (~3000000 BC)
Moon City Four (2130–57)
Mount Meru (first depiction ~5th c.)

Nuraghe (~1900 to ~750 BC)
Ötzi (~3200 BC)
Potala Palace (~1649)
Rapa Nui (~1000 to 1722)
Saturn V (1964)
Teotihuacan (~250)
Tiwanaku (~800)
Ugarit, Fall of (1192 BC)
Uluru (~8000+ BC)
Vinča-Belo Brdo (~5700 BC)
Zelda: Breath of the Wild (2017)

The list will expand in a sustainable fashion.

He told me tales
And he drank my wine
Me and my magic man
Kinda feeling fine

—*The Wizard*, Uriah Heep, Demons and Wizards (1972)

APPENDIX V: GAME TERMS

Being an incomplete glossary, prone to expansion with feedback.

Dice Notation - dXX, where XX stands for the number of faces on a die. Thus, d6, d12, d100, etc.

Exploding Die, dX* - A day that keeps rolling and adding together as long as shows its highest face. For example, when a d6* rolls a six, roll again and add the two results.

Game Master, GM - referred to as the referee.

Natural Roll - The number shown on a die face, without modifiers.

Non-Player Character, NPC - the antagonists and extras run by the referee.

Player - the humans playing the game. Those characters who are aware of the players running their lives conceptualize them as sometimes-malignant extra-dimensional daemons.

Player Character, PC - a player's main character.

Referee, Ref - the preferred term for the player running the antagonists in the game (the GM).

Top Cat, TC - light-hearted term for referee in UVG 1.
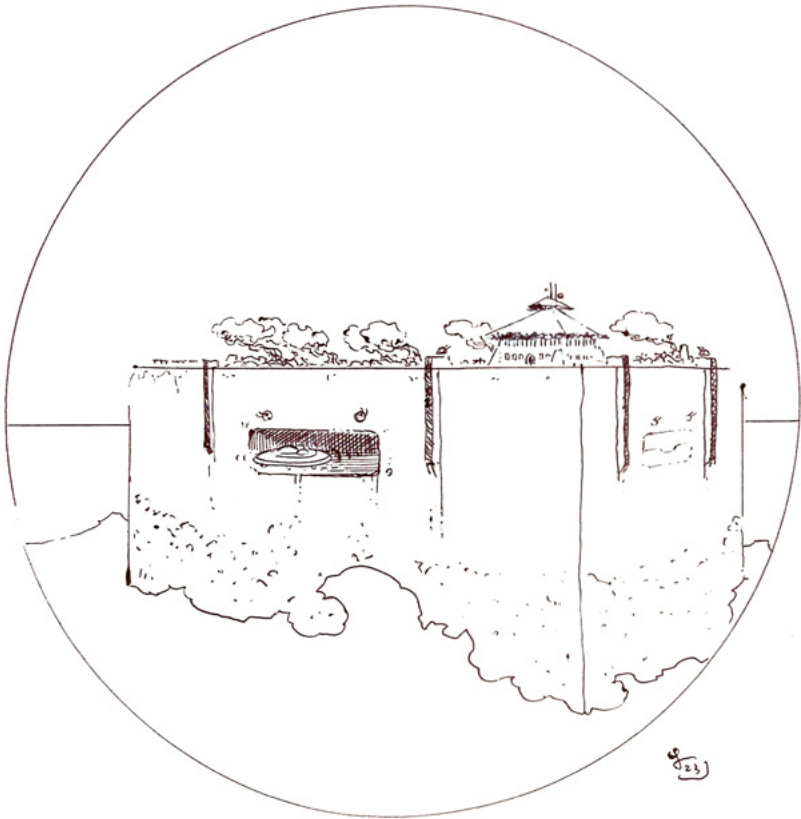
I see through the bricks to the sea, crumbling castle
Inching closer each century, crumbling castle
Water's rising up, thick and green, crumbling castle
Are we safe in our citadel?

—*Crumbling Castle*, King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard,
Polygondwanaland (2017)

APPENDIX VI. CLARIFICATIONS, CHANGES AND ERRATA

Nothing can ever remain the same. Nothing is ever made perfect.

— Glorious Truth of Freedom, Revelations of "Last-of-its-Name" Sarauca 673rd

VIII.w. Traits and Skills Clarification

All the innate, acquired and inherited, qualities and characteristics that make a character unique are now called traits. This includes qualities such as backgrounds, professions, mutations, downloaded skill packages, implanted prosthetics, corruptions, and memorized powers.

Skills are now a subset of the benefits offered by an individual trait.

Example: Jewels has a nomad raider background (a trait). The trait suggests they can ride like lightning, steal cattle, shoot guns and bows, skirmish and use guerrilla tactics (skills). When Jewels attempts an action that a nomad raider would reasonably be proficient in, they add their skilled bonus (+3) to the roll.

The naming of traits and skills was inconsistent in UVG 1E and 2E, creating confusion between what was a skill and what was a trait. For example, in SDM:ERK the text says "any trait can be a skill". A clearer formulation would be that "any trait may include a subset of relevant skills."

VIII.w.1. Useless Traits
A trait can be sub par or completely useless, wasting a trait inventory slot. A character can, over the course of their life learn skills, adopt customs, or acquire mutations that provide no benefit whatsoever.

A trait that is actively harmful to a character is usually recorded as a burden.

VIII.y. Inventory Changes
The inventory system has become a little more fine-grained from UVG 1E.

VIII.y.1. Burden and Encumbrance
In UVG 1E, encumbrance was a binary situation. Once a character was carrying more items than their limit, they were encountered (making rolls with disadvantage, that is rolling two dice and picking the worse result).

UVG 2E introduces the burdens inventory, which progressively increases a character's universal penalty the more slots they fill. This burden inventory also provides a general purpose location to note down any unusual damage and status effects a character has suffered.

VIII.y.1.1. Naming Clarification
Burdened is a more general term for a character suffering ill-effects from the physical and mental effects burdening them, as well as all the baggage they are carrying.

Encumbered more specifically refers to a character weighed down by the cumbersome objects they are trying to carry.

A character can drop their cumbersome objects at any time to reduce their penalty

Example: Onion is burdened with a bulky mirrored armoire (1 sk or 10 stones) and the fear that his whole life is a lie (1 st) as he trudges out

of the dungeon-palace of the four libertines. The physical and mental burdens impose a -11 penalty to all of Onion's rolls.

Suddenly, a decadent ghoul pops out of a pot and threatens Onion.

Onion swiftly drops the armoire to the ground and draws his saber. Onion is now no longer encumbered by the armoire, reducing his penalty by 10. His penalty is now -1.

However, Onion cannot do the same with the gnawing fear that his whole life is a lie. This has burdened him since his encounter with the psychoreflective vampire the night before, and will continue until he rests and chooses to remove this burden, or perhaps speaks to an electric priest and gets a purificatory confessional.

Movement and Ranges

The names of ranges are slightly changed from UVG 1E to reduce confusion. Particularly, close range is usually a synonym for short range in common usage and the new terms reflect that.

VIII.x. Hakaba Changes

The concepts of *ha*, *ka*, and *ba* are adjusted from UVG 1E and 2E.

VIII.x.1. Renaming

Their English translation is changed to body (ha), soul (ka) and psyche (ba) from body (ha), soul (ka), and personality (ba). Psyche as the totality of the sentient mind, conscious and unconscious, better captures the concept of ba. Psyche is also a shorter word, which sounds better with the other two.

VIII.x.2. Hakaba and Abilities

The existential trinity is now linked to the color of an ability:

body (ha)	≈	static abilities
soul (ka)	≈	active abilities
psyche (ba)	≈	dynamic abilities

In UVG 1E and 2E the concepts of body (ha), soul (ka), and personality (ba) were linked to the abilities endurance (ha), aura (ka), and charisma (ba) respectively.

The change better reflects how hakaba describes the underlying reality of the Given World, where all sentient entities have a form (ha), a fire (ka), and a way or being (ba).

VIII.z. Perfection Coda

There are no errata, citizen. You are in error. The world is perfect and always has been. If you have false memories, please retire yourself to a Temple of Refreshment for purification.

— The Apocrypha of Pseudo Adom, Codex of the Thorn

VIII.za. Corruption

The corruption (mutation) mechanics are somewhat changed from UVG 1E and 2E, giving aura a greater role in reducing the chance of negative effects. The tables are also changed from deleterious, cosmetic, and beneficial, to random effects for severe, regular, and mild exposure to the void.

APPENDIX VII. SYNTHETIC DREAM MACHINE THIRD PARTY LICENSE

v2.0

I'm astonished by the people's stories of their adventures in the Ultraviolet Grasslands and delighted by the adventures and creatures, stories and locations they've created. I promised a third party license a fair while ago, but the life of a solo game creator had its way with me. I played with making my own license for a while, but let's be real: I'm one, you are many, and there are good licenses about. This one is based on the Mörk Borg license (https://morkborg.com/license/). Check out Mörk Borg if you prefer blackened death metal grim darkness to the polychrome psychedelia of the synthetic dream machine.

Let's get to it …

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As long as you follow a few basic rules.

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v. Conclusion

Make it weird, wonderful, and wild. Don't bring modern hatreds and contemporary conflicts into your content. The world of *Our Golden Age* is at the end of time and space. It faces other issues. Like the dark forest and the heat death of the gods.

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UVG Guide Book: character creation, rules, equipment and powers for UVG 2E and other games in the synthetic dream machine.

Rules loose, psychedelic metal roleplay in the Vastlands at the edge of time and space.

SDM