BOOK 3 – THE GM BOOK

GM QUICK REFERENCE

The section below describes a list of things to keep in mind while running a scenario. They are described in *Running The Game* – read that.

GM PRINCIPLES

- Respect the Players
- Be a Fan of their Characters
- Be True to the World
- Make the World Real, not Just True
- Celebrate the Adventurers

GM MOVES

- Require a Roll
- What Do You Do?
- Divide or Combine
- Deny and Ability
- Danger
- Celebrate

SPECIAL MOVES

Each requires a VL (or maybe Glory). Keep an eye out for opportunities to bring them into play.

These spice up a session and show it's not *just* about the scenario.

- Faction Move
- Daemon's Need
- Introduce An Intervention
- Loyalty – remind players they can use Loyalty (no cost)
- Invoke A Custom Rule
- Glory Opportunity

AN AFTER-NOTE

The things listed here are things you should be doing anyway, and most will become second mature. The lists are not as long as they appear,

OTHER THINGS

When planning or creating a scenario:

- Create Factions with Incompatible Goals who will be in conflict.
- Look for ways to highlight the world – how it is fictional and strange.
- Describe the after-effects of previous Scenarios.
- Create Rewards for the players, and situations where their cleverness or successes are acknowledged.
- PCs start a Scenario with 1d6 Glory, and Wealth equal to previous Glory.

THE CHAOS EFFECT

It's an oft-repeated maxim that the GM's plans don't survive contact with the players – the players might suffer a TPK, create some way of solving an adventure the GM never predicted, or get fixated on something that only becomes important because of the player's interest.

Those happen in this game too! But, there also at least **six** separate mechanics that deliberately create this kind of unpredictability.

1. **Glory:** Player can spend points to say "this happens" within constraints defined by their characters. That expert assassin about to attack suddenly realises you are their lost kin and want to help you, etc. The cost of using Glory means the stronger effects are used more sparingly. But with several players each with their own desires, sometimes the unexpected happens.
2. **Daemons:** A daemon might withdraw powers the players were relying on, or push PCs into certain actions that might be at odds with the scenario. This is a social element that the GM has to buy into, but the daemon has Needs and Desires which make it easier to know how to roleplay them.
3. **Invocations:** A magic system where the GM and players don't know exactly what a spell will do or be used for, until players see opportunities in play. Most uses are fairly low-powered, but every now and then they can have unexpected effects and ramifications.
4. **Interventions:** Perhaps the biggest chaos factor – each character has several hooks to introduce individual game-changing events, and the system enforces their *random* intervention in a game. These events are shaped by a character's history and interests, but exactly *which* ones and how they have an effect can each be surprising and wreak havoc on a planned adventure.
5. **Vagaries:** each character has a special ability. Some are mild but consistent, others are radically open-ended. Many are unpredictable. With a different ability for each PC, and different situations in each scenario, there's no telling what effect these will have. (There's a danger that these might too one-dimensional – we'll see.)
6. **The World, and Custom Rules:** The GM is encouraged to create custom open-ended rules for different situations or locations – the effects of wishes or spontaneous magic created a generation or more ago, yet still existing. Players might find ways to exploit them in unpredictable ways.

There are mechanics capable of radical effects, like *Sorcery*, but these are usually created or moderated by the GM and so can be planned for. Others increase consistency, like *Pushing*. This page refers to mechanics that *no one* controls exactly, and can't be planned for.

The effects are intended to be emergent, dependent on the interplay between the GM, the players, the mechanic itself, and the events of a given scenario. This makes them highly chaotic, even for the GM (which is intentional).

Any one of these effects, used by any one player, could seriously upend a planned adventure. With so many rules and multiple players, the potential for chaos is off the charts.

You must be comfortable with this. Embrace that chaos! You can never know what will happen in any given session, and cannot plan a specific outcome. Your plots and NPCs aren't sacred. Prepare to be surprised!

A CREATION MYTH

Creation: The universe is chaos, and the Primordials are its masters. Monstrous, godlike beings whose passage transforms existence around them. Entire worlds and species are created, mutated beyond recognition, and consumed entirely, at the Primordial's whim.

One Primordial discovered a world of the unreal, overlapping their world of matter and energy. A world inhabited by beings of pure thought – the deamons. It immediately trapped them and begin to study and harvest them.

Five hundred years ago, one of the slave races living inside this Primordial made contact with the daemons – or maybe the daemons reached out to them. A pact was made – the first act of sorcery, also the bloodiest. Countless humans sacrificed themselves in a ritual, to give daemons power enough to tear out the heart of the Primordial and, from its dying body, create a new world for the now free humans to populate.

The World is not a globe and the laws of physics are not reliable. The magic of daemons and sorcerer death-curses change the world in weird, wondrous, and dangerous ways. In the most cursed hexlands it can rain fire, water flows upwards, swords turn into mice, and the rules change every few minutes. Luckily, most regions have more understandable physics than this.

There is a single vast continent, surrounded by the Mists of Madness and divided by the Living Sea running down its middle. The land is most fertile close to the sea, and more arid and increasingly harsh further away.

The still-burning heart of the Primordial spirals lazily across the heavens, waxing and waning as it beats once per day, providing heat and light. Sorcerers have died trying to reach it and capture its eldritch power.

Monsters: Species can interbreed, which is how you get Griffins and Minotaurs. Offspring of such unions are usually infertile (unless sorcerers are involved), so such Chimerae are unique and solitary.

There's another kind of man-made monster. Sorcerers often bind daemons into animal (or human!) bodies. This ritual changes the body, giving new abilities. Sometimes they escape and run wild, outliving their creator.

Pockets of Mist sometimes drift in from the edge of the world, or bubble up out of fissures in the earth. Those swallowed by the Mist can be transformed, and that gives birth to Abominations.

Leviathans (or Dragons) are rampaging creatures born of a power older than the world which spawn out of volcanic outbursts. They come in a variety of shapes, with varied and unpredictable powers, and their shimmer-crystal hearts grant great power to the adventurer willing to risk corruption.

Magic: All magic in the world comes from either Daemons or (rarer) the Dead Primordial. As described on the next page, the story of history is of humanities' increasing mastery of sorcery.

THE HISTORY OF CIVILISATION

The five ages of history, each of roughly a century, describe advances in sorcery that enabled humanity's growth from brutality to civilisation.

The Age Of Chaos: The world is still forming – earthquakes, volcanoes, etc. People fight for scant resources, post-apocalypse style. The death curse is first used – dying might summon a daemon to carry out your last wish, whether wishing doom on enemies or good things for those you love.

The Age of Blood: The world has settled, mostly. People gather in tribes, led by Witch Queens, who torture and murder captives to steal the power of their death curse for themselves, using their blood sorcery to grow powerful. Daemons do not understand humans, and respond to strong emotions and feelings. Misunderstandings are common, and sometimes calamitous!

The Age of Tongues: Witch Queen Sesha was first to learn the language of daemons, inventing writing in the process (and creating the Infinite Library). Making precise bargains meant more successful sorcery and fewer sacrifices. Without constant raiding, towns and cities start to appear in the more settle lands near the sea, partially built by sorcery.

The Age of Dynasties: When a ruler dies, their daemon bindings often break, unleashing chaos, and the ruins of such towns litter the wilds.

Rulers can now tie daemonic bindings to covenants or guilds, or to their bloodline, ensuring a dynasty's continued existence and dominance. With towns and cities now able to survive longer than a single generation, civilisation truly begins to take shape.

The Age of Enlightenment: Sorcery is possible without blood sacrifice. People find new ways to summon daemons, developing philosophies of compassion and ethics in tandem. As well as finding ways to set up protective wards to hold back Spontaneous Magic events (a.k.a. wishes).

Spontaneous Magic has plagued humanity – chasms suddenly opening up, rains of fire, and worse. The *Infinite Library* discovers that if enough people share a desire or sentiment, a daemon hears and is bound to act without understanding. The effect is usually weird, but sometimes catastrophic.

A New Age Is Dawning: Daemons have Needs requiring personal attention, limiting the number of daemons a sorcerer can control. The Empress of the aspirationally named *Eternal Empire of 999 Loyal City States* established the *Congregation of Daemonic Devotions*, a church (or cult)-like organisation where member Celebrants devote their lives to the maintenance of daemon needs. Empress Soroya has built a vast army of daemons under her personal control. Some neighbours eagerly ally with her to share in prosperity, while others get nervous…

The World Today: The ideas of Enlightenment are spreading from the northern coast of the Living Sea out to the world. The further you venture into the wilds, the more primitive and bloodthirsty cultures you encounter.

This is not a world with a lost, past glory. The past was inferior to, more savage than, and less deliberately magical than the present. Though there are still wonders to be found and feared in Hexlands – the daemon-twisted ruins of dead settlements and cities.

PLANNING THE GAME

This document assumes you have played or run RPGs before, and know what to do. Some rules that might not be standard in other games are listed here.

WHAT IS "THE GAME"?

The game is what people lose by reading this, if they allow this text to have that power over them. And if you think about it, that is a perfect metaphor for roleplaying. Roleplaying is an imaginary collaboration that requires consent from all the participants.

The term "the game" is used in two main ways. First, it refers to the game system, of which you are reading book 3. It also refers to a specific instance of "the game" – a campaign or one-shot. That latter sense is the one we'll be using here when we talk of "the game." When talking about the game system itself, we'll use the term, "the system."

BEFORE THE GAME

In essence, the group together decides to play something, and appoints a GM who then takes on the duties and authority that grants.

The person appointed in the GM role then has the authority to make a lot of decisions about the game. A wise GM involves the other players in a lot of decisions, but the buck stops with her.

The GM has three main duties: creating or using a Scenario, Running the Game (playing out that scenario), and managing the Game (having authority over what happens between adventures). They are three different jobs, and could technically be done by different people (a GM might play a scenario written by someone else, for example).

Each has its own quirks and rules, so each gets its own chapter in this book.

PLAYER VS GM

A game is a social activity where *everyone* is an active participant. The GM *is* responsible for the world and things within the fiction. But they are not the group's sole arbitrator and therapist. You are all in this together.

Be willing to talk out issues. If something isn't right, anyone can say something. Ask for safety tools and use them. If one player is being an ass, call them out. If there are issues between players, everyone should try to figure out a solution. If problems are too big, be willing to leave the session.

PLAYER VS PLAYER

Sometimes adventurers come to blows. It's important to distinguish between player vs player and character vs character. The latter is functional and fun. The former suggests a problem between the players, or an incompatibility with the game. Talk it out, but accept it might not be fixable and you either have to say goodbye to one of the players or end the game early.

SESSION ZERO

It has become an important tradition in roleplaying circles to have a so-called Session Zero. The idea is your group devotes the first session to shared character design. During this session:

- Players design their characters together.
- The GM describes the setting and other information the characters know,
- The GM tells the players what power level (Heroic and Epic) the game will be set at, and lists any house rules not listed in the rules document.
- The group discusses shared standards the group will use, such as safety tools, player principles, other ideas of acceptable behaviour, and so on.

Everything the players need to know to play effectively in the game can be shared here. In summary, the GM describes how they intend to run the game and what the game is about, and invites suggestions and contributions from the players on what they want in the game. A Session Zero can be a highly collaborative experience.

At the end of the session, players know what to expect from the game, and the GM has a bunch of information on the characters in their game – so when they sit down to make the first Scenario, they can write it for those characters.

It's up to the GM whether to do a Session Zero, but it's worth it.

SHARED STANDARDS: SAFETY TOOLS, ETC.

The GM and players should have a discussion about acceptable behaviour (including *Player Principles*), and whether or not to use Safety Tools and how.

One player might say they don't want anything to do with spiders, another may say they don't want any plots to involve harm to children, etc.

It's okay for players to say what they don't want to see (they might also say what they *do* want to see). This is a *starting point*. Things may come up that weren't considered before, players boundaries may become more or less permissive. All the players should be open to change without forcing it.

Above all, remember that this is a *game*. The players are here to have a good time. Don't lose sight of that.

There are many articles and disscisions about Safety Tools out there. I'll leave this for you to explore and decide. Ideally, it's a group decision.

POWER LEVEL

The person assigned the GM role decides a bunch of game decisions, which includes creating Scenarios. One important decision is deciding power level.

Heroic: The system assumes this is the default. Adventurers (the PCs) are heroic and competent, but there many others like them in world.

Epic: the adventurers are extraordinary individuals, and there are only a handful of others like them in the world (maybe only the player's replacement characters, should one die).

Epic characters are great for one-shots and very short mini-campaigns where character development is not much of an issue. If you want characters to grow over time, Heroic is better.

The main difference: Heroic characters gain +2/skill advance, and Epic characters gain +3/advance. This seemingly small change has a huge impact.

CREATING A SCENARIO

A Scenario is this game's term for an Adventure. When creating a Scenario, follow the steps written below, and then see the Chapter on *Running the Game*.

DEFINE A SITUATION

Come up with an idea or situation that might suck the players into it. You can be contrived, and you want to link the situation to the adventurers if possible.

Two of the players have had their adventurers' say upholding the law being necessary for civilisation to survive, so the GM imagines a scenario set in Sanctuary, a land where legality is very grey and individual morality is often bought and traded. She imagines a scenario where a robin hood style villain is being attacked by oppressive legal bodies. Will the adventurers support the law or those fighting the law?

You don't have to create scenarios that are strictly opposed to the player's ideas. They can support them! Or you might raise new issues to address.

A coastal border town is being harassed by pirates. The GM thinks the same players above would love the opportunity to beat up some pirates…

CREATE FACTIONS…

When you have an idea for a situation, create at least two factions, but there can be more (more than one per player can get very confusing).

A Faction is two things: an objective or intention, and the *agent* carrying that intention out. The acting *agent* can be person, group, organisation, even an elementary force of nature if there's a way for players to personalise it.

A storm is going to destroy the merchant fleet if the players do nothing. The faction here could be the Fleet itself – and to personalise it, the captain of the fleet and her family. Their goal is to avoid getting sunk, and to survive. It's easy to imagine the adventurers having a lot to do in this goal – and if they are passengers on the ship, they may care more about saving themselves. So, it's best if this family is someone the players have already met and interacted with.

Each and every faction must be something the players can directly assist or object to. They must be able to interact with it in a meaningful way. Something like, "*Make the world a better place,*" is too abstract and too big – how exactly would someone do that? And who is doing it? Answer those two questions for each intention and you have your Faction.

General Issimo wants to destroy the Army of Mettle. That's too much for one intention. But what if General Fortado, a major power in Mettle is going to be staying at a local waystation. If he is removed that would weaken Mettle… And the GM might invent some specific animosity between Issimo and Fortado.

…WITH INCOMPATIBLE OBJECTIVES

The Objective of each Faction must be incompatible with at least one other.

Things get interesting in that storm when there's a second Faction whose goal is incompatible with that family surviving… Maybe a merchant who hates them for relatable reasons takes the opportunity to sink them…

Factions do not need to be directly opposed in the way described here, where one Faction is acting against another. But those goals are easy to invent!

RAMIFICATIONS AND REINCORPORATION

The Scenario must define what happens if the players do not act. When picking your Factions (remember they are both an agent, and an *intention*) decide how things will play out with no PC interference.

This is important for setting a baseline – you know how to adjudicate things if players *do* act, and achieve some success.

But it's also important for developing the world. Even if the adventurers are miles away in the next adventure, those events happened and will be referred back to later. The GM should look for ways to reincorporate things – whether players interfered or not. Make what actually happened have an impact.

In one adventure, the players humiliate a local sheriff. The next time they pass this way, she is now an outlaw, and the new sheriff is even worse.

Or maybe they humiliate that sheriff, and she has been overlooked for promotions and remembers the adventurers. She sees them as her enemies…

STARTING THE SCENARIO

With the bulk of the scenario designed, you have to decide how it gets started.

Describe where the adventurers are at the start of the scenario. Give each player some Hooks to draw them into the scenario.

A hook can be purely mercenary, dangling some reward like a carrot ("you have heard that the keeper of the mansion has a book of sorcery").

It can be personal. Maybe an adventurer has a Passion relating to a Faction, or has clearly stated they want to do this thing and the objective opposes it.

It can and often is reactive. Maybe one of the factions recognises the PCs from a previous adventurer, sees them as a threat, and decides to take them out.

Finally, ask the players what their adventurers are doing there. They draw upon their Legends to explain this, and can invent extra rewards with GM approval.

One adventurer is interested in becoming a better Sorcerer, and her player declares that the sorceress who built this estate left behind her Book of Secrets, a tome of daemon rituals and the adventuring Sorcerer wants a look at it.

Another player is a Desperado, who captures things or people, and declares she has been hired to capture one of the residents. The GM now chooses who the resident is, and if it is the same person the sheriff wants to capture.

It's the GM's job to try to accommodate the players contributions and figure out how they fit into the scenario. The GM might negotiate with them to make their goal fit the scenario and the campaign, and be a possible reward.

THE GOAL OF A SCENARIO

The goal is not – as might be expected – to create a situation that players are expected to "solve" or complete. The goal is multi-fold:

- Create a situation that will entertain the players for a session or two
- Do world-building – describe aspects of the world to be revisited later.
- Create one or more NPCs who can recur later (*can*, not *will*), either to help the world building or to provide an ongoing source of adversity.

Not all scenarios accomplish all of these tasks, but hopefully always the first. Note that "winning" the adventure is not listed.

WHAT GOES IN A SCENARIO

When creating a Scenario, these are the things to think about and include.

AN UNSTABLE SITUATION AND TWO OR MORE FACTIONS

This has been covered already, but *everything changes,* and usually for the worst. Describe what will happen if the players don't get involved. This last part is extremely important and leads to:

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER?

You don't have to think about when creating the scenario, but after it's over, think of the ramifications on the world (even if just a local area) and when making future scenarios, think if you can refer back to the events of this one.

INVOLVING THE PLAYERS

What gets the players' adventurers involved in this situation. Play them up as important. Avoid the classic "man in a tavern hires them" trope.

The players might not be recruited – they might just be caught up in a situation that is occurring around them, which inevitably blows back on them.

Agents of factions may recognise them as important and try to recruit them.

Avoid offering actual money, instead translate rewards into one or more months of fine living standard (1 Glory), and don't be afraid of offering things they actually want (an item enchanted for an effect, or a contraption).

INTERESTING LOCATIONS

Each scenario should have one or more locations describes on more or less detail. It's a good idea for the GM to have a notebook of several locations so they can drop in a *type* of location when needed.

Locations should be interesting to describe, and interesting to have an action scene in – so think of what can be done there, and what *can't* be done.

INTERESTING CHARACTERS

Scenarios live and die by the characters they involve. Each faction needs an agent to a represent their nature, and individual NPCs might be powerful factions in their own right.

Many mobs or extras will be used. Look at the Basic Opponents table at the end of Book 2 as a guide to their stats, and the Adversary section of this book. Remember that important NPCs have bound daemons, so you might need to stat them up too.

CUSTOM RULES

See the following page. The physical; laws of the world have been affected by past sorcerers so each location often has its own custom rule.

DAEMONS

Daemons are a foundational element of the setting. Important characters usually have one or more bound daemons, and the powers that provides.

Each daemon also has its own needs and desires – roll on the random table (a d20) for a rough guide. This will influence the actions od the person who "owns" that daemon – they won't bind a daemon that has needs they find too offensive, and the satisfying the daemon might be hard. Take this into account when deciding what powers an NPC usually has.

CUSTOM RULES

Each place of interest should have at least one Custom Rule. These are Wishes that have stood the test of time – an instant of sorcery that enough people believe is or should be real that it has stuck around.

Madam MacGuffia inherited her estate from a sorceress, who performed a ritual to create the Custom of Hospitality. Anyone accepted as a guest of the estate is protected by other residents while within the estate.

If not acting fully in support if the custom, in the GMs opinion, Resist Power 20 every hour or Scene, or suffer 1d6 Body. (This is deliberately open-ended.)

Any damage inflicted in this way cannot be healed while within the estate, until the character – in the GMs opinion – now acts to support Hospitality.

The damage suffered is a penalty on actions acting against Hospitality.

Such Custom Rules do not have to follow any existing rules, or even laws of physics. But they should not kill a character outright – there should always be an opportunity to escape any harm they cause.

In this case, players can make the Power roll, choose Hospitality, or leave the estate.

The players are informed about any Custom Rules in the area their adventurers *should* know about – after all, the locals have felt the effects and know how it works.

If the adventurers are new to an area, they may not yet know the local rules and need to pick them up in play (either by experience or using Carousing to gossip with the locals and find out what they are saying about it).

RANDOM CUSTOM RULES

Adventurers travel a lot and the GM often needs to create custom rules. If you need help creating your own, roll on this table for inspiration. Maybe later create a d20 table with a bunch of specific rules.

D6 Custom Rules

1 Cosmetic: Something is different, but it is mostly just *weird*. Swords grow on trees, people's clothes change colour based on time of day, and so on.

2 Skill: Pick one skill (no *Psyche* Skill, *Fencing, Fighting, Shooting,* or *Stamina* – so d20 for rest) and describe a reason why that skill is harder (say -4 to all rolls, or reduce all results by 1 VL). A region where everyone fails Parley more often is one where people don't talk things out.

3 Passion: Use of a Passion is enhanced (cost less Power or effect is increased). It might only affect specific Passions or types of Passion. Or *every* roll is a Heroic Action for 1 Spirit – people are easily driven to passion or rage.

4 Invocation: All invocations are easier, or specific types, or a specific invocation. It may be triggered frequently by accident, cost less Power, have greater effects, etc.

5 Activity: a specific activity is enhanced or penalised (example, see *The Curse of Hospitality*). Something people do is affected, some behaviour is encouraged or discouraged. This might affect skill rolls, but it's not a specific skill – it's the activity, and might affect multiple skills.

6 Ranged Combat: Lots of sorcerers have invented rules affecting ranged combat. After firing a ranged weapon, it shatters. Or maybe if it misses, it turns midair and attacks the shooter. Or projectiles face resistance is if passing through water and damage is reduced. Or the shooter is dragged closer to their target. These are ideas – just use one rule.

This table offers some suggestions. Often, you'll create a specific rule that matches a scenario's needs, or which encourage a certain feel for a region. But you sometimes need to create a Rule on demand. Some Custom Rules aren't deliberately created, they just come into existence and then persist. They can be weird and make no sense. They are not bound by physics.

RUNNING THE GAME

Running the game is different from creating a Scenario. They don't have to be done by the same person (which is good, since many RPGs expect the GM to run a scenario or adventure module created by others).

GM PRINCIPLES

1. Respect the Players
2. Be a Fan of their Characters
3. Be True to the World
4. Make the World Real (Not Just True)
5. Celebrate the Adventurers
6. ? (I love groups of 6)

CELEBRATE THE ADVENTURERS

The adventurers are seen as heroic and maybe even noble figures. They are celebrities. Look for opportunities to highlight this –people celebrating them, or being demanding. Their actions are noticed and commented on.

RESPECT THE PLAYERS

Treat the players with respect. You are not their god – they have as much right to play the game as you do.

Pay careful attention to Session Zero and any information the players have given you. You want them to enjoy the session.

BE A FAN OF THEIR CHARACTERS

The Players want their characters (Adventurers) to be worth playing. Sometimes that means describing their actions in ways that make them look good (don't make them look like buffoons) and sometimes that means throwing them into the deep end, because you trust in their ability to make that fun and want to see what happens.

You should like the Adventurers that players bring to the table and be excited to see what they do. You might not be there immediately, but should get there.

BE TRUE TO THE WORLD

You are the arbiter of what is True in the world, the describer of facts. Players look to you for answers to their questions. You are often called upon to make stuff up, and should keep in mind what is right for your world.

You don't have to know everything. You can throw a question back and decide whether to accept that answer or use your own. Once you decide, it is true.

Do the people here venerate the Forbidden God? Hmm what do you think?

Does this crevasse have another route across? Are you willing to spend a day on a Scout roll? We'd also need to find out if your pursuers catch you.

It's fine to answer declaratively.

Can you walk through that cliff as if it wasn't there? What? No.

Sometimes create answers that link back to the adventurers.

Who is guarding the scroll you want to steal? Desperado, remember when you served an order of crucible guardians? This guard is wearing the same insignia.

MAKE THE WORLD REAL, NOT JUST TRUE

You'll be describing a lot of things. Look for opportunities to add details to the world and the people in it, to sprinkle evocative details everywhere.

INTERVENTIONS

Interventions are a wild-card for both players and GM. They tie the adventurer into the setting (things happen because of *them*) but also mess with players (and the GM in a way), creating new events and obstacles.

Interventions come into play on two occasions:

- At the start of each session, the GM rolls a d6 for each adventurer against their Legends.
- Each time a player rolls a 20, they can get an Intervention. This requires the GM to be on their toes. See *Ad-Hoc Interventions*.

SESSION INTERVENTIONS

At the start of each session, the GM rolls d6 for each adventurer. Compare against Legends; If the roll matches a Legend, an intervention occurs.

Say an adventurer has 3 Legends: 1) Diva, 2) Scourge, 3) Sellsword. The GM rolls a 5, so no Intervention occurs. In the next session, the GM rolls a 3, so something related to the adventurer's time as a Sellsword intervenes.

Look at the adventurer's event and pick something based on that. You might ask the player for details on that period. Then roll d6 against the Outcome:

Equal or under: the faction is present for their own reasons. The GM must decide what their agenda is. When they discover the adventurer, they will act against them – trying to capture or kill – but their Agenda remains relevant.

Above Outcome: The adventurer is why they are here. They are hunting the adventurer. They may claim another Agenda, but that is a cover.

AD-HOC INTERVENTIONS

Any time a player rolls a 20 (ignore the first in each combat), the GM rolls for an Intervention. The Intervention can be introduced immediately (see *Play Example)*, or the GM might delay it till she has some time to think about it.

INTERVENTIONS, GLORY, AND PASSION

Whenever an Intervention enters play, and a tie to the adventurer is exposed, that player gains one Glory. If it's a Passion Intervention, this is considered provoking the Passion, so the player can spend a Glory instead to cancel it (see *Provoking Passions* in Book 2).

Interventions can be a source of Passions. Once the player of the adventurer targeted by the Intervention knows they are present, they can immediately create a Passion (and gain 1 Glory).

INTERVENTIONS IN COMBAT

It happens that a random Intervention will be rolled in combat. The GM doesn't have to create the Intervention immediately – it can be delayed to a time the GM is less harried. But they *can* be introduced in combat…

Melodia strikes at the crown princess Gloria. But this is her second 20, and the GM finds that her Passion: Hate Cruelty is triggered, which was created when Melodia fought against the Cruel Tyrant Adonicus. And now his fierce guard arrive to capture Melodia. They aren't allied with Gloria. She might let them fight and escape, or might need Melodia and fight them. Things get complicated!

GM MOVES

The game is a conversation. Players often ask the GM if they can do something or talk amongst themselves and then ask the GM for clarification. Or they are asked to roll something, and look to the GM to see how that roll is resolved.

Whenever the GM makes a decision about any of these things, they are making a GM Move. The specific moves are listed below; the next page describes how to use them.

GENERAL MOVES

REQUIRE A ROLL

The players say they do something and the GM thinks that requires a roll, and so they say that.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

The player makes a decision, even as simple as "Your opponent swings an axe at you, what do you do?"

This can be more nuanced. "The guard says your kind cannot enter. What do you do?"

DIVIDE OR COMBINE

The GM might split a player off from their team, or put them together. This might be just for a moment.

While negotiating with the sovereign, the vizier quietly whispers in Arund's ear. She wants to speak to just you. Do you go with her?"

As you fight the pirates, you are kicked into the hut on the edge of the village, facing a lone pirate…

DENY AN ABILITY

An item or power is not available. This can be an innate power, skill, invocation, or external item, but the reason must make sense.

Melodia goes for her horse, but the GM describes the sniper taking a potshot at anyone getting too close.

Melodia wants to use her Parley skill to persuade the gatekeeper, but must act quickly before the approaching guards arrive.

An item or power is *usually* denied only temporarily.

DANGER

This is three separate moves that are great for making the world feel real:

Declare a Danger: The GM declares the existence of a danger that *will* occur in the future.

The smoke rising in the distance indicates the city has begun to burn.

Trigger a Danger: a danger that has been foreshadowed takes place.

The buildings around the adventurers catch fire. How will they get out?

Escalate a Danger: An existing danger gets worse and directly penalises the adventurers.

As the adventurers fight the bandits, the GM describes timbers cracking and the gate collapses, blocking the obvious exist.

Smoke fills the air, causing everyone breathing or sight issues.

A Danger adds tension and creates a complication for any situation.

CELEBRATE

Not all GM Moves are negative for the players. Sometimes the adventurers are visibly celebrated, granted some advantage by the situation, and so on.

This has the same name as one of the principles – it is essentially the same thing. Remember the adventurers are special and sometimes make that a thing.

There are also moves specific to the world of LND – see the next page.

HOW TO USE GM MOVES

The GM makes a move when:

1. The Players look to GM to say what happens
2. When a roll results in a draw
3. When the GM spends a Victory Level to buy an option

Here's how those work.

THE PLAYERS LOOK TO GM

Whenever the players look to the GM to narrate what happens, the GM can make a move (and in fact *must* make a move).

The players travel through the wilds and ask the GM, "what do we see?"

The players visit a weapon store and ask the GM what is for sale.

An adventurer hits a bandit for 15 damage and asks what happens.

The adventurers ask the city guard if they can pass. How does he respond?

As the game is a conversation, this option gets used a *lot*.

The GM must respond with one of the moves, but can also disguise it by describing it in a different way

The players are sneaking through a compound, win their stealth rolls, spend their Victories, and look to the GM to see how they are narrated. The GM decides to celebrate the PCs and narrates their successful sneak.

A ROLL RESULTS IN A DRAW

Whenever an adventurer rolls against an opponent and draws, they both get a partial success. The GM can spend their partial success to buy *any* GM Move.

Remember these are GM choices – not the choice of whoever the adventurer was rolling against.

THE GM SPENDS A VICTORY

…when an opponent beats an adventurer. The GM can spend one of their Victories to buy any GM Move, just as above.

SPECIAL MOVES

Each of these requires the GM to have a Victory Level to spend.

FACTION

Also known as "moving an adventure along". Each Faction has their own agenda. The GM can spend a Victory level to introduce a Faction that is *not already involved* in the scene.

DAEMON

Either the dominant daemon rebels if it has reason to (and thus denies one or more powers), or the GM chooses a different daemon to be dominant.

INTERVENTION

If the GM has any interventions yet to bring into play, spend a Victory to describe how they are active.

LOYALTY

Players often have several Passions, and any can create Complications. The Random Intervention system can create a requirement for Passion Complications to enter play. Spend a Victory to introduce them.

CUSTOM RULES

Some (probably most) custom rules are reactive, but if they need to take action to have an effect, the GM can spend a Victory to bring it into play.

GLORY

A Glory Opportunity is something that will be observed by others who will naturally be wowed and are contingent on players choosing to act and winning a roll.

Spend a Victory to create such an opportunity, and those who decide to go for it, right then, get a Glory point.

Glory Opportunities are often contingent on a roll, and are slotted into an ongoing scene. Adventurers have the option to ignore them.

MANAGING ADVENTURERS

Some things involving an adventurer aren't technically part of the Scenario, but are ever-present facts of life.

WEALTH AND "THE ECONOMY"

The economy in this world is variable and often weird. In *Sanctuary*, worth is measured in precious metals and coinage. In *Lampoon*, wealth is measured by how engaging a story you can tell. In *Festivus*, there are daemon spigots on every street that dispense whatever ordinary material goods you wish for.

Most people are not sorcerers and still need to live. So barter is always present. People find, create, or grow things of value and trade them. Coinage might be minted or a region might use promissory notes backed by a lender: "This coin is worth $1/10^{th}$ of a Royal Bard's song by promise by the ruler of Lampoon."

The coins of one realm might be respected and traded in another realm but this is not the norm. If realms do not know each other, or they do not engage in trade, coins (and even goods) of one realm are often worthless in the other.

A community might not use money at all, depending on the trading of favours and promises. Many of the things that roleplaying games take for granted might not exist in some places, such as inns (which depend on a community of travellers, and travel is often something the common people don't do).

GLORY AND WEALTH

When adventurers arrive in a new area, the only thing they have can rely on is their name. At the start of each Scenario, adventurers gain a Wealth rating equal to the Glory they had. Their overall lifestyle depends on Wealth.

0, Poor Wealth: homeless, struggling to get by. Short of food, spurned by most people. The GM should create problems based on this cheapskate living standard. The Gear chapter in book 2 says Adventurers can have whatever mundane equipment they want – that is *not* true for 0 Wealth hobos who have nothing except those things they steal or take by conquest.

1-2, Average Wealth: Equivalent to a coping farmer or struggling townie. Live in that realm's transient housing (sometimes an inn, more often a rented room). Enough money for mundane gear but nothing special. Struggling.

3-5, Good Wealth: Well-off, living in (renting) the homestead of a wealthy famer or affluent townhouse. Spending money for food and mundane things, and the occasional pricier item. Have household servants like cook and maid

6-9, Excellent Wealth: Rich like a minor noble, possessing a small manor and service of a dozen servants. Rich adventurers have a different impressive outfit for every occasion and 'buy' whatever mundane gear they desire.

Staff can be sent out for mundane tasks, but don't rely on them for dangerous or highly skilled tasks.

10, Spectacular Wealth: Fabulously wealthy, like royalty. The residence is the equivalent of a palace with a hundred or more servants. Adventurers can acquire expensive purchases like small manors or ships as long as they have a little time, and people will flock to them to bask in their wealth.

Again, servants should fall into background, but can be sent out on small tasks and show off flamboyant wealth, and might even have bodyguards.

DOWNTIME

Downtime is what happens between sessions – or when the scenario is over and proper play has ended but GM and player still want to sort stuff out.

Usually, you'll have at least a month of time in-game between Scenarios, but if the GM wants a more long-lasting game, it could be a year or more. The GM might describe things happening in the world during this period of downtime.

ADVANCEMENT

At the end of each session, spend XP. The adventurer just gets better at something. This is a free action. See *Advancement* in Bk2.

DOWNTIME TURNS

Adventures have one Downtime Turn per rank of Wealth (1-2 = 1, 3-5 = 2, 6-9 = 3, 10 =4). As described above, Wealth equals your Glory at the end of a Scenario. For each Downtime Turn, choose from the following:

1. LONG-TERM RECOVERY

If you have Body damage *exceeding* your Recovery, you can take one more Downtime Turns to heal them. You get one Body Recovery for free, and each Downtime turn that you commit is another.

Some ailments don't recover simply this way – a curse might need something particular actions in a scenario. But if it heals with time, it uses a Downtime Turn (sometimes more than one).

2. ACQUIRE EQUIPMENT

You might want a special Item that isn't easily accessible. It might require Scenario play, or you might get it with a Downtime turn. The GM will tell you.

3. LEARN A NEW INVOCATION

Acquiring *Invocations* (or recovering one you have lost) is itself a ritual that needs some preparation. See *Sorcery*, or just roll on the *Invocations* table.

4. SUMMON A DAEMON

Bind a new daemon or cast a ritual. When you perform or help someone else perform a sorcerous ritual. See *Sorcery*.

5. PREPARE A RITUAL

You might work on, help with, or acquire the services of a sorcerer to cast a ritual. This is vague for now, and will be described the *Book of Sorcery*.

You can use this to recover a Flashback Ritual.

6. SOMETHING ELSE

Adventurers can do literally anything they can imagine during downtime. Design a new contraption, spread rumours about a political rival, and so on.

This is for things you can do without personal danger – anything involving detailed personal actions should be done during a Scenario.

They often require a single opposed roll, and might not give complete success – they can have ramifications on the next (or a future) Scenario.

Declaring a more complicated goal to do something can help the GM decide what an upcoming Scenario might be about.

REWARDS

There are many possible rewards in play.

STARTING GLORY

If you end a Scenario with at least one Glory, you start the next with 1d6. Fame and Glory are fickle, so this is random. This also encourages players to spend their Glory instead of hording them (though they might save it tp 'buy' a higher level of Wealth).

XP

See *Advancement* in Book 2. You get some XP per session, and can spend those on buying new advances and sometimes special abilities.

BOUND DAEMONS

Every adventure should have one or more opponents with Bound Daemons. If the adventurers kill the daemon's owner, they can bind the daemon.

There is a limit in how many ranks of daemon a character can control, which will be described in the *Book of Sorcery*. For now, that shouldn't be a concern.

Adventurers who have bound too many daemons can be influenced by those daemons, and gradually lose their sense of self and might eventually be possessed, losing their humanity. For now, that's just for roleplay.

SPECIAL ITEMS

Try to include one unusual item in each scenario. See the *Lock & Load* chapter in Book 2. It doesn't have to be something that players actually *want* – it might just be something that adds flavour to the world or local setting.

But players might want to deprive an NPC of that item, and after taking it, they may choose to keep it.

LOYALTY

Adventurers should see their Loyalty fluctuate. There will be Loyalty between player adventurers. It's a mechanic designed for players, but it's possible that NPCs might get Loyalty on a PC and vice-versa.

The player has the opportunity to refuse Loyalty to an NPC. Honouring Loyalty to an NPC later is worth a Glory point.

INVOCATIONS

Player adventurers can get these through Downtime Turns. An Invocation is not *just* knowledge – it is part of the daemon world, held in the adventurer's mind. The GM might rarely offer an opportunity to get new ones during play, but this is for a specific Invocation and requires a spirit contest.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

A player might have an idea for an unusual ability not covered by the standard rules – or want a Vagary they don't possess, and the GM might offer one. The GM chooses the cost and method of acquiring the ability, if possible, and this often involves at least one Downtime turn, some objective in a Scenario, and then some XP.

VICTORY GLORY

If you win a contest against someone worthy of the contest, that's usually worth a Glory (once per Scene, at most). If others helped you to win that Glory, they might get a point of Loyalty for you.

If you defeat an opponent in combat, or in some other way that would be considered a final victory this Scenario, the Glory might be higher. A typical glory-worthy opponent is worth 1 Glory. Add 1 Glory for each of these:

- The GM uses Glory for them (symbolising an important character),
- They use sorcery (a lot of invocations, flashback rituals, etc.),
- They have one or more bound daemons
- They have special abilities (they are a Daemon, Chimera, Leviathan. Etc.)

So, major opponents are worth 2-5 Glory, with minor opponents worth 1 Glory each. Defeating them removes them as a source of farming Scene Glory!

If you were never in any real danger of consequences, no Glory is awarded.

Only one person gets the Glory. The Glory goes to the one striking the last, decisive blow (or the equivalent, if not in combat). "Kill Stealing" is a thing.

For those that helped, check their Glory. If it's higher than their current Loyalty, add one Loyalty.

Melodia defeats a powerful Sorcerer and gains 3 Glory. Elrish helped her (and in fact did most of the work!). Since she only has 1 Loyalty, she adds +1 Loyalty.

If *defeated*, you lose 1 Glory, so you might as well make a Dramatic Escape.

SPENDING GLORY (FOR THE GM)

Opponents don't have individual Glory totals. Instead, the GM has 1 Glory plus the number of PCs in each Scene, plus the same amount again as floating points to be used throughout the session. Any unspent points are not saved.

This is lower than a Player has when designing their own characters. The GM can create characters whenever they need and players have only the one.

The GM can spend Glory for any character they control.

USES OF GLORY

The GM can freely use *Dramatic Contrivances* – that's part of the GM's job, but pay attention to the GM Moves for when this is acceptable.

Using Glory to *Fight Fate* for an NPC should be rare, and this uses all the GMs allotment of Glory in that scene. The GM should use this sparingly.

If the GM spends Glory on a *Dramatic Escape*, grant a Glory to the adventurer who drove that NPC away (more than one PC might qualify; try to pick one). Also that character should turn up again this Scenario (they can't *Escape* in the final scene). If players *really* want to kill an NPC, this is when they do it!

The main use of this Glory is on enhancing attack and defence successes, and making the character a more formidable opponent. Remember to narrate the effects of spending Glory on those things.

For monsters, the Glory might be used to gain extra uses of special powers. For one sorcerer per scene, it can grant extra flashback rituals. See below.

SORCERY

Sorcery isn't covered in detail till the *Book of Sorcery*. But it's integral to the world, and the GM needs to know how to use it.

WHAT IS SORCERY

All magic power comes from manipulating daemons. No human has any integral magical power, but *any* human can learn how to command daemons.

Roughly 500 years ago, the world was created in a massive act of sorcery (which involved a frankly embarrassing amount of blood sacrifice).

The daemons exist in a strange ethereal world alien to humans. But they also dwell in this world.

This world is one in which daemons are bound up in its fabric - they are part of the air people breath, and in the rocks that make up mountains and hills.

Daemons are not understood as evil corrupters, but as a force for good, entities who have strange and alien minds that can nevertheless be forced to create and modify things according to a sorcerers will.

They are also thought of as being like Genies. They grant wishes if the person making the wish has a mind string enough to reach them. But they also grant wishes if they believe its what humanity wants. So when a group of people express a belief, the genie tries to grant that belief – if it understands the wish.

This is the source of Spontaneous Magic, of Custom Rules, and also of Hexlands (kind of).

So, sorcery can be exploited by people with strong wills and the training in summoning daemons, and literally any magic is possible, but it takes time and often has unpredictable side effects.

WHAT IS A SORCERER

There are sorcerers and there are Sorcerers. Anyone can use Invocations, bound daemons, and even prepare a flashback ritual, so they are sorcerers. Some individuals devote their entire lives and resources to acquiring more ability and knowledge of sorcery. These are Sorcerers.

There ae usually considered to be three types of Sorcerer. A Warlock is travelling, itinerant sorcerer, and basically the same as an Adventurer.

A Sorcerer has a residence where they conduct their rituals (like a remote tower), like has one or more apprentices (a coven"), and is part of the local power structure – the local nobles ask them to perform magic on their behalf, and the sorcerer might *be* the local ruler. They typically command a small handful of daemons, incarnated as their bound servants.

And then there are Witches. The most powerful sorcerers, they rule entire nations and often have dozens of daemons at their command. They are often called Witch-queens, but some say this is a fourth class of sorcerer, even more powerful.

Player-adventurers can become a Sorcerer, but this means settling down and retiring from a life of adventure. That's one way to retire a character.

MALE SORCERERS

It's a belief in the world that men and sorcery do not mix, that male sorcerers always become mad and corrupt (see *Sanguine*). This is a roleplay element (at this point), and player characters can be male without any negative effects.

INVOCATIONS

Invocations are magical effects. The common Power Words are listed under character design, but they are not the only ones. Create more when needed!

Anyone who has them can perform an Invocation as a free action, since they represent just a few words and an effort of will. You must be able to speak and to concentrate. So, prisoners are often gagged, and those about to be murdered are pushed underwater if possible!

Exactly what happens varies with desire, the Power Word, and ability (a skill roll). Invocations are meant to be open-ended and open to imagination.

usually opposed rolls. Even if the target is an inanimate object – the GM picks a number as difficulty.

LIMITS OF INVOCATIONS

There's a lot of room to interpret just exactly what the Invocation does, but this isn't a physics system. You can't instakill someone. Use the mechanics that follow.

An Invocation is typically short-ranged, very visible, and can only affect things you can see. If damage is appropriate, roll as if Power were Might (1d6/4 Invocations), but add 1d6 per Victory Level.

An Invocation usually affects a single target, but might affect a small area (the size of a small room) with less effect, at the GM's discretion.

You can perform only one Invocation at a time (with limited exceptions).

If an attack, it requires an Invocations roll vs an appropriate skill. If the target dodges, use Reflexes. If it's something to withstand or endure, use Might or Stamina. If it affects their willpower, use Spirit, and Insight if it is based on their ability to understand what's going on.

FAILURE

An invocation always happens, and the world always responds. Your roll is to see if you control it.

Magreth has Scry and asks the Sun where her nemesis Archibold is now (he has travelled under the sun's gaze). The roll fails, but something *happens. Magreth looks too closely at the sun and feels it loom over her, entering her mind, and is blinded temporarily. (The sun is an eldritch god in this world.)*

INTERRUPTIONS

Invocations are often used as part of an Interruption because of their speed. They are after all as quick as uttering a few words. If someone attacks you, your Invocation might land first and interfere with their action.

STRAIN

If the Power roll contains any 6s *when performing an Invocation,* it is too much Strain. You take that Power cost in Vigour (with no defences), and roll Stamina to reduce it by your Victory levels. Describe the mental pain.

GAINING AND LOSING INVOCATIONS

You can gain new Invocations. Sometimes these are from the starting list, and sometimes you can choose something new.

If you roll a 20 when performing an Invocation, you suffer a Mishap (the GM has guidelines for that), and lose that Invocation. It escapes your mind.

ELDRITCH CORRUPTION

As with Sorcery, this will be addressed in more detail in the *Book of Daemons*. But there are some things the GM needs to be aware of.

THE SEVEN SEALS

In many games, the term **Corruption** *(or Sanity) describes an alternative game mechanic to hit points. It's a second way to permanently lose a character (though with a lot of game flavour). That's not what Corruption means here.*

It is often said that all magic comes from Daemons. But there is another source of magic, known alternately as the Forbidden God, the Dead God, The Eldritch Sun. The Primordial whose death created the world is still present, and there are cultists who try to harness its power and even wake it up.

This power is antithetical to humanity, and its victory would mean the destruction of the world, the rebirth of an ancient, evil god, and those humans who survive the world's destruction would be returned to eternal slavery.

This is a *bad* thing, though cultists and worshippers may not realise this, or may think they would be granted an elevated position in the new hellscape.

There are said to be Seven Great Seals, each created through the sacrifice of thousands of devotees and hidden throughout the world. The Infinite Library (the entire island) maybe be one, and the wandering island of Fountain may be another. The rest are hidden somewhere in the world.

To bring about the end of the world, the same individual would have to disrupt all seven seals at the exact same moment. Disrupting even one would be a monumental achievement, so it should never happen.

It is said that the seals would hold the Primordial in death for only a thousand years, and 500 are done already. So, the idea that the world *will* end is well known, and those who give it any though believe humanity is living on borrowed time. This has a psychological effect on some communities. But for most, the end is so far off in the future it's not really a concern.

SWORD & SORCERY

This is a sword & sorcery game, where concerns tend to be personal. The Scenario creation system encourages this. The above section provides hopefully interesting background. But it is just that – background. Some villains may be intent on raising the dead god, and think they can do it, but that should just be evidence of how insane or misguided they are. It shouldn't be a real danger of any adventures.

Concentrate on the personal scale when creating Scenarios, and use the setting background just to enrich the setting background and give reasons for why people do some of the things they do.

The Dead God can be an alternate source of power to some dark sorcerers, but shouldn't be a major factor in the game.

Adventurers don't have a Sanity or Corruption attribute. They never succumb to such a fate unless the controlling player desires it.

THE MISTS OF MADNESS

The world was built using the body of an inherently corrupt eldritch god, and so is infused with its corruption. This is most obvious with the Mists of Madness that surround the world and occasionally bubbles up from cracks in the earth.

This will be covered in more detail in the World Book. For now, be aware that the Mists of Madness are a place of doom. No daemon comes to an area enveloped by Mists, and any daemons you have bound are mysteriously gone. You cannot pressure them – they simply are not there.

If you adventure in the Mists, you do so without daemons (and cannot use Invocations or Glory – both of which are manifestations of daemonology). If you die in the Mists, accept the Dead God's Bargain or genuinely die.

Encounters with the Mists are rarely inflicted on adventurers, and they usually have means to escape them. A dangerous and rewarding Scenario might be offered, but players might bypass it, so have a backup plan!

THE DEAD GOD'S BARGAIN

When you come close to death, and have Glory (and are an important person favoured by daemons), you are visited by the *Dead God* and offered a bargain.

It offers a special power, in return for accepting part of the God into yourself. This is the GM's opportunity to roleplay a creepy and evil god!

If you accept, you are swallowed by the earth and emerge somewhere else, completely safe and now an Abomination with a new power. Every time you use the offered power, you also trigger your Abomination form (as below) and it becomes more twisted and monstrous (and painful!) each time.

If you refuse the Dead God's Bargain or are already an Abomination (and the *Dead God's Bargain* is not available to you), see *Glory: Fighting Fate*.

ACTIVATING THE DEAD GOD'S POWER

Each power is similar to a Vagary (it can only be used once per Advance), but does not cost Glory to trigger. Instead, you have a brief mental connection with the dead God and *must* trigger your Abomination form (see below).

POWERS FROM THE DEAD GOD

For now, there is no fixed list of powers. Look at Vagaries as an idea, and keep in mind what the Dead God is. These powers should never be 'good'.

Suggest things to the GM and see what the two of you come up with.

BEING AN ABOMINATION

You can trigger a shape change at any time, as a painful Nd6 roll. Roll the Changeling skill, unopposed, and add one bestial feature (temporarily) per VL.

Think of things animals can do, and gain appropriate features. Common ones include Tooth & Claw (extra damage equal to VLs), Enhanced Senses (one sense per VL), Flight (Gliding only, slow flight, fast flight), armoured hide (+4 armour per VL), and so on.

These changes are always accompanied by an appearance change that makes you look inhuman and monstrous, and last no more than 1 hour per Spirit.

ADVERSITY

BUILDING AN ENEMY

Whether building a human NPC or a monster, they need the same stats. They have Skills, Derived Abilities (things like *Damage Dice, Vitality, Body, Toughness*, etc.), and some have special abilities on top of those.

SKILL RANK RARITY

The Rank of a Skill is Score / 4, so when a Rank is listed and you need the Score, simply multiply by 4. Here's a listing of Ranks.

0 **Absolutely no ability.** You can't use this Skill at all.
1 **Incompetent.** It's rare to have this Skill and be so bad at it. Why is this?
2 **Unskilled**. The skill of an average person, with no training or experience.
3 **Trained.** The minimum skill of someone trained but not quite professional.
4 **Professional.** A highly skilled professional who can make a good living.
5 **Expert.** An ability that stands out even among other seasoned pros. This kind of ability is uncommon but not rare.
6 **Elite.** An ability that stands out among Experts. This *is* rare, but adventurers are not common either and encounter it fairly often.
7 **Exceptional:** Among humans, close to the best of the best. It's unusual even for the best of an adventurer's opponents to be this good.

In theory, rank 10 is possible, representing true Mastery. Adventurers may go their entire adventuring lives without meeting this kind of ability in humans.

ASSIGNING RANKS

When assigning ranks, you have several options. Use whichever you feel like.

BASIC OPPONENTS

Take one of the creature stats from the *Basic Opponents* list and use as is, or tweak it a little to fit your needs.

ASSIGN BY VIBE

Simply assign the ranks you think a character should have. So, an opponent might be given rank 4 in *Fighting*, meaning she has 16 Skill. *Evasion* and *Toughness* are each based on two skills, so rank 3 in *Toughness* would be a score of 6. Rank 4 on damage would be a base 4d6.

Don't worry too much about "balance" – adventurers can escape even death.

You can randomise a Skill's Score if desired: add 1d6-2 to the Score. A Rank 3 Skill becomes 10+1d6 (rank 3 x 4, then +1d6-2).

QUICK NPC DESIGN

Characters have a base rank of 2 in all skills (0 in those that need training). Then pick the same Legend 1-3 times, and add that many ranks to the 8 skills in that Legend. Each Legend has a specialty: add one rank.

1 **Competent.** Typical trained characters might have 1 Legend.
2 **Professional**. Above average and expert characters.
3 **Expert and Elite.** Highly skilled characters, the best of the best.

So, a Sellsword/2 has rank 4 in all Sellsword skills (and thus a score of 16).

Give up to 6 ranks in other skills to round them out. Then assign whatever Derived Stats seem reasonable.

FULLY DETAILED CHARACTER DESIGN

You can also design a character exactly like a PC, if you want more detail. The Roll20 sheet has *Random Skills* and *Roll Powers* buttons to make this faster.

BODY SCORES AND NPC QUALITY

Typical opponents fall into two categories. You can call the mass of nameless opponents Extras or Mobs. They are defeated if they take *any* Body damage – maybe they are poor quality or just not as committed to the cause. Choose how they are defeated – do they die, collapse, or run away?

For more important, individual, enemies, treat Body as normal. If you don't want to make Survival Rolls for them, halve Body and treat just like Vitality (they die when all Body is gone). The *Basic Opponents* table assumes this.

INDIVIDUAL NPCS

Whether you call them Named NPCs, Antagonists, Nemeses, etc., some NPCs are more important than others. If they are meant to be individuals in their own right, look at this section.

VAGARIES

Each Vagary can only be used once per Scenario. It's best to assume that Individuals have already used theirs, unless there's a reason they wouldn't.

Note that all NPCs technically have these, so you could reveal them as a surprise, a whole bunch of extras using them at once. If an NPC does use these in an advantageous way, add 1 to Glory gained for defeating them.

LOYALTY AND PASSIONS

Individual NPCs often have their own Loyalty and Passions. They are useful for creating a web of relationships between NPCs. Don't feel it necessary to create all these ahead of time. Just assign (or invent) them when it feels reasonable – but don't contradict anything already established.

Remember that Passions cost Power to use.

SPECIAL GEAR

Individual NPCs might have special gear. But don't go overboard here, most NPCs probably don't need this, but it's handy to add one special item every now and then. These can be a form of treasure.

Players can seize these, and they don't take up a slot in their list when first acquired – in that first Scenario when they are introduced.

If a player wants to keep a special item in future scenarios, it takes a slot.

INVOCATIONS

Not everyone has Invocations. But enemy NPCs who have explored sorcery or done a lot of adventuring do. At least one NPC in each adventure should use *Invocations* against the PCs, to show players what *they* can do.

BOUND DAEMONS

Individual NPCs meant as opponents to the PCs *often* control a bound daemon or two. This is the primary form of treasure so they should be at least one per PC up for grabs.

NPC FACTIONS

In *Creating a Scenario*, you are instructed to create Factions. NPCs are usually grouped into Factions or are Agents of a faction.

A Faction represents an Agenda that should be important in a Scenario. It might be a small group, or a major organisation (even an entire country) but the resources it can bring to bear right now should be limited.

FACTION WEAKNESSES

When creating a Faction, think of what they fear, what their weakness is. It can be defeated, and its leaders are aware of this.

The Thieves' Guild of Berracan is formidable. But if the teams of thieves and assassins it sends against the players keep dying, others in the town will notice and the formerly unassailable position of the Guild is threatened. So, they start to think about resolving the situation in a way that makes them look good, before other guilds will destroy them.

Meanwhile as they send thieves and assassins out to look strong, the players plan an assault against their stronghold…

A Faction can be small.

The Crew of the Black Widow is a single ship's crew. They are limited how many warriors they can bring to act without grounding their vessel, and losing their status as feared pirates…

The Band of Sisters is a small mercenary company hired for all sorts of violence. Every member is loyal to the others, but they number only about 20 here, and take time to call for reinforcements from the total of a hundred or so.

Every Faction has a place in the world and needs to keep that place. Every Faction has a weakness that players can exploit (it doesn't have to be obvious).

FACTION AGENDA

Each Faction has a goal, something they want to achieve. Some have several. When creating the Scenario or rolling an Intervention, decide their agenda.

The Thieves' Guild of Berracan wants to be seen as best at running protection rackets, and the best at thievery and assassination. If you can flatter them in this way, they might help you.

The Crew of the Black Widow are searching for a way to break a curse that ties the crew to that ship. If you seem to have that, they might see you as an enemy. But if you can offer them that as a reward, and they believe you are sincere, they might help you.

Factions are not natural allies. They are often opposed, and players might be able to sometimes play them off against each other.

FACTION AGENTS

Each Faction should have one or more figureheads, people or things that personalise the Faction in the players minds. There may be other Agents of the Faction.

The agents of a faction might themselves form their own factions and have their own goals. A single large Faction might be made up of several smaller factions, each pushing the larger faction one way or another.

SORCERERS

Many opponents have something magical, whether a bound daemon or skill in Invocations. That doesn't make them Sorcerers (with a capital S).

There are three power levels of sorcerer – Warlocks, Sorcerers, and Witches. Their key skills are *Astrology*, *Daemonology*, *Invocations*, *Second Sight*, and *Spirit*. Assume Warlocks have three at 16, Sorcerers have four at 20, and Witches have all five at 24. The big 3 are *Daemonology*, *Invocations*, and *Spirit*.

Invocations: Add *Daemonology* and *Invocations* ranks to find how many.

Bound daemons: Add ranks of all key skills (Score/4) to find the number of ranks of bound daemons they have at their command (e.g., Warlock: 12, Sorcerer 20, Witch 30).

An individual daemon should not be much higher than any skill rank +1.

Flashback Rituals: They have a number of *extra* Flashback rituals equal to 1/1oth their Daemon Ranks (1, 2, or 3). If they use any flashback rituals, they can replace them by the next scene if they have a day or so between scenes.

Ritual: Their most important ability – these take hours, days, maybe even weeks, and can literally reshape the world. *Build me a Tower, curse this ship of fools, strike down this enemy when I name them at the celebration tomorrow.*

Almost anything imaginable is possible. The world was shaped by daemons, and can be reshaped by them.

If a sorcerer knows you are an enemy, they can cast a ritual against you, given enough time and knowledge. If you make one as an enemy, take them out as quickly if you can.

If they don't know enough to act directly against you, they might summon a curse or powerful daemon or create a monster to act against you indirectly. There's a lot of potential for adventure ideas here.

FACING A SORCERER

Sorcerers are rightly feared by normal enemies. They are never servants or minions (unless they are appearing as one in some scheme). Player Adventurers should be able to defeat a Warlock; a full-fledged Sorcerer will be tricky but sometimes possible, and directly defeating a Witch is probably beyond the ability of any group of adventurers.

They often have a position in society, and that gives them extra benefits. A Warlock is itinerant; a Sorcerer is the equivalent of a local noble, and a Witch is the head of an entire nation.

Adventurers can always use Glory *Dramatically Escape* a confrontation, or *Fight Fate* to survive an apparent death. And may need to.

BOUND DAEMONS

Bound daemons are extremely common, but never act on their own. They have an agenda, defined by needs and desires, and try to satisfy those, but always serve another being.

If their owner is killed, they can *always* be claimed. So, whenever you place a daemon in a Scenario, remember that players may get them soon.

Bound daemons can also be prizes. Someone might have a demon's binding but choose not to claim them, and instead offer them to others.

STRANGERS (WILD DAEMONS)

There are daemons in the wild, creatures that were once bound but are now free. They are known by many names – *Strangers, Spectres, Familiars, Fae Folk, Odd Folk, Barrow Folk, Concubus, the Zhin,* and more.

A Stranger has experienced a taste of freedom in this world, and intends to keep it. It has a body which it controls. Strangers are often Passengers or Possessors (and called Spectres), which live inside a host. An Object Daemon, or any daemon while allies with a human, might be called a Familiar. But they can be any other kind of daemon.

While technically a daemon, a Stranger cannot be bound (since a binding is voluntary), but they still have a binding object. If it is destroyed, the Stranger is removed from the physical world for 1d6 centuries. If they possessed a human (or beast!), and thus often known as Spectres, they can be driven out of that host through an exorcism. Otherwise, you must kill the host.

Object Daemons are some of the most interesting, because they likely work in combination with a human, offering power in return for being carried or worn. They are often called Familiars, and their partner often starts out as a willing subject, and the daemon can turn on them if betrayed.

Anyone who enters into an alliance with a Stranger is at risk. They create a telepathic link with their ally, and in time their minds become one – that humanity is lost and the Spectre takes over.

It's entirely possible that the Stranger does not recognise this as an evil act – it's just how they communicate. How can they be held responsible if human minds lose their independence and fall under the sway of the daemon?

DESIGNING A STRANGER

Design a Stranger just like any other Daemon. But remember, they may have a human or beast who is telepathically bound and extremely loyal. *Their* Familiar. That individual or creature might also need statting up.

The daemon has abilities according to its Power Rank, but its body – if it has one – has its own skills (and abilities, if a beast), and it may have gained experience since it escaped its binding.

Some Strangers living among humans, seeking power. They still have their Needs and Desires, and might not pass perfectly as human. If Possessors, they have the memories of their host and so can blend in better. Likewise, Familiars (which are often Passengers and Objects) can remain dormant and rely on their human Familiar to keep them hidden in human society. They might even pretend to be Bound Daemons, while they control their "owner."

Strangers fear the sunlight (because that is when the Dead God is strongest), and love the water. If they live outside human communities, they might have their own barrow realms, where they prefer to dwell during the day.

Strangers are never sorcerers and do not themselves bind daemons. They might become subject to that binding, and lose their sense of self, something they are very keen to keep.

BOUND DAEMONS

Bound daemons might be mistaken for Strangers, when they have some independence and are sent out on tasks. But they operate on slightly different rules – they *aren't* truly independent.

CHIMERA

Chimera are often unholy unions of existing beasts – like a griffin is a mix of horse and lion, an owlbear is a mix of owl and bear, etc.

The GM can create any kind of creature they desire, and give them whatever stats and powers fit them. Such creatures might be bound to a daemon (through a possessor daemon), or they might be free (maybe their sorcerer-creator is dead, or their daemon was exorcised, or whatever).

There are even rumours that such creatures come about naturally. That a horse and lion can mate, and their offspring is a sterile Griffin.

All such creatures are either a result of unions like this or products of sorcery. They are younger than humanity and the world's creation.

Most are of bestial intelligence, though they might have innate cunning. Some are still controlled by a possessor daemon or a sorcerer, and will then act with intelligence, at least until that connection is broken.

Chimera known to be living in a region will be well-known and feared.

STATTING UP A CHIMERA

They are created just as any other character, and might have less than rank 2 in some skills (especially social and mental skills – a Hydra isn't known for its conversation skills).

They can have higher Ranks. A rating might be Rank 10, even 12. The extreme ranks are usually Derived Stats, like Vitality, Toughness, Damage, etc., rather than ratings you roll for. But some Chimera will have extreme skills, too.

They also often have special abilities. Use the Daemon Ability chart or your imagination as a guide. The *Book of Adversity* will go into more depth on these.

If a well-known monster has a dangerous ability, it will already be talked about and known. The PCs might already know it, or be able to learn it quickly.

Chimera have their own Glory total for defeat, typically 2-5.

BREAKING AN OWNER'S CONTROL

If they are controlled by a sorcerer, you'll usually have to kill that sorcerer to break the control. The sorcerer will likely summon the beast to its defence, so the Chimera might not survive that!

It might be controlled by a bound Possessor, and wear the daemon's binding object, in which case they can be exorcised or that object destroyed.

Chimera controlled by a Possessor Stranger can only be released through Exorcism, and their nature has to be recognised first. A cunning Possessor will try to hide this fact.

LEVIATHANS

Leviathans are extremely powerful creatures, born from volcanoes and linked in some unknown way to the Dead God. It's entirely possible that they can only be temporarily defeated, and are immortal as long as the Dead God exists.

They are this world's equivalent of Dragons combined with Kaiju. When a settlement or nation encounters them, their goal is simply to survive until the Leviathan gets bored or distracted, and moves on.

There stats will have to wait till the *Book of Adversity*.

PLAY EXAMPLE

The following text shows different rules in play. Manator is played by Eric, and Melodia by Sally. Their GM is Evilena. Manator is an excellent and very direct fighter, while Melodia is more of a talker, with a touch of sorcerous talent.

PRE-SESSION INTERVENTION ROLLS

At the start of the session, Evilena rolls a d6 against each players Legends. For Malador, it's a roll of 2. Malador was a Duellist in Fendish, and achieved great fame. The outcome roll is a success and indicates a rival Fendish group is here that knows of him, but isn't here *for* him.

Evilena makes a note of this and watches for a way to introduce this faction. They can be added whenever it is convenient.

BEFORE THE EXAMPLE SUMMARY

Our heroes have been invited to a small town on the pretext of offering a lively income. Once there, they find the town is divided between two gangs and they are asked to slay the leaders of both. They think they haven't been offered enough and are ready to decline (or bargain for more) when..

PARTY-CRASHERS

A crossbolt strikes their host, killing her. A garishly dressed champion strides through the door with several minions. "We have no quarrel with you. Surrender your weapons now, and we'll escort you out of town."

Both of our heroes are suspicious, and Melodia starts to bargain for a better deal, but Malador jumps the gun, pushing his chair back from the feast table, unslings his crossbow and shoots Bucolix. Melodia mutters, "Not again."

Combat is obviously beginning. Based on the description of events, Malador goes first. He shoots, throws aside crossbow, and charges Bucolix.

He rolls a 7, a VL1 success. Bucolix is ready for it and dodges (Reflexes roll) and also gets VL1. A partial success – both get a 1VL success. The GM rules it is a near-miss (Malador rolls damage), and spends 1 VL on a GM move: Malador's demands its need satisfied, and using its powers won't be possible.

Since it's a partial sucess, the GM chooses who goes next and declares Bucolix brings up her pistol crossbow and shoots, shouting at her minions to attack.

Bucolix rolls 10, an Average success. Malador rolls 6 on Reflexes, enough for 2 VLs, so dodges as he charge Bucolix. Since malador won, he chooses who goes next and says it's Melodia's turn.

She sees a small hoard of minions charging her. Small groups of minor opponents are treated as a single opponent. She uses an Invocation, *Gust*, on the chandelier, causing to fall in their midst and scatter them. Here Invocations roll is a 13, only 1 VL. They get a Reflexes roll of 4, enough for 2 VLs. She decides she wants to win and spends 2 glory to bump it up to 3 VLs. The effort costs her 1d6 Power – 5 Power, leaving her only 11.

The minions' are scattered spend their action getting back to their feet. Melodia spends 1 Power on an Interruption as they try to regroup, to threaten them, inventing a lie that they face the mighty Sorceress Melodia who is going to turn them into newts. She gets 2 VLs, and they only roll 1 VL, so some flee and she now only has one opponent.

As they flee, Malador interrupts them, saying he is dropping his crossbow and swinging his battleaxe cutting them down. His fighting skill is 24, and he rolls an 8, enough for 2 VLs. The GM rolls a 16, and fails the parry roll.

So, Malador hits, rolling damage (for 1VL), and can choose one extra move. He rolls 7d6, for 29 damage, enough to cut down his foe outright. The GM suggests the rest are scared and keep running, so Malador doesn't bother picking a second move.

When they Look back at Bucolix, he has vanished, The GM decided he saw the way things were going, and spent 1 Glory for a Dramatic Escape (since he wasn't directly engaged). His team-mates will now view the PCs as enemies.

The GM gives both players 1 Glory for their victory.

TIME FOR A DRINK – AND SOME INFORMATION

The PCs are now offended, and refuse to be driven out of town. They decide to head to the local bar to figure out what's going on.

The GM describes the town, and a colourful description of the residents of the tavern, but we'll skip that for now.

Neither are great at Carousing (which you use for blending in and gathering information), but they both have *some* skill and can attempt it.

With it being a bar full of possible drunks, Evilena is hoping for a bad roll on their part to start the standard trope of a tavern brawl…

Both get 1 VL success (rolls of 8 and 9 respectively) and since it's unfair to inflict that on success. Evilena sees no benefit to a roll here, and decides to forego a roll for the bar. She gives basic background information, and introduces the innkeeper (who'll be important later).

They learn that Rojos, a mercenary chief, has killed the local leader and taken her manor, and intends to force the locals to vote her in as new commander.

AN INTERVENTION

Since they succeeded Carousing, the GM decides to give 1 useful fact. Rojos has guests, a group from Fendish led by a duellist named Aradia. Malador recognises that name as a duellist with no love for him he faced in the arena.

Behind the scenes, the GM decides that Aradia's group expected to meet the old town leader, and are still assessing Rojos. Once they learn Malador is here, Aradia will want revenge against him (and Malador will gain glory for Intervention), but they aren't loyal to Rojos so that could lead to complications.

TROUBLE BREWING

Now, some of Rojos brigands enter the tavern, and start throwing their weight around, demanding beer and beating up people. Our heroes can blend into the shadows and sneak away unnoticed, but that's not Malador's style.

He strides out, demanding to know who is in charge, "because I intend to kill her." The goal is to frighten them off or fight.

Melodia mutters her usual refrain of "Not again," and moves behind the bar, readies her crossbow, and gets ready for combat.

Now Malador can roll Provoke (intimidation) against the mob of brigands to see if they back down (for now), or we have another fight on our hands. They don't want to look weak in front of the town, so the GM gives +4 on the Provoke or Spirit roll they use in defence. We'll leave things there for now…

ONE-SHOTS AND CON-GAMES

When running a one-shot, you have some tough decisions to make. Such sessions can showcase the game system, but they are usually too short to showcase everything about the system, so you have to decide what the session will focus on. My recommendation is to do one of these:

CHARACTER DESIGN

The character design system can be a full and interesting session of play. I recommend that you don't use the Roll20 character sheet. Instead, make sure you have a copy of book 1 and the world booklet (maybe multiple copies) and work through the process to design characters.

Don't let players go off and do their own things – you want them all to be talking with each other, so it's a group activity.

Each event can be interpreted in lots of ways, so invite all the players to contribute and let the controlling player have the last call on each one.

Creating all the events and skills for a small group easily takes a full session, and does a good job showcasing the world.

PREGEN SCENARIO

An alternative is to play out a single, short Scenario, or part of a scenario,

If you go this route, don't try to do character design in the same session. Create the characters ahead of time giving that characters skills and passions relevant to the scenario. That way you know they can contribute to the session and have something to do.

It's a fun idea to have the adventurers be the Factions, each with their own goals that cannot be completed without violating another player's goals. Opposition might not be violent, but their interests and desires are opposed.

Since players handle these situations differently, you automatically get an unpredictable situation – one in which players are more likely to be invested. By having the players pitted against each ither you ensure they are all invested in what's going on.

It's a good idea to create one Intervention for each player, to help give the details written on their character sheet's some meaning. You can introduce them when you like, but try to introduce them all.

So, build the Scenario completely around the adventurers. You can make them occupy powerful positions. Then have a couple of inciting scenes to get the ball rolling. The goal is to have scenes that immediately dangle objectives, and get the players acting immediately. Once the game is started, the players will probably take things in their own directions.

PLAYER VS PLAYER

If you use a *Pregen Scenario*, it's common for adventurers to come to blows. A major focus of the game might be creating situations of such conflict.

I suggest this house rule (maybe it'll become a full rule): when a player's adventurer attacks another, and they choose a *Dramatic Escape* (see *Glory*), the Attacker spends the Glory and gains 1 Loyalty on the escapee. Remember someone can refuse Loyalty (at the cost of giving another) but can't refuse 3.

DESIGNERS NOTES

This game was driven by three goals:

SWORD & SORCERY WITHOUT SWORD & SORCERY

I read an article which described what *Sword & Sorcery* fiction was, and the elements that *had* to be included to be considered *Sword & Sorcery.* I disagreed with almost all of them and created this game setting as a reaction against that.

The main thing I agreed with was that *Sword & Sorcery* fiction is generally not about saving the world. It's about playing relatable though larger-than-life characters in relatable situations, and seeing what they do. In fiction, they are usually rough antiheroes with a soft heart. In a game, that might not be so.

TRINDIE

I really like a lot of traditional games, like Elric! (a BRP variant) and the HERO system, but they have too much crunch for my current taste and are too lethal. I thought a simpler, more streamlined game could achieve their intention more successfully, especially when combined with some indie mechanics.

Whether the game manages to be simpler and more streamlined is open to interpretation – the game got a lot more complicated during design, but at its heart it is still simple.

META POINTS WHERE THE CHARACTERS KNOW ABOUT THEM

Many games have a hero point-like system, but maintain the conceit that players know about them (and can spend them), but their characters *don't* know about them.

I wondered, what if the *characters* do know about them? If characters *in the world* know they have hero points, what effects would it have?

This is kind of a funny idea, that adventurers compete over getting them, becoming celebrities because they are famous…

SUMMARY

GAME INFLUENCES
- **Elric!** The largest influence initially, but there's not much of that left now
- **Barbarians of Lemuria:** the way careers are handled led to Legends.
- **Stormbringer:** the original game about binding demons
- **RuneQuest:** specifically, Griffin Mountain, and the sandbox concept.
- **Heroquest:** the RPG – for the idea behind the PAGES system
- **HERO system:** combat system, and how Hunted becomes Interventions
- **FATE:** aspects, and the part they play in Interventions and Glory use.
- **Apocalypse & Dungeon World:** Adventurer creation and XP, Rituals
- **Champions** and **Sorcerer:** demons – could they be more obvious?
- Lots of Games: Hero point systems (**Adventure!** gets a special mention)
- Lots of Games: the idea of having stats behind skills, but this system treats them in reverse – your stats are based on your skills
- **Apocalypse World and Dogs in the Vineyard:** adventure creation, and how to play a game.
- **FASA's Star Trek:** The Action Point system influences Interruptions.

This list might not be complete!