

SHIFT™

CORE RULEBOOK

VER. 1.0



CREATED BY JORDAN RICHER
& GRAEME FOTHERINGHAM

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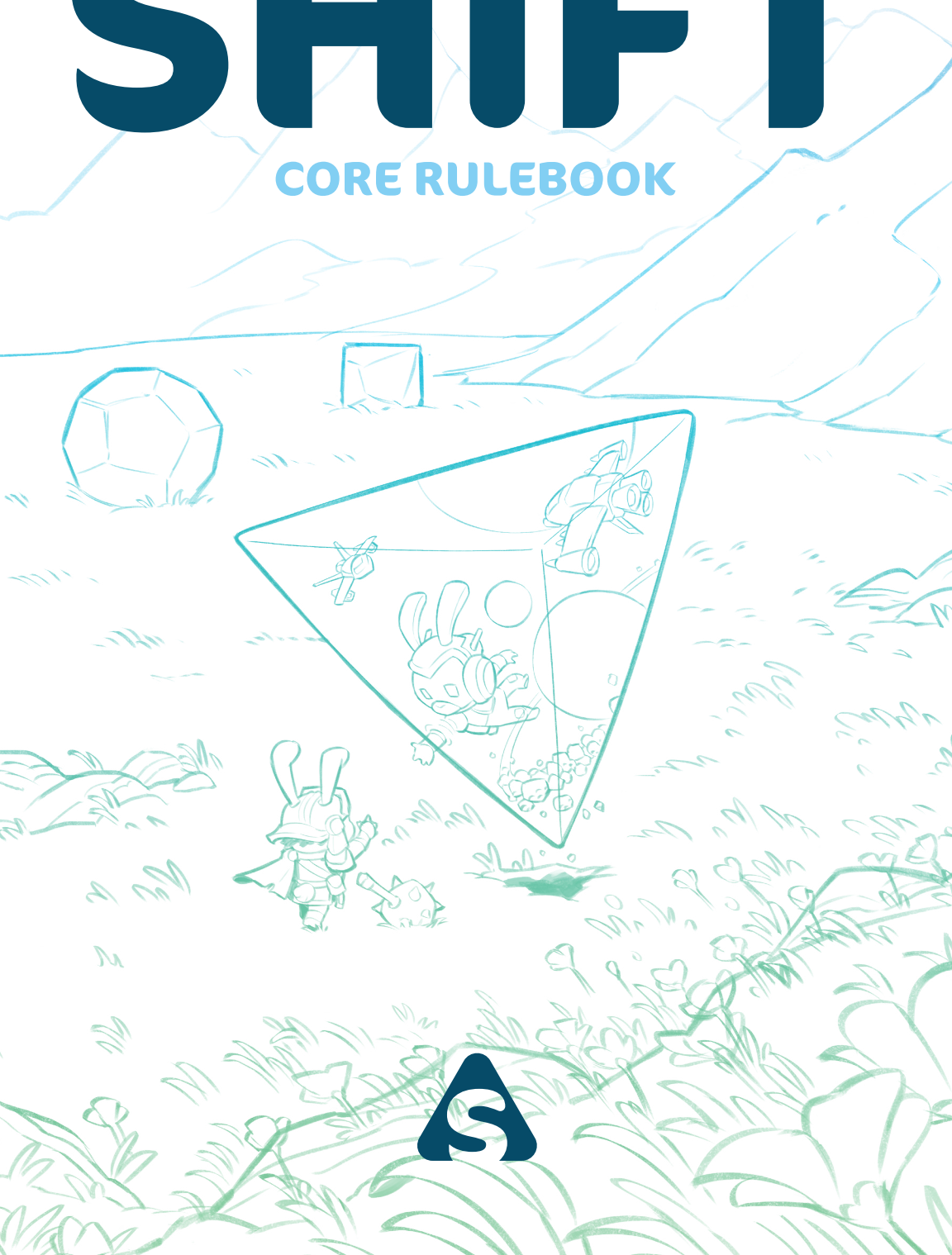
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CREDITS

Game Designers	Graeme Fotheringham Jordan Richer	Graphic Design	Ricardo Evangelho Madison Pflance
Lead Writer	Jordan Richer	Art Direction	Brian Scott Walters
Writers	Joseph Carriker Carlos Cisco Graeme Fotheringham Alex Roberts Gail Simone	Interior Art	Em Acosta John Barlow Justin Chan Antonio Demico Avery Howett Tony Moy Faith Schaffer Jacob Walker
Editors	Misty Bourne Andrea Bruce Lore Evans Verity Lane Sebastian Yüe	Regular Cover Art	Justin Chan
Project Manager	Victoria Jeffrey	Deluxe Cover Art	Elliot Bouriot Antonio Demico
Marketing & Communications	Allie MacAlister Sebastian Yüe	Producer	Ricardo Evangelho

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KICKSTARTER BACKERS WHO BELIEVED IN THIS BOOK
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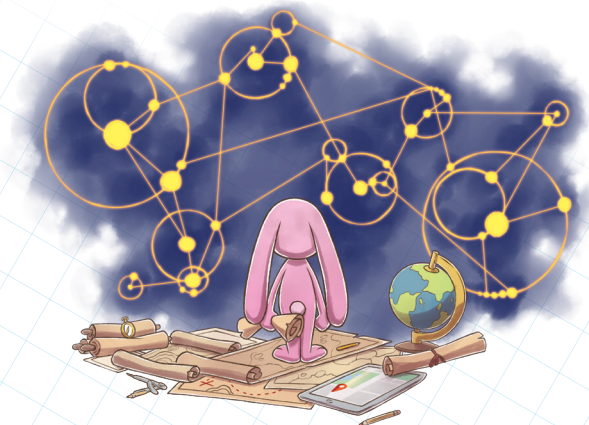


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1: YOUR WORLD, YOUR RULES

What you have in your hands (or on your screen) is SHIFT, a fast-paced, highly customizable tabletop roleplaying game specially designed to bring your worlds to life. This book contains the core rules of the game, a toolkit for building your own settings, and a selection of ready-to-play mini-settings (called World Sparks) to get you telling fun stories right away.

WHAT IS A TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME?

A tabletop roleplaying game (or TTRPG for short) is a set of rules and guidelines for a group of friends to tell a story together. This storytelling is driven by a player called the gamemaster (or GM) and one or more additional players playing as individual player Characters (or PCs) in the story. Tabletop roleplaying is often described as a conversation—the gamemaster describes a scenario and the other players describe how their Characters act and react in that situation. As your Characters take action, the GM describes how the world changes because of those choices, and then the conversation

continues—with a new scenario, new actions, and new changes to the world.

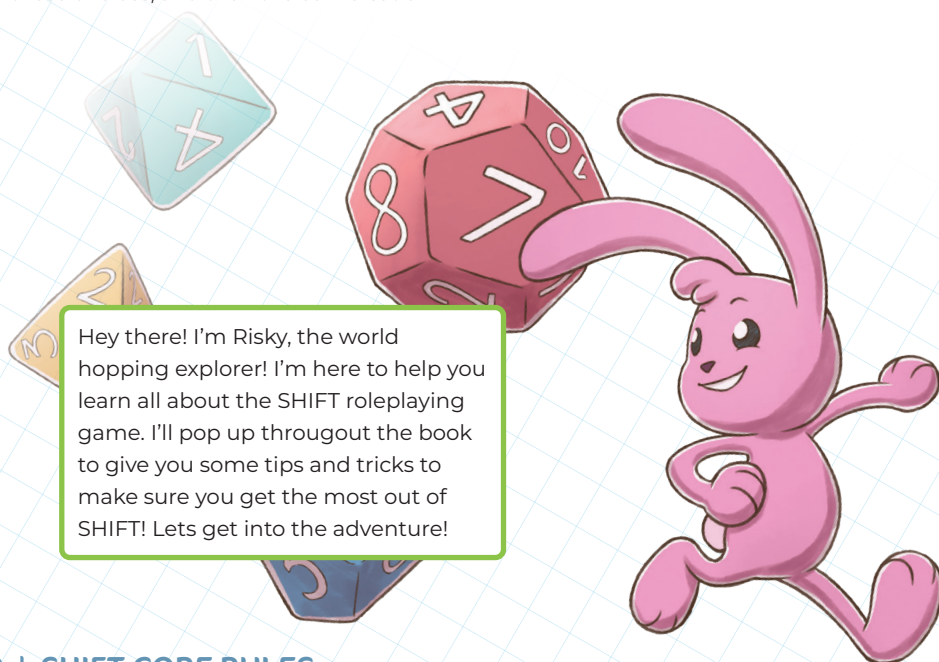
When the outcome of the action your Character takes is uncertain, the rules of a TTRPG come in. When you don't know what's going to happen in a TTRPG, you turn to the mechanics to find out, most commonly by rolling some dice and seeing if what your Character was trying to do succeeds spectacularly or fails dramatically based on the result. This uncertainty is part of the fun of TTRPGs.

WHAT IS SHIFT?

Well, SHIFT is a TTRPG! It's a big grab bag of rules and ideas you can use to tell the type of story you want to tell. It is a system built around dramatic successes and failures—no matter the results of a roll, the world around you changes in an exciting way.

Don't worry, though—it isn't a hard game to learn for one important reason:

Every aspect of SHIFT is powered by the same core building blocks: **Traits** (the abilities of Characters, monsters, equipment, anything!) and their associated Shift Dice.



Antonio Demico

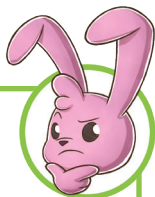
That's right: whether it's one of your Characters' abilities, the Vehicle they're driving, or that cool magic sword they found in a ruin, almost everything in SHIFT runs on Traits and Shift Dice. As your Characters use these Traits to interact with the world around them, you roll the Trait's Shift Die to find out what happens. However, rollers beware! Every die roll in SHIFT risks the die being rolled *shifting down*, changing the Shift Die for the worse and making your Character's life more difficult.

Don't worry about the specifics for now, though. Let's get you familiar with the layout of this book first!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The *SHIFT Core Rulebook* is split into two parts to help keep you organized:

Chapter 1: SHIFT Core Rules dives into the mechanics of the game, from the basic building blocks to the nitty-gritty of character creation. Whether you are playing SHIFT as a player or your table's GM, this is the place to start.



Throughout this book, you'll find rules sections called "Building Blocks." These provide ways to tweak SHIFT to best suit the setting you're playing in. They let you make things harder or easier for the players and change the tone of your game. Play around with these building blocks and find what works best for you and your table.

In the first two chapters of Part 1, you'll learn the core rules of SHIFT and how to create and play your Characters. The rest of Part 1 focuses more on GMing the game, including more in-depth guidelines as well as some additional rules to flesh out things like Vehicles and Locations. It's also got the rules for creating Adversaries—the baddies and obstacles your Characters have to deal with on their adventures—and your very own SHIFT settings, to really make the game your own.

Nothing in the guidelines for game mastering SHIFT is for the GM's eyes only. In fact, it might inspire players to come up with cool concepts for their Characters! Anyone can dive into this section once they've got a grip on the basic rules.



In **Chapter 2: SHIFT World Sparks**, there are five mini-settings you can use to jumpstart your SHIFT games. These are launching-off points that touch on some popular genres: fantasy, sci-fi, horror, superheroes, and romance. Use them as is, mix and match, or just take what you need to build your own worlds and Characters. Have fun!

PLAY EXAMPLES AND GAME MASTERING ADVICE

Throughout this book you'll find examples of game play and extra bits of Game Mastering advice to help your games run smoothly.

Examples of play will be highlighted in boxes that look like this. Some are narrative examples of a rule, others are represented as conversations between players and their game master.

Game Master advice is formatted in boxes like this, and have advice that can help clarify and expand on specific rules. They will sometimes provide alternate options for rules, or ways to change them to fit your game!



WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PLAY?

SHIFT can be played pretty easily with just a few handfuls of dice and some pals. This section breaks down everything you need to start playing SHIFT.

A GAME MASTER

The Game Master is the narrator, director, and band leader all in one. They set the scenes that your Characters engage in and describe the results of your decisions and actions. A GM is also one of the players, but instead of an individual Character, they play all the non-player Characters (NPCs) in the world, as well as all the monsters, the murderous A.I.s, the stubborn sheriffs, the romantic interests, everything!

You're probably thinking this role might be complicated, but don't worry, we'll make sure the GM of your SHIFT game has everything they need to tell great stories.

If you picked up this rulebook, it's likely that you will be the GM for your first sessions of SHIFT, getting some friends together and guiding the first stories. Don't worry about it—you'll do great! Just remember, it's everyone's responsibility to make the game fun, not just yours. After a few games, everyone at your table will be ready to take a crack at GMing too!



PLAYERS

Players are the other storytellers at the table, embodying individual player Characters (PCs) and engaging with the GM's story and scenes. When you play SHIFT as a PC, your job is to be curious, get excited about the things happening in the world of the game, and describe the things your PC does.

You can play SHIFT with as few as two people (a GM and a single player) or with as many players as the GM feels comfortable having at their table. If this is your first trip into the world of TTRPGs, we recommend keeping your

player count to three or four people to start. Once you're used to running SHIFT, go ahead and invite everyone you know to play!

DICE

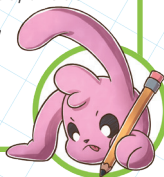
SHIFT is all about dice! Whenever the outcome of your Character's actions isn't certain, you roll some dice to find out what happens to them. Could be good, could be bad, but one thing is for sure: it's always going to be exciting.

Dice come in a few different types, and they're differentiated by the number of sides they have. They're referred throughout this book as D x : D for "die" (of course) and x for the number of sides that die has. A six-sided die is a D6, a ten-sided die is a D10, and so on.

To play SHIFT, you'll need at least one of each of the following dice: a D4, a D6, a D8, a D10, and a D12. You can get cozy and share one set with the whole table, but the game will run a lot smoother if everyone has their own set.



Most of the time, you're going to use two Traits combined together, which means you're going to roll two dice at the same time. There are a couple ways you can handle this. If you want to roll both of those dice simultaneously, go for it! Just keep track of which die is connected to each Trait. This is easy if they are two different dice types, but if both Traits have the same die (like two D10s, for example), you might want to grab two different-colored dice to help keep them separate. If you've only got one set of dice, that's fine too! Roll one die at a time, and make note of which Trait you're rolling for each time. Easy!



CHARACTER SHEETS

A character sheet is where you keep all the Traits and details about your Character in one place. SHIFT Characters are relatively simple, and most will fit on one piece of paper or a few index cards. You can also print out some copies of the official sheet from the SHIFT website. rpgshift.com/resources

SAFETY TOOLS

Safety tools make sure everyone at the table feels comfortable and on the same page when it comes to the themes and content of your stories. There are a lot of popular safety tools, and we recommend starting with the TTRPG Safety Toolkit, a free resource co-curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. It is a compilation of safety tools designed by members of the tabletop roleplaying games community for use by both players and GMs. You can find it online at bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit.

You can find more guidance on safety at your table in the **Chapter 3: Game Mastering SHIFT.**

SHIFT

CHARACTER NAME:

PLAYER NAME:

CAMPAIGN:

CHARACTER DETAILS:

MIND

DRAWBACKS:

BODY

DRAWBACKS:

SOUL

DRAWBACKS:

FOCUS TRAIT:

KEYWORDS:

DRAWBACKS:

FOCUS TRAIT:

KEYWORDS:

DRAWBACKS:

FOCUS TRAIT:

KEYWORDS:

DRAWBACKS:

PACK TRAIT:

LOAD OUT:

TECHNIQUE:

TECHNIQUE:

XP TRACKER:

BANKED XP

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For more resources go to SHIFTGPG.com



2: THE CORE RULES

SHIFT DICE AND TRAITS: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF SHIFT

Everything in SHIFT is built around one powerful puzzle piece: the Trait. A Trait is a narrative description of an ability, skill set, or other aspect of a PC, an NPC, an Adversary, a Vehicle, and so on. Traits describe anything and everything, whether it's your superhero's fire manipulation powers, a monstrosity's gnashing teeth, or a Vehicle's ramshackle engine. If you want to bring an ability, item, or similar into your SHIFT setting so your Characters can interact with it, you're going to want to turn it into a Trait!

Their narrative description is only half of what makes a Trait tick; they also have a Shift Die associated with them that you roll when that Trait comes into play.

SHIFT DICE

Every Trait has a die assigned to it, ranging from D4 to D12. The assigned die represents how likely a Character is to succeed when using that particular Trait.

When you want to see if your Character can do something cool, choose a relevant Trait and roll that Trait's associated die to find out what happens. Regardless of which die you roll, a result of 1, 2, or 3 means that the action is successful. This

means that in SHIFT, the D4 has the highest probability of success, while the D12 has the lowest.

If you aren't sure which die has better odds, just remember: the fewer sides the die has, the better your shot at success. The D4 is king with a 75% change of success!



Having your Characters take dangerous and daring actions moves the story forward, but rolling dice comes at a risk. When making a roll, if you roll the highest possible result on the die (a 4 on a D4, a 10 on a D10, and so on), you have to shift it down to the next worst die. A D4 becomes a D6, a D6 becomes a D8, and so on. If things have turned really bad and you need to shift down a D12, its associated Trait is Exhausted. An Exhausted Trait can't be used until its die shifts back up to a D12 or better.

Don't worry though, dice can shift back up through rest, specific Character abilities, or as the result of Critical Successes.

We'll dive deeper into Shift Dice in the "**Chapter 2: Action Rolls: Getting Things Done!**" section later in this chapter.

Shifting down might sound like a terrible thing at first, and it could lead to trouble for your Character the next time they use that Trait, for sure. For you and the GM though, a die shifting down is a chance for something dramatic to happen! Don't think of shifting down as "losing;" think of it as another way to progress the story, just in a direction you weren't expecting!

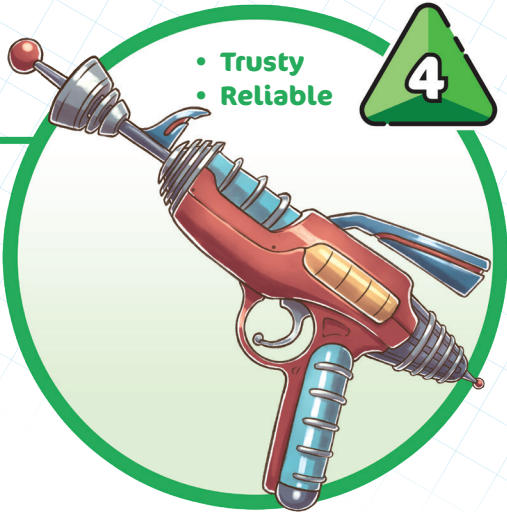
DICE SHIFTING PROGRESSION



SHIFTING DICE



D4: STRONGEST ODDS



- Trusty
- Reliable



D12: WEAKEST ODDS



- Last legs
- Glitchy



LEGEND

- CRITICAL SUCCESS
- SUCCESS
- FAILURE
- CRITICAL FAILURE = SHIFT DICE
- EXHAUSTED

TRAITS

Traits come in a few different varieties, but they all follow the same basic rules. At its simplest, a Trait consists of a name (a word or short phrase describing the broad function of the Trait) and an associated die. This die is the highest die the Trait can have, also known as the Trait's Max Die. A Trait can't shift to a better die than its assigned Max Die. Beyond that, some Traits have Keywords which help define what

the Trait can do, as well as Drawbacks, which your GM might put on a Trait to represent injuries, flaws, and other more permanent problems.

Throughout this book, Traits are shown in the following format: the name of the Trait is in **blue bold**, followed by, if relevant, the Trait's Max Die in brackets. For example, **Necromancy** (D4). Keywords and Drawbacks are *italicized and highlighted*. For example, *frustrated*, *muddy* or *patchwork*.

EXAMPLE TRAITS

HOVERBOARD

KEYWORDS:

levitate, speed

DRAWBACKS:

unbalanced



FAIRY-TALE MULE

KEYWORDS:

loyal, speech

DRAWBACKS:

annoying



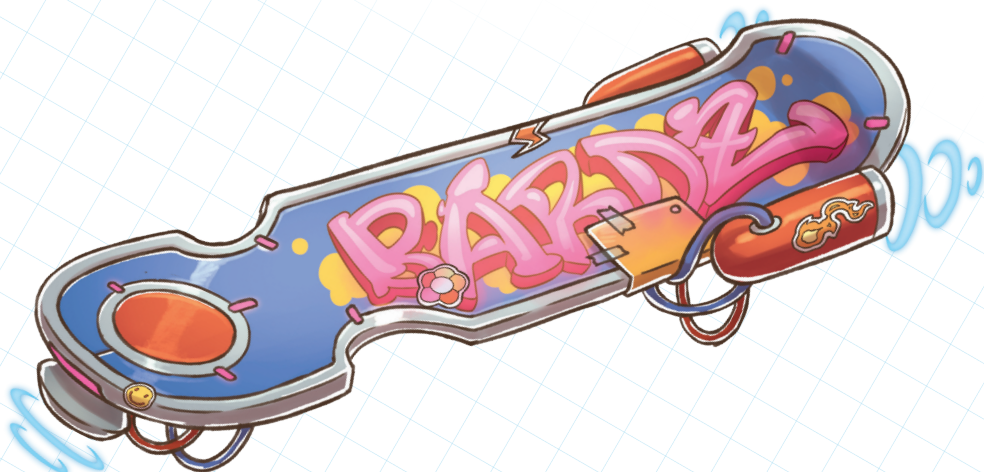
SPIDER POWERS

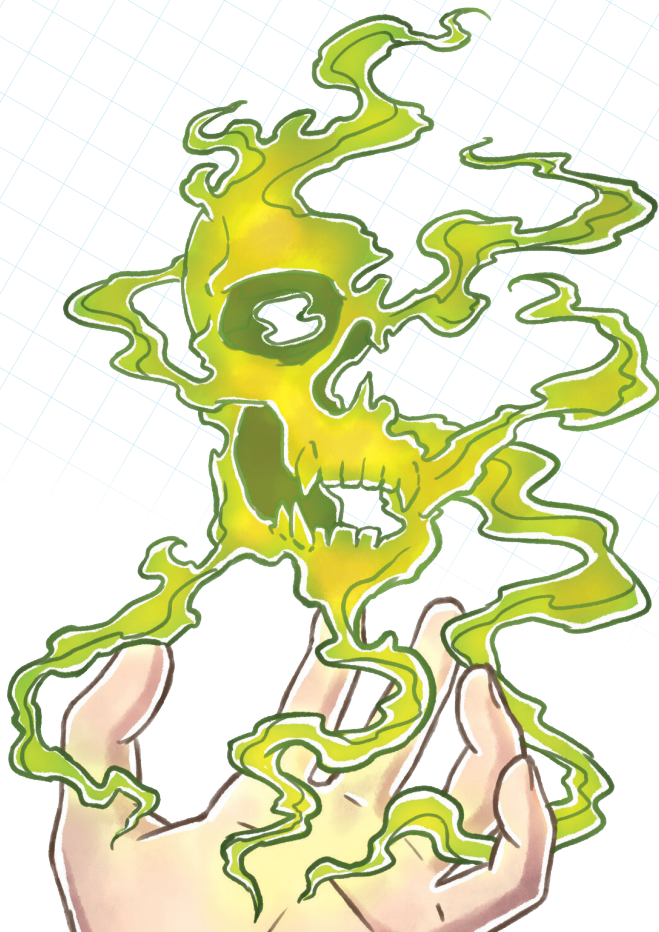
KEYWORDS:

super strength, webshooting

DRAWBACKS:

secret identity





NECROMANCY

KEYWORDS:

death sight, raise

DRAWBACKS:

draining

4

FURRY CO-PILOT

KEYWORDS:

repairs, strong

DRAWBACKS:

stubborn

8

SPECTRO-SCREWDRIIVER

KEYWORDS:

patch up, unlock

DRAWBACKS:

fragile

6

CORE TRAITS

In SHIFT, the fundamental abilities of all player Characters are represented by three Core Traits: **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul**. Like all Traits in SHIFT, Core Traits are assigned a die to represent how capable a Character is when using that Trait. The outcome of each action taken in the game is determined by rolling one of these three Core Traits. Exhausting a Core Trait can be disastrous; it could result in your Character falling unconscious or even dying, depending on how perilous the situation is. Let's take a look at how these Core Traits work in the game.

BODY

The **Body** Core Trait is a Character's ability to act physically in any given situation. Knocking down a door, lifting debris off a friend, or clobbering a minion all fall under the **Body** Core Trait. The **Body** Trait's die shifting down can mean broken ribs, physical fatigue, or getting knocked down. Ouch!

MIND

The **Mind** Core Trait relates to a Character's ability to focus, think through, and process information. Understanding an ancient tome, hacking a computer, and making a solid logical argument could all be resolved with your Character's **Mind** Core Trait. Shifting its die down might represent mental exhaustion, confusion, or your Character seeing something cosmically incomprehensible.

SOUL

The **Soul** Core Trait represents a Character's ability to interact and connect with others, whether that's rallying allies or talking down an angry opponent. If your Character is interacting with something or someone that can understand them in some manner, their **Soul** Core Trait comes into play. When a **Soul** Trait's die shifts down, it could reflect shaken confidence or a growing distrust of others.
















FOCUS TRAITS

While the three Core Traits represent the fundamental abilities of the Characters, Focus Traits represent a Character's honed skills, unique abilities, and specialty equipment. These are more specific than Core Traits and allow each Character to have their own cool specializations.

In addition to a descriptive name and a Max Die, a Focus Trait has one or more Keywords that define what the Trait does. Most Focus Traits don't have a Max Die higher than a D6, but each Character has a primary Focus Trait, and its Max Die is a D4. You can learn more about creating Focus Traits and Characters in the "**Chapter 2: Character Creation and Advancement**" section later in this chapter.

When a Focus Trait is Exhausted, the Character can't use the Trait until they have rested or otherwise shifted the Trait's die back up again. Be creative when explaining what happens when a Focus Trait's die is Exhausted. For example, describing a power source flickering out or the click of the pistol as the Character realizes they are out of ammo.

EXAMPLE OF CORE TRAITS ON A CHARACTER SHEET

MIND	    	6
DRAWBACKS:		
BODY	    	10
DRAWBACKS:		
SOUL	    	8
DRAWBACKS:		

Dale, a hacker with a shady criminal past, has been leaning too hard on his **Friends in Low Places** Focus Trait, calling in favors and help from his old crew. When Dale fails a roll with **Friends in Low Places** and the Focus Trait Exhausts, the GM decides the data smuggling ring he was using has had enough, and its leader comes knocking with an offer Dale can't refuse.

KEYWORDS

While the name of a Focus Trait provides a general idea of what the Focus Trait can do, Keywords define what the Focus Trait does well. A Keyword can be a single word or a short phrase that describes a more specific way that the Focus Trait can be used. When you create a Character, you get to pick a couple Keywords for each of your starting Focus Traits to really make your Character your own. Keywords mean that two Characters with the same Focus Trait will still be unique—and good at different things! You'll find example Keywords throughout this book written in *highlighted italics*. Feel free to use them to inspire your own Characters.

While Keywords help define a Focus Trait, two instances of the same Keyword can vary wildly in their application. For example, **Fix What's Broke** has the Keyword *repair*. You could apply *repair* to anything from busted machinery to broken hearts. If you're the GM for your SHIFT game, let your players get creative with how they use their Keywords. Flexibility is fun!



It might seem complicated at first to decide what makes a good Keyword, and that's okay. You're going to do a lot of experimenting to figure out what works for your table. The best keywords inspire multiple cool actions your Character might take, but you don't want them to be too broad. A Focus Trait that can do everything isn't actually that much fun, believe it or not. Let's take a **Doctor** Focus Trait as an example: a *heart surgery* Keyword is too specific. How often will that come up? You could broaden it to just *surgery*, but it still feels a bit situational. A Keyword like *surgical precision* might be the sweet spot here: it implies skills at performing surgery but also inspires other actions that require similar precision, like snipping the right wire on a bomb or even pinpointing the exact button to press to get someone riled up. If you're looking for even more inspiration, check out **Appendix A** for a big chart of one hundred random keywords to jump start your imagination!





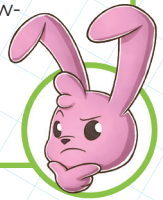
Chandra has chosen the **A Proper Education** Focus Trait for her Character and wants it to reflect her past mingling with the wealthy elite. Therefore, she chooses the Keywords **dueling** and **etiquette** to represent her knowledge of how to behave in high society. Another player, Alan, also wants his Character to have **A Proper Education** but decides to focus on his Character's time as a field academic. In that case, he might choose **research** and **sketching** as his Keywords to demonstrate his Character's ability to learn from and record essential details.

DRAWBACKS

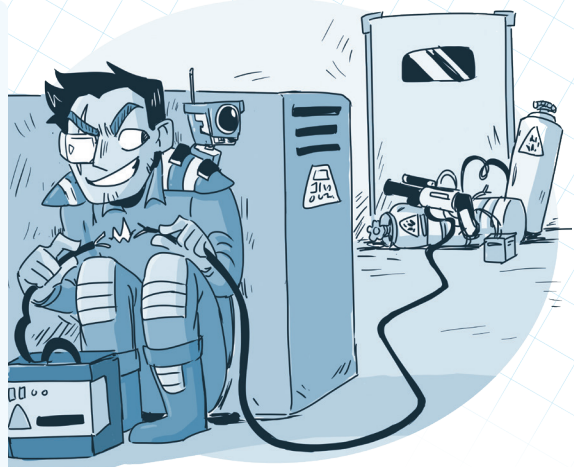
While a Keyword is what a Trait does well, a Drawback is something that hinders the use of a Trait, making certain situations more uncertain or dangerous when that Drawback comes into play. There are a few ways a Drawback can get attached to a Trait. A GM could apply a Drawback after a roll with the Trait fails or when the Trait's die shifts down. For example, after a failed roll with a **Ray Gun** Focus Trait, your GM may decide to give the

Trait the **unstable** Drawback as it sparks and sputters from being misused. Drawbacks can be applied at any time, as long as it can be explained in the narrative. A GM could choose to apply a Drawback to a Trait when its die shifts down to provide a more permanent consequence to the outcome, or could even apply a Drawback instead of a Trait's die shifting down to keep the downsides of the failed action purely narrative.

A Drawback isn't a bad thing! If you're a player on the receiving end of a Drawback, lean into it and find places in the story for it to come into play. Just like Keywords, Drawbacks are opportunities for roleplay and storytelling, so don't be afraid to use them. You might even be able to find ways to use a Drawback to your advantage!



Jefferson wants to use their **Ray Gun** Focus Trait to shoot at a boarding party. The GM reminds Jefferson that the **Ray Gun** is **unstable**, and the arcs of plasma and sparking electronics make an attack with the **Ray Gun** a Risky roll. Later, Jefferson decides to use the **unstable** gun to their advantage and turn it into a rudimentary explosive device to open an airlocked door. In this case, the Drawback is advantageous, and the GM allows Jefferson to attempt the Action Roll to assemble the bomb as a standard, rather than Risky, roll.



If a roll is made using a Focus Trait with a Drawback, the GM and player should decide if the Drawback hinders the action being taken. If it does, the roll is considered Risky (see **Chapter 2: Action Rolls: Getting Things Done!** for an explanation of Action Rolls and, more specifically, Risky rolls).

Drawbacks applied to Core Traits represent temporary injuries and other lingering status effects. For example, a Character who receives a leg injury might have the **slow** Drawback applied to their **Body** Core Trait. Another Character that catches the attention of a demon looking to possess them might receive a **hunted** Drawback attached to their **Soul** Core Trait.

When deciding on a Drawback to apply to a Trait, it's important to consider when that Drawback may trigger a Risky roll. While the Drawback **enraged** may describe how a Character feels, it isn't immediately clear to the players or GM when that Drawback may impact an Action Roll. For example, if a failed roll involving the behavior of the city watch was the reason

the Drawback was applied, **enraged by the city watch** may make more sense. The affected Trait will become Risky to use in the presence of members of the watch, as the Character struggles to maintain their composure.

REMOVING DRAWBACKS

Removing a Drawback from a Trait can be handled in a few different ways. First, some Drawbacks, such as those representing physical injuries, can be removed after a reasonable amount of in-game time has passed. For example, a **sprained ankle** Drawback might go away after a day or two of staying off of it, while a **broken arm** Drawback will likely take a few months of in-game time.

You can also use an appropriate Focus Trait to remove Drawbacks when it makes sense in the narrative. For example, a mechanic Character with the **Tinker** Focus Trait could use it to remove the **noisy** Drawback from a rattling, damaged car engine.

Finally, at the GM's discretion, some more dire Drawbacks may require entire adventures of their own before they can be removed. A Character whose **Soul** Trait has the **werewolf's curse** Drawback may have to find a drop of moonlight to cure their ailment, or a **Body** Trait with a **missing finger** Drawback may have to have a cybernetic replacement crafted for it.

PACK TRAIT

The equipment needed on an adventure can vary, and tracking individual pieces of equipment can slow down gameplay. To keep equipment management interesting and snappy, every player Character in SHIFT has a Focus Trait called **Pack**. **Pack** Traits represent the general supplies and sundries your Character has on them at any given time. Narratively, your Character's **Pack** Trait might be their backpack, mobile laboratory, or a steamer trunk being pulled by a lackey. Regardless of how you describe their **Pack** Trait, your Character can access it anywhere; SHIFT Characters are always prepared!

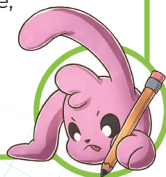
The **Pack** Trait is defined by choosing an appropriate Keyword that establishes the theme of a Character's equipment that matches the setting. For example, an occult investigation setting might have the following **Pack** Trait Keywords to choose from:

The Keyword provides a broad category of the types of items that might be found in your Character's **Pack**. You don't have to define the specific items Characters have until they use their **Pack** Trait to make a roll. All items represented by a **Pack** Trait use the **Pack** Trait's die, which has a Max Die of D6.

When you roll your Character's **Pack** Trait die as part of an action, it represents your Character quickly grabbing something, using it, and returning it to their pack, or using a consumable item such as lamp oil or food. If you want to use the same item again, you can, but you must make another roll with your **Pack** Trait die. When a **Pack** Trait die shifts down, it represents equipment getting worn down, resources running low, or items getting lost during adventures.

Although the **Pack** Trait and its Keyword allow for a lot of flexibility on what equipment your Character has on them, you should always have a discussion with your table about what is reasonable to pull out of your pack. A handful of coins to convince an urchin to help the party may be acceptable, but \$10,000 worth of gold bars is likely a stretch.

It can be a bit weird to wrap your head around the **Pack** Trait at first. For example, why does shifting down your **Pack** Trait while using a crowbar make your gun worse at shooting? When thinking about shifting up and down, it's best to imagine the change as wear and tear on all your equipment over time, as well as your Character getting less effective with their equipment as they get more worn out.



*Foster's PC Jenny, a flapper whose **Pack** Trait has the **socialite** Keyword, is getting her gang ready to infiltrate a fancy nightclub. Her mechanic friend Charleigh isn't used to dressing up for a high society night out, and Jenny is excited to help. Foster decides that Jenny's **socialite** equipment includes a makeup kit and wants to use it to help Charleigh look her best for the night out. The GM and other players all agree that item fits within the **socialite** Keyword, and Foster makes a roll using Jenny's **Pack** Trait die to see how good a job she does.*

Keyword

Example Equipment

burglar

A coil of rope, climbing gear, a pair of knives, lockpicking tools, a disguise

chemist

Textbooks, reagents and powders, measuring tools, a mortar and pestle, a blowpipe and burner

mechanic

Basic tool box, vials of oil, a large hammer, measuring tools, basic personal protective gear

researcher

A map, a hunting rifle, writing utensils, reference materials, sampling jars

sailor

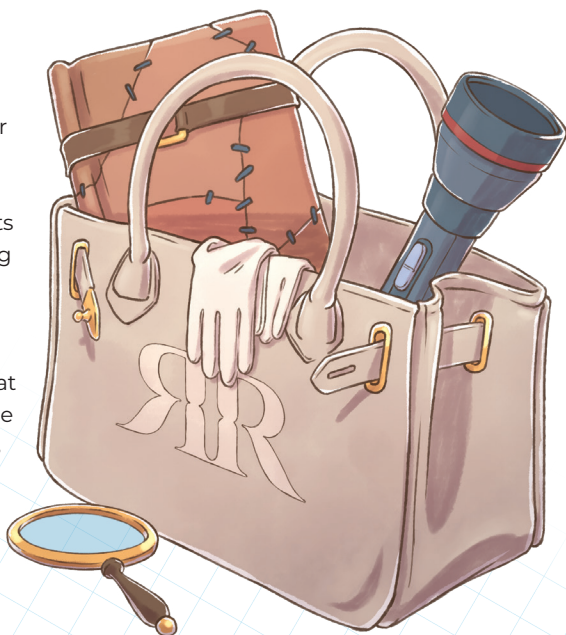
A coil of rope, climbing gear, a sextant, a spyglass, a pistol

socialite

A small handgun, a calling card, fashionable clothing, a correspondence kit, a family seal

CREATING TEMPORARY FOCUS TRAITS

On any given adventure, you might find yourself pulling out the same piece of equipment repeatedly: maybe your Character is depending heavily on a compass from their **Pack** Trait, or they're using their **Pack** Trait to regularly use a weapon. This is absolutely fine, but it's important to remember that when your **Pack** Trait shifts down, it affects all your equipment moving forward, which isn't ideal. By voluntarily shifting down your Character's **Pack** Trait once, you can create a Temporary Focus Trait to represent a piece of equipment that acts separately from your **Pack** Trait for the rest of the session. The starting die for this new Focus Trait is the same die that your **Pack** Trait die was before shifting it down. The Temporary Focus Trait sticks around until it Exhausts or until you have a Safe Rest and replenish your **Pack** Trait to its Max Die.



Voluntarily shifting down a **Pack** Trait to make a Temporary Focus Trait can be enormously useful, and it ensures your Character is never without the equipment needed for a task, as long as it's reasonable that they could have it on hand.

However, be careful with how often you use your Character's **Pack** Trait this way. The **Pack** Trait represents all the basic resources your Character has for this stretch of the adventure, and Exhausting the **Pack** Trait die could limit your options when things get dicey. You don't want to get caught with an empty backpack in a difficult situation.

As always, your GM is the judge of what is reasonable. For example, if your party relies too much on a specific piece of equipment in their packs during a session, your GM might suggest creating a Temporary Focus Trait or declare that that piece of equipment is no longer available. Let's be honest here, there are only so many sticks of dynamite one backpack can hold.

If you find yourself creating the same Temporary Focus Trait a lot, consider creating it as a new custom Focus Trait when you get the opportunity to advance your Character (see **"Chapter 2: Character Advancement"** for how this works). If your diplomatic Character is pulling out a pistol a lot more than you expected, maybe it's time to make that cool gun permanent.

TECHNIQUES: TRICKS AND TALENTS

Techniques are limited-use abilities that allow Characters to do extraordinary things. They represent the tricks, rituals, and maneuvers your Character has learned. When you create your Character, you start with one Technique, and you can acquire more as you progress through the game. Unlike Traits, Techniques don't have a Shift Die or

Keywords associated with them. Instead, each Technique has its own rules text that explains how you use it.

Unless otherwise specified, a Technique can be activated at any time. Most Techniques can be used a limited number of times per session (the description of the Technique will explain how many). Your Character regains all uses of their Techniques at the start of each session and after a Safe Rest (see **"Chapter 2: Rest and Recovery"** later in this chapter for more on resting and recovering in SHIFT). Here's a sample Technique:

Sow Doubt: While conversing with an NPC, you may plant a seed of doubt into their mind, causing them to question a previously held belief. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.



*Maria, a skilled occult investigator traveling with an informant, has come across a cyclopan island where she is attempting to find an Adversary hiding in an eldritch ruin. Maria and her accomplice decide to bring a revolver with them to protect themselves as they approach the ruins. As the party investigator, a pistol fits with Maria's **Pack** Trait Keyword, but she doesn't want to risk her **Pack** Trait die shifting down every time she uses it. She decides to shift her **Pack** Trait die from a D8 to a D10 and adds the following Temporary Focus Trait to her character sheet: **Six-Shot Revolver** (D8) (Temporary).*

**ACTION ROLLS:
GETTING THINGS DONE!**

When a Character wants to do something dangerous, difficult, or anything where the success of the action is uncertain, it's time to make an Action Roll!

MAKING AN ACTION ROLL

Action Rolls are made by following these steps:

- 1. Choose a Core Trait
- 2. Choose a Focus Trait
- 3. Roll!
- 4. Determine Results

1. CHOOSE A CORE TRAIT

Every action starts with deciding which Core Trait is most relevant to the action: the **Body** Core Trait for physical actions, the **Mind** Core Trait for actions requiring accuracy, focus, or technical know-how, or the **Soul** Core Trait for interactions with other people and creatures.

MIND	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
DRAWBACKS:							
BODY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10
DRAWBACKS:							
SOUL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8
DRAWBACKS:							

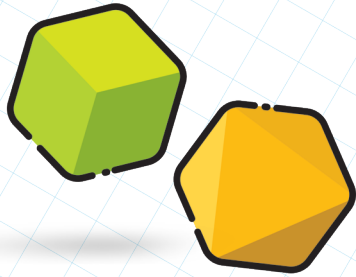
2. CHOOSE A FOCUS TRAIT

If your Character has a Focus Trait relevant to the action they are attempting, they can roll that Focus Trait's die alongside the Core Trait's die. The attempted action should relate to one or more of the Focus Trait's Keywords; otherwise, the GM may decide the Action Roll is Risky (see “**Character 2: Risky and Inspired Rolls**” later in this section) to account for the Character doing something outside of their specializations. Choosing a Focus Trait is not mandatory, but it does improve the chances of success.

FOCUS TRAIT:	LASER GUN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8
KEYWORDS:	STUN, FUSE							
DRAWBACKS:								
FOCUS TRAIT:		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
KEYWORDS:								
DRAWBACKS:								

3. ROLL!

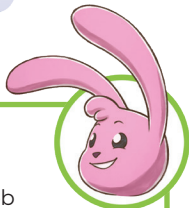
Roll the applicable dice you've selected.



4. DETERMINE RESULTS



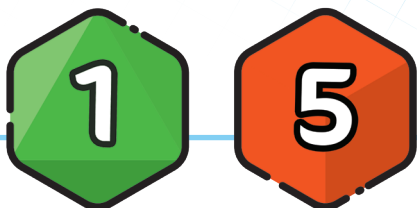
Be creative with your Core Traits! Smashing a window could be seen as a simple job for your **Body** Trait, but using your **Mind** Trait to find the weakest point in the glass or your **Soul** Trait to convince an NPC to do it instead are also valid options.



THE POSSIBLE RESULTS OF AN ACTION ROLL ARE AS FOLLOWS:

CRITICAL SUCCESS

- Any die shows a 1



Your action succeeds, and you choose a Critical Success Bonus (see the next section, “**Chapter 2: Critical Success Bonuses**,” for more details)!

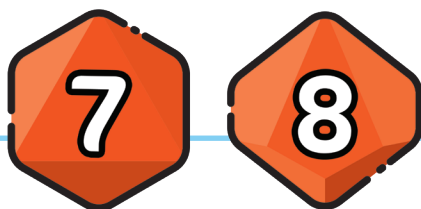
Is a Mitigated Success that includes a Critical Success still Critical? Yes!

You still get a Critical Success Bonus and the action is still a spectacular success.

The die that shifted down just means you had to push yourself or your gear further to get it. The cost of being awesome!

FAILURE

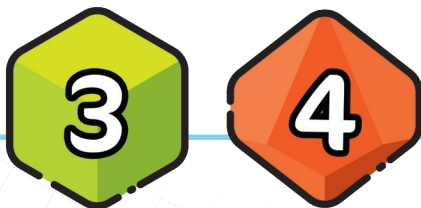
- No dice show a Success, and no dice show their highest value:



None of your dice rolled a 1, 2, or 3, but they also didn't roll their highest results. Your action doesn't have the intended results, but it isn't a catastrophe either!

SUCCESS

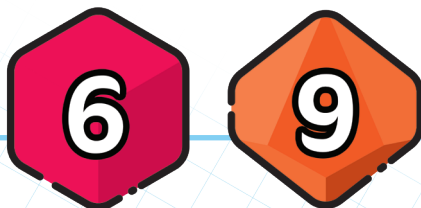
- At least one die shows a 1, 2, or 3, and no dice show their highest value:



Your action succeeds without a hitch.

CRITICAL FAILURE

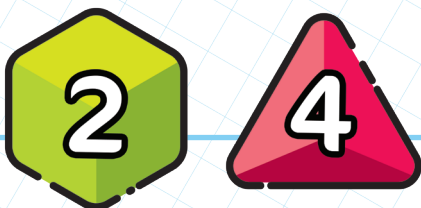
- No dice show a Success, and one or more dice show their highest value:



Your action doesn't go your way, and at least one of your Traits shifts down. The situation might get more complicated, but that might also bring in new opportunities too (see “**Failing Forward**” in **Chapter 3**).

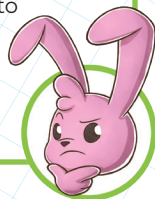
MITIGATED SUCCESS

- One die shows a successful 1, 2, or 3, but a second die shows its highest value:



Your action succeeds, but it comes at the cost of one of your Traits shifting down.

The fact that only one die needs to succeed for the whole Action Roll to be a Success gives you lots of room to narrate what happens during the attempt. You try to break open a safe with your **Body** and your **Trusty Crowbar**, but only the **Body** Trait succeeds—did you get frustrated and break in with your bare hands? Did the crowbar bend and you need to pry it open with your fingers? Every roll tells a story—have fun with it!



MAKING AN ACTION ROLL

GM: As your starliner departs the derelict space station, you review the day's salvage in the engineering bay. You realize you might finally have what you need to finish the **Orbital Mining Laser** you've been piecing together.

ELLIE: I'll give it a shot. I'll roll my **Mind** (D6) Core Trait and **Scrapper** (D6) Focus Trait to improve my odds.

GM: Alright, go ahead!

ROLLING A SUCCESS

ELLIE: I got a 2 on my **Mind** die and a 4 on my **Scrapper** die. Nice!

GM: Success! Your **Mind** die result of 2 is enough to pull it off. After hours of delicate adjustments, accidental fires, and frustrated tears, the **Orbital Mining Laser** has been installed on the ship!

ROLLING A FAILURE

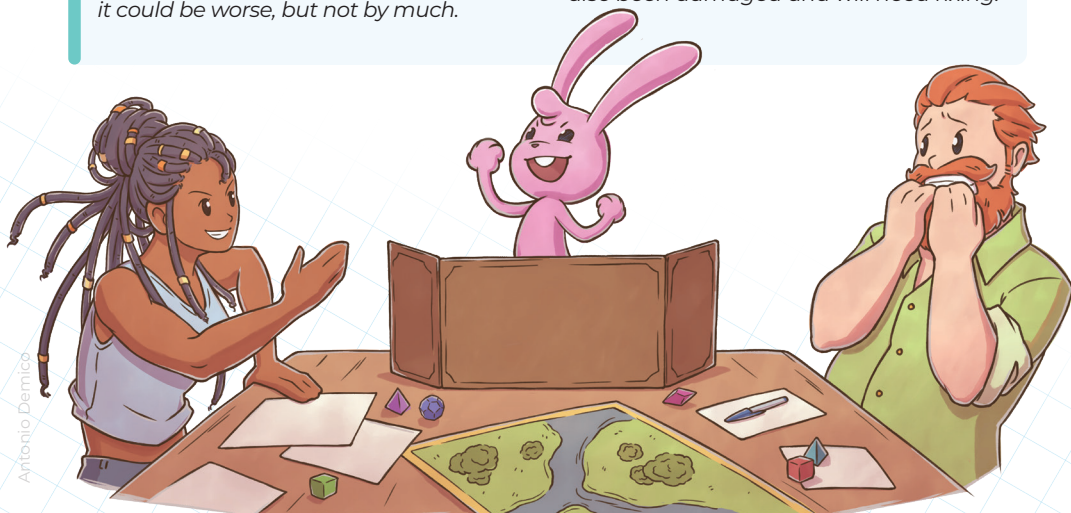
ELLIE: Ugh, I rolled 4 on both dice. I guess it could be worse, but not by much.

GM: You start wiring the primary laser module, but an error light flashes red as you connect the main capacitor. After a few attempts and failures, the components overheat and burn out. Looks like you'll need additional parts or a revised plan if you'd like to try assembling the laser again.

ROLLING A CRITICAL FAILURE

ELLIE: Oh no. I rolled 6 on **Mind** and 5 on **Scrapper**!

GM: Sorry, Ellie, that's a Critical Failure. With you rolling the highest result on your **Mind** die along with **Scrapper** failing as well, you are having some real trouble with this laser. A large spark suddenly erupts when the laser's capacitor overloads, sending a surge of energy through the system. The power surge causes a minor explosion, scattering debris across the workbench. You realize your mistake, but some of your scrapping gear has also been damaged and will need fixing.



CRITICAL SUCCESS BONUSES

When you roll a Critical Success on an Action Roll, you get to choose a bonus from the following options:

Shift Up One of Your Character's

Traits. Shift up the die of any one of your own Traits by one die (it cannot exceed the Max Die for that Trait).

Shift Up an Ally's Trait. Choose a willing ally and allow them to shift up the die of any one of their Traits by one die (it cannot exceed the Max Die for that Trait). This could be a fellow PC or even a friendly creature or NPC controlled by the GM.

CRITICAL SUCCESSES

GM: *The ground trembles as the terrifying Gorragan, a rhino-like beast, prepares to charge again. It's injured and dangerous. Jason, the creature's glowing yellow eyes are locked on you.*

JASON: *I'll meet it head-on! Charging forward, I'll use my **Body** (D8) Core Trait and my **Nova Knuckles** (D6) Focus Trait to break through its rocky armor. Critical Success—two 1s!*

GM: *Excellent! Choose one Critical Success Bonus. You can shift up one of your Traits, shift up an ally's Trait, shift down an Adversary's Trait twice, or add an interesting narrative boost.*

SHIFT UP ONE OF YOUR TRAITS

JASON: *I'll shift up my **Body** Trait; this fight has me pumped!*

GM: *A burst of momentum overtakes you. Your muscles surge with energy as you hammer your fists against the Gorragan's rocky hide, shifting its **Granite Defenses** Trait down by one. Your **Body** Trait shifts from D8 to D6, fueled by pure adrenaline!*

Shift an Adversary's Trait Down Twice.

If the Success of this Action Roll would cause a target's Trait die to shift down, shift it down by one additional die.

Get a Cool Narrative Boost. If none of these options fit the current scenario, you and your GM work together to come up with a cool narrative effect that occurs as part of your action. This could include removing an appropriate Drawback, gaining information that might give you an advantage on a future Action Roll, or creating an opportunity for an ally to do something cool. Get creative with it!

SHIFT UP AN ALLY'S TRAIT

JASON: *Ellie, what if we shifted up your **Mind** Trait? Your guidance helped me land these hits.*

ELLIE: *That would be great!*

GM: *Ellie, your strategizing helped Jason strike the Gorragan's weak points. Your confidence builds as you watch him turn the tide of the battle thanks to your tactics, and your **Mind** Trait shifts up.*

SHIFT AN ADVERSARY'S TRAIT DOWN TWICE

JASON: *I'll double down on my attack and shift down one of the Gorragan's Traits by two.*

GM: *Your **Nova Knuckles** shatter the Gorragan's **Granite Defenses** Trait, Exhausting it completely. The Gorragan stumbles and collapses, defeated.*

GET A COOL NARRATIVE BOOST

JASON: *I'll take a narrative boost. Maybe I spot something interesting?*

GM: *As your knuckles slam the Gorragan into the ground, a crack travels outward, revealing a hidden cavern filled with glowing crystals. The Gorragan remains a threat; however, you've uncovered a trove of valuable resources.*

ALTERNATIVE CRITICAL SUCCESS RULES

Like everything in the SHIFT system, you can adjust how Critical Successes work in your game. If you'd like to make things more challenging overall, you can decide that Critical Successes only happen when all dice show 1s. This has an interesting effect on the odds—you are more likely to get a Critical Success when rolling just one die than you are when rolling two. It could lead to some exciting moments!

Alternatively, if you'd like Critical Successes to be even more useful, you can have every 1 rolled on a die give you a Critical Success Bonus. Roll a D6 and a D8 and get 1s on both? You can shift an Adversary's die down two extra times, shift up one of your own dice and one of your allies, or any combination of options from the Critical Success Bonuses. This variant of the Critical Success rules means dice will be shifting up and down more often and is probably best used in lighter settings or with experienced players.

REGULAR D6 ROLL



RISKY D6 ROLL



INSPIRED D6 ROLL



RISKY AND INSPIRED ROLLS

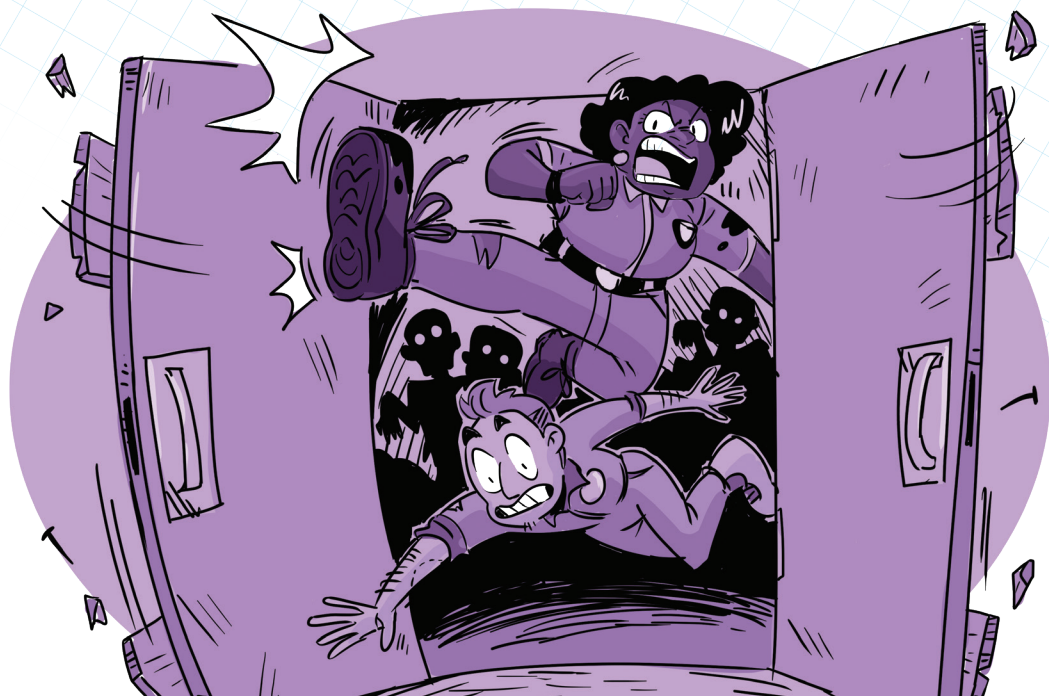
Sometimes a situation comes with a greater threat, or smart tactics and good roleplay make your GM want to reward you with an improved chance of Critical Success. In these dramatic moments, your GM can increase a roll's threat by making it Risky, or easier by making it Inspired.

When a roll is Risky, you make the roll as usual, except any die that does not show a successful result shifts down, not just on a Critical Failure. A GM may decide a roll is Risky for several reasons. For example, your Character might be outnumbered, or they lack the appropriate resources, or the action is outside the scope of a Trait's Keywords.

Alternatively, when a roll is Inspired, you make the roll as usual, except any successful result counts as a Critical Success. Just like with Risky rolls, a GM may decide a roll is Inspired for several reasons. For example, your character might have the upper hand, or their plan might be particularly clever. When your GM says that an Action Roll is Inspired, any successful result counts as a Critical Success.



*Bria's Character, a descendant of Zeus in an ancient mythological setting, attempts to summon an obscuring fog to make sneaking through a village easier for her party. Her GM, Sean, looks at Bria's **Stormbringer** Focus Trait and notes her Keywords are *lightning* and *flood*. Sean decides that summoning a fog isn't covered by either of the Trait's Keywords but still wants to give Bria the chance to do it. He says she can make the Action Roll but it will be Risky, and Bria will have the additional risk of shifting down any die that rolls any Failure result. Bria decides it's worth the risk and makes the roll, using her **Soul** (D6) die and her **Stormbringer** (D4) die.*



Oswald, a local mechanic, and Louisa, a sheriff's deputy, are being chased through the hallways of a hospital by enraged zombie-like creatures. They take a wrong turn, and a barricaded door blocks their way. They decide that their best chance of escape is to work together to manually open the door through brute force. Louisa chooses her **Combat Training** (D4) Focus Trait to contribute to the roll. Oswald doesn't feel that any of his Focus Traits apply and decides to use his **Body** (D8) Core Trait as his contribution. Oswald rolls a 7, which fails. Luckily, Louisa's training comes in clutch; she rolls a 2! The Action Roll is a Success, and the two Characters break open the blocked door.

WORKING TOGETHER

Sometimes an action is too tough to take on by yourself and you want to bring in a pal to help. When two players want their Characters to work together, each selects a Trait that their Characters have access to. Unlike a standard Action Roll, when two players work together in this way, they are not required to use a Core Trait for the roll. Each player makes an Action Roll using their chosen Trait, and each player is responsible for rolling their own Trait die and for describing how their Trait contributes to the Action Roll. The roll

resolves in the same way as a standard Action Roll—dice shift down if they show their highest value, and the roll is considered a Critical Success if both players' dice show a 1. How the Critical Success Bonus is used must be agreed upon by both players involved.

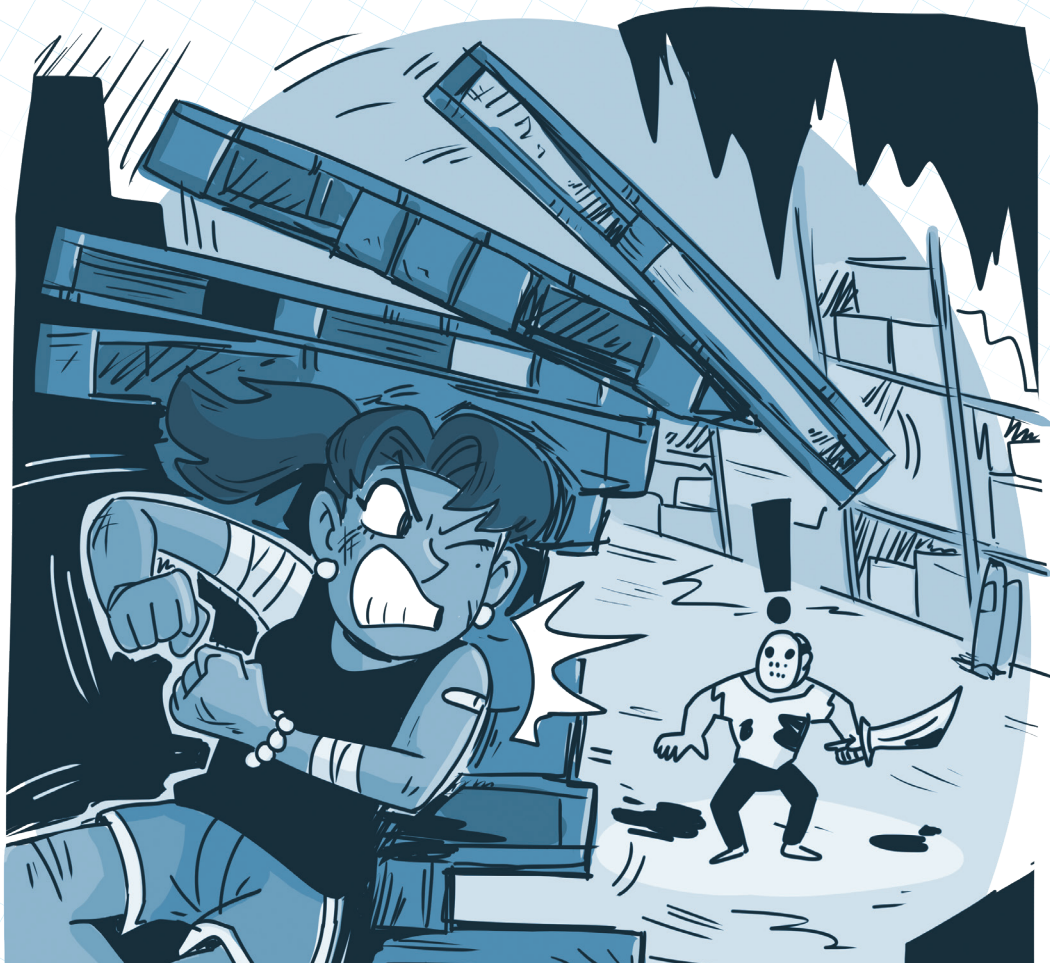
It's important to note that because neither player is required to choose a Core Trait, this is the only time you can combine two Focus or **Pack** Traits for an Action Roll.

Working together allows players at your table to spread the risk of an action between their Characters and combine their Traits in creative ways.

EXERTION: VOLUNTARILY SHIFTING DOWN A TRAIT'S DIE

There will be important and dramatic moments during SHIFT sessions when you don't want to leave results up to the luck of the dice. If you want to succeed at an action automatically, you can voluntarily shift down, or Exert, an appropriate Trait's die to do so.

Exerting a Trait to ensure Success should be a major event. Your Character is giving up a piece of themselves, pushing themselves to the limit to make sure something goes in their favor. A Success by Exertion should give the best possible results (short of a Critical Success) to whatever action you're taking.



A survivor in a horror-themed game is hiding from a hockey mask-wearing murderer in an abandoned warehouse. The survivor can hear the murderer getting closer and decides they don't want to gamble on making a swift escape. They could make an Action Roll with their **Scrappy Underdog** (D6) Focus Trait in an attempt to find another way out of the warehouse, but a Failure on the roll could mean a wrong turn. The survivor instead decides to Exert their **Scrappy Underdog** Trait die to ensure they find the fastest way out. The die shifts down from a D6 to a D8, and the survivor escapes successfully, no roll required.

ENCOUNTERS

An Encounter in SHIFT is any situation between one or more Characters and an opposing force or obstacle in their way that can't be overcome in a single Action Roll. In SHIFT these obstacles are called Adversaries. It could be a battle, a heated debate, a chase through a crowded market, or even weathering a storm.

BREAKDOWN OF AN ENCOUNTER

Regardless of the reason for the Encounter, they all follow the same structure:

1. Determine start of Encounter advantage
2. Determine the turn order
3. First PC action phase
4. Adversaries' action phase
5. Second PC action phase
6. Next round begins

1. DETERMINE START OF ENCOUNTER ADVANTAGE

When an Encounter begins, the GM decides if one side has an advantage over the other. This could be a narrative advantage, like having the high ground, or one side setting up an ambush.

If the GM determines that one side has an advantage, that side acts first, followed by the opposing side. After this initial round, the next round starts as usual in turn order.

If the GM determines that no one has an advantage, the first round proceeds based on the turn order established in the next step.



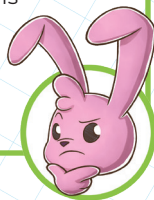
2. DETERMINE TURN ORDER

Encounters in SHIFT are dynamic, and Characters might have the edge on one turn and be caught off guard the next. Each round begins with the players rolling dice to determine the turn order for that round (except for the first round, which may be different if anyone has an Encounter Advantage).

To determine the turn order, each player chooses a Core Trait—**Body**, **Mind**, or **Soul**—and makes an Action Roll using only that Trait's die. Any players that succeed on this Action Roll act before the Adversaries during the First Action Phase, and anyone who fails this roll acts after the Adversaries during the Second Action Phase.

Which Core Trait you choose is up to you and doesn't necessarily influence which action you take on your turn, though GMs should encourage their players to narratively explain why they choose a particular Core Trait.

It's important to note that rolls to determine turn order can critically fail and are at risk of shifting down. This is because Encounters are intended to be high-intensity situations, and Exhaustion is a real risk.



DETERMINE TURN ORDER

GM: *As you travel down the long abandoned research hallway, suddenly sirens blare and red lights flash all around. The door behind you slams shut, trapping you inside the narrow passageway. Ahead, two ancient automechs clank to life, their targeting lasers scanning each of you. This looks like an ambush!*

The automechs act first since they've surprised you.

*The first automech locks onto Ripley, firing a **Plasma Bolt** (D6). It rolls a 3—a Success. Ripley, the **Plasma Bolt** hits, searing through your armor. Your **Body** Trait shifts down by one.*

RIPLEY: *Yikes. Noted.*

GM: *The second automech targets Ellie with its **Stun Pulse** (D6) but rolls a 5, which fails, striking the wall beside you. These automechs are clearly hostile!*

*Let's roll for the turn order for the first round. Choose a Core Trait—**Mind**,*

***Body**, or **Soul**. Successful rolls act in the First Action Phase before Adversaries, while failed rolls mean you act after them. Remember—you can get Critical Successes and Critical Failures on these rolls, just like any roll.*

RIPLEY: *I'll roll **Mind** (D6) and take aim. Rolling...a 1, Critical Success!*

JASON: *I'll roll **Body** (D4) and charge the automechs with my cyber-saber. That's a 2, Success.*

GM: *Looks like you two are in the First Action Phase. How about you, Willow?*

WILLOW: *I rolled my **Mind** (D6) to analyze their targeting systems but I failed with a 5. At least it wasn't a crit!*

GM: *Ok, that's the Second Action Phase for Willow.*

ELLIE: *My **Body** (D8) came up 3, Success! I look for some cover.*

GM: *Alright, so Willow you'll be in the Second Action Phase, and Ripley, Jason, and Ellie are in the First. Which of you three wants to make the first move?*

3. FIRST ACTION PHASE

Any players who succeeded on their turn order Action Roll take their turns during this phase.

4. ADVERSARY ACTION PHASE

During this phase, all Adversaries in the Encounter take their actions. The GM chooses the order the Adversaries act in (see “**Adversary Actions During Encounters**” at the end of the “Encounters” section for more about this).

5. SECOND ACTION PHASE

Any players who failed on their turn order Action Roll take their turns during this phase.

6. NEXT ROUND BEGINS

Unless the Adversary has been overcome or the circumstances have changed sufficiently enough to end the Encounter, the next round begins anew with determining the turn order.

PLAYER TURNS

During both the First and Second Action Phases, players attempt to overcome the Adversaries and obstacles in the Encounter. During a turn, in any order, each player may both make an Action Roll and move their Character.

Should multiple players' turns fall within the same Action Phase, those players decide the order in which they act within that phase.

MAKING ACTION ROLLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

Action Rolls during an Encounter follow the same rules as Action Rolls outside of Encounters: you roll Core Traits with or without Focus Traits, and the result of your rolls determines the outcome.

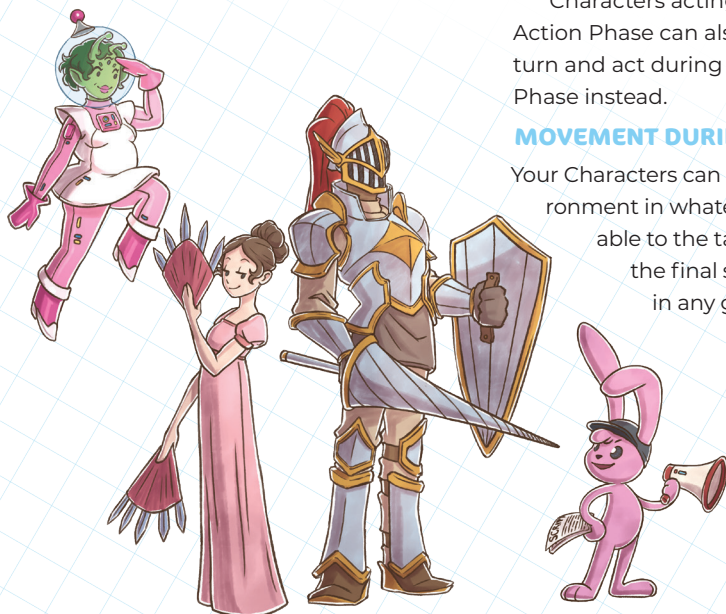
Rolls you make during Encounters will target Adversaries, allies, or the environment in an attempt to overcome the Encounter's challenges. A successful action taken against an Adversary shifts down one of its Traits' dice. As a player, you should be clear about the intended target of each of your Action Rolls. Whether you are aiming to ground a flying creature or disarm someone, you should state your goals to the GM so they can shift down the appropriate Trait.

You don't have to have your Character make an Action Roll at all during an Action Phase—sometimes the best move in an Encounter is to wait and see what your opponent does next.

Characters acting during the First Action Phase can also choose to delay their turn and act during the Second Action Phase instead.

MOVEMENT DURING ENCOUNTERS

Your Characters can move around the environment in whatever way seems reasonable to the table, and your GM has the final say on what is possible in any given situation.



If the Encounter takes place in a space with environmental effects that might hinder movement, the GM can call for an appropriate Action Roll to see how well a Character maneuvers through the scene. The Character always gets to where they want to go; the Action Roll just indicates how difficult it is to get there.

The distances between Characters and their opponents is tracked abstractly by the following four ranges:

Close. Someone or something is within Close range if your Character can reach out and touch them with their hand without moving. You can hit someone with a melee weapon if they are within Close range.

Near. Someone or something within Near range is one turn's worth of movement

away from you. If you want to interact with them, you'll need to move into Close range or target them with something ranged.

Far. If something or someone is within Far range, you'll need to spend two turns moving to get into Close range with them. Not all ranged attacks can reach a target at this distance, so it's up to you and your table to decide what works and what doesn't.

Extremely Far. Targets at Extremely Far range are just that—very, very far away. You'll need something faster than your legs to get closer to something at this distance. Generally speaking, someone this far away is outside the scope of the Encounter and can only really influence people in the current situation with specialized equipment or incredible powers.

PLAYER TURN

GM: *Ripley, Jason, and Ellie, you're up.*

Who acts first, and does anyone want to delay to the Second Action Phase?

JASON: *I'll close in, slashing the first automech's **Plasma Bolt Launcher** with my **Body** (D4) and **Cyber-Saber** (D8) Traits. My **Body** rolled 4, and **Cyber-Saber** rolled 2—a Success overall.*

GM: *Your **Cyber-Saber** slices through the automech's **Plasma Bolt Launcher**, but the resulting impact shifts your **Body** die down.*

ELLIE: *I'm looking for a makeshift shield. Rolling my **Mind** (D6) and **Scavenger's Instinct** (D8)... **Mind** rolled 4, and **Scavenger's Instinct** rolled 6.*

GM: *Unfortunately, both rolls fail. You find a loose wall panel but underestimate its weight. As it comes free, it slams to the floor, drawing unwanted attention.*

RIPLEY: *I'll fire at the first automech's damaged **Plasma Bolt Launcher** with my **Mind** (D6) and **Nova Rifle** (D8).*

*Rolling... 3 for **Mind** and 2 for the Nova Rifle—both successful!*

GM: *Your shot shatters the **Plasma Bolt Launcher**, Exhausting the Trait. The automechs act next! The first targets Jason with its **Stun Pulse Generator** (D6) and rolls 2, a Success. Jason, you're hit—shift down your **Mind** die as the pulse clouds your brain briefly. The second automech targets Willow with its **Stun Pulse Generator** (D6), rolling a 7, which fails. Willow, you evade the pulse. Now it's the Second Action Phase.*

WILLOW: *I attempt to hack the panel. Rolling **Mind** (D4) and my **Disruptor Console** (D6)... **Mind** rolled a 3, while the **Disruptor Console** rolled a 7!*

GM: *Nice! The **Disruptor Console** fails to connect to the older tech, but you successfully hack the terminal directly. The automechs shudder in unison as the disruptor algorithm takes hold, and each automech shifts down its hostile **Attitude** Trait by one. Let's keep the action going and reroll for the next round's turn order.*

ADVERSARY ACTIONS DURING ENCOUNTERS

In an Encounter, an Adversary can make a number of Action Rolls equal to its Power each round. For example, a kraken with a Power of 4 can lash out with its tentacles up to four times during the Adversary Action Phase, while a simple farmhand with a Power of 1 can only make a single Action Roll per round. (Power is a statistic unique to Adversaries that indicates their general challenge level and how difficult they are to defeat. See **Chapter 4: Adversaries** for more on Power.)

In Encounters with multiple Adversaries, the GM can alternate between Adversaries when taking actions. As an example, in an Encounter with a Power 3 Adversary and a Power 1 Adversary, they could make two actions with the Power 3 Adversary, switch to the Power 1 Adversary to take its single action, and then return to the original Adversary to finish the turn.

If the party is having a difficult time or the pace of the Encounter needs to be adjusted, the GM can choose to have an Adversary take fewer actions than their Power allows.

Adversaries make Action Rolls in the same way players do by combining up to two of their Traits (one of which can be their **Attitude** Trait) and rolling the associated dice.

REST AND RECOVERY

Inevitably, SHIFT Characters get worn down. When that happens, you're going to need to find a secure place to rest and regroup. Resting gives Characters a way to shift their Trait dice back up and, in some cases, reset uses of their Techniques. Depending on the tone, style, and environment of your game, resting might be easier or harder.

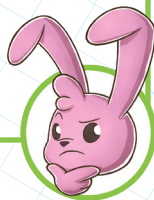
There are two kinds of rest: Safe Rest and Unsafe Rest. During a Safe Rest, a player's Core, Focus, and **Pack** Trait dice all shift back up to their Max Die, and all Techniques back to full use. Characters can only take a Safe Rest in secure places like walled cities, secured lighthouses, or well-defended spaceports. Taking a Safe Rest costs nothing but time (basically, a solid night's rest).

An Unsafe Rest, on the other hand, requires an expenditure of resources. To rest in dangerous territory, each player who wants to have their Character rest must shift down their **Pack** Trait die by one. Doing so represents setting up camp, preparing a meal, and anything else required to secure an unsafe place. In exchange for this shift down of their **Pack** Trait die, a player can choose one of their Character's Core or Focus Trait dice to restore to its maximum.

Players can help each other as well, shifting down their own **Pack** Trait die to restore an ally's Core or Focus Trait die to its maximum.

You can shift down your Character's **Pack** Trait die as many times as you like, shifting a Core or Focus Trait die to its maximum each time you do. Be careful though—your **Pack** trait is a limited resource that only replenishes during a Safe Rest.

What's considered a Safe or Unsafe area is up to you and your table. Can you imagine sleeping in the area without having to take turns keeping watch? Then it's probably Safe. Can you hear wolves howling uncomfortably nearby? You aren't likely to get a good night's sleep.



UNSAFE REST

GM: After slipping past the Starguard fortress walls, you find a brief moment of reprieve in an unlocked ammunition room out of reach of the fortress's searchlights. From here, any sound could alert the nearby patrol units. You could rest here, but it'll be an Unsafe Rest if you do.

ELLIE: Yeah, let's rest before we go deeper. I'll Shift my **Pack** Trait down to restore my **Body** die to its maximum. I'll quietly reach into my quick-pack and swallow a restoration capsule before pressing my ear to the door to listen for any approaching dangers.

GM: The restoration capsule seals your wounds and dulls the pain, but the surrounding patrols you hear keep you on edge.

JASON: Willow, how's your power? Do you need a recharge? I have a few energy cells left.

WILLOW: I would appreciate that. My **Optical Scanners** are performing inefficiently. My **Optical Scanner** (D12) Focus Trait is nearly exhausted, and my sensors barely illuminate the room.

JASON: I got you! I shift down my **Pack** Trait and hand Willow an energy cell. Take it easy; we can't have you running out of batteries.

GM: Willow, as you replace the cell, your sensors brighten, and the hum of recalibrating circuits gives everyone momentary relief. You can restore your **Optical Scanner** Focus Trait to its maximum. Suddenly, you're back to high alert as you all hear a patrol come to a loud halt directly outside the door.

HEALING OUTSIDE OF REST

As you progress your Character, they can acquire Techniques to heal their allies in other ways. For example, a doctor might have a Medic's Kit Technique that gives access to some quick emergency supplies. This might allow the doctor to shift up an ally's **Body** Core Trait die by two dice mid-action.

Your table may decide there are narrative reasons for a Trait's die to shift back up during play. For example, a soak in a hot spring might soothe a sore back (**Body**) or reinvigorate a Character's excitement for adventure (**Soul**). You should feel free to suggest opportunities to rest and shift dice up during adventures. How often this happens should be a matter of tone; a more deadly setting may not suit this kind of "narrative" healing, whereas a light-hearted world might have plenty of opportunities to shift Trait dice back up.

CHARACTER DEATH

Characters are often pushed to their limits. They get worn down, beaten up, and stressed out. As their dice dwindle over the course of an adventure, their options begin to run out, and resources become limited. Eventually, one or more of a Character's Core Trait's dice will Exhaust, forcing them to face their fate.

How this situation resolves depends on the story's tone and what the player wants for their Character. For example, if you want your Character to stick around a little longer, your GM might choose to apply a Drawback to the Core Trait's die that is Exhausted. A Drawback keeps your Character in play, but it should also be something severe enough to cause ongoing problems for them. If you opt for a Drawback in this situation, shift the Exhausted Core Trait back to D12, and you're back in action!

It may be that you decide this is a dramatically appropriate time for your Character to die, and that's okay. In this case, say something awesome and make one final exciting Action Roll that's an automatic Critical Success before your Character passes on.

CHARACTER DEATH

GM: As Willow and Nancy struggle to get the downed starliner back into orbit, gravipedes continue to swarm through the hull breach, each pulsing with dark energy. Ripley, you've successfully managed to defend against the gravipedes, buying the crew valuable time. But now, as you're backed up against the bulkhead, you've Exhausted your **Body** die completely.

RIPLEY: I'll fight to the end if it means the crew can escape. What are my options?

GM: The large amount of gravipede venom coursing through you causes each movement to feel heavy and arduous. You can Shift your **Body** die from Exhausted back to a D12, but your **Body** Trait will have the weighed down Drawback. You'll have to find an antidote or other medical solution to be able to clear it later in your journey. Alternatively, you can make one last heroic stand, ensuring the crew escapes, but at the cost of your life.

RIPLEY: I think my journey ends here. I'll take down as many gravipedes as possible to protect the others.

GM: If you're sure, there's no need to roll. Describe your last stand for us.

RIPLEY: I grip my knife and grab a nearby plasma torch before charging into the swarm. Swinging wildly, I'll slice through the mass of gravipedes toward the hull breach.

Get this ship off the ground! I'll hold them off!

Finally, I'll lunge through the hull breach onto the planet's surface, drawing the gravipedes' attention as they swarm around me.

GM: You pull it off. The gravipedes focus on you, giving the crew the final crucial seconds they need. As the starliner lifts off, the crew can only watch through the hull breach as Ripley continues her fight on the planet's surface below, her plasma torch a bright beacon in the darkness—until it's swallowed by the relentless swarm. Ripley's sacrifice secures the crew's escape.

BUILDING BLOCKS: REST AND RECOVERY

Depending on the tone of your SHIFT campaign setting, you can adjust how rest and recovery work by choosing between the Standard, Simple, or Challenging Rest and Recovery building blocks.

STANDARD REST AND RECOVERY

The Standard Rest and Recovery building block is the baseline for SHIFT campaigns and uses the rules as presented at the beginning of this chapter. If you want some resource management and challenge as your players explore your world but don't want it to be too deadly, Standard rest and recovery is the building block for you.

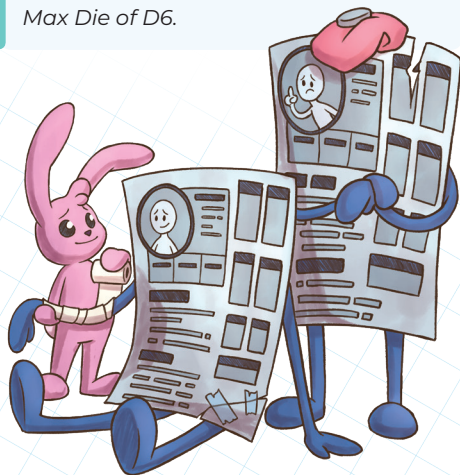
SIMPLE REST AND RECOVERY

The Simple Rest and Recovery building block is for campaigns with lower stakes and lighter tones. With this building block, a Character that shifts down their **Pack** Trait during an Unsafe Rest restores all of their dice back to their maximum (as opposed to choosing just one). Characters also restore all their dice to their maximums at the end of each session. Additionally, any Drawbacks a Character has attached to their Core Traits due to Exhaustion are cleared. All Characters start refreshed and with a clean slate at the beginning of each session in a campaign using this building block.

CHALLENGING REST AND RECOVERY

For truly difficult and deadly campaigns, GMs may want to consider using the Challenging Rest and Recovery building block. With this building block, Characters who shift down their **Pack** Trait during an Unsafe Rest can only shift up one Trait's die twice, or two different Trait's dice once each (as opposed to bringing them back up to their maximum). Additionally, when returning to a Safe place to rest, their dice cannot be restored higher than the **Wealth** Trait of the Location they are staying in, even if the Max Die of a Trait would normally allow it to shift higher. The exception to this is the **Pack** Trait, which is always restored to its D6 maximum during a Safe Rest. You can learn more about both the **Wealth** Trait and Locations in **Chapter 7: Locations**.

*Aldrick, a beleaguered knight, stumbles into the poor village of Doldraven after a strenuous day of protecting the downtrodden. They take the opportunity for a Safe Rest in the local inn, but the poverty-stricken village is not well equipped to resupply and heal heroes. The Max Die for Aldrick's **Body** Trait is a D6, but because Doldraven's **Wealth** Trait is only a D8, their **Body** Trait is only restored to a D8. Aldrick is able to get some basic supplies and restores their **Pack** Trait back to its Max Die of D6.*



CHARACTER CREATION AND ADVANCEMENT

Now that you know the basics of how SHIFT works, you're ready to build a Character! As previously mentioned, Characters are made up of a set of Core Traits, Focus Traits, and Techniques as well as their all-important **Pack** Trait.

Creating a Character in SHIFT involves the following steps:

1. Create a character concept
2. Choose a primary Focus Trait
3. Choose a Technique
4. Assign Shift Dice to Core Traits
5. Choose or create a secondary Focus Trait
6. Choose a starting Pack Trait Keyword
7. Name and describe your Character

1. CREATE A CHARACTER CONCEPT

Before making any mechanical choices, your SHIFT Character starts with a concept. Who are they? What did they do before they took up the adventuring life? What do they value? What are their goals? What role do they play in the party? You should work with your GM and your fellow players to develop these concepts, weaving them together to create a cohesive team.

Mary, a player creating a Character for a new seaside eldritch horror campaign, has decided they want to play a person of influence, someone with aristocratic connections and the ability to sway people with their words. Mary decides their concept is a disgraced politician with ties to a prosperous fishing dynasty.

2. CHOOSE A PRIMARY FOCUS TRAIT

Your Character's primary Focus Trait represents the main way they interact with the world around them. Whatever you want your Character to be best at is your primary Focus Trait.

This Focus Trait can be chosen from a selection provided by your GM or the SHIFT setting in which the campaign takes place. The **"Chapter 9: SHIFT World Sparks"** chapter has a variety of Focus Traits to get you started. If there are no Focus Traits that fit your character concept, work with your GM to create a new one from scratch. Your Character's primary Focus Trait starts with two Keywords and a D4 as its Max Die. Each Focus Trait includes some suggested Keywords, but feel free to create your own custom Keywords with your GM if none of the examples fit your concept.

*Mary considers their primary Focus Trait options for their disgraced politician. They like the potential of a leadership-driven Trait like **Pulling Rank**, but they decide to pick a Focus Trait that highlights the manipulative side of their character concept. Why simply encourage their crew when they can command them with a word? Mary chooses the **Voice of the People** Focus Trait as their primary Focus Trait and gives it the Keywords obedience and slippery, perfect for getting what they want and avoiding blame.*

3. CHOOSE A TECHNIQUE

At character creation, you get to choose a powerful Technique for your Character. Just like Focus Traits, your GM or the SHIFT setting you're playing in will have a selection of Techniques to choose from. You'll also find a bunch of them in the **"Chapter 9: SHIFT World Sparks"** chapter.

New Techniques can be acquired as your Character advances.

*While browsing the Technique options, Mary selects the **Don't You Know Who I Am?** Technique for their Character. They want to play into their Character's past political connections and shady business practices, and **Don't You Know Who I Am?** will make sure their name is known no matter where they are.*

4. ASSIGN SHIFT DICE TO CORE TRAITS

Every Character has three Core Traits: **Mind**, **Body**, and **Soul**. No one person is naturally skilled at everything, so a Character's Core Traits have Shift Dice that range from D6 to D10.

At character creation, distribute a D6 Shift Die, a D8 Shift Die, and a D10 Shift Die among your Character's **Mind**, **Body**, and **Soul** Traits. Careful consideration should be given to the Core Trait that is assigned the D10, because that Trait will Exhaust after shifting down only twice. Nobody's perfect, right?

*Mary knows their Character rarely lifts a finger for themselves, so they put the D10 into their **Body** Trait. They want their Character to be cunning and scheming, so they assign the D6 to their **Mind** Trait. That leaves a D8 for their **Soul** Trait, and that makes sense. This Character will be all about manipulating people, but that doesn't mean they connect with others easily.*

5. CHOOSE OR CREATE A SECONDARY FOCUS TRAIT

Next up, you're going to choose or create a secondary Focus Trait to represent additional skills, equipment, or allies your Character has acquired. This Trait can be chosen from the same selection provided for the campaign or created with your GM. Since this Focus Trait is not the main ability of your Character, its Max Die is D6.

You assign two Keywords to the secondary Focus Trait.

Use this secondary Focus Trait to further flesh out your character concept. It's a good opportunity to showcase your Character's background or to represent a piece of equipment they always have with them. Focus Traits can also represent an ally or pet, with their Keywords representing the ways they aid your Character.

*Considering their Character's low **Body** Trait, Mary decides their Character needs some protection. They choose to make their secondary Focus Trait a bodyguard named **Brutus**. Mary gives **Brutus** the Keywords **clobber** and **protect**.*

As an option, Focus Traits can start with a Drawback along with their two Keywords. This can help add more depth to a Character's abilities, provide more roleplaying opportunities for the player, or give a slight mechanical challenge to overcome.



6. CHOOSE A STARTING PACK TRAIT KEYWORD

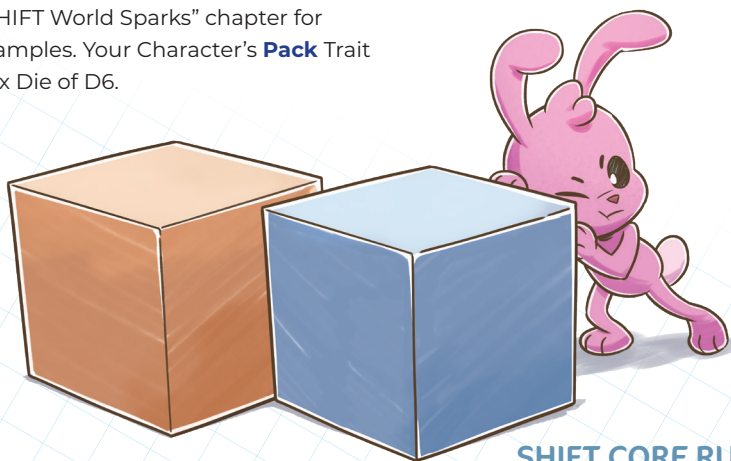
Choose your Character's Keyword for their **Pack** Trait from a list of options based on your chosen campaign setting. Take a look at the "SHIFT World Sparks" chapter for some examples. Your Character's **Pack** Trait has a Max Die of D6.

*Mary decides on the socialite Keyword for their Character. They want their Character to be ready to impress in any situation, and the fine clothing, jewelry, and other signs of wealth will help with that. Besides, they have their bodyguard **Brutus** to handle the more physical aspects of their life.*

7. NAME AND DESCRIBE YOUR CHARACTER

The last step in character creation is to choose a suitable name for your Character that fits the setting you're playing in. You may also want to write a brief description of your Character to present them to the party. Don't sweat the details—you'll develop more about them as you play!

Mary wants a stuffy, self-important-sounding name for their Character, so they name him August Wyndham. Mary sees the Wyndhams as an old fishing family that has fallen into decadence, and August's past behavior has sullied his family name. August is never seen in anything less than a three-piece suit and cravat, and he walks with an ornate cane. He is a man in his mid-forties and has a streak of gray in his dark hair.



CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Your Character will grow and change over the course of their adventures by earning experience points (XP) and spending that experience on new Keywords, Traits, and other advancements.

You should work to weave these new abilities into the narrative, inspired by the events in your story.

EARNING EXPERIENCE POINTS

You earn an XP whenever you:

- ▶ Are forced to shift a Trait die down due to a Mitigated Success or Critical Failure. When rolling two dice, if they both shift down, you earn 2 XP.
- ▶ Exert a Trait die to guarantee a successful Action Roll.

The most experience points you can earn this way in a single session is 5 XP, though you can carry over as much XP as you like between sessions.

Your GM can reward your party with bonus XP at the end of a session for great roleplaying or for completing major story beats. This can go beyond the 5 XP per-session limit.



SPENDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Any XP a player earns can be spent to advance their Character in the following table.

You can only acquire one new advancement per session, but you may carry over XP from session to session to save up for more expensive advancements. Self-improvement is hard work, after all!

ADVANCEMENT

XP COST

Acquire a New Keyword. A player may select one of their Focus Traits and assign it a new Keyword. There is no limit to the number of Keywords a Focus Trait can have. 2

Acquire a New Technique. A player may choose a new Technique and add it to their character sheet. The same Technique cannot be taken more than once. 4

Acquire a New Trait. A player may select or create, with the guidance of the GM, a new Trait, complete with two new Keywords. This new Trait's Max Die is a D6. 6

Improve a Core Trait's Shift Die. A player may choose one of their Core Traits and improve its Shift Die by one (maximum of D6). 8



3: GAME MASTERING SHIFT

The rules in “**Chapter 2: The Core Rules**” chapter of this book are all you need to start playing SHIFT with your friends. That being said, if you want to dive deeper into building worlds for SHIFT or you're looking for additional rules to make your SHIFT games even more dynamic, this section has everything you need!

There aren't any secrets in this section; players and GMs alike should feel free to read through it. There's something here for everyone to inspire great ideas for your next SHIFT Character or campaign!

RUNNING THE GAME

Game mastering a TTRPG for the first time can feel daunting, so the following are some tips to make sure you get off on the right foot.

SESSION ZERO

Before starting a SHIFT campaign, make time for a session zero. This is a chance for the players and GM to create Characters and discuss expectations for the adventures ahead.

Creating Characters as a group lets the players collaborate, allowing them to weave their character concepts and backstories together. This is also a good opportunity for the GM to discuss with the players what Keywords they choose for their Traits. Players have a lot of flexibility when crafting their Characters, and the GM should help make sure that their Keywords aren't too narrow or too broad, and that each Character feels unique and interesting.

SAFETY

A tabletop roleplaying game should always be a fun and welcoming experience for everyone. Clearly communicating the themes to the players at the beginning of a campaign is not a spoiler; rather, it ensures that everyone goes into a campaign with a clear understanding of the story they're about to tell together. It is important to establish and respect a clear line between what the players are comfortable with and what their Characters are comfortable with. For example, if a player asks for sharks not to be included in the campaign, a GM could replace the sharks in an adventure with a different aquatic threat. However, if a player's Character is afraid of sharks but the player is fine with them being in a campaign, the Character's reaction to the sharks surrounding their ship can be a dramatic addition to the story. When Adversaries interact with Characters, the GM should be mindful of not attacking the player behind the Character, especially with hostile Adversaries.

SAFETY TOOLS

Safety tools help to establish clear boundaries for how the group wants to engage with the themes in a game of SHIFT. The particular safety tools used should be discussed and agreed on prior to or during session zero and revisited throughout a campaign.

A great resource for safety tools is the TTRPG Safety Toolkit, a free resource co-curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. It is a compilation of safety tools designed by members of the tabletop roleplaying games community for use by players and GMs. You can find it online at bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit.

The GM and players should familiarize themselves with the TTRPG Safety Toolkit's options and decide which tools would most benefit the group. If this is your first time using safety tools, the following tools are a great starting point:

- ▶ **Lines and Veils.** a framework for setting boundaries before the game starts
- ▶ **X, N, and O cards.** check-in tools for use during the game
- ▶ **Aftercare.** a way to decompress after the game

Discussing safety needs and serious content can be difficult. To help players who may be uncomfortable, the toolkit provides "The Digital RPG Consent Checklist" in its "Tools and Resources" section. This allows players to anonymously fill out a form detailing their needs. Setting aside time throughout the campaign to check in with each other is a great way to ensure everyone is having fun and feeling supported.

WHEN SHOULD PLAYERS ROLL?

SHIFT is a game about risk and reward. Every time a player rolls dice to resolve an action, they risk shifting those dice down and decreasing their chances of success on future actions. Therefore, when deciding when to call for Action Rolls, the GM should consider whether there is something at stake for the Character:

- ▶ Is the Character taking action under pressure or under a time constraint?
- ▶ Is the Character in a dangerous or precarious situation (for example, on a rickety bridge, in a lava lake on a floating rock, or in a high-speed chase)?
- ▶ Most importantly, would it be interesting or impactful for the group whether the Character fails or succeeds in the situation?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, it's a good time for the GM to call for an Action Roll to resolve the outcome. If the Character has all the time in the world or is in a relatively safe position from which to make the action, the GM doesn't need to call for a roll and the Character succeeds automatically. SHIFT assumes that Characters are skilled and capable individuals who can get things done as long as it falls within their Traits and Keywords. The GM should let the Characters do the things the players have built them to do and only have them roll when the outcome is uncertain.

EPIC SUCCESSES AND DRAMATIC FAILURES

The risks of rolling dice in SHIFT mean that successful actions should feel like significant accomplishments—against the odds, the Characters have changed the world around them in a meaningful way. The GM should encourage the players to describe how their Characters triumph with the same amount of style.

Failure should be just as thrilling. When a SHIFT Character fails, the world around them is still affected, just not in the way they were hoping. Invite the players to describe how they fail, despite their Characters' best efforts.

*The town guard discovers the party at the scene of a robbery they didn't commit. The guards are ready to arrest the group when Sawyer, the group's occult mage, attempts to use their **Eldritch Image** (D4) Focus Trait to scare the guards before fleeing. Sawyer's player rolls a 4, not only causing the attempt to fail, but shifting down their **Eldritch Image** Focus Trait in the process. The GM decides that the guards, now certain of the party's nefarious actions, give chase to the party.*

FAILING FORWARD

When an Action Roll fails, it shouldn't bring the narrative to a halt. It may not be what the player intended to happen, but failure should provide new ways to advance the story. These new opportunities may be dangerous or challenging, but they always move the Characters toward their goals. This is especially true for Critical Failures. When a die shifts down, whether voluntarily by a player or due to a failed Action Roll, the GM should introduce something dramatic afterward. Here are some examples of failing forward:

*Lost in the belly of a moon-sized space station, Android 2B uses their **InfoPad 9000** Focus Trait to try and pull up blueprints of the labyrinth-like network of tunnels that fills this part of the station. 2B fails their Action Roll, but the GM still describes them finding a potential way out—an ancient maintenance tube that is overgrown with biomechanical plants. It looks dangerous, but it might be a way out, and 2B starts to climb the vines.*

USING KEYWORDS

As players choose Keywords during character creation, the GM should pay close attention to their choices. Why a player has chosen a specific Focus Trait and how they define it telegraph what that player is looking to experience during play.

For example, if a player creates a Character with ice powers for their superhero game and chooses **speed** and **bridge** as Keywords for their **Absolute Zero** Focus Trait, this provides a good idea of the type of hero they'd like to play. **Speed** conjures an image of a Character that's swift on their feet, someone designed to get in and out

of spaces quickly and safely. At the same time, the **bridge** Keyword indicates that the player wants their superhero to be able to project ice to travel and create connections between places.

Another player might choose **wall** and **spray** for their **Absolute Zero** Focus Trait Keywords, informing the GM that this player wants their ice-powered superhero to be a balanced mix of offense and defense, creating defensive ice barriers and freezing the villains they face.

The GM of a SHIFT game should view the Keywords their players choose as a roadmap for the story, indicators of what the players are most interested in having their Characters do during the game. The GM should lean into the players' choices and give them opportunities to use their Traits the way they've designed them.



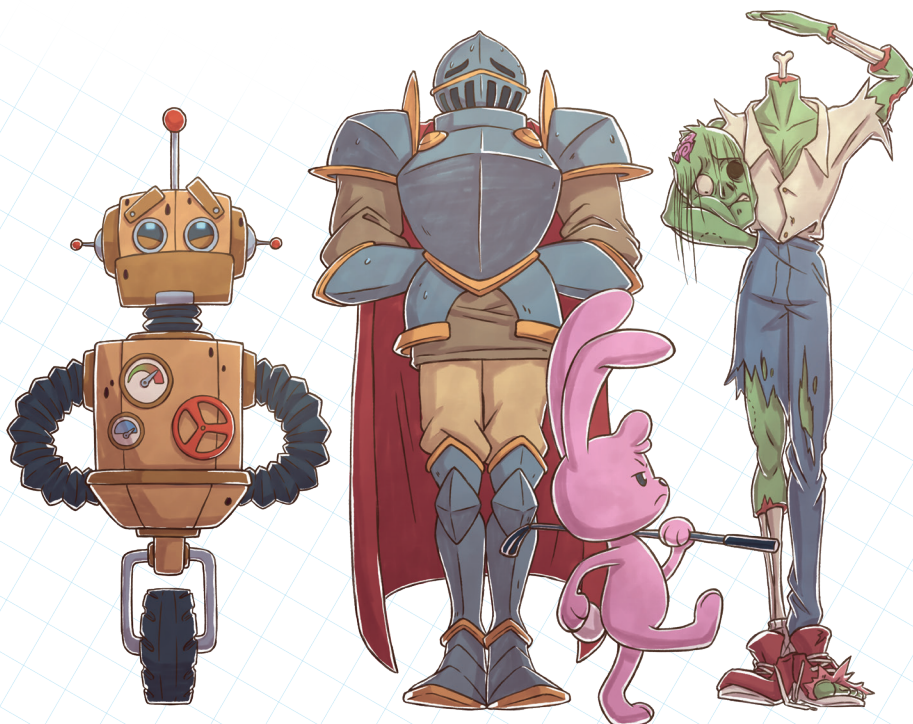
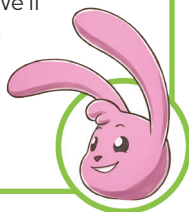
4: ADVERSARIES

Adversaries in SHIFT are anything that is presented as an obstacle to the PCs. An Adversary can be a single monster, a horde of creatures, or even the environment itself, like a terrible storm or the moving clockwork of a massive engine. Adversaries have the following features:

- ▶ Adversaries have a Power associated with them that represents how difficult they are to overcome, how many actions they can take in an Encounter, and how many Traits they have.
- ▶ Adversaries have their own Traits that describe their abilities and attributes and a selection of Special Traits that can be used to modify existing Adversary stat blocks.
- ▶ Alongside their Focus Traits, all Adversaries have a unique Core Trait called **Attitude** with Keywords that indicate their current drives and motivations.

- ▶ When making Action Rolls, Adversaries can combine any two of their own Traits (including their **Attitude** Trait), limited only by what makes sense narratively.
- ▶ Each Adversary has their own version of a character sheet, also known as its stat block.

Later on you'll learn about an optional stat that Adversaries can have called Scale. It adds another layer to Encounters, as attempting to overcome an Adversary of higher Scale than your own is much more difficult, and being a higher Scale than your opponents means they are a lot easier to defeat. We'll go into details in **Building Blocks: Scale**, for now if you need an Adversary's Scale and it isn't listed, assume its **Scale** is 1.



POWER

Power is a statistic unique to Adversaries that indicates their general challenge level and how difficult they are to defeat. The Power of an Adversary could indicate how big it is, how powerful it is, or it could even represent a group of the same kind of Adversary. Power ranges from 1 (average humanoids, simple animals, and so on) to 5 (large monsters, powerful magic-wielding NPCs, heavily armed Vehicles, and so on).

The Adversary's Power is used to determine how many Traits it has, the number of Action Rolls it can make during an Encounter, and the number of its Traits that need to be Exhausted for it to be overcome.

ADVERSARY TRAITS

Adversaries get a number of Traits equal to their Power plus 2, one of which is their only Core Trait, **Attitude**, and the rest of which are Focus Traits. An Adversary may also have Special Traits, a kind of Trait unique to Adversaries that adds special abilities and defenses to the Adversary's stat block.

FOCUS TRAITS

An Adversary's Focus Traits consist of a name, a Shift Die, and a description. Unlike a Character's Focus Traits, which allow for a broad range of possible ways to use them, an Adversary's Focus Traits are narrower in scope and are a lot more tailored to an Adversary's specific abilities. For example, a PC with dragon-like features might have a Focus Trait called **Draconic Lineage** with the keywords *flight* and *flame* to define what aspects of their lineage they have mastered using. A dragon Adversary, on the other hand, might define those draconic aspects as two separate Focus Traits: **Leathery Wings** and **Breath of Fire**.

The description of an Adversary's Focus Trait defines the way the Trait can be used in Action Rolls and the types of effects it can create. Some Traits provide the GM with the option to apply a Drawback to

a Character's Trait when the Adversary succeeds on an Action Roll. Adversary Focus Traits with this option will have details about this Drawback in their descriptions.

*While engaged in a battle with a fire-breathing wyrm, Barnaby, a knight errant, gets hit by the wyrm's **Flame Breath** Focus Trait. In addition to shifting down Barnaby's **Body** Trait die, the GM also applies the aflame Drawback to Barnaby's **Trusty Wagon** Focus Trait.*

Though an Adversary's Traits don't normally have Keywords (aside from their **Attitude** Core Trait), if the Adversary has a Trait that represents a piece of equipment that the Characters may want to recover, the GM can apply suitable Keywords and Drawbacks to it. Then, if a player takes the equipment from the Adversary, it's ready to be added to their character sheet as a Focus Trait.

ATTITUDE TRAIT

An Adversary's **Attitude** Trait consists of a description, a Shift Die, and a Keyword that reflects its current mood and motivation. For example, an angry mob might have an **Attitude** Trait with the *enraged* or *furious* Keyword and act irrationally. On the other hand, a monk's **Attitude** Trait might have the *patient* Keyword, approaching their actions with a preternatural calm.

Attitude Traits can be used in Action Rolls like any other Trait, and their Keywords follow all the same rules as Focus Traits, but they should also color all aspects of an Encounter with that Adversary. For example, a guard whose **Attitude** Trait has the *irritable* Keyword is *irritable* during any action, not just ones that include their **Attitude** Trait's die.

SPECIAL TRAITS

Special Traits provide ways to alter and strengthen existing Adversary stat blocks. Special Traits like **A Small Group of...** and

A Large Group of... turn a single Adversary into a group, making the Adversary stronger and harder to defeat.

Special Traits *don't* count toward the number of Traits an Adversary can have based on its Power. They *do*, however, affect the number of Action Rolls an Adversary can take during its Action Phase in an Encounter and the number of Traits that must be Exhausted for the Adversary to be overcome. Each Special Trait description includes how many additional Action Rolls the Adversary has during its Action Phase (if any) and how many additional Traits must be Exhausted to overcome it (see more in “**Overcoming Adversaries in**

Encounters” at the end of the next section, “**Interacting with Adversaries**”).

For example, if an Adversary with a Power stat of 2 has both the **Large Group of...** and Armored Special Traits (in addition to the other four Traits it has based on its Power), the Adversary can take *six* Action Rolls during the Adversary Action Phase of an Encounter (four for its Core and Focus Traits and two for its **Large Group of...** Trait). It must also have *five* of its six Traits Exhausted in order to be overcome (two for its Power, one for its **Armored** Trait, and two for its **Large Group of...** Trait).

The following Special Traits can be applied to any appropriate Adversary:

ARMORED

Basic protection that allows for a few extra hits. Characters must Exhaust one more of this Adversary's Traits (in addition to the number indicated by its Power) before overcoming this Adversary.



HEAVILY ARMORED

Advanced protection that provides a strong defense. Characters must Exhaust two more of this Adversary's Traits (in addition to the number indicated by its Power) before overcoming this Adversary. Additionally, the **Heavily Armored** Trait must be Exhausted before any of this Adversary's other Traits' dice can be shifted down.



A SMALL GROUP OF...

A small gathering that slightly increases fortitude. This Adversary represents a small group of creatures and can make one additional Action Roll on each of its turns. Characters must also Exhaust one more of this Adversary's Traits (in addition to the number indicated by its Power) before overcoming this Adversary.



A LARGE GROUP OF...

A large gathering that greatly increases fortitude. This Adversary represents a large group of creatures and can make two additional Action Rolls on each of its turns. Characters must also Exhaust two more of this Adversary's Traits (in addition to the number indicated by its Power) before overcoming this Adversary.



INTERACTING WITH ADVERSARIES

Every Adversary is an obstacle, something for the Characters to overcome, whether that be via combat, conversation, or otherwise.

Players have two main ways of overcoming Adversaries based on how they choose to approach them:

- ▶ Influencing the Adversary's motivations and goals outside of an Encounter by Exhausting their **Attitude** Trait and changing its Keywords
- ▶ Overcoming the Adversary physically during an Encounter by Exhausting the required number of the Adversary's Traits

CHANGING AN ADVERSARY'S ATTITUDE

Like anyone's emotional state, an Adversary's **Attitude** Trait is fluid. Often, events in the narrative may cause the Keywords of an Adversary's **Attitude** Trait to change. For example, a *patient* monk may learn their

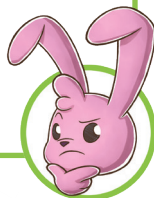
order has betrayed them and turn *vengeful*, or a *modest* city watch captain may become *arrogant* after being awarded a medal for saving someone's life.

Both Characters and other Adversaries can influence **Attitude** Traits as they would any Trait by shifting the **Attitude** Trait's die down by interacting with the Adversary and the world in which your game takes place. If the **Attitude** Trait becomes Exhausted, its Keywords must change. Any time this happens, the **Attitude** Trait's Shift Die resets to a D4.

Sometimes the narrative and current events of the story may make it difficult, or even impossible, to change an Adversary's **Attitude** Trait's Keywords. If the party has just killed a lord's son in cold blood, it would be unreasonable for the players to be able to change how the lord feels in this moment; no number of successful Action Rolls will change the lord's **Attitude** Trait's *enraged* Keyword. Any time an Adversary's **Attitude** Trait can't be changed, the GM should inform the players.

The **Attitude** of an Adversary is meant to be a narrative tool first. It helps the GM define in simple terms what the Adversary wants and what drives its decisions. When playing, look for opportunities to change an Adversary's **Attitude** without having to make Action Rolls, and if you're the GM, give your players opportunities to roleplay their way through overcoming a threat. For example, if the Characters are trying to convince a *stubborn* queen to help them, there may be very little to sway her simply by talking to her. But if the party can bring her concrete evidence of a threat to her kingdom, the queen's **Attitude** might change in a way that benefits the party.

Keep in mind that the opposite is also true—the narrative decisions you make may change an Adversary's **Attitude** for the worse, making a *stubborn* queen turn *enraged* in a heartbeat.



CHANGING AN ADVERSARY'S ATTITUDE

GM: You've reached the command center of Outpost 9 and its distrustful overseer, Commander Kasbaan. The room is illuminated by flickering holo-screens, each displaying hundreds of moving blue and red indicators. You're here to gain access to Kasbaan's vast resources; however, his Attitude Trait is suspicious. You'll either need to change his **Attitude** by negotiating or prepare for a fight.

RIPLEY: I'll attempt to shift down his suspicion by rolling my **Soul** (D6) Core Trait. I'll step forward.

"Commander, Outpost 9's reputation precedes it, and your dedication to security is known throughout the sector. We're here to support that, not compromise it. We've identified threats to the outpost, and we're equipped to help."

GM: Roll your **Soul** Die, Ripley.

RIPLEY: Here goes nothing... I got a 3!

GM: Success! Kasbaan's suspicious **Attitude** shifts from D10 to D12. You notice his expression soften, though he remains wary.

NANCY: I'll support Ripley by rolling my **Soul** (D8) Core Trait and **Intel Trace** (D6) Focus Trait, sharing our findings.

"Commander, as Ripley mentioned, we've intercepted intel suggesting Outposts 3 and 5 are planning a siege on Outpost 9 any day now. If we work together, we could strengthen your defenses."

GM: Give it a roll, Nancy! A Success here will Exhaust Kasbaan's **Attitude** Trait and change its Keyword from suspicious to intrigued.

NANCY: Hey, nice—I got a 2 with **Soul** and 5 with Intel Trace.

GM: The Success with your **Soul** die is enough! His suspicious **Attitude** changes to intrigued and resets to D4. He uncrosses his arms, appearing less rigid.

"Curious...this intel has been known to me for weeks; however, you've come here and confirmed my suspicions. You have my attention," he says, glancing at one of the many displays.

With Kasbaan's **Attitude** changed to intrigued, you now have an opening to negotiate. He remains guarded, but he's listening.

OVERCOMING ADVERSARIES IN ENCOUNTERS

Sometimes, words aren't enough, and overcoming an Adversary may require a more hands-on solution.

When attempting to overcome an Adversary during an Encounter, Characters must Exhaust a number of the Adversary's Traits equal to that Adversary's Power (as well as any additional Traits indicated by their Special Traits, if they have any; see "**Special Traits**" in the previous section for more details.

What happens when an Adversary is overcome is up to the players' intentions, the GM's discretion, and the story so far. If

the players have been attacking the Adversary, perhaps it simply dies. If the players have been focusing on capturing the Adversary, overcoming it might mean that it is weakened enough to be restrained or trapped in a net.

Exhausting an Adversary's **Attitude** Trait during an Encounter counts toward the number of Exhausted Traits required to overcome it and can represent demoralizing or intimidating the Adversary. Exhausting an **Attitude** Trait in this manner does not necessarily change the Trait's Keywords (but it can, at the GMs discretion), and the **Attitude** Trait only resets to a D4 if the Encounter ends with the Adversary still alive.

OVERCOMING AN ADVERSARY

GM: The Encounter with the rogue auto-mech, EN-V, nears its end. EN-V stands bent and broken in the med-bay, their sensors glowing red as they scan the party. With a Power of 4, EN-V has six Traits, two of which are already Exhausted. The Encounter will end if another two Traits are Exhausted. What are your next moves? We're in the First Action Phase.

ELLIE: I'll target EN-V's **Servo-Strength** by sabotaging the power to its movement servos. I'll roll **Body** (D6) with my **Scavenger's Instinct** (D8) Focus Trait.

GM: Go ahead, Ellie.

ELLIE: I got a 2 for **Body** and a 3 for **Scavenger's Instinct**—two Successes!

GM: You spot the servo cable on EN-V's thigh and sever it, shifting its **Servo-Strength** Trait down. As a result, EN-V's movements become increasingly jerky and sluggish.

JASON: Moving to close range, I'll roll **Body** (D6) and my **Cyber-Saber** (D8) to Exhaust EN-V's damaged **Stun Pulse Generator** (D12).

GM: Roll it, Jason.

JASON: Rolling... 5 for **Body**, which fails, and a 3 for my **Cyber-Saber**, which succeeds!

GM: Sparks fly as EN-V's **Stun Pulse Generator** is sliced from their arm and falls to the ground. The Trait is Exhausted.

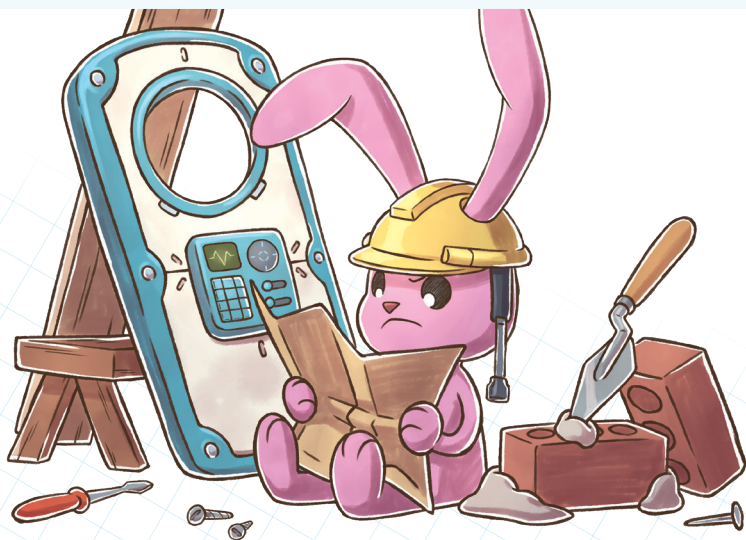
WILLOW: I'll aim to Exhaust EN-V's hostile **Attitude** (D12). From the med-bay console, I'll roll **Mind** (D8) and my **Logic Override** (D4) Trait to hack EN-V's core programming to finish it off.

GM: Roll **Mind** with **Logic Override**, Willow.

WILLOW: Sweet, a 3 for **Mind** and a 1 for **Logic Override**—Critical Success!

GM: EN-V's Attitude shifts from hostile to protective, and as EN-V's fourth Trait is Exhausted, they briefly power down before their sensors fade from red to blue, awaiting your commands. The Encounter is over. You get a Critical Success Bonus too!. How do you want to use it?

ELLIE: I'm going to shift my **Mind** from D8 back up to D6; I've been working it overtime!



CREATING ADVERSARIES

Creating an Adversary involves the following steps:

Step 1: Create an adversary concept

Step 2: Determine the Adversary's Power

Step 3: Define the Adversary's **Attitude** Core Trait

Step 4: Define the the Adversary's Focus Traits

Step 5: Add Special Traits (optional)

STEP 1: CREATE AN ADVERSARY CONCEPT

Before making any mechanical choices, it's important to define the central concept of the Adversary. Consider the following questions:

- ▶ How does it interact with the world?
- ▶ What are its intentions and motivations?
- ▶ Does it wish the party harm, or is it merely trying to slow the party down?
- ▶ How strong are its convictions?

Finally, you should consider why the Adversary exists and its goals in the story.

Lucas is designing a new Adversary for his dark fairy tale setting. He wants something that will stalk the Characters through the woods at night and be as threatening in the shadows as it is in the open. Lucas decides to lean into the classic fairy-tale vibe and creates a large, slaving dire wolf.

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE ADVERSARY'S POWER

The stronger and more active an Adversary is, the higher its Power. When choosing an Adversary's Power, consider the following:

- ▶ How active will this Adversary be in an Encounter?
- ▶ How difficult will it be to overcome this Adversary?

- ▶ How does this Adversary's difficulty compare to other obstacles in the story?

Another factor to consider is whether this Adversary will be the only creature in an Encounter or if it will be paired with other Adversaries. To create an appropriate challenge for the party, the total Power of all Adversaries involved in an Encounter should be equal to the number of Characters in the Encounter.

Lucas wants his dire wolf Adversary to have an imposing form. He wants it to feel dangerous enough that if a single Character got cornered by it, the dire wolf would feel genuinely threatening. Lucas decides to give the dire wolf a Power of 2 and visualizes it to be the size of a horse. He has four players in his group, so he'll have to add another Adversary to the dire wolf Encounter if he wants to up the challenge.

STEP 3: DEFINE THE ADVERSARY'S ATTITUDE CORE TRAIT

An Adversary's **Attitude** Trait drives all of its actions, whether the **Attitude** Trait's Shift Die comes into play or not. Consider the Adversary's motivations, needs, and role in an Encounter, and then choose Keywords for the **Attitude** Trait that will push the Adversary toward those goals.

Because an Adversary's Attitude is its main driving force, the **Attitude** Trait's Max Die is a D4.

The dire wolf Lucas creates needs to embody the starving hunter archetype, desperate to find its next meal. So he keeps things simple and makes the dire wolf's Attitude Trait (D4) hungry.

STEP 4: DEFINE THE ADVERSARY'S FOCUS TRAITS

The total number of Traits recommended for any given Adversary is based on their Power. An Adversary has a number of Traits equal to their Power plus two:

POWER	# OF TRAITS
1	3
2	4
3	5
4	6
5	7

The Adversary's **Attitude** Trait counts toward this total, and the GM selects the remaining Traits. An Adversary's Traits should describe their most important abilities, their talents, and the actions they are most likely to use in an Encounter. These Traits should also be central to the Adversary's existence. When one of them becomes Exhausted, it should be a significant blow to the Adversary.

Once an Adversary's Focus Traits have been defined, the GM chooses a number of Traits equal to the Adversary's Power and assigns a D6 Shift Die as their maximum. The remaining Traits are assigned a D8 Shift Die.

Traits given to the Adversary beyond the suggested amount for their Power are assigned a D8 Shift Die as their maximum.

Lucas doesn't want to stray too far from the concept of the "big bad wolf," so he keeps the dire wolf's Traits simple. He gives them flavorful names that evoke a storybook feel: **Feet that Chase**, **Teeth that Tear**, and **Growl that Frightens**. These three Traits are quintessential to what Lucas is looking for in a monstrous wolf, and Exhausting any of them would dramatically hinder the creature. Noting

the dire wolf's Power of 2, he assigns a D6 Shift Die to both **Feet that Chase** and **Teeth that Tear**. He then assigns a D8 Shift Die to the last Trait, **Growl that Frightens**. Paired with the wolf's **Attitude** Trait, it now has four Traits, the recommended number for an Adversary with 2 Power.

STEP 5: ADD SPECIAL TRAITS (OPTIONAL)

Depending on the needs of the Encounter, one or more Special Traits may be applicable. Special Traits have their own Shift Dice assigned to them and may have special rules that increase the Adversary's difficulty or provide additional special conditions for overcoming it. Remember, Special Traits don't count toward the number of Traits an Adversary can have based on its Power.

Lucas looks at the Special Traits and considers giving the dire wolf the **Armored** Trait to represent its thick, matted fur, but he decides against it. He doesn't want to make the wolf too strong. Lucas sees it as a solitary hunter, not a pack, so he adds neither the **A Small Group Of...** Trait or the **A Large Group Of...** Trait. Later on in the campaign, Lucas decides he wants to pit the party against a pack of dire wolves. He adds the **A Small Group Of...** Special Trait to the direwolf stat block, and now it can make three Action Rolls each round (instead of its normal two), and it also requires an additional Trait to be Exhausted before it is overcome.



THE BIG BAD WOLF

POWER 2 | SCALE 1

ATTITUDE

HUNGRY

The Big Bad Wolf's main goal is simple: find its next meal. Dinner is the only thing on its mind.

4

TRAIT

FEET THAT CHASE

The Big Bad Wolf relies on its amazing speed to chase down its prey and ambush its target.

6

TRAIT

TEETH THAT TEAR

When the Big Bad Wolf smiles, the rows of teeth in its mouth seem to go on forever.

6

TRAIT

GROWL THAT FRIGHTENS

The growl of the Big Bad Wolf sends shivers down the spines of children and bold hunters alike.

8

OTHER KINDS OF ADVERSARIES

Adversaries don't need to only be monsters and living creatures; they can also be physical obstacles, puzzles to solve, and even weather conditions.

Let's say you want to create a large, complicated vault door for a cunning group of rogues to break into. This should be a significant challenge, so we'll say its Power is 3. The party is going to have to work hard to break through this vault door.

For Traits, let's give it an **ironclad Attitude** to start. This vault door doesn't have a mind of its own necessarily, but it does have a job to stick to: keeping people out. With Adversaries like this vault door, the **Attitude** Trait acts more like a Focus Trait, simply representing its strongest aspect.

For its four remaining Traits, we'll focus more on the mechanical aspects that need to be overcome by the party, with Focus Traits like **Complex Machinery**, **Electronic Keypad**, and **Steel Plating**, each with a D6 Shift Die. The final Trait will be **Sound The Alarm!** with a D8 Shift Die.

We'll give the **Sound the Alarm!** Trait a special ability to help ramp up the action: each turn while the **Sound The Alarm!** Trait is active, the vault Adversary makes one of its three Action Rolls using **Sound The Alarm!** and **Attitude**. If the Action Roll is a Success three times over the course of the Encounter, the alarms go off and guards arrive on the following round to join the fray.

When Adversaries like this bank vault make Action Rolls, they represent less "active" actions taken against the Characters and more the resistance that the Adversary throws in their way. For example, the bank vault might roll **Steel Plating** and **Complex Machinery** targeting a Character's **Thieves Tools** Trait, representing the strain on their equipment.

BUILDING BLOCKS: SCALE

If the setting you are playing in involves Adversaries of vastly different sizes, or if you just want to add some additional depth to your Encounters, you may want to consider adding the optional Scale stat to your Adversaries. Where Power suggests how much of a threat an Adversary is and how difficult it is to overcome, Scale represents an Adversary's overall strength and size. and ranges from 1 to 4.

By default, all Characters and similar-sized NPCs and creatures have a Scale stat of 1 (think humanoids, normal animals, small Vehicles, and so on). If you think a human with human-sized equipment could reasonably deal with an Adversary, it's probably Scale 1.

Adversaries of Scale 2 are a lot harder for lowly human-sized creatures to overcome. The difference between Scale 1 and Scale 2, for example, might be the difference between a small car and a fully-armed tank. Scale 2 could also include large creatures like dragons, dinosaurs, and other mega-fauna. A Character with a Scale level of only 1 will have to get really lucky to do any kind of damage to a Scale 2 Adversary.

Scale 3 gets into Adversaries that are the size of buildings, including battleships, kaiju, and other massive obstacles.

Finally, Scale 4 is on the level of city-sized Adversaries and bigger. Enormous galactic battlecruisers, unknowable cosmic entities, and anything so big it blots out the sun fall under Scale 4.

BIG BANK VAULT

POWER 3 | SCALE 1

ATTITUDE

IRONCLAD

This vault is built for one purpose: keeping thieves out.

TRAIT

COMPLEX MACHINERY

Heavy gears, coiled springs, and massive tumblers stand between you and the cash inside.

TRAIT

ELECTRONIC KEYPAD

The machinery is only half the puzzle; you have to get through the electronic stuff too.

TRAIT

STEEL PLATING

Hope you brought a laser!

TRAIT

SOUND THE ALARM!

Don't cut the wrong wire!

Each turn while this Trait is active, the Adversary makes one of its three Action Rolls using **Sound The Alarm!** and **Attitude**. If the Action Roll is a Success three times over the course of the Encounter, the alarms go off and guards arrive on the following round to join the fray.



ACTION ROLLS BETWEEN DIFFERENT SCALE LEVELS

If two things that are the same Scale interact with each other, Action Rolls are resolved normally as described in "**Chapter 2: Action Rolls: Getting Things Done!**" When two things of different Scales interact, different rules apply.

If the character or Adversary making an Action Roll has a Scale level one less than its target, the Action Roll will only shift down their opponent's Trait die if the Action Roll results in a Critical Success. In this case, regular Successes count as regular Failures instead.

*Jonas (Scale 1) aims his spear at a large blue whale (Scale 2) diving through the waves. Jonas knows this is unlikely to work, but if he can injure the whale even a little, he'll be able to track it. He makes his Action Roll, and it's a 2 with his **Body** (D6) Trait and a 4 with his **Fisherman** (D8) Trait. Against another Scale 1 Adversary this would be a Success, but unfortunately the blue whale is too large, and the spear bounces harmlessly off its side.*

If the character or Adversary making the Action Roll has a Scale level one higher than its target, a Critical Success on their Action Roll completely Exhausts a Trait instead of just shifting it down a second time. Critical Successes in this case are very dangerous, and Characters will have to be smart to stay out of danger.

*A lumbering brachiosaurus (Scale 3) swings its heavy tail at the side of a jeep (Scale 2) racing alongside it. The brachiosaurus lands a Critical Success on its Action Roll, completely Exhausting the jeep's **Reinforced Paneling** Trait rather than just shifting it down twice. The jeep's Power is 2, and its **All-Terrain Wheels** Trait is already Exhausted, so the second Exhausted Trait takes it completely out of commission as it crashes dramatically.*

An Action Roll against an Adversary with a Scale level two levels higher than yours or higher has absolutely no effect, and any result of the Action Roll is treated as a normal Failure. No matter your aim, your pistol is not going to have any effect on a battleship.

OVERCOMING LARGER-SCALE ADVERSARIES

Scale can be applied to just one aspect of an Adversary as opposed to the Adversary as a whole. A chaotic wizard Adversary wielding dangerously out-of-control wild magic could have their **Wild Magic** Trait treated as Scale 2, representing how much more deadly it might be than a player might think. During an Action Roll, if one of the Traits involved has a higher Scale level, the whole Action Roll is considered that Scale for the purpose of that roll.

In this case, what can your Character do to affect an Adversary with a higher Scale level than yours? The best option is to get on their level—find a Vehicle or other piece of equipment that is the same Scale as your Adversary and fight them on even footing. If you are using the Traits of a Vehicle, your Action Rolls with that Trait are considered the same Scale as the Vehicle, even if its Scale level is different from yours.

If you'd like Characters to have more access to greater Scale levels directly, you can use one of the following optional rules. The first is to add the following Technique to your game, giving players a way to boost their Scale 1 Traits to Scale 2 temporarily a few times per session.

SCALED UP

You have learned how to increase the potency of your skills so you can affect things normally out of your reach. When you gain this Technique, choose one of your Focus Traits. After making an Action Roll with that Focus Trait, you can shift down one of your Core Traits to treat the Focus Trait as though its Scale level is 2. You can gain this Technique more than once, choosing a different Focus Trait each time. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

Another way to offer your players more direct access to greater Scale levels is to implement a new rule whereby they can spend XP to affect their Action Rolls. When using this optional rule, a player can spend 2 banked XP after making an Action Roll to treat the outcome as though the source of the roll was one Scale level higher. You can see this as a Character pulling from their previous experiences to give themselves a boost. This effect can stack: spending 4 banked XP increases the Scale level by two, and so on. The only limit to using this effect is how much XP you have banked.

5: TRAVEL

The adventure and danger of a long journey is often the cornerstone of a campaign. For some groups, traveling from one place to another can be an exciting adventure all on its own, and tracking resources during a long voyage can provide a challenge and an additional source of drama for players. On the other hand, some settings favor a more cinematic approach to travel, and Characters arrive where the next part of their story takes them without worrying about the journey itself.

BUILDING BLOCKS: TRAVEL

SHIFT offers three travel building blocks to better tailor the game to different styles of play: Standard, Simple, and Challenging.

STANDARD TRAVEL

The Standard Travel building block makes traveling something players need to plan for but does not have any surprise losses of resources along the way. The main factors of Standard Travel in SHIFT are the resources being used during the journey and the number of Legs the journey has.

LEGS

Every journey is made up of a number of Legs, each one representing a distance long enough to require some resources to be spent to keep the travelers rested and fed. Most journeys are one to five Legs long; any journey longer than that requires stopping somewhere for a resupply along the way.

In between Legs of the journey, the GM is encouraged to provide the players with opportunities for side adventures and chances to replenish resources. These should include some risk and difficult decisions for the Characters to make but with rewards enough to tempt them into veering off their path. Example mid-Leg Encounters could include:

- ▶ On a long interstellar journey, the Characters come across a lucrative piece of salvage. Do they stop to dismantle it despite the risk of injury and the potential of dangerous life forms on board?
- ▶ While staying at a cliffside pub on a journey through a dangerous mountain range, the party learns about an opportunity for work. Do they spend the time making some extra money on the side or do they press on?
- ▶ Road-tripping through the apocalypse, the Characters spot a gas station whose lights are still on. Could there still be gas in the pumps? Do they pull over and risk an ambush, or just power through and hope to make it with the fuel they have?

RESOURCES

Food, camping supplies, fuel—a long journey requires various resources to keep the travelers safe and healthy. For every Leg of a journey, a resource of some kind must be spent by shifting down a Trait. Which Trait depends on how the Characters are traveling.

On Foot. If the Characters are traveling by foot, they have to rely on what they can carry with them. For every Leg of a trip, each Character on the journey has to shift their **Pack** Trait die down by one.

In a Vehicle. Compared to a Character's pack, Vehicles can carry a lot more supplies, represented by their **Cargo** Trait. For each Leg of a trip while in a Vehicle, the Vehicle's **Cargo** Trait is shifted down by one. This shift provides supplies for all Characters and crew on board, and Characters don't have to shift their **Pack** Trait down unless the Vehicle's **Cargo** Trait die has been Exhausted, at which point each Character has to shift down their **Pack** Trait die for each remaining Leg of the journey.

If a **Pack** or **Cargo** Trait can't be shifted down during a Leg of a journey (because

those Traits are Exhausted, for example), then a Core Trait belonging to each affected Character must be shifted down instead. This Core Trait is chosen by the player whose Character has been affected.

SIMPLE TRAVEL

The Simple Travel building block strips journeys down to a purely cinematic style of play. The length of the journey and resources needed are handled narratively, and the GM simply narrates what happens on the trip. The journey can be interrupted by Encounters, but only if the Encounter furthers the story—otherwise Characters should just arrive at their next destination quickly.

This building block is ideal for stories that focus more on action and less on the management of resources. Adventures that use Simple Travel jump from key Location to key Location, keeping the players in the immediate action, and abstracting hours or even days of travel.

CHALLENGING TRAVEL

The Challenging Travel building block adds an extra level of risk to long journeys. After spending a resource following a Leg of a journey, one Character also has to make an Action Roll representing the additional

difficulties of navigating, piloting a Vehicle, and dealing with any surprises along the way. The player can choose which Traits to use for the Action Roll, but the Traits should reflect some aspect of the journey at hand. If that Action Roll results in a Failure of any kind, Characters must spend an additional resource for this Leg of the trip, which means an additional shifting down of their **Pack** Trait dice if traveling on foot or an additional shifting down of their Vehicle's **Cargo** Trait die if traveling in a Vehicle.

This building block is best suited for games where travel is meant to be difficult and a major focus of the setting. Players will likely want to get their hands on a Vehicle early, if not start with one, to better survive the long journeys.

GMs should also give ample (Risky) opportunities for Characters to find extra resources between Legs, as the additional chance to lose resources with each Leg could have them coming up short on their travels.



6: VEHICLES

A rumbling, armored bus making its way through the zombie apocalypse. A sailing ship taking to the waves. A star freighter hauling cargo across a vast expanse of space. In SHIFT, a Vehicle is anything that can carry you across long distances relatively safely. It can be for a single person, like a motorcycle, or have a crew of hundreds. Regardless of their size, Vehicles are represented in a similar way as Characters, with their own character sheet and a unique set of Core and Focus Traits.

VEHICLE CONCEPT

Like with Characters, a new Vehicle starts with a concept. Can it only hold one person, or does it carry large groups of people? Does it have weapons and defenses? The two fundamental aspects to consider are the Vehicle's size and crew capacity.

SIZE

A Vehicle's size doesn't have any specific mechanical effect, but it can provide guidance on what the Vehicle is capable of. For example a small Vehicle meant for just one person might not have the ability to go head-to-head with a large Vehicle with an array of gunners and engineers.

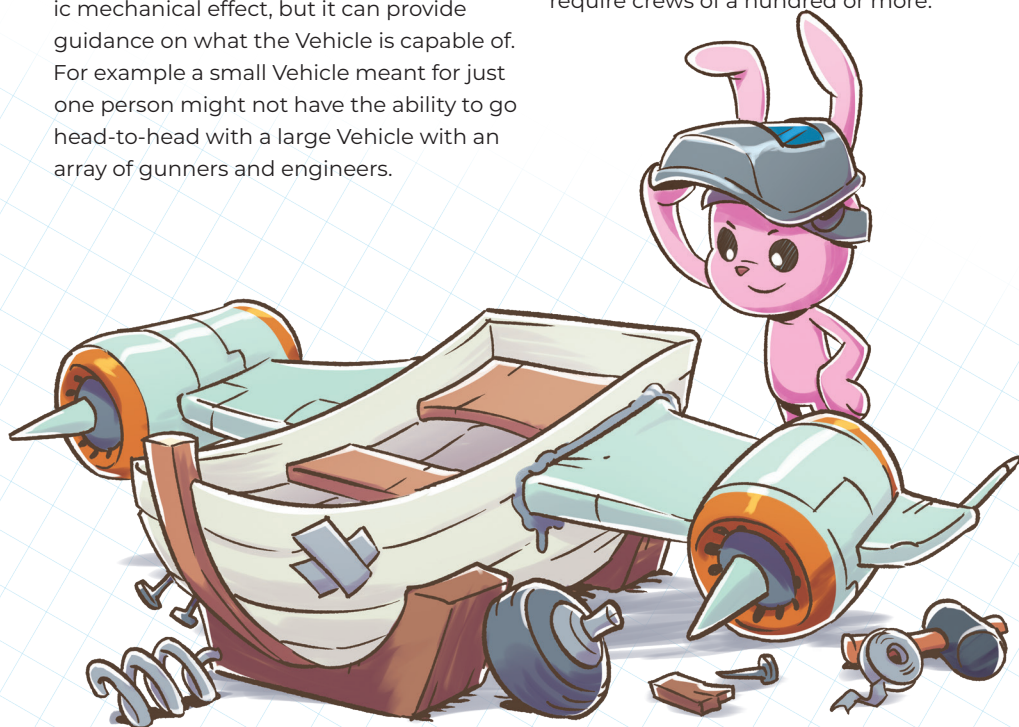
Vehicles generally fall into the following size categories:

Personal. Bikes, escape pods, and single-seater airplanes. Not a lot of room for cargo or passengers, but they usually make up for that in speed and maneuverability.

Small. Compact cars, horse-drawn wagons, and similar. They can transport four or five people comfortably along with a modest amount of cargo.

Large. Big passenger airplanes, long-distance star freighters. Large Vehicles can carry dozens of people and a hefty amount of cargo. These Vehicles tend to need a small crew to keep them operational. This category might also include 18-wheelers and trains.

Immense. Massive cruise ships, intergalactic world vessels. These enormous Vehicles carry hundreds or even thousands of people and enough cargo to keep them going for years or more. Immense Vehicles require crews of a hundred or more.



Justin Chan

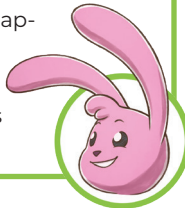
CREW CAPACITY

Crew capacity refers to the number of people required to operate a vessel. Personal and small Vehicles generally have a crew capacity of one: the pilot or driver. Large and immense Vehicles have much larger crew capacity needs, anywhere from ten to over a hundred crew for the biggest vessels.

Crew capacity is separate from a Vehicle's passenger capacity, which varies depending on the size of the Vehicle and what it's equipped to do.

Vehicles with larger crew capacities that are under the command of the players will normally have an NPC crew, leaving the players to use their Core and Focus Traits to issue orders to the crew, as opposed to crewing the vessel themselves.

Vehicles make excellent story hooks for SHIFT adventures, so consider having players start with a Vehicle of some kind. Nothing will keep them motivated like having a cool base of operations to keep safe. Maybe they're on a road trip in a minivan across a zombie-fied countryside, or they're the crew of a cramped starfreighter scraping together a living in the wilderness of space. Either way, their Vehicle is their ride to adventure!



VEHICLE CORE TRAITS

Similar to Characters, Vehicles have Core Traits that define them: **Structure**, **Maneuverability**, and sometimes **Crew** (if the Vehicle has an NPC crew). The Shift Dice assigned to these Traits can be as high as a D6 or as low as a D12.

STRUCTURE

A Vehicle's **Structure** Trait represents how sturdy it is. When a Vehicle takes physical

damage, it will often be its **Structure** Trait that shifts down, manifesting narratively as its key mechanical systems breaking down and making the Vehicle less stable. Exhausting a Vehicle's **Structure** Trait generally means it's destroyed, though a GM can give it a Drawback that needs to be repaired instead.

Action Rolls made with the **Structure** Trait might involve activities that require players to strain the physical limits of the Vehicle, such as surpassing its top speed or surviving slamming into a wall.

MANEUVERABILITY

A Vehicle's **Maneuverability** Trait represents how easy it is to control while moving as well as how fast it goes. The **Maneuverability** Trait shifting down could be from taking damage to its wheels or mobility systems, or from having problems with its navigation equipment. Exhausting a Vehicle's **Maneuverability** means a complete loss of control of the Vehicle, and activities that involve precision movements become nearly impossible.

Action Rolls made with the **Maneuverability** Trait might involve navigating through difficult terrain, chasing down another Vehicle, or dodging incoming attacks.

CREW

Only Vehicles large enough to have an independent NPC crew have a **Crew** Trait. It represents both the size of the crew and its effectiveness under stress. Effects that might shift down the **Crew** Trait are attacks from boarding parties and decisions that test morale. Exhausting the **Crew** Trait means that only the most basic functions of the Vehicle are available, with the players operating as a skeleton crew.

Action Rolls made with the **Crew** Trait might include attempting repairs, boarding another ship, or performing long-term research tasks.

VEHICLE FOCUS TRAITS

Also similar to Characters, Vehicles have Focus Traits. Most of these are unique to the Vehicle. But just like a Character's **Pack** Trait, if a Vehicle is large enough to have cargo space, it has the **Cargo** Focus Trait.

CARGO TRAIT

A Vehicle's **Cargo** Trait works similarly to a player's **Pack** Trait. It represents equipment that is stored on the Vehicle, including larger objects that don't fit in a standard **Pack** Trait. On a sailing ship, for example, the **Cargo** Trait could be used to represent a row boat or a harpoon gun. In an apocalyptic road trip setting, the **Cargo** Trait could include a variety of zombie-hunting equipment in the trunk of a car.

Additionally, a Vehicle's **Cargo** Trait can be used to create Temporary Focus Traits, just like with the **Pack** Trait. Again, Traits made this way can represent equipment bigger than what a Character could carry on them, limited only by the size of the Vehicle.

RESTING AND THE CARGO TRAIT

Like the **Pack** Trait being used to perform Unsafe Rests, the **Cargo** Trait can also be shifted down to rest while traveling with a Vehicle. Maybe the Characters grab camping supplies from the back of their truck or prepare a large feast in their starship's galley. When the players agree to shift down their Vehicle's **Cargo** Trait to rest, their Vehicle is treated like a Safe place, and they restore all their dice to their maximums, following the same rules of a Safe Rest.

UNIQUE FOCUS TRAITS

Hood-mounted machine guns, high-tech medbays, tank treads, and lifeboats: all of these are represented by unique Vehicle Focus Traits. Vehicle Focus Traits are structured exactly the same as the Focus Traits that players use to build their Characters. They consist of a name, a Max Die, and one or more Keywords. Here are some example Vehicle Focus Traits, including potential Drawbacks they might suffer:

EXAMPLE UNIQUE FOCUS TRAITS

GRAPPLING GUN

A short-range weapon used to tether one Vehicle to another.

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: capture, pull, tear

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: cut, jammed

ION SHIELDING

A defensive barrier of ionic energy that protects your Vehicle from incoming energy weapons.

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: absorb, deflect, overcharge

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: drained, short-circuited

MECHANICAL SPIDER LEGS

Eight spindly mechanical legs with surprising maneuverability.

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: climb, dash, skewer

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: snapped, tangled

MAKING ACTION ROLLS WITH VEHICLES

There are two ways players can use a Vehicle's Traits to make Action Rolls: they can combine one of the Vehicle's Traits with one of their own Traits, or they can roll only the Vehicle's Traits, combining one of its Core Traits with one of its Focus Traits.

When a player wants to use one of their Character's Traits with a Vehicle's Trait, they treat this Action Roll as though they were working with another player. They can choose any of their Character's Traits and combine it with any of the Vehicle's Traits, in any combination. A Character might use their **Soul** Core Trait with a Vehicle's **Crew** Core Trait to inspire them to take action

in a dangerous situation. Alternatively, a Character may want to take things into their own hands, combining their **Ace Pilot** Focus Trait with their Vehicle's **Advanced Flight Computer** Focus Trait to steer it through some deadly obstacles.

When having a Vehicle act on its own, it follows the same rules as a Character, choosing a Core Trait and a Focus Trait to make the Action Roll. Any Character currently onboard the Vehicle can use it to make Action Rolls. A player might combine the Vehicle's **Structure** Core Trait and its **Reinforced Frame** Focus Trait to ram it into an opposing vessel, or use the **Crew** Core Trait and **Battlestations!** Focus Trait to have the crew attack with the Vehicle's weapon batteries.

MAKING ACTION ROLLS WITH VEHICLES

GM: *From orbit, the surface of planet Charsaw-6 appears desolate, but early readings suggest there are mineral deposits beneath the planet's surface. The ship's computer informs you: "Warning: Geographic instability detected. Proceed with caution." You'll need to scan the surface to determine the best mining zones and identify any dangerous fault lines.*

NANCY: *We should roll the starliner's **Maneuverability** (D10) Core Trait with our new **Orbital Mining Laser** (D8) Focus Trait to get in close and see if the minerals here are worth the risk.*

GM: *Go ahead and roll, Nancy.*

NANCY: *Rolling... **Maneuverability** rolled a 3, and **Orbital Mining Laser** rolled a 1; both Successes!*

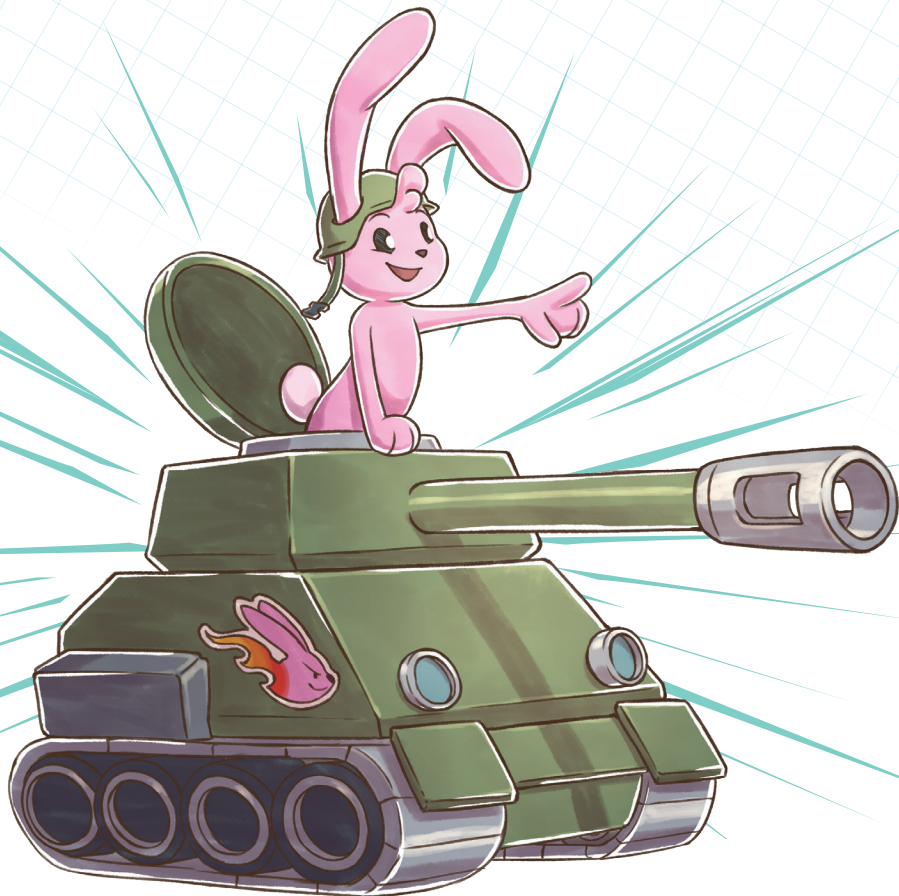
GM: *The scans reveal deposits of rare minerals, galatinum and magnalite, far below the surface. However, the scans also show a network of fault lines and volcanic vents. Extraction could trigger severe seismic activity. What is the plan?*

JASON: *I'll operate the extraction controls and combine my **Mind** (D8) Core Trait with the ship's **Orbital Mining Laser** (D8) Focus Trait to target the nearest galatinum deposit without disturbing any fault lines.*

GM: *Roll **Mind** with the **Orbital Mining Laser**, Jason.*

JASON: *Rolling... I rolled an 8 with **Mind**, so that shifts down, but I rolled 2 with the **Orbital Mining Laser**, a Success overall.*

GM: *You maneuver the drill with steady control, positioning it precisely over the deposit; however, the equipment locks into place just as there's a seismic shift on the planet below. As the **Orbital Mining Laser** hammers into the sub-surface galatinum deposit, it also hits a nearby fault line, triggering widespread seismic interference. Until the seismic event passes, you'll be blocked from locating additional deposits. Jason, your confidence takes a hit, but the good news is that the starliner's cargo bay now contains a sizable amount of galatinum.*



REPAIRING VEHICLES

A Vehicle's Trait dice are restored in the same way Characters' are, during Unsafe and Safe Rests.

During an Unsafe Rest, players can collectively agree to shift down the Vehicle's **Cargo** Trait to restore one of its other Traits to its Max Die. This represents digging into reserves to refuel, reload, and repair.

During a Safe Rest in a place where the Vehicle can properly dock, land, or park, all its Traits' Shift Dice are restored to their maximum values. The exception to this is the **Cargo** Trait, which can only be restored as high as the current Shift Die of the Location's **Wealth** Trait. A poor Location is often ill-equipped to feed its own people, let alone resupply a Vehicle for long journeys.

It's important to note, if the **Cargo** Trait is being used to provide a Safe Rest for

Characters in an otherwise Unsafe environment, it does not count as a Safe Rest for the Vehicle as well, and it does not restore any of its own Traits. A Vehicle can only be restored fully when in a Safe Location.

REPAIRING A VEHICLE OUTSIDE OF REST

Any Techniques that shift dice up for Characters can shift dice up on Vehicles as well, as long as it makes sense within the context of the Technique. For example, a Technique called First Aid Kit could patch up the **Crew** Trait but likely won't be much use on repairing an engine.

A Vehicle's Traits can also get Drawbacks through play, which can be removed through Action Rolls and narrative moments, as normal.



7: LOCATIONS

Dangerous sites to explore and safe places to rest and relax are a staple of all adventures and settings. Like everything in SHIFT, Locations are defined by a set of Traits. Before more mechanical considerations, however, it's best to start with a strong concept.

LOCATION CONCEPT

Locations can range from bustling cities to abandoned ghost towns and everything in between. Some things to consider when creating a new Location:

- ▶ How big is the Location? How many people live there?
- ▶ Is the Location defended? Does it have a militia, guard, or army of some kind?
- ▶ How prosperous is the Location? Does it have anything and everything someone might be looking for, or are its shops barely keeping their doors open?
- ▶ What makes the Location unique? What special feature is it known for?

As a rule of thumb, a good size for a Location is about the size of a city—if it's any bigger than that, the areas within it will start to feel like they should be full Locations themselves, and if it's smaller than a city, there may not be enough territory to explore. That being said, anything is possible—if your entire story takes place inside a large, scary mansion, go for it! Make it a full Location and detail the different rooms as Landmarks.

SAFE OR UNSAFE?

Not every Location is secure enough for adventurers to safely relax and recuperate. Smaller Locations are entirely Safe or Unsafe, and larger Locations have a mix of Safe and Unsafe Landmarks within it. Every city has its comfortable hotels and dangerous back alleys, after all.

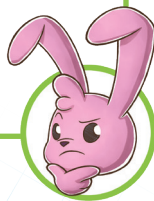
LOCATION TRAITS

All Locations have three Core Traits: **Attitude**, **Wealth**, and **Security and Safety**. They also have at least one Focus Trait that is unique to them, representing a special resource, feature, or asset that sets the Location apart from others. Each of a Location's Traits has a Shift Die assigned to it as well.

These Traits work similar to an Adversary's Traits—they can be paired up and rolled as Action Rolls (against the Characters or even against other Locations), and they can be targeted and changed by the Character's actions. Shifting a Location's Traits up and down requires effort on a larger scale. Shifting down a Location's **Security and Safety** Trait could require an assault on a key guardhouse, and shifting up a **Wealth** Trait might require a massive donation to the Location's economy. Each of these is an adventure unto itself.

These Traits can also be used to abstractly resolve battles between Locations. If two city-states are at war, you can roll their **Security and Safety** Traits to see how they fare in a key land grab. A successful roll on either side shifts the opposing **Security and Safety** Trait down, potentially weakening them for the next battle.

Don't keep a Location's Traits a secret from the players; they provide a snapshot of the Location's current strengths, weaknesses, and points of interest. You don't have to make finding access to these Traits easy for the players, but they should know what their options are.



LOCATION CORE TRAITS

ATTITUDE

Just like an Adversary's **Attitude** Trait, a Location's **Attitude** Trait has a Keyword that represents the general attitude of the average person living in the Location. For example, a Location ruled by an evil overlord may have **fearful** or **subjugated** as its Keyword, and a xenophobic Location with a dislike of outsiders might be **insular** or **distrustful**. The Shift Die associated with the Attitude Trait should give an idea of how strongly held the attitude is in the Location. For example, the Shift Die of the Attitude in a Location with a small but growing **rebellious** population might be a D8 or D10. In a fully indoctrinated Location, its **devoted** **Attitude** Shift Die might be a D6 or even a D4.

WEALTH

A Location's **Wealth** Trait shows how affluent the Location is. It doesn't only represent the money stored in the Location's coffers, but also other resources, such as food, livestock, and land. A Location's **Wealth** Trait also gives an indication of how well the Location can restock a Character's or Vehicle's supplies. Any Location whose **Wealth** Trait is worse than a D8 is struggling.

SECURITY AND SAFETY

A Location's defenses can come in a variety of forms. Some might have a city watch or a standing army, others might have magic wards or automated drones. All of these are covered by the Location's **Security and Safety** Trait. A Location whose **Security and Safety** Trait is worse than a D8 is considered extremely vulnerable to outside dangers.

LOCATION FOCUS TRAITS

Every Location should have at least one unique Focus Trait that highlights its identity. A powerful space station might have a **Planet Smashing Laser** Trait, a dilapidated seaside town could have a **Cult of the**

Fish God Trait, and a cyberpunk megacity may be under the control of a **Heartless Megacorp** Trait. This unique Focus Trait doesn't have to be a dangerous or negative aspect of the Location; it can be something useful that the Characters might be able to take advantage of. The powerful space station could also have an **Advanced Repair Bay** Trait that can be visited to patch up a starship, and the cyberpunk city could have a **Bustling Black Market** Trait where the Characters can find rare hardware.

USING A LOCATION'S TRAITS

Anytime a Location is exerting its influence on the world or the Characters and the results are uncertain, you can use the Location's Traits to make Action Rolls to represent that influence. Maybe the Characters have caused a lot of trouble in town, so you roll the Location's Core **Security and Safety** Trait to see how successful the guards are at tracking them down. Are the upper classes upset with the party as well? Combine it with the **Wealth** Trait to represent the lords and ladies financing the hunt for the Characters. In this way, the Location can be treated like something of an improvised Adversary when you need one that represents a Location's interests. When using a Location's Traits as if the Location is an Adversary, treat Critical Successes and Failures as normal Successes and Failures—a Location's Traits don't shift down in this case.

And just like an Adversary, a Location's Traits can be influenced by Characters as well. It is possible for a Location's Traits to shift up and down, but this indicates major changes to the Location; for the Characters to influence a Location on this level requires major moves and could take multiple sessions. For example, a group of thieves might make a plan to raid the coffers of a kingdom, going after its **Wealth** Trait. It could take coming up with the plan, gathering the resources and intel needed, and then the actual session where they

EXAMPLE LOCATION FOCUS TRAITS

MINING UNION MEMBER

You've been mining asteroids in the outer rim since you were a teenager, and the union is the only thing looking out for your safety while you're out there. You owe them.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Who is your rep in the union? Are they helpful or a pain in your butt?

You were in hot water recently; how did the union get you out of trouble?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *connections, finding jobs, paperwork, strength in numbers*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *outcast, unpaid dues*

DEPUTY SHERIFF

You gained the trust of the local sheriff, and they gave you a badge of your own.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What deed got you the attention of the sheriff?

Who was the first outlaw you brought to justice?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *deescalate, intimidate, ride, search, track*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *mistrusted, vengeful nemesis*

STEEAGE PASSENGER

You've scraped together enough money to get passage on the lowest levels of a massive ship.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What is on the other side of the trip that makes it worth spending your bottom dollar on it?

How do the other people on the ship treat you?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *blend in, charm, dance, hide, scavenge*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *exhausted, hungry*

pull off the heist itself before the kingdom's **Wealth** Trait shifts down. When a Location's Trait changes, it should be reflected throughout the Location moving forward. **Security and Safety** going up could mean more guards on the street, for example.

When you enter a Location for the first time, your GM can also roll the Location's Traits to determine what you find there as you explore. If you are looking for a specific piece of equipment or resource, they could roll the **Wealth** Trait—a successful result means that the Location has what you need, while a Failure means you'll need to look elsewhere. You might ask your GM if a local merchant is willing to bargain, and a failed roll of the Location's **Attitude** (*xenophobic*) Trait suggests they aren't going to be very friendly. When a Location's Traits are used this way, the Trait dice don't shift up or down, even if the result is a Critical Success or Critical Failure.

Finally, you can use a Location's Traits to simulate interactions between different Locations. If one Location wages war against another, you could roll the **Security and Safety** Trait for both sides, treating them the same way you would treat an Action Roll in an Encounter. If one Location rolls a successful result, the opposing Location's **Security and Safety** Trait shifts down. In this case, Critical Successes and Critical Failures do shift dice up and down, representing the costs of war and risks involved.

CHARACTER FOCUS TRAITS UNIQUE TO THE LOCATION

Creating a few Focus Traits that are tied to the themes, people, and Landmarks of a Location can help solidify what makes the Location unique. These Traits provide players with a way to have their Characters instantly connect to the setting, or a way for them to pick Traits up from spending time in the Location. When creating Focus Traits tied to a Location, consider the following questions:

- ▶ Are there any factions or organizations within the Location that a Character may want to join?
- ▶ Is there an industry or job that is unique to this Location? What kind of skills does it require?
- ▶ What different cultures are present in the Location? What sort of class structure can Characters be a part of?

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

A Location can be as large as a whole star system or as small as a single house, and Landmarks are the significant areas of the Location that provide adventure opportunities for Characters. Most Locations are a mix of Safe and Unsafe Landmarks, providing dangerous areas to explore and secure places to rest.

EXAMPLE LANDMARKS

Haunted House

- ▶ Quiet Sitting Room (Safe)
- ▶ Barricaded Bedroom (Safe)
- ▶ Cobweb-Riddled Attic (Unsafe)
- ▶ Darkened Basement (Unsafe)
- ▶ Secret Passage (Unsafe)

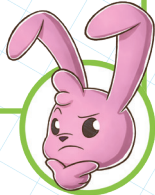
Western Town

- ▶ Rowdy Saloon (Safe)
- ▶ Sheriff's Office (Safe)
- ▶ Abandoned Mine (Unsafe)
- ▶ Bandit Hideout (Unsafe)
- ▶ Old Graveyard (Unsafe)

Space Station

- ▶ Docking Bay (Safe)
- ▶ Space Bar (Safe)
- ▶ Cargo Bay (Unsafe)
- ▶ Black Market (Unsafe)
- ▶ Substation Network (Unsafe)

As you build up your Location, you may find that the Landmarks you add to it are quite large on their own. Maybe your Location is a whole continent, and the Landmarks represent individual cities. This is fine! You could use these Landmarks as bitesize descriptions that you can develop into their own Locations as your Characters explore them further.



CREATURES AND NPCs

Just as important as the Landmarks within a Location are the people and creatures the Characters might meet there. These NPCs are the potential allies, sources of quests and missions, and antagonists at the heart of a Location. When establishing the important NPCs in a Location, consider the following questions:

- ▶ What motivates the NPC?
- ▶ What do they want from the Characters? What might the Characters want from them?
- ▶ What is the NPC's general attitude toward the Characters?

Important NPCs do not need to be fully fleshed out with Adversary stat blocks, but an **Attitude** Trait and Keyword can give you a starting point for how the Characters and NPCs will interact.

EXAMPLE NPCs

Geoffrey, Ghost Butler [he/him]. Geoffrey is tired of his unlife and wishes to see the other ghosts in the haunted house put to rest so he himself can finally retire. Geoffrey will immediately recruit the Characters to help him with this task, giving them as much detail as he can on the angry spirits of the house. Geoffrey's **Attitude** toward the Characters is **desperate**.

Sheriff Maggie Walderson [she/her].

As the Sheriff of a one-horse town, Maggie spends most of her time breaking up bar brawls and settling arguments over unpaid debts. Her town is just big enough to still be a target for bandits, however, and she will begrudgingly look to the Characters to help handle these problems. Maggie's **Attitude** toward the Characters is **stern**.

Central Station AI [it/its]. The Central Station AI was programmed to monitor and protect the inhabitants of the space station, and it takes its job very seriously. Some people who live on the station think it takes its job too seriously, as the AI has trouble seeing the nuance in some situations. The AI reaches out to new visitors to the station, like the Characters, to get their outsider opinions on how the station is being run. The AI's **Attitude** toward the Characters is **pragmatic**.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

A Location in SHIFT should be a hub of activity, a place brimming with potential adventures and problems for the Characters to deal with. An adventure hook is a bite-sized prompt that ties together the Landmarks and NPCs of the Location into a jumping-off point for a story. When building adventure hooks for a Location, consider the following questions:

- ▶ What NPC is at the center of the adventure hook? Do they need help or are they causing the problem?
- ▶ What Landmark makes a good backdrop for the adventure hook? Is it already an Unsafe area, or is the source of the trouble making it Unsafe?
- ▶ What can the Characters gain from getting involved with the adventure hook? What will draw them in?

8: CREATING YOUR OWN SHIFT SETTING



Building your own SHIFT setting from scratch is not complicated, though it is recommended you have a good understanding of the core SHIFT rules prior to starting.

ESTABLISH A CONCEPT

Before any mechanical considerations, the most important step of creating a setting for SHIFT is a strong narrative concept. Consider the following questions when building your SHIFT setting:

- ▶ What kind of tone will the setting have? Bright and fun? Dark and gritty?
- ▶ How common is healing in this setting? Do Characters bounce back quickly, or is shifting dice back up a rare occurrence?

Before devoting too much time to creating a setting from scratch, consider taking a look at the “**Chapter 9: SHIFT World Sparks**” later in the book. These bite-sized settings provide a ton of pre-made Traits, Techniques, and Adversaries. Even if they don't fit your planned setting perfectly, the World Sparks can be reskinned, hacked apart, and mashed together to help do some of the heavy lifting of your setting creation.



CHOOSE BUILDING BLOCKS

The SHIFT rules are flexible, and choosing the right rulesets can further cement the tone and feel of a setting. The key building blocks of SHIFT are the Core Traits, Travel, and Rest and Recovery.

Core Traits. Customizing the standard Core Traits (**Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul**) to fit a new SHIFT setting is a good way to emphasize what is important in that setting. For example, changing the Core Traits from **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul** to **Speed**, **Might**, and **Instinct** really emphasizes that the setting

will focus on action and excitement.

Adding to the number of Core Traits can also customize SHIFT to the setting. As an example, the addition of **Social Standing** as a fourth Core Trait can highlight the importance of status in a highly political world. If adding a new Core Trait, give the players an additional D8 to distribute among their Core Traits.

Travel. How easy or hard it is for Characters to navigate a setting will have a dramatic effect on the pacing of adventures in that setting. The Standard Travel ruleset puts some emphasis on the difficulties of travel and managing travel resources without making it the centerpiece of the whole campaign. The Simple Travel ruleset is suitable for more cinematic stories, mostly skipping travel to get Characters to the action quickly. Lastly, the Challenging Travel ruleset makes traveling a focus of the adventure, requiring more planning and more risk. **Chapter 5** goes into the options for travel in more detail.

Rest and Recovery. The ease with which Characters can recover their dice and Techniques can change how deadly a setting feels. The Standard Rest and Recovery building block allows for relatively hearty heroes but still requires that they find safe places to rest to fully recover. The Simple Rest and Recovery building block allows Characters to get back into the action quickly and is suitable for superhero stories and anything with a more lighthearted, Saturday morning cartoon type feel. Finally, the Challenging Rest and Recovery building block makes *where* the Characters rest just as important as when they rest, which makes it suitable for settings with very low resources or long distances between safe havens. **Chapter 2** goes into the options for Rest and Recovery in more detail.

CREATE A STARTING LOCATION

Most settings will consist of many Locations, each with their own stories and interesting Landmarks. When creating a custom SHIFT setting, it can be daunting to create all the possible Locations and Landmarks in one go, so it's recommended to focus on one starting Location. Consider the following when creating a starting Location for a custom SHIFT setting:

- ▶ Does the Location showcase the themes and concepts of the setting?
- ▶ What kind of Safe Landmarks does the Location have where Characters can rest?
- ▶ What kind of Unsafe Landmarks does the Location have where Characters can adventure?

A good starting Location has a lot of intrigue and conflict for the Characters to deal with and provides a safe home base for them to retreat to. **Chapter 7** goes into detail on creating Locations for SHIFT.

If your setting leans heavily on travel or centers around a Vehicle, you might want to put in the extra work of creating a few more Locations, an interconnected network of places for the players to travel between and explore. Put together a simple map with routes connecting the Locations, including the number of Legs each trip will take, then let the players plot their course!



CREATE EXAMPLE TRAITS

To aid players during character creation, it can be helpful to have some example Focus Traits prepared that highlight the types of people, professions, and activities unique to the setting. These Traits can provide options for players during character creation and serve as examples for players to create their own Traits appropriate to the setting.

Consider the following questions when creating Focus Traits for a new SHIFT Setting:

- ▶ What types of skill sets do people need to survive in the dangerous parts of the world?
- ▶ Are there people in the world with magic or other unusual talents?
- ▶ What factions, organizations, or groups in the setting could be represented by a Trait?

In addition to creating example Focus Traits for a setting, providing some sample keywords for each Trait can further demonstrate what is important and significant to people in your setting.

*Dario is creating his own science fiction setting from scratch and is creating Focus Traits to showcase what the average person in his world needs to survive. He wants there to be a strong "space trucker" influence on his setting and decides that **Bluecollar Belter** is the kind of flavorful Trait he's looking for. Belters work in deep space, hauling asteroids to mining facilities so they can be stripped of their valuable resources. Belters are diversely skilled and very organized, so he gives his players the example Keywords **repair**, **piloting**, and **union matters** to demonstrate this.*

CREATE EXAMPLE TECHNIQUES

Techniques show what kind of special equipment, powerful abilities, and ways to change the narrative the players have at their disposal. They can be slightly more difficult to create from scratch, but adapting Techniques from existing SHIFT content (like the World Sparks in **Chapter 9**) to fit your setting is fairly straightforward.

For example, the fantasy World Spark has a Technique for a magic item called Prismwood Shield that can be adapted to a sci-fi setting by changing the flavor of the Technique.

PERSONAL DEFLECTOR

A wrist-mounted energy emitter that becomes a temporary shield on command. If an attack would shift down one of your Trait's dice, you can use this Technique to prevent it. If the attack was from an energy-based weapon (like a blaster), the deflector also reflects the attack back at the attacker. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

Techniques can be tweaked further by changing the number of uses they have before a Safe Rest.

When creating a brand new Technique, consider if the ability is narrative or mechanical.

Narrative Techniques allow players to step outside of their Characters and ask a question about the world around them or establish a new fact about the situation at hand.

Dario wants money to have a lot of power in his sci-fi setting and wants to show how it can influence people and events in the world. He decides to show this with a narrative Technique called Money Talks.

MONEY TALKS

Your affluence opens doors for you and brings the right people to you. Use this Technique to choose one of the following:

- ▶ *Gain access to a place or event that would otherwise be closed off to you. This includes private parties, closed-door meetings, and sporting events.*
- ▶ *Gain an audience with anyone that can be reached by your social circle. The meeting happens within a day, at the GM's discretion. You can use this Technique once per session.*

Mechanical Techniques interact with SHIFT's mechanics in some way, most commonly by shifting dice up and down.

A mechanical Technique might shift some dice back up, prevent dice from shifting down, or add Keywords and Drawbacks to Traits. They often represent special equipment and limited-use items.

Dario designs the Swarm Gun to represent a swarm of aggressive nanobots.

SWARM GUN

A shoulder-mounted cannon that fires swarms of nanobots that can go after multiple targets at once. Use this Technique to shift down an Adversary's Traits up to three times. These three shifts can be targeted at a single Adversary or spread across multiple. You can use this Technique once per session.

CREATE ADVERSARIES

Adversaries provide the obstacles and conflicts of a SHIFT setting, and it's best to have a handful of Adversaries prepared that represent the main threats of the world. When creating Adversaries for a new SHIFT setting, consider the following:

- ▶ What is the most common type of Adversary the Characters might encounter? Do they travel in groups or individually?
- ▶ Is there an overarching villain or monster that is the centerpiece of the setting?

Two or three Power 1 Adversaries, a Power 2 Adversary that is an advanced version of one of the Power 1 Adversaries, and a couple of higher-Power Adversaries to use as bosses is more than enough to start a SHIFT setting. Check out the "**Chapter 4: Creating Adversaries**" chapter for more details on creating new Adversaries for SHIFT.

Want to publish your SHIFT creations? You can do it with "SHIFT Open License"! This license lets you create your own SHIFT World Sparks, supplements and games for sale or for free. Check out **Appendix B** for a full breakdown on how to get started!

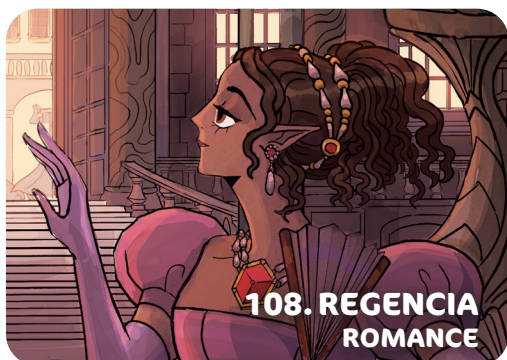
9: SHIFT WORLD SPARKS

This section presents five unique SHIFT World Sparks for you to play in as-is or mix and match and use in any way that works for you. A World Spark isn't a fully fleshed-out setting, it's just enough to give your SHIFT stories a jump start.

Each World Spark is laid out in the same way as the “**Chapter 8: Creating Your Own SHIFT Setting**” chapter and is designed

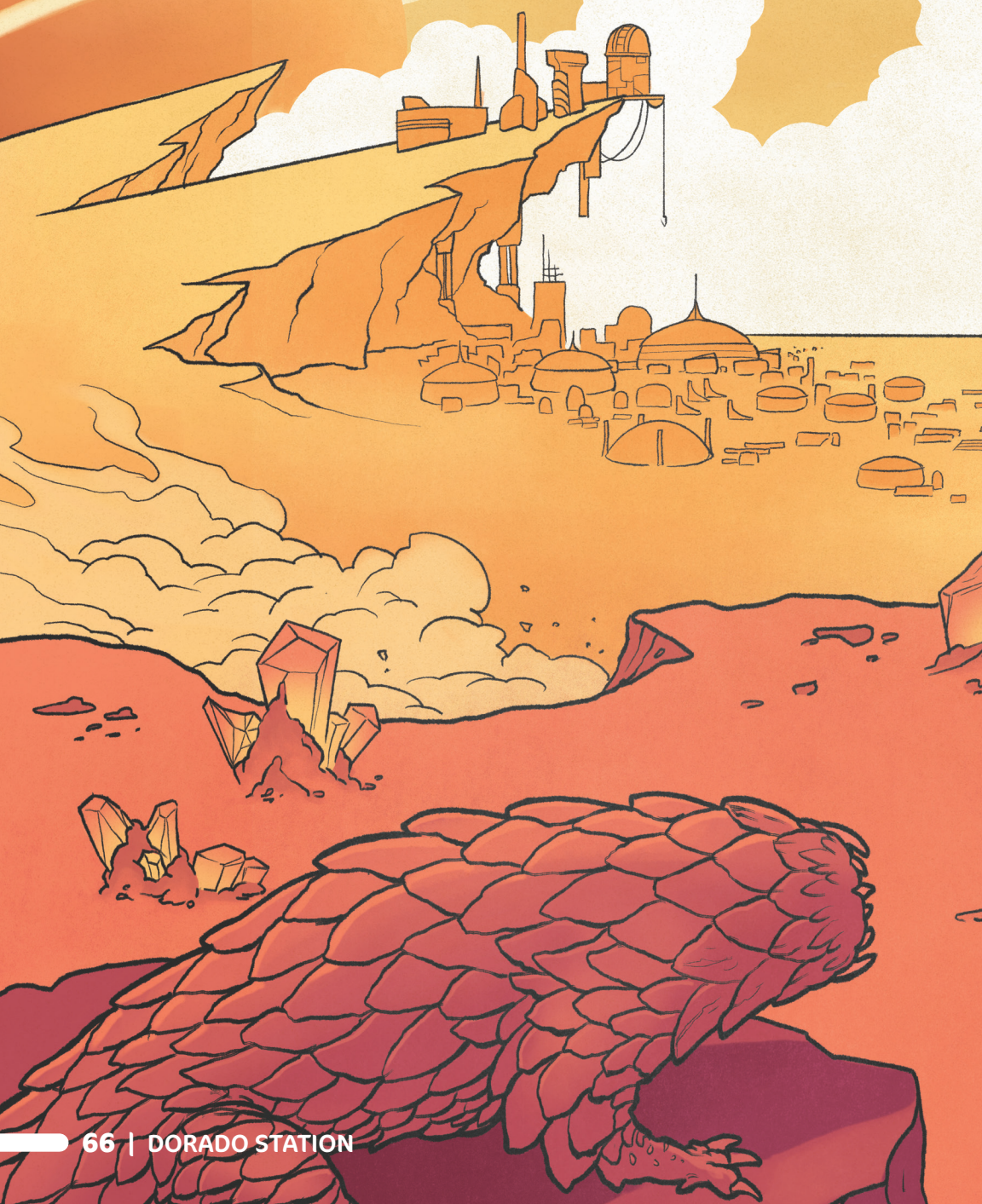
following the same guidelines (though some of the World Sparks throw some fun twists into the mix) so each one can be used as an example for how to build your own setting.

Please hack these SHIFT World Sparks in any way you want. If you want to re-flavor a Trait from the sci-fi setting into a magic ability in the fantasy world, go for it! That's what they are there for. Have fun!



DORADO STATION

A SCI-FI SHIFT WORLD SPARK





John Barlow



Welcome, prospector!

If you're seeing this, that means you're hurtling toward the surface of Ordaz II to start your career mining precious warpstone: The Rock That Moves the Universe!™

But first, a history lesson.

Not long ago, humanity hit the jackpot and figured out how to master faster-than-light travel, all thanks to the wonders of warpstone. It was a golden age of expansion and exploration that we thought would never come to an end! Unfortunately, the supply of warpstone (only found on Jupiter's moon Io) was incredibly limited, and it looked like a dark age for the galaxy was around the corner.

Lucky for us, a plucky (and handsome!) explorer named Darrik Ordaz discovered something extraordinary: an exo-planet hidden in the Proxima System with a peculiar magnetic field. Most importantly, it was crusted with warpstone crystals in such incredible abundance he knew he'd be a fool not to take advantage. Are there roving packs of dangerous fauna? Sure. Is warpstone extremely unstable and prone to explosion? Naturally. Are fine folks such as yourself willing to risk your lives for a chance to fill your pockets? Well, you're here, aren't you?

Not long after, Ordaz founded Dorado Station, a veritable boomtown locked in orbit around the exo-planet he now calls Ordaz II. (He's nothing if not humble!) The station has everything needed to refine warpstone into fuel, and Ordaz has made it his personal mission to make sure no one has to go anywhere else for their warpstone fix. How generous!

Finally, we come to you, noble prospector! Ordaz Holdings and Dorado Station can't work without your hard work and all of us in management are grateful for your efforts. Remember: at Ordaz Holdings, we're all family! Anything you've heard about the death rate of miners planetside, the rumblings of union uprisings and violent unrest on our beloved Dorado Station are simply rumors, spread by Ordaz Holdings jealous competitors. We will not let them tear this family apart.

Looks like your dropship is about to land and the first day of the rest of your life (however long that may be) is about to begin.

Enjoy, and good luck!

*Automated Message from
Ordaz Holdings HR Department*

Welcome to Dorado Station! In this World Spark, players play as prospectors: itinerant miners bound to three-day contracts, sent down from a space station to an exoplanet in rickety drop ships. Ordaz Holdings, your benevolent corporate overlord, has laid out extremely generous terms. Meet your three-day quota and you can keep 10 percent of the proceeds (after recouped costs). Intense inter-company competition, deadly rivals, and hostile indigenous fauna all make for a dangerous loop. Make your quota, make it back, and you may just make your fortune.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Dorado Station is a dangerous place, but prospectors have the latest and greatest equipment* and training**, so this World Spark's building blocks use the standard SHIFT rulesets.



***Ordaz Co. is not responsible for providing prospecting equipment.**

****Ordaz Co. is not responsible for training prospectors.**

CORE TRAITS

This world uses the standard Core Traits: **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul**

Body. Ordaz II is full of dangers and physical peril, and **Body** is paramount when it comes to surviving its physical rigors. Whether it's handling extreme turbulence when dropping into orbit, toughing it out through the dust storms, surviving attacks from competing prospectors, or making it through a crash, **Body** is the thing keeping you alive when everything else wants you dead. It's a Core

Trait related to the work that needs doing: mining. Injuries to **Body** could result in physical exhaustion, choking on dust, grievous injury, bio-repairs, or suffering from "Ordafllu."

Mind. A strong **Body** only gets you so far once you're off-planet. Up on Dorado Station, it's a whole different world. Sure, you might get in a scrape here and there, but navigating and subverting the hyper-corporate culture requires a keen **Mind**. Whether it's hacking into their systems to drain accounts or fry a lander's engines, securing dossiers on your professional competitors, or discerning the most valuable fields of warpstone to harvest, **Mind** is essential for those hoping to find their fortune at Dorado Station. Injuries to your **Mind** could result in being stunned, being hacked, paranoia, inability to connect, or malfunctioning implants.

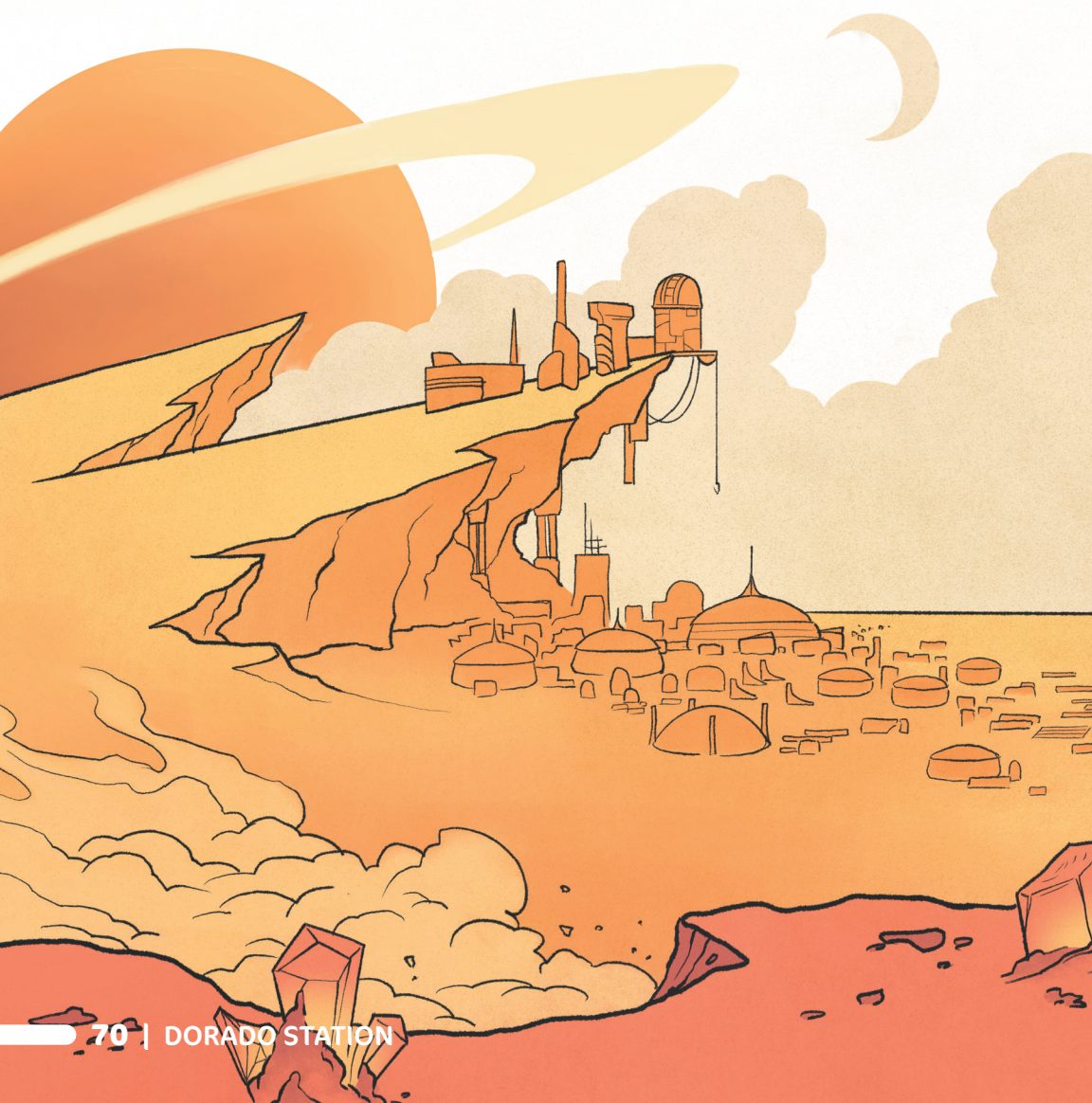
Soul. Unfortunately, you can't survive Ordaz II on wits and muscle alone—you need to be able to work with others, and that's where **Soul** comes in. Whether it's parsing corporate double speak or negotiating a truce with a competing mining squad, **Soul** is essential for keeping afloat whether above or below. Up on the station, **Soul** can be used to infiltrate rival gangs or impersonate executives to sneak into upper-level offices. Down on the planet, **Soul** can be used to intimidate or bribe a rival prospector, scaring them off a choice haul, or to calm a frenzied moleshank before it eats your crew. Injuries to **Soul** could result in being banned, outed as a spy or traitor, unable to connect with others, blacklisted, hated, or wanted—dead or alive.

TRAVEL

Traveling to and from Ordaz II via drop ship is fraught with peril. Dorado Station can comfortably house five thousand people but is rarely at capacity, thanks to an exceptionally high employee “turnover” rate. The station is generally considered a Safe place, unless you’re sneaking through corporate offices, so the Standard Travel ruleset is suggested aboard Dorado Station, and the Challenging Travel ruleset when planetside or infiltrating restricted areas of the station.

REST AND RECOVERY

Between the near-constant aggression from both local fauna and competing crews, it’s nearly impossible to rest on the surface of Ordaz II. Prospectors can rest and recuperate when they return to the station, provided their contract allows for it. The suggested Rest and Recovery ruleset for this sci-fi dystopia is Standard aboard Dorado Station and Challenging when planetside.



LOCATION: DORADO STATION

LOCATION TRAITS

Attitude (D10). Most inhabitants of Dorado Station are in direct competition with one another for contracts and payouts. These **cutthroat** folks are constantly sizing every-one else up.

Wealth (D6). There's a stark divide between the prospectors who are successful and those who aren't. Wealth begets better equipment, which begets better and more successful prospecting runs.

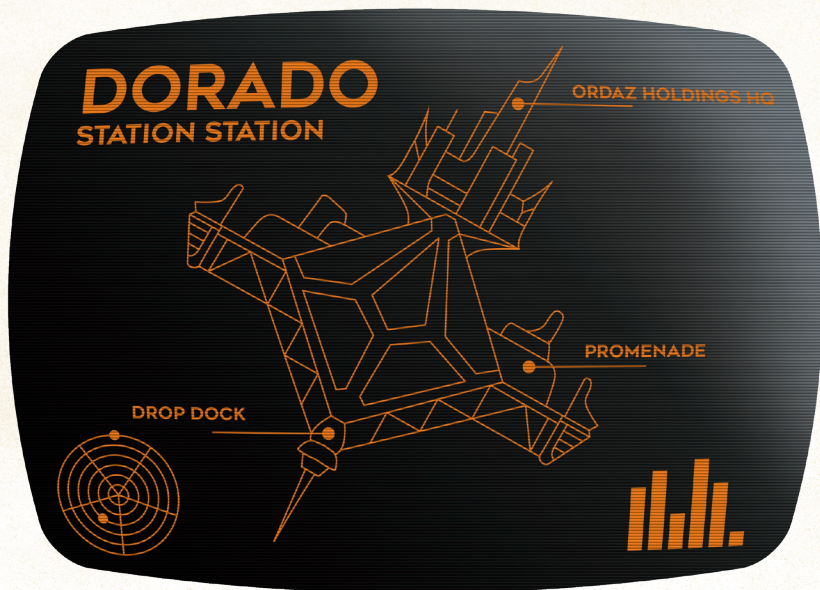
Security and Safety (D4). The station itself is highly secure and doesn't tolerate violence...at least on the station. Whatever you do on the planet is up to you. And everyone else out there.

Strange Mercantile (D8). This far-flung station has folks flying in from all over, often peddling the last of their possessions for some basic mining equipment. You can find almost anything in the merchant stalls along the promenade.

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

Promenade (Safe). The main stretch of the station, open to the public, rings its entire circumference. Here you'll find access to living quarters, merchant stalls, and the requisition center. This is primarily where prospectors can be found. Security regularly patrols, keeping the peace between fierce rivals. Decent housing here is in high demand and short supply, and only contracted prospectors can rent a cabin. Due to the recent influx of fortune seekers, small pockets of shanties keep popping up on the promenade faster than the security officers can sweep them away.

Drop Dock (Safe). Claiming it's for safety reasons, but really so they can maintain yet another monopoly, Ordaz Holdings forbids prospectors from using their own transport down to Ordaz II. Instead, they rent out small Prospector Shuttles, which can hold up to eight people and a few tons of ore. Any damage to the shuttle is deducted from the final pay out. This is also where returning ships weigh out their warpstone crystals and receive their cut.



LOCATION: ORDAZ II

LOCATION TRAITS

Attitude (D10). The local fauna is **hostile** and does not take kindly to the disruption caused by harvesting warpstone.

Wealth (D4). You can hit the biggest paydirt of your life and lose it just as fast. There is no inherent wealth to be found, but the warpstone is worth everything it takes to get it.

Security and Safety (D10). There are no rules down here, and rival prospectors are just as likely to relieve you of your payload as the fauna is to relieve you of your life.

Shifting Surface (D6). Ordaz II is impossible to map. Its surface features change by the day. Where once was a canyon now sits a mountain. The constantly changing landscape poses regular threats, but can also open up passages that weren't previously available.

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

Warpstone Crystals (Unsafe). The whole point of Ordaz II—at least where prospectors are concerned—is that its surface is covered in deposits of warpstone crystals. Finding one isn't difficult; the challenge comes from finding a deposit that hasn't either been claimed by rival prospectors or had a moleshank turn it into a nest for its eggs. If a vein is unoccupied, it likely won't remain that way for long, so prospectors try to work fast.

Extraction Zone (Unsafe). This is the spot where the Prospector Shuttles arrive and depart. Thanks to work-shy prospectors looking to steal others' payloads, it's become one of the most dangerous places on the planet. Arriving isn't as dangerous, but prospectors wanting to make it home in one piece would do well to double-check their shuttle hasn't been sabotaged.

IMPORTANT NPCS

Darrik Ordaz [he/him]. Ordaz II's discoverer and the illustrious owner of the station. Unlike most tycoons who stumble onto a turnkey operation, Darrik lives and works on the station. Granted, his digs are vastly superior to everyone else's, with a level of luxury that would make even the ultra-wealthy salivate. The only things Darrik cares about are market share and being more profitable than he was the year before. It's never enough to just stay in the black. He wants whatever the next financial color is past that. All the time. And usually, he attains it. But the whole station is put in danger whenever profits dip below a certain level (or depending on whether or not he enjoyed breakfast). His **Attitude** toward the Characters is **coldly dismissive** or **repulsed**.

Andra Pompil [she/her]. A cutthroat middle manager responsible for assigning contracts and prospecting rights. She's no friend to the prospectors and answers directly to Darrik. Like him, her chief motivation is maximizing extracted profit from labor. That said, she's more than happy to be bribed, and the best jobs usually go to those who've learned this lesson. She's friendly with some of the old-timers, but newcomers to the station have trouble even getting a meeting with her, despite a calendar that is wide open most days. She's petty, insecure, easy to manipulate, and horrendously vengeful if she finds herself slighted. Her **Attitude** toward the Characters is **professionally hostile** or **respectfully frigid**.

Orkah Gruul [she/they]. A highly successful and ruthless prospector who claims the top quota nearly every day. A former space pirate, they have an equally unscrupulous and brutal crew at their disposal. While she doesn't target new prospectors specifically, they often get in her way. Inexperienced miners who don't know who Orkah is sometimes try and jump their claims before they return. So far no one who has tried this has survived. She spends most of her time on the station these days, outsourcing her work to her lessers. Their **Attitude** toward the Characters is *competitive* and *intimidating*.

Gunnar Prost [he/him]. One of the old-timers. He's made a lot of money doing this and honestly doesn't know what to do with it all. He just loves the thrilling danger of the work and the camaraderie that grows between prospectors working the same contract. Gunnar is always available to offer a helping hand or bit of advice... when he's at the station. Down planetside, he may not be as ruthless as some of the other prospectors, but there's a reason he's among the wealthiest. His **Attitude** toward the Characters is *patronizing* but *cordial*.

Salvia Glim [she/her]. A former competitor of Darrik whose company embarrassingly tanked and ruined her completely. Used to a certain quality of life that few professions can afford, she turned to prospecting on the very planet her biggest enemy owns. The way she sees it, Darrik will slip up eventually, and she'll be there to pick up the pieces when he does. She operates on the philosophy of "Can't someone else do it?" in almost all things. Salvia doesn't like getting her hands dirty and usually pays an outsized crew to compensate for her lack of effort. She sees anyone remotely successful as direct competition and aims to derail them at every turn. Their **Attitude** toward the Characters is *covetous* and *annoyed*.

Sallo [they/them]. No one really knows anything about Sallo other than the distinctive skull mask they never remove. Sallo is a butcher. Even the local fauna know to give them a wide berth. Sallo travels with no crew and avoids other prospectors while they are on contract. Should they find themselves on opposite ends of a quarrel, Sallo is rarely bested. And if they are, victory over them is purely pyrrhic. Their **Attitude** toward the Characters is *unconcerned*.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

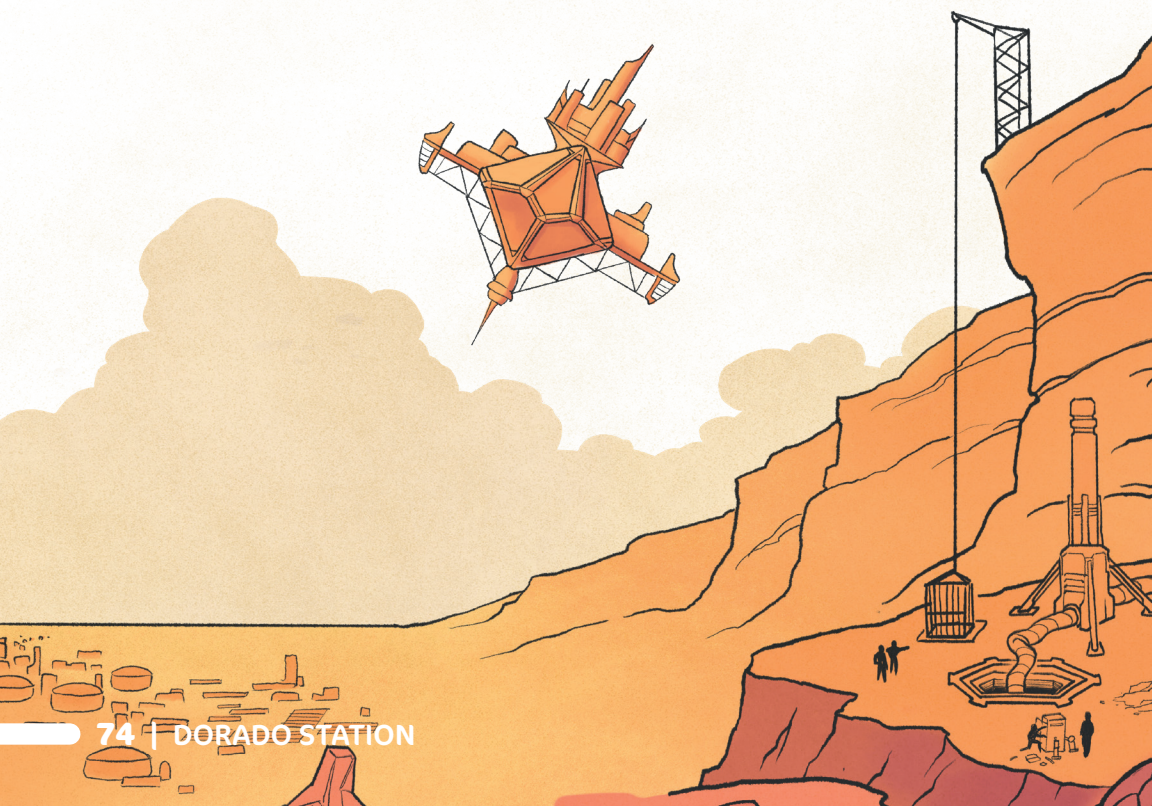
Storm on the Horizon. An irradiated dust storm looms on the horizon as the prospectors on the station look down at the planet and see their gravy train coming to a halt. These storms have been known to disrupt prospecting for days, even weeks! There's a shortage of drop shuttles as everyone makes a scramble for whatever warpstone crystals they can get their grubby little mitts on. Gunnar Prost is willing to split a shuttle, but he takes a sixty-forty cut of anything they come back with. Take it or leave it, there aren't many options.

Friends in Low Places. Andra Pompil and Salvia Glim are planning a coup. The Characters could be a part of this new order if they help the two of them overthrow Darrik and take the station. Andra would prefer the coup be bloodless (she'll have to clean up, after all), but Salvia has no such moral conviction. She'd just as soon plant a bullet in Darrik's head the next time he gets up to give one of his "motivational speeches." Whichever method the Charac-

ters choose, the promise of a larger guaranteed cut of the profits from warpstone is hard for them to pass up. But unseating Darrik is no small task. He commands an army of blind loyalists, and his pockets are deep enough that he can buy more.

False Profits. Someone has been placing decoy beacons on the surface of the planet, acting as crystal deposits, but usually leading into a moleshank nest. Multiple prospectors have died thanks to these tricks, and someone needs to be held accountable. It's likely a fellow prospector, as not many others make their way planet-side...but who?

Hat on a Hat. When mining a crystal, suddenly the Characters are attacked by a pack of wild moleshanks. To make matters worse, a shalemaw is in pursuit of the pack, hoping for a quick lunch. And just for good measure, a rival gang of prospectors has pulled up with the hopes of using the chaos to make off with the Characters' haul. They're between a rock, a hard place, and thousands of stone teeth.



FOCUS TRAITS

CRACK PILOT

Unparalleled when piloting a spaceship or other flying craft.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Where did you get your training? Why won't you go back?

Has your experience piloting been on the more legitimate or illegitimate side of business?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *air of authority, eagle-eyed, evasive maneuvers, hot shot, reflexive*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *faulty navigation, no fuel, shot down*

REFORMED SMUGGLER

An expert at getting something or someone in or out of restricted zones, undetected.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What went wrong on your last smuggling gig? How did you end up here afterward?

What was the most expensive piece of contraband you stole? Who did you sell it to?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *bribe, concealment, gift of gab, shoot first, sneaky*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *cargo screening, heavy pockets, lowball bribe*

MEDICAL OFFICER

A former medical officer turned prospector, diligent and dedicated to your work but with a terrible bedside manner.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What was the worst thing you've ever seen in the med bay? How did you respond?

What happened when you accidentally killed a superior officer during a critical operation?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *diagnose, field surgery, healing, stasis, stim-injector*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *faulty equipment, unknown ailment, unlikeable*

UNION COMRADE

A laborer whose core values revolve around solidarity, lending a hand, and taking the fight to the bosses.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What sort of work were you in before becoming a prospector?

How has your experience dealing with the bosses shaped your view of commercial enterprise and worker exploitation?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *bolster morale, infrastructure, labor, organization, supply run*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *broken morale, burn out, no backup*

WARPSTONE GEOLOGIST

A former military science officer turned prospector. You're an expert on all things warpstone and can pinpoint the richest veins.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Why did you leave the military for the private sector?

What discovery did you make about warpstone that put you at odds with your colleagues?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *analysis, increase value, precision drilling, quick extraction, resource radar*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *bad scan, unstable vein, broken pick*

HARDSCRABBLE MERC

A hardened mercenary who gave up that life to work security for prospectors.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What battle you participated in still haunts you?

What was an order you could never take? What happened when you didn't?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *battle tactics, explosives, positioning, silent communication, too many guns*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *I need another clip!, it's a dud!, no more guns*

REFORMED PIRATE

A former space pirate who turned to prospecting as a (slightly) safer and much more lucrative business opportunity.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What was the last job you pulled as a pirate? What made you quit?

How often do you engage in piracy when prospecting?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *bribe, concealed weapon, good booze, intimidate, morale booster*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *bad reputation, bounty hunted, too much good booze*

THRILLSEEKING TOURIST

An exceedingly wealthy tourist who loves adventure and getting your hands (just a little) dirty.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Out of all the thrills you could seek in space, why mining?

How did you make your fortune? What unpleasantness did you have to ignore in order to do so?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *brave, comfortable accommodations, exceptionally wealthy, hired help, new equipment*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *naive, not prepared, unskilled*

STARSHIP ENGINEER

A (likely harried) engineer, formerly of a large commercial starship, now seeking your fortune.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What's the worst problem you've ever had to deal with on a ship, and how did you solve it?

How integral do you see yourself to the operation of the team?

Does everyone else agree?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *assess, full repair, jury-rigged weaponry, pilot in a pinch, slap some tape on it*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *core meltdown, hull breach, overworked*

CORPORATE SPY

A spy for a rival corporation sent to gather info on Dorado Station.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What company do you work for? How do you feel about them?
Who knows your secret and what leverage do you have to keep them quiet?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *disguise, doublespeak, hack, slink, spy gadget*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *disavowed, distrusted, exposed*

PACK TRAIT KEYWORDS

KEYWORD

EXAMPLE EQUIPMENT

Maintenance

Repair kit, arc welder, speed tape, replacement parts, spare plasma coil

Medical

Med-kit, dermal sealant, injector, protective gear, diagnoser

Miner

Custom drill bits, plasma pick, crystal containment, plasma charges, detonator

Pilot

Biolocked keys, ranged weapon, flight suit, navigation computer, console bobblehead

Security

Ranged weapon, melee weapon, body armor, binoculars, spare ammunition

TECHNIQUES

THE JUICE

You know how to take a small amount of warpstone dust, mix it with just the right amount of fuel, and make “The Juice”: a volatile concoction that’s just as effective a lobbed bomb as it is a boosting fuel for your Prospector Shuttle. You can temporarily double the speed of the shuttle, but it puts increased strain on the engine, threatening a meltdown. If you choose to use it as a bomb, make an Action Roll to throw it at a target. On a Failure, the bomb detonates near the target but only causes it to shift down two dice. “The Juice” cannot be used as a bomb *and* as fuel; you must choose one when you use it. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

QUANTUM TETHER

Sometimes you need to get back to your shuttle quickly. The quantum tether keeps the miner quantum-entangled to their ship, allowing them to quickly transport back, as long as the ship remains on the surface of the planet. When you use this Technique, you immediately return to your ship. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

SANDSPEAK

You have a working knowledge of the shifting sands and shale of Ordaz II and can usually tell how your day is going to go after a glance at the ground. When navigating Ordaz II, you may ask the GM two of the following questions, which they have to answer truthfully:

- ▶ Where is the closest source of warpstone?
- ▶ Where is the nearest shalemaw (or moleshank) nest?
- ▶ How many shuttles have landed before us in the past day?
- ▶ Where can we find temporary safety to avoid danger?
- ▶ You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

JUMP PACK

When you find yourself in the wrong place at the wrong time, look no further than the Ordaz Brand Jump Pack. Never faulty, and any accidents are purely due to operator error. The jump pack is useful for accessing hard-to-reach places and avoiding attacks by more forward-thinking enemies. You can use this Technique to dodge an attack or overcome a tall obstacle. You can use this Technique three times per Safe Rest or session.

HARDLIGHT PICK

While most prospectors use standard-issue equipment, you’ve squirreled away something truly special: a hardlight pick. An experimental prototype, the head of the pick is literally made of hardened light. Because of this, it’s extremely light and can be swung for hours without exerting the user. When mining, you may use this Technique to shift down the Shift Die of the structure, crystal, or inanimate object twice. You can use this Technique three times per Safe Rest or session.

ADVERSARIES

RIVAL PROSPECTOR

POWER 1 | SCALE 1

Coming in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and gender expressions, the one thing that unites all prospectors is a love of credits. Usually flunkies of someone more important, these are your bread-and-butter human rivals on the planet of Ordaz II, and you may get into verbal scrapes with them on the station proper. into verbal scrapes with on the station proper.



ATTITUDE

COMPETITIVE

If you're making money, they aren't. They'd prefer to see that arrangement reversed.

TRAIT

UNDETERRED

These goons keep coming. They don't have the good sense to just die, because the money is good enough that even injurious failure is not enough to keep them from prospecting.

TRAIT

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

A variety of mining equipment has been jury-rigged into various forms of semi-functional weaponry, as dangerous to the user as their intended targets.



SHUTTLE SECURITY

POWER 2 | SCALE 1

Hardened mercs, former pirates, and ex-military make up the meatheads who guard the prospectors. They are paid well for their time, and do their job with the utmost professionalism (well, except the pirates). Prospector squads with one or two Shuttle Security that have been successful on a number of runs are tough and shouldn't be taken lightly.



ATTITUDE

WARY

These guards don't want to get into any unnecessary scrapes, and they treat other prospecting teams with a wary disdain that says, "Approach not, lest ye be shot dead."



TRAIT

BATTLE TACTICS

They know how to make the battlefield work in their favor, finding optimal cover and places to line up perfect kill shots.



TRAIT

ADVANCED WEAPONRY

Laser pistols, plasma casters, sonic emitters...you name it, they have it. If these mercs could have lifted an experimental weapon from a previous job, they did. And they put it to fine use here.



TRAIT

HEAVY ARMOR

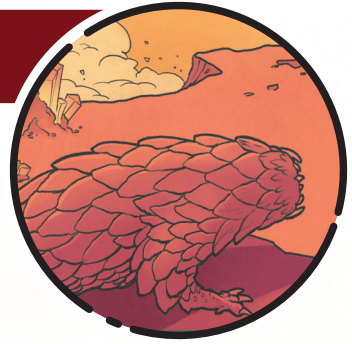
Shuttle Security never leaves home without reinforced body armor. Whether to repel other prospectors or save them from a moleshank tooth, it does the trick.



MOLESHANK

POWER 3 | SCALE 1

Fully blind, these tunneling, armor-plated beasts are fearsome pack predators that look like a pangolin with a lamprey maw, complete with teeth that spin like drills. Before humans arrived on Ordaz II, moleshanks subsisted on a diet of mostly raw iron, grinding it up in their horrible maws and expelling it as a fine powder. Unfortunately for prospectors, they recently developed a taste for the iron in human blood.



ATTITUDE

HUNGRY

The moleshanks view prospectors as snacks, and if they had the cognizance they would consider them delicacies.



TRAIT

TUNNEL

Moleshanks can tunnel through solid metal, consuming it as they go. They can definitely tunnel through a human body with ease.



TRAIT

GRAB AND GRIND

A relatively new hunting technique designed to shuck armor off a target, the moleshank will tunnel under it, burst up, grab it, and grind it with its teeth.



TRAIT

PLATED ARMOR

Kinetic weaponry is of little use against the moleshanks, reflecting off its armored plating. Energy weapons are starting to become more common as a result.



TRAIT

PACK HUNTERS

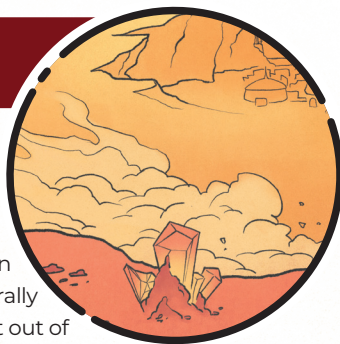
When hunting in a group, an alpha is designated. As long as the alpha lives, all other moleshanks fight to the death with unmatched fervor.



SHALEMAW

POWER 4 | SCALE 1

Akin to sand-bound, spine-covered baleen whales, shalemaws swim through the vast deserts and consume the iron dust leftover from moleshanks' digestion. Ecosystem! These slow-moving juggernauts are easily avoided in most cases but nigh unstoppable if forced into an Encounter. They can be spotted from miles away and generally don't attack unless they are attacked first, or if you don't get out of its way. Still, some foolhardy prospectors think the ambergris hidden in their digestive tracts is too valuable to pass up.



ATTITUDE

NONPLUSSED

These gigantic sand whales care not for the tiny creatures that walk the dunes and only seek vengeance on those that attempt to harm them. Still, collateral consumption is common.



TRAIT

GREAT MAW

Moving through the sand, their gigantic mouths open in a 60-foot circle, and they consume anything in their direct path. Shuttles included.



TRAIT

DIGEST

Anything swallowed passes through a positively massive digestive tract and is eventually digested and compacted. There might even be someone you know in there!



TRAIT

STONE HIDE

Their diet of iron has hardened their skin into a near-impenetrable hide.



TRAIT

UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

There are few things that can stop a shalemaw moving at full speed. Those not swallowed by it are crushed between it and the sand or stone in its wake.



TRAIT

PRECEDING ADVERSARIES

When a shalemaw appears, there is usually something or someone running from it, likely terrified moleshanks or desperate prospectors. You stand between them and freedom, and they'll punch a hole in you if they need to.



DORADO STATION ENCOUNTER: CLAIM SQUATTERS, GO HOME!



You and your crew have scraped together some half-decent equipment, filled out all the appropriate paperwork (in triplicate), and you are now finally ready to mine your claim! Unfortunately, you've discovered that a couple of rival prospectors have squatted on your plot, and you need to show them who's boss. Take them out, scare them off, or (if you're desperate) make a deal with them—the choice is yours!



DESCRIPTION

This Encounter is a quick and dirty introduction to the Dorado Station World Spark. Dorado Station is a tongue-in-cheek setting that channels video games like **Borderlands** and **The Outer Worlds**. The world of Dorado Station is all about larger-than-life characters, strange mutated monsters, and big, risky chances for glory.

CHARACTER CREATION

Have players come up with their concepts first—encourage them to borrow ideas from their favorite sci-fi settings if they aren't sure where to start. Once their concepts are settled, have them create their Characters as follows:

- Assign a D6, D8, and D10 Shift Die to their **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul** Core Traits, in any combination.
- Choose or create two Focus Traits, assigning one of them a D4 Shift Die and the other a D6. Additionally, each player will assign two Keywords to each of their Focus Traits. The Dorado Station World Spark has ten example Focus Traits for players to choose from, with example Keywords and Drawbacks included.

ENCOUNTER BREAKDOWN

PART 1: ROUGH LANDING

The Encounter begins with the Characters landing on Ordaz II, ready to find their fortune. Right on time, however, one of the Characters is alerted to some bad news via their communication pad: someone has stolen their claim! The Characters immediately know who did it—their rivals from Dorado Station.

Create Rivals. Have the table come up with their two rivals, one leader and their sidekick. Don't worry about all the details—just names, major personality traits, and their relationships to the Characters will do for now. These two will turn up later!

PART 2: THE JOURNEY TO THE CLAIM

The surface of Ordaz II is composed mostly of dusty orange rock, large stone formations, and deep canyons. Represent the journey with a Trait:

THE JOURNEY TO THE CLAIM

6

Let players describe actions that their Characters take to navigate toward their claim, and have them make Action Rolls against the journey's Trait. When the journey's Trait is Exhausted, the Characters have arrived at their claim.

Obstacles. As the party makes progress against the journey's Trait, put new obstacles in their way. These can include things like rock slides, canyon walls causing interference to their gear, local wildlife, and so on. When the environment causes the party issues, you can roll the journey's current Trait die to see if it has a negative effect on the Characters. A successful roll on the journey's Trait die might injure a Character or introduce a new complication.

Injured Moleshank. Halfway through the journey, the party is ambushed by an injured and desperate moleshank. Its stats are the same as presented in the Dorado Station World Spark, but it is missing its **Pack Hunters** Trait, and its **Tunnel** and **Plated Armor** Traits have both shifted down to a D10 from its injuries. In this state, it is also only considered a Power 2 Adversary. The party can deal with this creature any way they see fit. Remember though, defeating an Adversary doesn't have to mean killing it; it could mean scaring it off or even making it a new ally.

PART 3: TAKING BACK THE CLAIM

Once the party arrives at the cave entrance that leads to their claim, they find the claims beacon already activated, despite the party being the only one that has the proper digital key to activate it.

Interacting with the Beacon. A Character that interfaces with the beacon

somehow unlocks a scan of the claim, which shows a steep incline from the cave entrance down to a larger cavern. It also reveals that two people are already down in the cavern—their rivals!

Defeating Their Rivals. Use a single Rival Prospector stat block from the Dorado Station World Spark to represent both of the rivals, but add an extra D8 Trait that represents the sidekick. Additionally, treat them as a Power 2 Adversary, requiring two of their Traits to be Exhausted before they are overcome and giving them two Action Rolls during their turn in Encounters. Negotiating and making deals with them are on the table, but coming to an agreement won't be easy.

EPILOGUE

Once the party deals with their rivals, the claim is theirs, and they can start digging up their next payday. Fortune and glory await on Ordaz II!



DRAGON-KNIGHTS OF YLGARA

A FANTASY SHIFT WORLD SPARK



CONCEPT

The old kingdoms are no more. When the walls of reality split like worm-eaten wood, the things that squirmed through those breaches did more than kill and destroy. They disgorged foul servitor-creatures that spread far and wide, bringing devastation. This was not a singular cataclysm; each wave of intruders was its own sort of apocalypse, and the old kingdoms of Ylgara were doomed.

Until hope came on wings of fire.

When the Abhorrent and their malevolent Spawn breached Ylgara, the dragons of the ancient world awoke. Slumbering for centuries in their hidden lairs, the First Children of Ylgara rose to save their world from the vile intrusion. Some chose to face the intruders head-on in battle after battle, while others saw the poor creatures struggling to survive the devastation of Ylgara and took pity on them. Gathering survivors the world over, these dragons led their peoples to their territories and made new homes for them, protecting them from the Abhorrent. A key gift granted by the dragons was access to wyrmstone, enchanted gemstones that coalesce from an elder dragon's very soul, to be used against the Abhorrent. The creation of wyrmstone is not without its dangers, and a dragon's first wyrmstone, known as its Crown-Stone, can leave even the most powerful dragons vulnerable for a brief time.

In return for the dragons' protection, the people of Ylgara swore oaths of fealty and service to these dragon-lieges. The strongest were given ancient artifacts from their lieges' hoards: mighty weapons and sorcerous implements with which these champions fought the Spawn of the Abhorrent and defended their slowly rebuilding communities. Years have passed since the Abhorrent changed Ylgara forever, and now is a time of survival, reclamation, and regrowth.

In this World Spark, players will play as Dragon-Knights and brave heroes who have sworn to defend Refuge, one of the last bastions of Ylgara built on the bones of the world before. Protected and guided by a trio of dragons named Exigal, Valtandis, and their queen, Galera (collectively known as the Dragon Court), the Dragon-Knights venture out into the wasteland armed with powerful wyrmstone gifts in order to push back the evil influence of the Abhorrent.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Ylgara's people are survivors, having lived through the terrible onslaught of the Abhorrent. This World Spark's building blocks use the standard SHIFT rulesets.

CORE TRAITS

This world uses the standard Core Traits: **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul**.

Body. Fortitude and physical adroitness are governed by the **Body** Trait, allowing a hero to survive the hazards and hunger of the wastelands. Use **Body** to battle the many threats in Ylgara, to weather a storm or plague, or to scramble to safety in an avalanche or sudden flood. The **Body** might be injured by grievous wounds, a lack of food or water, or sheer fatigue.

Mind. Intelligence and intuition are at the core of the **Mind** Trait. Use **Mind** to notice dangers before you stumble into them, to decode an ancient book, and to remain calm in the face of overwhelming odds. The **Mind** might be injured by witnessing terrifying, Abhorrent-wrought horrors or simply dealing with the difficulties of survival, by a recurring prophecy that echoes through your dreams, or by the mental touch of some ancient artifact or magic.

Soul. Connection is the heart of the **Soul** Trait, not only connecting socially to other people, but connecting with the artifacts and magics granted to Dragon-Knights. Use **Soul** to convince wastelanders to leave you in peace, to negotiate with a hidden enclave of craftsfolk, or to tap into the magic of a place of power. The **Soul** might be injured by sorcerous backlash, an ancient curse, or by the wearing-thin that comes of too many demands with too little time to recover.

TRAVEL

Ylgara's lands are dangerous for anyone but the capable or lucky. Wild places grow strange thanks to the influence of the Abhorrent, and the ruins of settlements hold as many dangers as they do memories. The suggested travel ruleset for Ylgara is Challenging Travel. Those traveling the wastelands survive by making allies in settlements and finding the occasional precious safe haven between hazardous regions.

REST AND RECOVERY

For ordinary folk, the world of Ylgara would qualify as Challenging when it comes to rest and recovery. Fortunately, some of the benefits of those who venture into the world with the blessings of the dragons is the ability to do more with less and to recover more quickly even in adverse conditions. Generally speaking, Standard Rest and Recovery mechanics are the norm for Dragon-Knights of Ylgara.



LOCATION: REFUGE, THE UNFALLEN CITY

Once there was Crowngard, a beautiful and envied city. At its edge stood a tall escarpment upon which sat the royal castle, both elegant and strong, wrought of finest stone. But then, the sky above Crowngard unraveled like cheap linen, and an unnamed and unnamable thing fell through. Another of the Abhorrent, here in a city whose streets and resources were already strained with the refugees of other Abhorrent attacks.

The castle's residents were the first to fall, including the royal family. But as the last of the royal line died, the mountain trembled. Exploding outward from the base of the escarpment came a vision out of legend: a dragon. At the hour of the city's greatest need, the first of the dragons, Queen Galera, awoke and came to the aid of the people of Crowngard. Her arrival heralded the awakening of the other dragons across Ylgara, but she was the first. She managed to drive the horror off, and it retreated into the harbor, leaving her victorious. In the great promenade square at the base of the escarpment, she swore to protect the people of the city and any who came to her seeking sanctuary. It was Crowngard no longer, for there was no longer any crown to guard, but instead it was a Refuge, she said, and that has been its name ever since.

Refuge's boundaries encompass the borders of the old city Crowngard, and the efforts of the Dragon Court and its knights have pushed that border slowly into the surrounding Spawn-filled ruins, slowly reclaiming it. The Abhorrent-Spawn constantly test those boundaries, forcing Refuge's defenders to be ever vigilant.

LOCATION TRAITS

Attitude (D8). If there is one thing that binds Refuge-folk together, it is hope. Some pin that hope on Queen Galera or one of the other dragons, others on the Court of Dragons as a whole, while others look to their neighbours putting aside petty differences to build something strong. Either way, the people remain *hopeful* despite circumstances outside of Refuge.

Wealth (D10). Queen Galera has opened Refuge to any who need sanctuary. While an act of incredible compassion, it also strains resources. Equipment is likely to be scavenged from other ruins rather than freshly crafted, and there is rarely enough food for everyone.

Security and Safety (D6). Between the efforts of the Dragon-Knights and the wyrm-wards (powerful magical barriers) erected by the Court and its wyrmstone sorcerers, Refuge is the safest of the sanctuaries in Ylgara. Streets within the wards are relatively secure, with the wyrm-wards hedging out all but the most powerful Abhorrent Spawn. Beyond the wards, regular rotations of Dragon-Knights patrol and fight off horrors in hopes of reclaiming more of the city.

Draconic Presence (D8). Queen Galera and the other members of the Dragon Court have taken an oath to make the safety of Refuge their principal goal, and their presence is proof of that. While they cannot be everywhere, it is not uncommon for one of the Court's dragons to show up to lend aid, whether in situations of danger, disaster, or when tensions rise among the survivors and a mediator is required.

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

The Dragon Throne (Safe). The great castle that rises up from a tall foundation of stone is not just the heart of Refuge, it is also all that remains of Crownard and a reminder of what has been lost. In the years since, the great bed of stone has become home to the Court of Dragons, carved through with winding passages and private quarters for the dragons, including Exigal, Galera, and Valtandis, the elders of the Court. The Dragon Throne acts as home and headquarters for several groups in Refuge: the Dragon-Knights, the wyrmstone sorcerers, a small body of soldiers who act to defend the city's populace, as well as myriad adventurers and helpful volunteers who scrounge and hunt for supplies and food. A cavern entrance in the base of the stone foundation opens up just above the city streets and serves as the meeting place and throne room for the Court.

The Fountain Square (Safe). When Galera landed after driving off the Abhorrent that nearly destroyed the city, she assured the onlookers that she was here to stay and defend them. The power of her oath swelled, and where her great claws, extended before her in oath-giving, touched the cobbles, a great spring of water rose up. The people quickly built a pool wall around it, and eventually a fountain with a carving of Queen Galera with her claws extended outward. The pool acts as the main water source for Refuge now, as many of the other sources are terribly tainted by the Spawn that infest the city's unsafe areas. It is a gathering place of the people, the center of Refuge's community, and a source of hope and inspiration for them all.

The Last Dash (Unsafe). The path to Refuge is perilous, but the avenue once known as Crown Way is the final stretch before safety. The Spawn that terrorize the uncontrolled portions of Refuge know this and stalk its boundaries. Once-a-day patrols aim to roust any dangers lying in

wait, but canny beasts often know to avoid the patrols of Dragon-Knights and wait for less-armored morsels to come along. Travelers who reach the wyrm-ward that marks the boundary of controlled Refuge are given immediate food and rest, but the locals have named the approach the "Last Dash" in acknowledgement of the final burst of speed and vigor needed to reach that safety.

The Old Harbor (Unsafe). Rotting sea-going vessels rest half-sunken in the filthy waters of the destroyed harbor. Something unwholesome has taken up residence in the many nooks and crannies of the debris-littered ridges and shoals of the deep harbor floor. A massive knot of roiling tentacles, the Harbor Beast is a potent Abhorrent Spawn. Despite its size, it is capable of slipping away through the most unlikely routes, squeezing through gaps far smaller than it with ease. It is served by a bevy of aquatic terrors, some of which are more than capable of slipping out of the water to hunt or which have found their way into the old rain-flow tunnels of the city.

The Foundrylands (Unsafe). Within a day's ride of the city are craggy foothills riddled with old mines and smelter camps. Once a thriving hub of export for the old city, they are now empty except for hungry terrors and a supernatural, choking dust. In recent years, the Foundrylands were the hunting grounds of Spawn from the Abhorrent known as the Howling, but they seem to have given way to the arch-predators of the Abhorrent Voracious in recent months. In response to the growing threats, Dojimar the Steel Dragon set out to investigate the threats of the Foundrylands in hopes of establishing a secure outpost and seizing control of a mine to hopefully provide for Refuge. But Dojimar never returned, and whispers around the Court say that the queen and other elder dragons fear he may have become stonelost.



WHAT ARE THE STONELOST?

Dragons are hardy, their spirits well-defended from the corruption of the Abhorrent. But in some circumstances, elder dragons whose spirits so overflow with magic that it coalesces into gemstones may fall to their influence. In order to kill an elder dragon, their crown-stone, the first stone they ever manifest, must be prised from their skull and shattered. Into this vulnerable wound, the Abhorrent pours its malign essence, creating a terrible creature driven by alien urges. A stonelost wyrm is still a dragon, though they are subservient to no one—the corrupted drake doesn't serve the Abhorrent outright. Instead, their usual personality and goals are replaced with warped versions that closely align with those of the Abhorrent that has tainted their spirits, creating a terrible foe to Ylgara above all else

IMPORTANT NPCs

The people of Refuge have no choice but to be resilient. They are vigilant for threats to their safety and are nearly all willing to sacrifice themselves to ensure that others survive.

Queen Galera [she/her]. A mighty gold-and-emerald elder dragon, Galera is the very picture of fierce nobility. Her oath to defend Refuge and its people is the center of her drive, and she firmly believes that all of Ylgara will be saved not by some singular effort to “save the world” but by doing what she has undertaken: to create a pocket of protected safety, and then fight tooth and claw to extend it slowly over

time. Galera can be short-tempered with other dragons (particularly those who don't agree with her methods or goals), but she always treats non-dragon folk with gentle benevolence and compassion. In her mind, all of the land's people bear deep scars from the traumas inflicted on them by the Abhorrent, and she makes concessions for people lashing out or giving in to grief or rage. Her **Attitude** toward the Characters is **magnanimous**.

Castellan Imaris Veldyn [they/them].

None of the groups who use the Dragon Throne as a base of operations have authority over one another nor over the castle proper: it is Castellan Imaris who is entrusted by the Dragon Court with managing the resources and logistics of the Dragon Throne, keeping it supplied and organized. They also work to keep things peaceful and orderly among the various inhabitants. They are a tall figure with long, straight, brown hair and a single pectoral chain of office given to them by Queen Galera. This pectorale is magical and set with one of Galera's wyrmstones, allowing the castellan to (among other things) communicate silently with the queen herself. Their **Attitude** toward the Characters is **helpful**.

Fountain-Keeper Mildaris [he/him].

The fountain-keeper acts as protector of the people gathered in Refuge and sees to feeding and housing them. Everyone agrees that although Mildaris does an amazing job with what little he has to work with, the strain of the task weighs heavily on him. He tends to be dismissive and abrupt, always hurrying through interactions because he has other tasks to focus on. He especially lacks patience for adventurers, seeing them as thrill-seekers with no real sense of responsibility. His **Attitude** toward the Characters is **impatient**.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There is always something that needs doing in Refuge and never enough people with the mettle to do it.

The Lost Caravan. Twelve hours ago, scouts spotted a group of refugees traveling through the dangerous outskirts of the city with two ox-pulled wagons. They should have arrived by now, but there has been no further sign of them. Fountain-Keeper Mildaris needs someone willing to seek the refugees out—if they are lost or hurt, they should be brought back, but if the worst has happened, folks should know. Either way, Mildaris also asks the Characters to see if any of the goods they brought with them have survived whatever misfortune has befallen them.

Night Terrors. Castellan Imaris Veldyn confides in one of the Characters that they fear something unwholesome has found its way into the Dragon Throne's halls. Dragons and visitors who visit there all report disturbances in their sleep via terrible dreams. Fortunately, Imaris is in a position to be alerted to such events and realize its reach. What has slithered its way into the dark cellars and rotting garrets, and how is it causing these terrible dreams?

Into the Foundrylands. Queen Galera has a task that needs doing, but she needs folk who are willing to be discreet about it. Scouts have spotted a winged silhouette over the Foundrylands, and she fears that Dojimar the Steel Dragon has fallen to the influence of one of the Abhorrent. She tasks the Characters to venture into those horrible lands and see if it is Dojimar. They will know him by his silver-and-hematite scales and the single hematite stone that sits upon his brow. If the worst has happened, they must return to her with word of it so the Council can decide what to do next.



FOCUS TRAITS

These Traits represent some of the roles and skills players creating Characters in Ylgara can choose from.

HOARDBEARER

You bear a precious artifact gifted to you from a dragon's hoard. In return, you offer fealty to that dragon and to the people that dragon has taken under their wing.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What is the item you bear called, and what is its legend? What is the curse that awaits you within it, should your resolve falter?

What is the purpose you were sworn to in exchange for this artifact, and how do you feel about this duty?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *glory, guard, intimidate, serve, strike*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *artifact-cursed, draining, obligation*

HUNTER

You are a hunter and a stalker, moving unseen by your prey until you are ready to strike.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What is your preferred weapon, and where did you learn its use?

What is the quarry you are known for taking down? What does everyone assume about you because of this great accomplishment?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *stalk, steal, strike, survive, track*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *hunted, off-balance, spotted*

RUINS CROW

Like a crow on a battlefield, you are drawn to the ruins of old cities. You pick at corpses and refuse, carrying resources and secrets away as your prizes.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

In hunting through old ruins, what specifically do you tend to search for?

What horrible discovery have you made in your explorations?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *dig, find, hide, investigate, scavenge*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *afflicted, haunted, lost*

SCAVENGEWRIGHT

Many of the old arcane crafts may have been lost to the coming of the Abhorrent, but you have mastered the talent for combining their remnants in surprising, useful, and only occasionally disastrous ways.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What is the signature gadget you bear with you at all times and that you are best known for?

What piece of work do you regret working on, and why?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *confine, gadget, maintain, repurpose, upgrade*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *arcane backlash, inventor's block, out of materials*

STONE OF GALERA

You bear one of the emeralds of Queen Galera, granting you access to her powers of brilliance, passion, and protection...but be wary of the blinding light you now wield.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What was your act of inspirational courage or sacrifice that gained Galera's respect?

When you first touched the emerald, how did it demand that you improve yourself as its bearer?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *endure, fire, inspire, light, protect*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *blinded, overbearing, scalded*

STONE OF EXIGAL

You bear one of the amethysts of Exigal the Shadow, granting you access to his powers of stealth, cold, and the invocation of terror in your foes. Mind your spirit, however, for Exigal's contempt for his lessers may bleed through.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What secret did you whisper to Exigal when he granted you your stone, and what would the consequences be if anyone else discovered this secret?

When you first touched the amethyst, what hope or dream did you have to feed it in order to prove your worth to it?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *darkness, escape, freeze, hide, intimidate*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *callous, corrupted, selfish*

STONE OF VALTANDIS

You bear one of the sapphires of Valtandis-Who-Dreams, granting you access to their powers of healing, prophecy in slumber, and binding. Be cautious that you are not touched by their whimsy and distraction, however.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What is the prophetic dream you had that attracted Valtandis's notice? Has it come true yet?

When you first touched the sapphire, what act of mercy did it demand of you, and why was it so hard for you to accomplish? How do you wear or carry the stone?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *confine, flora, guidance, recover, sleep*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *daydreaming, fickle, slumberful*

WAR-DRAKE

You're a young dragon, old enough to have found your speech, but nowhere near ready to manifest your first wyrmstone. You have answered the elder dragons' call to war, though, and are ready to do them proud against the Abhorrent and their Spawn.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What is the primary color of your scales, and what gemstone is your underbelly and accents?

What was the singular event of wonder or terror that prompted you to join the fight against the Abhorrent?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *evade, ferocious, fire, fly, sustain*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *battle frenzied, lost speech, overexerted*

WATERS-GRACED

When you first drank the waters of the queen's fountain, a deep, serene well of ancient compassion and power awoke in you. You are a healer of your people, empowered by the waters of the blessed Fountain Square and other pure sources of clean water.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What deep pain or trauma had you numbed yourself to until your first drink of the fountain's waters, and how does it shape your purpose?

What vessel do you carry your sacred waters in, and what is your personal ritual for blessing the water with which you refill your vessel?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *compassionate, mediate, nurture, recover, sustain*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *burnt-out, empty vessel, overwhelmed*

WASTELANDS NOMAD

You have spent much time in the most volatile parts of the wastelands. It's made you very capable outside of the dragon sanctuaries of the world, but it's also hardened and scarred you.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Did you grow up in the wastelands? If not, how did you come to spend so much time there?

What feature or personality quirk do you bear that marks you as an outsider among civilized people? How do you feel about it?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *endure, evade, fauna, stalk, survive*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *antisocial, callous, violent*

WYRMRIDER

You are trained to ride a non-sapient dragon called a war-drake in defense of your people, soaring the skies with your boon companion.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What is the name of your war-drake companion, and how did you meet?

What duties have you and your companion proven to be most skilled at?

What jobs do you hate being given?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *balance, connected, fly, martial, restore*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *fallen, grief-stricken, overwhelmed*

WYRMSTONE SORCERER

You have been trained in the wielding of wyrmstone to connect with the ancient magics of the land, which come naturally to dragons. You protect your people and serve your dragon using those sorceries to set wards, strengthen defenders, and strike down the Abhorrent-Spawn.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How did you first learn of your affinity for magic, and how have you learned to control it?

If you bear a full wyrmstone (possessing one of the “Stone of...” Traits), how does its resonance influence the flavor of your sorcery, positively and negatively?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *bolster, evoke, guide, strike, ward*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *overextended, power-seared, psychically numbed*

PACK TRAIT KEYWORDS

Most of what the folk of Ylgara carry with them are either rough-made items or things scavenged from the old world.

KEYWORD

EXAMPLE EQUIPMENT

Knight

Sword or other melee weapon, whetstone and sword oil, bedroll, tinder kit, banner

Mystic

Meditative focus, energizing drink made from fermented mushrooms, a set of divinatory cards or stones, vessel of sacred water, icon of a dragon

Scavenger

Blade, metal scraps for patching armor, dirty but valuable trinket, bundle of wire and twine, weak alchemical acid

Scout

Cloak, short bow and quiver of arrows, alchemical flare, field dressing kit, handheld signaling mirror

Wanderer

Hunter's snare, traveling staff, throwing knives, poorly preserved rations, herbal remedies kit

TECHNIQUES

The heroes of Ylgara bring a scavenger's wit, fury against the Abhorrent, and the blessings of the dragons to bear in this splintered world.

DRACONIC MIGHT

Your close association with one of the draconic protectors of Ylgara has given you insight into their power, and you may tap into it for yourself. On a single roll against the Abhorrent, their Spawn, or their servitors, you may upgrade one Failure to a Success or one Success to a Critical Success. The outcome of this roll is always significant, marking you as a threat to any nearby foes. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

HEROIC AURA

You inspire courage and trust in others. You can speak with an NPC or group of NPCs and cause them to see you as a hero. This doesn't create immediate friendship, but they are likely to regard you as someone capable of great feats. Those in need might see you as a savior, and those hostile to you might have second thoughts about antagonizing you. You cannot use this Technique during an encounter. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

SENSE FOR DANGER

You have an uncanny knack for anticipating trouble. At the start of an Encounter, if your side does not have advantage, you may choose to give your side advantage. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

When you have this Technique, the GM may also tell you if an area is under the influence of an Abhorrent when you enter such an area. (This does not count against the number of uses you have of this Technique.)

SCAVENGER'S LUCK

You are skilled at finding useful gear in the ruins of the old world. You may create a Temporary Focus Trait without shifting down your **Pack** Trait die. Whatever you discover does not need to fit the theme of your **Pack** Trait's Keywords. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

WARDINGS

Your aptitude with magical protections serves you and your allies well. When you are in an Unsafe area, you may spend one hour warding the area, and it becomes a Safe area until you finish a Safe Rest there.. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.



ADVERSARIES

The things that have seeped into Ylgara from whatever horrorscape they originated from have no names that folk can comprehend. To dragonkind, they are simply “the enemy” or “the adversary.” Most commonly, they are referred to as the Abhorrent, so named for the horrible, uncanny forms they bear, unlike anything seen in the natural world.

No two Abhorrent are alike in form or behavior. Each is a unique monstrosity, sufficiently mighty in power that even an assault from one of the great dragons is not sufficient to destroy them for good. Whether because they are singularly strong or because their regenerative or rebirthing capabilities are not so easily defeated by mere violence, a battle with an Abhorrent is a long-term fight. Let there be no mistake: the stakes of each of these battles is nothing less than the right to exist in Ylgara.

These are the better-known Abhorrent, but they are far from the only ones that torment Ylgara.

► **The Obliviate:** The Obliviate lurks beneath the shadows of mountains, occasionally rising into the lowest part of mountain citadels to unleash shadowy Spawn on those who dwell beneath the earth. Skulking beneath the ground, away from the light, the essence of the Obliviate is *cold, darkened, forgotten,* and *lonely*.

► **The Pestilent:** The Pestilent slowly spreads a feverish morass of congealing ichor and half-dissolved flesh, its approach heralded by disease and plague. Slowly creeping across the lands, the Pestilent is *diseased, feverish, pustulent,* and *unclean*.

► **The Voracious:** The unnatural fires of the Voracious have largely consumed the woodland homes of the westernmost forest-dwelling people. It is a pale flame that consumes all things, living and otherwise, leaving only unwholesome gritty ash. It is *agonized, burning, consuming,* and *nuclear*.

► **The Howling:** The dry sandstone canyons of the Varinlands have become the hunting grounds of the carnivorous winds of the Howling. The unseen, horrible winds of the Howling, driving living things to acts of desperate consumption, are *cannibalistic, maddening, tempestuous,* and *visceral*.

The names presented here were ones given by the people of Ylgara, not the true names of the horrors. These given names tend to be more descriptive of the entity's appearance and activities, but if the creatures have objection to such a reductive nomenclature, they have yet to voice it.

Indeed, as far as anyone can tell, the Abhorrent do not communicate (at least as we understand communication). The Spawn simply know the will of their originator. They do not willingly coexist in the same territory as other Abhorrent; where one exists, there is no room for another. Spawn from different Abhorrent do occasionally encounter one another, but there is no standard for how they interact. They may ignore one another, fall into conflict, or even seem to cooperate for a time. In some ways, they interact with one another the way animals in the natural world do, although if there are designations of prey versus predator among them, they are entirely unseen by the folk of Ylgara.

STONELOST WYRM

POWER 4 | SCALE 2

A dragon of cruel and terrible countenance. Its scales are pale and cracked as though diseased. Its eyes are maddened, and the crown-stone that normally adorns its brow has been ripped out, leaving a hideous wound that slowly weeps a black, tarry ichor.

ATTITUDE

CORRUPTED

The draconic magic of the stonelost has been diseased, turning to serve the alien urges of the Abhorrent instead of the land of Ylgara. The exact nature of this depends on the Abhorrent to which the wurm is aligned.

TRAIT

DRACONIC FIRES

Although the fires of the dragon's spirit are changed, they are still mighty. They grant the stonelost wurm great endurance to pain and injury, and it may unleash them into its environs. Rather than simply burning as other dragons' breaths, the unnatural fires of a stonelost are pale and their damage unnatural: wyrms of the Obliviate create patches of black rot while those of the Howling macerate flesh.

TRAIT

INSENSATE SCALES

The stonelost wurm's body is not the healthy, strong form of other dragons. Its scales are cracked, its musculature enervated. But its might is still without question, for the Abhorrent free the wurm from mortal concerns like pain, allowing it to hurl itself into danger heedlessly, driven only by its new urges.

TRAIT

FANGS AND TALONS

The ancient, primal weapons of every dragon are still strong in the stonelost: a maw full of rending teeth and vicious talons on the tip of every limb, wings included.

TRAIT

UNHOLY STRENGTH AND SIZE

Even with a form riddled with the symptoms of Abhorrent investment, the stonelost wurm is a mighty creature capable of great feats of physical power.

TRAIT

WITHERED MAGICS

The mighty sorceries of elder dragons are notably diminished in the stonelost. The old draconic powers of elemental fury and natural protections are all but gone, replaced by sorceries aligned with their Abhorrent tormentor instead.

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WRITHELING

POWER 3 | SCALE 1

A horrifying amalgamation of squirming, writhing snakes all somehow merged into a single unsettling entity. It moves using some of its snake heads as limbs, while others lash out to strike at everything around it.

ATTITUDE

BERSERK

The monstrosity is driven by unreasoning, primal purpose, and either hunger or hatred of the light and warmth.

TRAIT

HYDRA-BODY

Though the individual components of the writheling's amalgam body are no tougher than the normal creatures from which they are wrought, they regenerate quickly.

TRAIT

SLITHER AND CRAWL

A writheling moves quickly, its undulations allowing it to slip through obstacles and distances with terrible, uncanny speed.

TRAIT

VENOMOUS BITES

A writheling's fangs drip with Abhorrent-augmented venom, striking with a dozen or more bites at the same time.

TRAIT

HIDDEN MENACE

Writhelings are adept at hiding themselves in places a creature of its size shouldn't be able to fit, and it moves silently.



SERPENTINE NIGHTMARES

The sandstone vipers of the Varinlands were once considered a nuisance to travelers there – dangerously venomous if they bit, but they were largely shy creatures that avoided people. With the twisting winds of the Howling shrieking through those canyons, many of the snakes were combined into new monstrosities: mashed-together amalgamations of numerous serpents, turned into ravenous things that slither, leap, and even brachiate among the tall rock outcroppings there. Their venom has been augmented by the touch of the Abhorrent, and their hunger seems eternal. Writhelings have also been encountered in the caverns haunted by the Obliviate, made up of light-hating subterranean serpents or even centipedes.

STONEMADDENED BEAST

POWER 2 | SCALE 1

Shards of sharp rock are embedded all over the hide of this huge beast, giving it a stony, spiky carapace. Its eyes are wide and maddened, and its face is stained with gore.

ATTITUDE

TERRITORIAL

Whatever place the stonemaddened beast has claimed as its own, it defends furiously and violently.



TRAIT

BRUTAL WEAPONRY

Whatever the natural weapons of the original creature, they are magnified and strengthened by the Abhorrent.



TRAIT

STONY CARAPACE

With bits of its local environs somehow fused with its form, the stonemaddened beast is strong and tough even beyond the capabilities of the animal it used to be.



TRAIT

MINDLESS FOCUS

Stonemaddened beasts are singularly driven and do not stop or turn aside from where their mind is set for anything save death or success.



CORRUPTED CREATURES

The Abhorrent do not create; they change. Even their so-called Spawn do not have a true genesis, but all started out as something else. The Abhorrent exert supernatural influence onto their environments and transform them, from landscapes reshaped into alien wastelands to the creatures found within those places transformed by the powers and themes of that Abhorrent.

Among the most common such transformations are the stonemaddened: animals infused with the harshest elements of the environment in which they live. Though they are called "stonemaddened," it is not only stone that is fused with their forms: from ancient hardwoods merged with stags and woodland hunting cats to raw veins of ore merged with the large, predatory lizards that hunt through the subterranean worlds, these beasts are always territorial and violent.

THE FORSWORN

POWER 1 | SCALE 1

A perfectly ordinary person, someone you might pass on the street every day. But hidden within, they have surrendered to dread and hopelessness and serve the Abhorrent...sometimes unknowingly, sometimes deliberately.

ATTITUDE

TREACHEROUS

The forsworn subverts efforts to battle and even survive against the Abhorrent.



TRAIT

NIHILISTIC HOPE

Truly desperate folk tell themselves lies that they cling to when true hope is too difficult. Fools they may be, but even fools can believe and draw strength from resignation.



TRAIT

SECRET PLOTS

Whether cunning manipulators or simply grieving folk who would lash out at the world, the forsworn always have secrets and machinations in play.



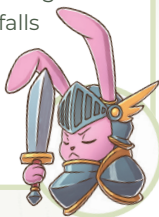
HOPELESS SOULS

The forsworn are perhaps the greatest enemies the people of Ylgara face for one simple reason: the forsworn have lost all hope and have given in to an apocalyptic creed. They believe that once the dragons are destroyed and Ylgara succumbs to the Abhorrent, it will be remade into a strange, peaceful world. Some seem to hope there will be a place for them there, but others are simply exhausted and grief-stricken with the ongoing struggle to simply exist, seeking only the end.

The forsworn cannot be detected, for they are (largely) untouched by the actual taint of the Abhorrent. They live among the peoples of Ylgara, silently subverting the efforts of dragons and heroes alike, sowing discord, despair, and ruin. Some of them claim to belong to a cult known as the Disciples of Ruin, but others simply give in to the darkest parts of themselves. Some claim to have received visions or messages from the Abhorrent themselves, although this is often met with skepticism and accusations of madness.

DRAGON KNIGHTS OF YLGARA ENCOUNTER: BACK FROM THE BRINK

An ill omen has fallen on your cadre. Your knight-captain has gone missing while on patrol in the outer ruins of Ylgara, and without their guidance you cannot complete your training. With the Dragon-Knights already spread thin protecting the city of Refuge from the encroaching Spawn, it falls on you to find out what happened to your captain and bring them back... dead or alive.



DESCRIPTION

This encounter introduces the grim setting of Ylgara, a ruined world trying to rebuild after the incursion of eldritch horrors known as the Abhorrent. Inspired by gritty fantasy like ***Game of Thrones*** and post-apocalyptic media like ***The Walking Dead***, players take on the roles of Dragon-Knights, powerful warriors who have sworn allegiance to the dragons protecting one of the last safe havens of Ylgara, the city of Refuge.

CHARACTER CREATION

The idea of Dragon-Knights evokes imagery of heavily armored warriors, but the knights fill their ranks with all kinds—scrappy scouts, spellcasters, and even some young dragons looking to prove their mettle. The Dragon-Knights of Ylgara World Spark presumes humans are the predominant species, but if your table wants to bring in fantastical races like elves or dwarves or wants to play as dragons, they should feel free to. Players might borrow ideas from their favorite fantasy and horror media for their character concepts. Once their concepts are settled, have them create their Characters as follows:

- Assign a D6, D8, and D10 Shift Die to their **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul** Core Traits, in any combination.
- Choose or create two Focus Traits, assigning one of them a D4 Shift Die and the other a D6. Additionally, each player will assign two Keywords to each of their Focus Traits. The Dragon-Knights of Ylgara World Spark has ten example Focus Traits for players to choose from, with example Keywords and Drawbacks included.

ENCOUNTER BREAKDOWN

PART 1: DRACONIC SUMMONS

The party is summoned before Queen Galera and given the news that their knight-captain has gone missing while on patrol through a particularly chaotic area of the ruins. The Queen implores the party to find their captain and their dragon mount and bring them back safely. The resources of Refuge are limited, and they can't afford to lose such an experienced knight. Queen Galera gifts the party with a special compass that can track a dragon using one of their scales. Provide the players with this shared Temporary Focus Trait:

DRAGON SCALE COMPASS



KEYWORDS: *reveal, track*

DRAWBACKS: *tuned to a specific dragon*

Create Your Knight-Captain and Their Dragon. As a group, name your knight-captain and their dragon companion. Have each player describe their relationship with the knight-captain as well as what connections they've made with the captain's dragon. Keep in mind, this figure has been a mentor and respected leader to your party, and they should look on them with reverence.

FOR THE GM: WHAT HAPPENED?

The truth is that the knight-captain's dragon companion has been corrupted by the Abhorrent and turned into a stonelost wyrm. The dragon turned on the knight and wounded them, and now the knight-captain is fighting for their life to survive while their former ally hunts them through the ruins. The party will have to choose to track down either the knight-captain or the stonelost dragon, rescuing the former and dealing with the latter.



PART 2: SEARCHING THE RUINS

Once the party leaves the relative safety of Refuge, they can begin their search for the knight-captain in the ruins. The players can decide to track the knight or the dragon, making Action Rolls to shift down the Trait that represents their target.

LOOKING FOR THE DRAGON

TRACKING THE DRAGON



Potential signs of the dragon:

- ▶ Scrape marks along ruin walls made by dragon scales
- ▶ Bloodstains mixed with black ichor
- ▶ Scorch marks and melted metal
- ▶ Cowering scavengers claiming to have seen "a rampaging creature"

LOOKING FOR THE DRAGON-KNIGHT

FINDING THE KNIGHT-CAPTAIN

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Potential signs of the knight-captain:

- ▶ A shattered and bent piece of armor
- ▶ A bloody bandage
- ▶ Bloodstains on some rubble
- ▶ A burnt fragment of parchment

While exploring the ruins, the Characters might encounter one or more of these obstacles:

- ▶ A lost forsworn, wandering the ruins in despair
- ▶ Paths blocked by crumbled walls
- ▶ Patches of corrupted energy from the influence of the Abhorrent

PART 3: FOUND AND LOST

How this encounter comes to a head depends on who the Characters search for.

Finding the Dragon. If the party tracks down the dragon, they find a terrible and tragic sight—the knight-captain's companion is in the final stages of transforming into a stonelost wyrm, cursed to serve the Abhorrent forever. The dragon is thrashing against the surrounding ruins, circling around a cornered and wounded knight-captain.

Finding the Knight-Captain. If the party instead races to find the knight-captain, they find them holding fast behind a half-collapsed wall. The captain has an injured leg in a makeshift splint, and the bandage is soaked through with blood. Their dragon is seeking them out on the other side of the wall, moments from finding them and the whole party.

Resolving the Battle. Once the Characters make themselves known to the dragon, it attacks. It uses the stonelost wyrm stat block, except it doesn't have access to its **Withered Magics** Trait and its Power is 3. The knight-captain is in distress, upset about the corruption that has taken over their friend. They are represented by a single Temporary Focus Trait:

INJURED KNIGHT-CAPTAIN



KEYWORDS: *bolster,*
longsword prowess

DRAWBACKS: *Broken leg*

The stonelost wyrm fights until one of its Traits has been Exhausted, after which it takes to the sky and returns to its new Abhorrent masters.

EPILOGUE

The knight-captain is inconsolable after the dragon departs, having lost a piece of their soul and their best friend to the corrupting forces of the Abhorrent. The party will have to help them get home, as their broken leg can't hold their weight. A funereal ceremony is held for their lost dragon, and the knight-captain swears to free it from its corrupted form.

If the knight-captain doesn't survive the fight, the sentiment when the party returns to Refuge is grimmer, as they break the news of losing the dragon and the knight-captain to the Abhorrent.

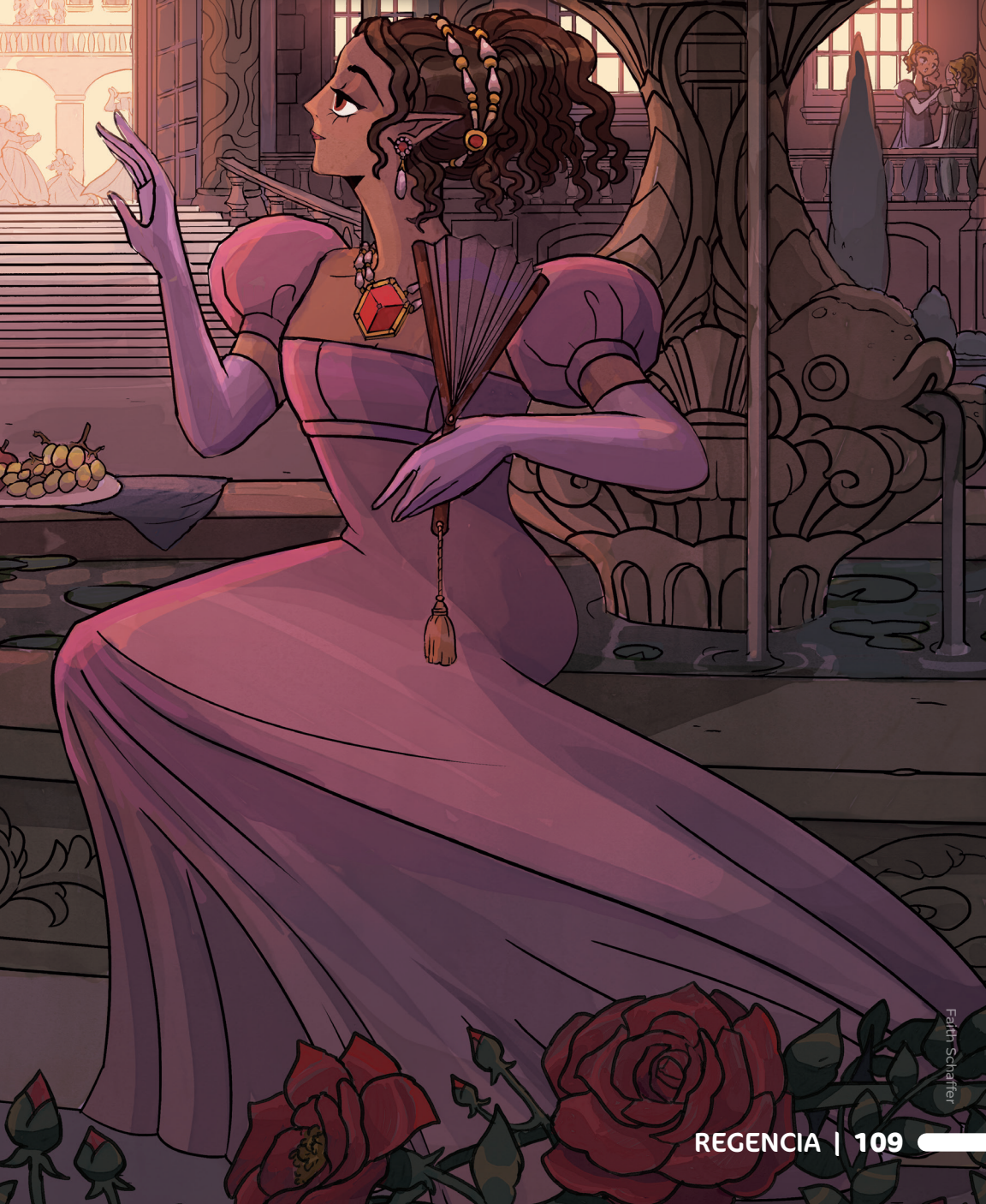
Either way, the party are sworn in as full Dragon-Knights and given the opportunity to join the ranks to protect Refuge.





Regencia

A ROMANCE SHIFT WORLD SPARK



CONCEPT

When Emmet Gundelson first introduced the world to his patented automated attendants, he had no idea how they would forever change the world of Regencia. His clever clockwork companions were loyal, hardworking, and tireless, and they soon replaced any need for people to work. This glorious invention allowed the world to progress past the dangers and drudgery of factory life and labor. Regencia became elevated, a place where humanity could pursue their passions freely.

Regencia is a world where people live comfortably, work little, and have nothing to agitate them but the endless obligations, customs, and delights of society. Relationships are everything; a well-connected lady, gentleman, or gentletheman has no shortage of company, companionship, resources, and support. Wealth and title might hold some power, but even the richest noble is miserable without friendship, lonely without love, and vexed if connected to a troublesome family.

Marriage is the most important institution in Regencia. As a lifelong commitment between two people and an unbreakable connection between two families, every marriage has a profound effect on the lives of individu-

als and on the company they keep. Competition for desirable partners—whether for their personal qualities, status, or connections—is high, and the pressure to marry starts at young adulthood. Though some live without it, marriage is seen as the ultimate path to connection, comfort, status, and security.

Ideally, one marries for love. In actual fact, one takes what one can get.

Regencia takes inspiration from the social mores and norms of upper-class landowners in late 18th- and early 19th-century England. In Regencia, thanks to the inventions of Gundelson Industries, *everyone* gets to enjoy the ample leisure time and material comfort that makes for such a wonderful playground for comedy and romance. Take inspiration from the tropes and archetypes of the regency romance genre. Assure your players that knowledge of the actual Regency era is useful, but not required.

Feel free to connect Regencia to fantasy or science fiction-inspired worlds; it could be a region, a time period, or perhaps its own odd little planet. Above all, Regencia is a garden where frivolous but dramatic tales of romance and intrigue grow in abundance.

ROLEPLAYING ROMANCE

Before your first session playing in the world of Regencia, make sure that your session zero includes a discussion on the players' comfort levels with romance at the table. Some may be fine with inter-PC romance, while others may not want their Characters involved in romance at all—both are valid options! If the party isn't interested in romance between their Characters but still wants romance to be a theme of the story, have them help out two NPCs in love. This also keeps your table from having one or two of the PCs feeling like the "main characters" of the story and allows everyone to stay equally involved.

Of course, romance is just one of the many intrigues in Regencia, and there is more than enough scandal to keep player Characters busy without true love being the only focal point.

Finally, all types of romance between all types of consenting adults are considered the norm in Regencia and the town of Rookwood. All genders, sexual preferences, and romantic comfort levels are normalized—the scandals don't come from who you love, but instead how dramatic you are about your romantic endeavors.



BUILDING BLOCKS

CORE TRAITS

This world uses the standard Core Traits: **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul**. However, you may find yourself using them in a slightly different way than you are used to. Injury to these Core Traits should usually take the form of Drawbacks assigned to them rather than dice shifting down. Examples of Drawbacks for each Trait are listed included in the following Trait descriptions.

Body. The **Body** can be a key asset in making one's way through society. A potential partner might be quite impressed by the gallant way you ride a horse, the lightness of your dancing, or your firm but delicate way with a croquet mallet. Even a well-timed faint requires excellent control of the **Body**.

Regencia gentlefolk may not be locked in life-or-death struggles often, but consider injuries such as spraining an ankle, contracting a fever, or being thrown from a horse. On a rare occasion, a situation in Regencia may even escalate to a duel, which comes with its own physical risks.

Potential Drawbacks for the **Body** include: *bedridden*, *exhausted*, *feverish*, *sluggish*, *sore*.

Mind. Forming ideas, plans, arguments, and solutions all require the **Mind**. This is vastly important to your Characters, as Regencia's marriage market requires grand strategies. They may need this Trait, for example, to figure out if something is amiss in the duke's study, to scheme up a way for Miss Cloverdale and Sir Thomas to be seated next to each other in the barouche, or to realize that Colonel Davenport's version of events could not possibly be true given what you heard from your dear Penelope.

The **Mind** might be injured by a particularly difficult puzzle or riddle, being bested in an argument, or being frightened out of one's wits.

Potential Drawbacks for the **Mind** include: *befuddled*, *enraged*, *tongue-tied*, *uncertain*, *vexed*.

Soul. In a world obsessed with social connections, the **Soul** Trait is paramount. Though the **Mind** is responsible for plans and schemes, only the **Soul** allows one to form real, meaningful bonds. One might need the **Soul** Trait to speak the truth to an intimidating figure, befriend a difficult peer, or to declare one's love.

Injury to one's **Soul** might come from embarrassment, a failure to fulfill obligations, or being jilted in love.

Potential Drawbacks for the **Soul** include: *ashamed*, *bitter*, *heartbroken*, *overcome with ennui*, *shocked*, *withdrawn from society*.

TRAVEL

Traveling from place to place in Regencia is relatively safe—boring at its worst, and positively scenic at its best. Use the Standard Travel ruleset in Regencia, and consider thematically fitting random encounters for the Characters. Being accosted by bandits is the kind of nonsense that only happens in gothic novels. Being waylaid by a snowstorm is more likely. Any time your Characters are trapped for many hours at a time in an enclosed space does make for prime opportunities for questions, confessions, and revelations.

REST AND RECOVERY

Use the Standard ruleset for Rest and Recovery in Regencia. Though you may not be under threat of physical attack, the only place a Safe Rest can be had is in one's own bed or at a suitable inn. Unsafe Rest locations leave one open to accruing obligations, being under social scrutiny, or accumulating stress. Such conditions may lead to embarrassment or making a spectacle of oneself. Having to stay overnight at a relative or acquaintance's home—whether due to bad weather, illness, or other misfortune—takes its toll, even if only on one's nerves or reputation.

LOCATION: ROOKWOOD, NORTHSHIRE

Rookwood demands no notice on a map. A few buildings set comfortably in an elbow of the Loxleigh River surrounded by a handful of well-kept estates seems the most normal sight in Regencia, at least at first glance. One of the earliest adopters of automated attendants, Rookwood has long been a place of rest, civility, and social activity. However, Rookwood has earned itself a slight reputation, and not in the sense of being *reputable*. Anyone with acquaintance in that part of Northshire knows the gossip is always especially piquant there. There's guaranteed to be at least one scandal a season, and the number of eccentrics per capita seems distinctly above average.

The town functions smoothly. The estate grounds are pleasantly dotted with game for hunting, mushrooms for foraging, and ponds for swimming. But ask anyone who has spent a season in Rookwood about their time there, and note the particular arch in their brow as they tell you that it was...“interesting.”

LOCATION TRAITS

Attitude (D6). The people of Rookwood love to be introduced to a new acquaintance, hold a picnic or a ball, play cards, and take pleasant strolls through the countryside. Their *sociable* nature makes any dignified event or encounter a coveted pleasure.

Wealth (D4). Few want for anything in Rookwood. Some people may have greater wealth than others, but no one lacks a comfortable bed and food on the table.

Security and Safety (D10). Though a physical attack is out of the question, Rookwood holds innumerable threats to one's heart; rejection, embarrassment, and a falling-out are always around the corner for those unrestrained in word or deed.

Scandal (D8). The rules of Regencia society are so rigid they have become

brittle. Introducing oneself unsolicited, not introducing one acquaintance to another, talking too much, not talking enough, being too eager to dance at a ball, being too reluctant to dance...all these faux pas and more could cause a flurry of disproving gossip. Keep your actions civil and restrain your speech around all but your closest companions. Even being associated with someone who has been inappropriate or disrespectful could cause problems for one's social and romantic prospects.

USING SCANDAL

Scandal is an amorphous but ever-present threat for your PCs. Taking social risks such as saying what they really think, being honest about how they feel, or putting someone's needs above social convention (including their own) has the potential to build trust and intimacy with others. And it makes one vulnerable.

Whenever PCs take these social risks, the GM can roll a Scandal die. A D8 is the default, but you can increase the threat to a D6 or D4 when there are more strangers or high-status persons around, at a ball or formal dinner, for example. You can decrease the threat to a D10 when they are with friends and family, or a D12 when they are only with their most trusted people. Narratively, a Scandal die shifting down means that people are a little more kind and trusting, more inclined to relax and to forgive minor faux pas. Think of it as the Characters' social environment softening a little. When a Scandal roll shows a successful result and controversy rears its ugly head, make the consequences immediate. For example, an important NPC turns their nose up at the PCs, and they are suddenly unwelcome at an important event. Close a literal or metaphorical door that will force the party to find creative or risky alternatives.

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

Hartlebury Lodge (Safe). A modest manor on the far edge of Rookwood, Hartlebury Lodge is a welcome respite for all who visit. Never lonely, but rarely bustling with dance and merriment, it is the perfect place for croquet on sunny days, tea and cakes in the afternoon, and a game of cards in the evening. The famously hospitable widow, Lady Hartlebury, has no greater pleasure than keeping the company of lively young people...and pairing them up to amuse herself.

Sedgwick Manor (Unsafe). Isolated by surrounding woods, the pointed arches and high towers of Sedgwick Manor make a frightful silhouette on otherwise inviting countryside. Its library is said to be the most extensive in Northshire, and for several counties around. Many would love to lay their hands on its wealth of texts and local records, but Lord Beaumont, a moody and disagreeable man, is even less inviting than his estate. The cemetery adjoining the manor is capstoned by a grim stone monument to the late Lady Beaumont, a gothic marvel commissioned but strangely neglected by her grieving husband.

Cavendish Park (Unsafe). With its expansive grounds, unparalleled ballroom, and great halls with famed statues and portraiture, Cavendish Park stands as one of the most popular places in Rookwood for merriment and diversion. Mr. and Mrs. Cavendish are always delighted to host a dinner, fancy dress party, or even an ostentatious ball. Some believe this might be because they have four grown daughters still unattached.

Fanny's Millinery (Safe). In the center of Rookwood village, between the blacksmith and the inn, rests the beating heart of local fashion—and gossip. Fanny is the local purveyor of bonnets, lace caps, gloves, shawls, and every ribbon and feather one could want to adorn them. Acquiring and decorating hats is a fine way to spend an afternoon, and the walk into town a re-

freshing excursion. Fanny's most important wares, of course, are rumors. Anything might be overheard in her shop.

IMPORTANT NPCS

Mr. Arthur Moreland [he/him]. The delight of every party, this handsome bachelor seems agreeable to everyone. Always ready with a joke or a riddle, the first to suggest charades on a rainy day or lawn games on a sunny one, he can be relied on to lighten the mood and keep everyone entertained. Some wonder if his cheer is a facade—can't he ever be serious? Is he hiding tenderness and sensitivity, or something more sinister? His **Attitude** toward the Characters is **enthusiastic**.

Patience Alders [they/them]. As resident botanical expert of Hartlebury Lodge, Patience spends more time with plants than with people. They insist the company is just as comforting and often more interesting. Disinclined to parties and picnics, and seemingly uninterested in romance, Patience can often be found either tending the land or enjoying an evening cup of tea and a book in their small cottage. This slight removal from society makes them a favored confidante, and they are an excellent listener. They sit on secrets, confessions, and stories the way a dragon sits upon its hoard of gold...and in that sense, they may be the richest person in Rookwood. Their **Attitude** toward the Characters is **gentle**.

Sir John Pembroke [he/him]. No one could question Sir John's character or the integrity of his word (and anyone could appreciate the way he wears a pair of breeches). Widely considered the most eligible bachelor in Rookwood, he is always seen in the latest fashions, reading the newest works of poetry and philosophy, and commissioning fine works of art for his considerable estate. Perhaps overly cautious about his high value on the marriage market, he attends few social events and rarely stays for long. This aloof attitude has

convinced the busybodies of Rookwood that Sir John must have a tantalizing dark side. His **Attitude** toward the Characters is *fickle*.

Miss Mary Ann Beaumont [she/her].

In the high windows of Sedgwick Abbey, a lonely figure can often be seen, sketchbook or needlework in hand. Patience praises Miss Beaumont's botanical drawings as accurate and expressive. Lady Hartlebury frowns and says, "Poor girl," when her name is spoken. Her mother died long ago, and her reclusive father rarely brings her out in society, making Miss Beaumont something of a mystery to the rest of Rookwood. She has few acquaintances to call upon, and some say Lord Beaumont frowns upon even those. Her **Attitude** toward the Characters is *curious*.

Mx. Francis Perry [they/them]. Seen in mirror-shined riding boots one day, frilly plumed bonnets the next, and not infrequently both, Mx. Perry delights in thumbing their nose at social conventions. Francis makes no small show of being well-travelled, well-heeled, and well-read, taking great delight in regaling others with tales of their adventures and, in trusted company, affairs. Regarded with a kind of affectionate exasperation by society, others can only call them, with a cluck of the tongue and a twinkle in the eye, "a bit of a Rookwood type." Their **Attitude** toward the Characters is *brash*.

Miss Hyacinth Forbes [she/her].

Spinster. Gossip. Eccentric. These are just some of the titles assigned to Miss Hyacinth Forbes, lone heir to the beautiful Forbes estate. She is infamous for turning down no less than four offers of marriage despite being a regular sight in the village, especially at Fanny's, and well past the usual marrying age. Her **Attitude** toward the Characters is *blunt*.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Decide with the players what has brought them to Rookwood. They might be a family, either just moved into one of the manor houses or more established in the area. If players are interested in romance between their Characters, they could be a group of friends touring the countryside or visiting Rookwood specifically. The following adventure hooks focus on the players working together to help others, but each can decide whether their Character is eligible or interested in romances of their own that might pop up along the way.

When GMing romances, remember that no PC can roll dice to convince someone to feel, desire, or want anything. PCs might be able to impress someone, flatter them, draw their attention, or connive ways to be in the same room as them. Roll to distract the automated footman to stop the coach for an hour. Roll to play masterfully on the pianoforte, despite your nerves. Roll to distract a chaperone while two lovers take a turn around the rose garden. All these skills and more are helpful when nursing a romantic relationship. But whether affection or desire exist in any person, PC or NPC, is not for game mechanics to decide.

Star-Crossed. There is a rumor going around that two young people in love are being tragically separated by their families. One of them is said to be Sir John. But if that were true, what objection could any family have to such an eligible suitor? It would take both determination and delicacy to find out who these tragic lovers are and help them elope...assuming that is their desire.

Matchmaking, Matchbreaking. The eldest Miss Cavendish was overheard at Fanny's speaking in a strained voice about her parents' "well-intentioned" and "persistent" interest in her love life. Though evidently reluctant to speak ill of anyone, especially her own family, it was clear

that the pressure on her, her sisters, and potential suitors has spoiled at least one promising match. The next Cavendish ball is tomorrow, and one wonders how to keep Mr. and Mrs. Cavendish out of their daughter's affairs long enough for her to, at least, enjoy herself.

In Want of a Life. Miss Beaumont, so removed from society in the dark halls of her foreboding home, nonetheless has a

reputation for being a shy but perfectly amiable young woman. Unable to strike out on her own or even make her own acquaintances without inviting scandal, the lady could surely use a friend. Could anyone convince her father of the benefits of good society? Or does this problem require something more clandestine? Either way, the secrets of Sedgwick Abbey may need to be investigated.

FOCUS TRAITS

People in Regencia are defined by their relationships with others. What you can and can't say, who will and won't believe you, and how much power you can exert in different contexts depends on how you are connected. Note that none of the Focus Trait titles have to be literally true of the Character.

THE ELDEST

You have at least one younger sibling, or someone you consider a sibling, and you feel a sense of obligation to the expectations this creates. Like it or not, you are expected to be the responsible one.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Who in your family is "the baby," and do you cherish them more or less than you resent them?

What was the latest responsibility to be thrust upon you, and how did you handle it?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *astute, compassionate, front of the line, mature*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *arrogant, disappointing, parentified*

THE YOUNGEST

You're the baby of the family (or of another group) and you have always been assured of protection, attention, and perhaps a suffocating amount of both.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

When was the last time you got away with something scandalous, and how does it haunt you?

Which happens more often: being spoiled or being overlooked? Why?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *adorable, brash, crafty, self-indulgent*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *childish, disbelieved, in someone's shadow, sulking*

DOTING PARENT

To your children, or to those you care for like your own, you are a reliable source of comfort and support. Their lives are more important to you than your own, for better or worse.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What do you want most for those in your care? Do they want it too?

What unfulfilled wish are you currently pushing on someone younger than you?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: authoritative, comforting, head of the table, stalwart

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: distant, pushy, suffocating, unreliable

WIDOWED

The loss of your partner changed your social position forever. You're a little more lonely than you used to be, but also a little more free.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Do you miss your late partner? Does that make you more or less inclined to find a new one?

What special interest has your solitude given you more time to pursue?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: brooding, eccentric, independent, self-assured

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: careless, mourning, preoccupied, self-centered

HOPELESS GOSSIP

You love to have a chat! Everyone knows you are eager to hear and share about even the smallest detail of others' lives. They also know you can't keep a secret.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

When was the last time your rumor-mongering got you in trouble?

What is the one secret you have faithfully kept, and why is it important to you?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: a good listener, latest dirt, lively, local history, news from afar

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: betrayal, embarrassed, scornful, untrustworthy

INCORRIGIBLE FLIRT

Silly? Perhaps. Careless? Once or twice. But you're determined to have fun, and there's nothing more diverting than a rosy blush on a handsome face.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Who have you been flirting with lately, and why aren't you actually interested in them?

When did your charming nature benefit you most recently?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: coy, direct, goofy, playful, saucy, seductive, serious

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: scorned, thoughtless, too far, too much

BOOKISH

You take such pleasure in a new volume or a well-worn favorite. Indeed, you might prefer a book to a conversation most evenings. Such habits have given you an incredible wealth of knowledge but have done less for your social graces.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What do you love to read in the parlor, and what do you read alone in your room?

What is the last great book you read, and why does it keep coming up in conversation?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: erudite, florid speech, gentle voice, knowledgeable

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: lonely, oblivious, outmatched, snooty

ACCOMPLISHED

To be truly accomplished, one must be well-trained in playing music, singing, drawing, speaking multiple languages, and dancing, and one ought to be well read and thoughtful as well. Through talent or persistence, you flourish in all these areas.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What do you encounter more often, admiration or envy? Which do you prefer?

Of all your becoming talents, which do you consider the most impressive?

Do others agree?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: beautiful, brilliant, dazzling, modest, precocious, renowned

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: faltering, flustered, sore throat, twisted ankle

PACK TRAIT KEYWORDS

KEYWORD

EXAMPLE EQUIPMENT

Bluestocking

Novel, pocket knife, sketching supplies, sweets, coin purse

Gentlefolk

Bonnet, pocketwatch, hand mirror, newspaper, perfume, gloves

Rake

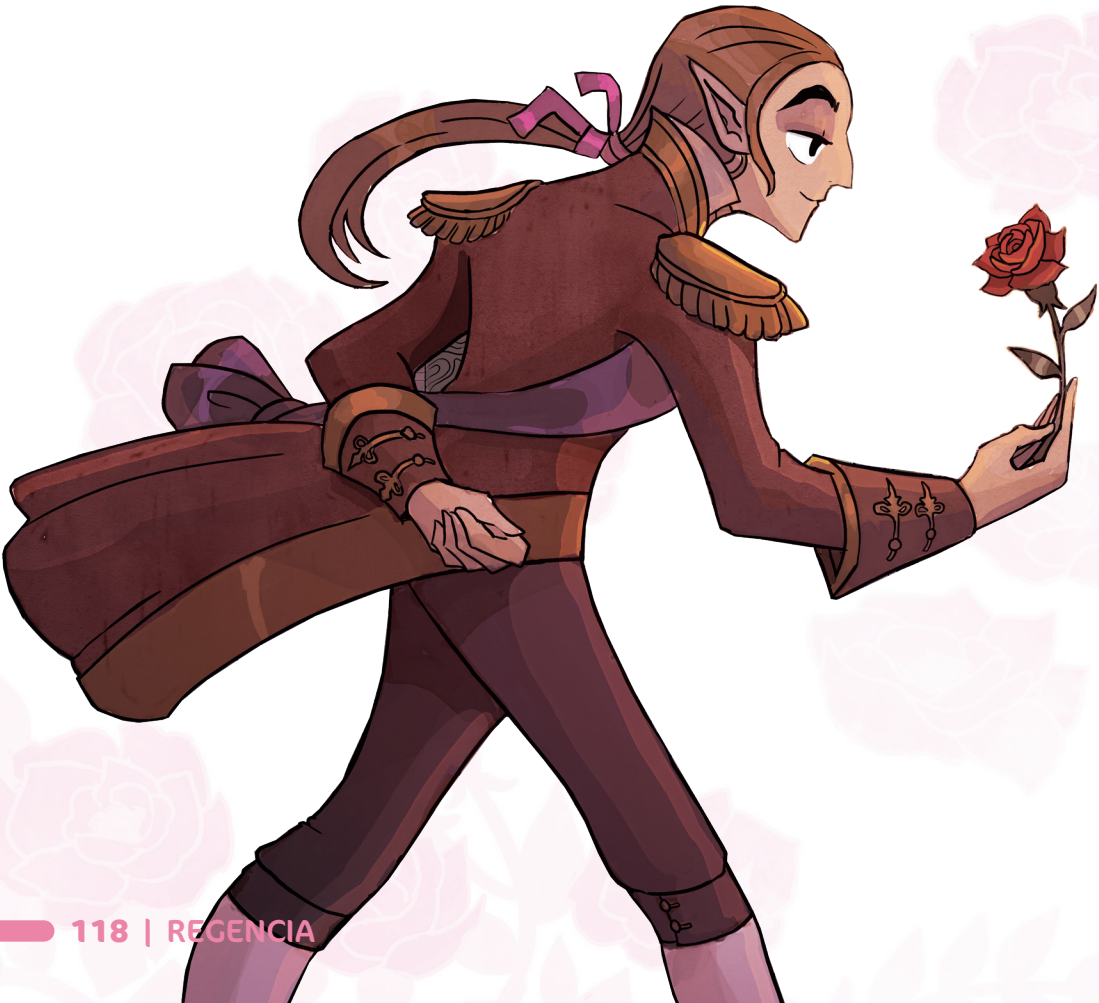
Snuff box, playing cards, book of poetry, flintlock pistol, love letter

Romantic

Diary, perfumed paper, small trinkets, bouquet of flowers, pen and ink

Scholar

Eyeglasses, book of philosophy, book of history, pencil, notebook



TECHNIQUES

JUST THE THING

You're a caregiver, experienced in amending common aches and pains. Because of your extensive knowledge of the latest medicines and trusted home remedies, you can provide **just the thing**: an easy remedy that will, with a little rest (Safe or Unsafe), remove a Drawback from any Character's Trait. Examples might include a hot bath, a cold compress, a clove tonic, essence of lavender, a nip of sherry, or some patented snake oil. You can use this Technique three times per Safe Rest or session.

NAME DROP

You're well connected and widely acquainted with people of some renown. Without rolling, you may convince an NPC to provide a small favor or overlook a mistake a PC has made by mentioning the right person. Dropping a name means more than just saying it, of course. Tell the GM what important or influential person you are speaking of, and mention your acquaintance with the NPC in a way that excuses or earns whatever the PCs have done or want to do. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

SOME MIGHT SAY...

Heaven forbid anyone ask for what they want. How indelicate! But in a conversation with an NPC, you can use hypothetical questions to give an NPC a reasonable excuse to reveal things about what they want, know, or believe. When you use this Technique, you can ask the GM one of the following questions, which the GM must answer truthfully:

- ▶ What does this person really want?
- ▶ What does this person really think of me or of another person?
- ▶ What does this person wish they could tell us?
- ▶ What is this person afraid of?

You can use this Technique three times per Safe Rest or session.

FAINT

Delicate persons such as yourself cannot endure excessive strain. When you use this Technique, you may replace any Drawback you would receive to your **Mind** or **Soul** and immediately replace it with the **fainted** Drawback to your **Body** as you faint. Using this Technique also ends whatever interaction you are in; you cannot be questioned, blamed, or attacked while fainting, nor can you accomplish anything. The faint counts as an Unsafe Rest: it reduces your **Pack** die by one and allows you to shift any Trait except **Body** back to its maximum. The **fainted** Drawback stays until the end of the current scene. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.



ADVERSARIES

LADY ARABELLA HARTLEBURY

POWER 2 | SCALE 1

Lady Hartlebury [she/her] has married off all seven of her children to great success and now finds herself with little to do but meddle in the affairs of other eligible young gentry. A lady of her station is accustomed to having her way, and one of her age considers herself quite authoritative in how things ought to be done.

ATTITUDE

MEDDLESOME

"Surely people with less experience or of a lower station than myself will appreciate me setting everything in order."

TRAIT

IF I MAY...

In a conversation, Lady Hartlebury can interrupt, shut down, dominate, opine, and pontificate with the tenacity of a prize-winning pugilist.

TRAIT

MOTHER KNOWS BEST

Having raised seven well-behaved and now quite accomplished children, the Lady sees fit to talk to almost anyone as though they were her own helpless offspring.

TRAIT

NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH

It is rare that anyone even attempts to contravene or protest against Lady Hartlebury's generous interventions. She does not hesitate to publicly shame someone or exile them from her home and social circle.



THE RUMOR MILL

POWER 1 | SCALE 2

Faster than any carriage and with wider circulation than any newspaper, words of every deed and misdeed seem to travel on their own. As much as the PCs may rely on gossip to get key information, they might just as easily fall victim to unsubstantiated (or, at least, exaggerated) rumors that threaten their relationships and reputation.



ATTITUDE

HASTY

True, untrue, or a little of both—the rumor mill cares only to entertain and scandalize at the maximum pace.

TRAIT

TALES OF SCANDAL

A story about someone doing something against the usual order is highly embarrassing. If you're currently caught in a scandal, people might think ill of you or hesitate to trust you.

TRAIT

HIDDEN MENACE

A story about someone acting against common decency and morals can threaten their social standing. If you're the subject of disgrace, people might actively shun you or warn others against associating with you.



USING THE RUMOR MILL

Even if the PCs know who started a rumor or who's been spreading or exaggerating it, the process of gossip has a life of its own. Rather than being centered around a single NPC, Encounters with The Rumor Mill could be a kind of montage of the Characters investigating the rumor to find out exactly what people are saying, countering the rumor by speaking truth to the right people, restoring someone's reputation (for example, by coaching them to be publicly generous if there is a rumor about them being miserly), or even countering the rumor's effects on one person with even more salacious gossip about someone else. Like any foe, this Adversary can be fought, reasoned with, distracted, pacified, or dealt with in some other creative way by ingenious players.

You can think of The Rumor Mill as a recurring villain. Each time it appears, it puts players on the defensive: they need to counteract it rather than actively working on their own goals or helping others. Overcoming this Adversary can look like more than just the cessation of gossip; think about how the PCs' reputations might have changed as a result of how they disproved or diverted rumors. They might now be known to be generous, truthful, forthright, silver-tongued, or something else. The GM can make these explicit Traits or just enact them in future encounters with NPCs.

You may also want to incorporate the optional Scale rules from **the Adversary chapter** of the core rulebook to complicate things further and make affecting The Rumor Mill more challenging. If you use Scale, treat The Rumor Mill as having a Scale of 2.

LORD ALBION BEAUMONT

POWER 2 | SCALE 1

The Lord of Sedgwick Abbey [he/him] is rarely seen and is spoken of only in hushed tones. A well-educated man who once traveled the world, he has become a recluse since his wife's passing. He cuts an imposing figure, and his low growl of a voice sends shivers down the spine.

ATTITUDE

SCORNFUL

Lord Albion is wary of outsiders, is protective of his only daughter, and spurns the invitations of polite society. The world seems to hold no appeal to him.



TRAIT

THINLY-VEILED THREATS

Beaumont is not a monster; he is a gentleman. A gentleman with enough status, sway, and resources to make problems disappear. If you become a problem, even hearing what he might do can rattle the mind.



TRAIT

IMPENETRABLE GRIEF

Guilt is a barbed weapon. Hearing an old widower's tales of woe and misfortune can shut down even the most urgent or well-meaning interaction.



TRAIT

THE HOUNDS

Lord Albion Beaumont has a loyal, obedient pack of dogs that intimidate, frighten, or pursue on his command.



SEDGEWICK ABBEY

POWER 3 | SCALE 2

A few hundred years ago, this must have been a proud, impressive structure. Now its intricate stonework and hunched gargoyles look menacing, and its moss-covered bricks seem to form more a tomb than a home.

ATTITUDE

FOREBODING



The abbey can't be seen from the main road. Once you've gone through the gates and far enough into the dark woods to glimpse it, you can't help but feel uneasy. Every detail of the place seems to cry: Go! Stay away! For your own sake!

TRAIT

THE CRUMBLING TOWER



Watch your step! Years of neglect have left some parts of the abbey in a treacherous state.

TRAIT

A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT



Soaked to the bone with cold rain or rattled by thunder and lightning, visitors to Sedgewick feel the effects of the weather in both body and soul.

TRAIT

TWISTING CORRIDORS, WREATHED IN SHADOW



Like any gothic structure, this abbey is rife with trapdoors, hidden staircases, and secret passageways. Getting lost—or worse, trapped—in this labyrinth requires nerves and sense to hope for any escape.

TRAIT

SECRETS AND GLOOM



Lord Albion's collection of antique oddities and dusty tomes of forbidden knowledge lurk in the depths of the Sedgewick library. Local records, ancient journals, and other important sources of information could easily collapse without warning, choke an intruder with dust and mold, or reveal horrors that scar the mind.

REGENCIA ENCOUNTER: LOVE PREVAILS

The town of Rookwood thinks of itself as a prim, proper, and traditional place, so when anyone shows a modicum of colorful strangeness, people take notice, and the rumor mill churns. When two people with similar oddities fall in love, that complicates things further. They need help from their closest friends to see that the people of Rookwood approve, applaud, and encourage the lovably odd union.



DESCRIPTION

Play as fancy, fashionable, and frivolous Characters who have nothing to do but foster their friends' romantic relationships and attend fabulous parties. Get invited to a fabulous soiree and battle The Rumor Mill itself to help your friends make a splash on their first public night out!

CHARACTER CREATION

Have players come up with their concepts first—encourage them to borrow ideas from their favorite romance novels and films if they aren't sure where to start. Once their concepts are settled, have them create their Characters as follows:

- Assign a D6, D8, and D10 Shift Die to their **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul** Core Traits, in any combination.
- Choose or create two Focus Traits, assigning one of them a D4 Shift Die and the other a D6. Additionally, each player will assign two Keywords to each of their Focus Traits. The Regencia World Spark has ten example Focus Traits for players to choose from, with example Keywords and Drawbacks included.

ENCOUNTER BREAKDOWN

PART 1: FRIENDS IN NEED

The party is approached separately by two of their close friends, each asking for help. The two friends are madly in love with each other, but they worry what Rookwood's rumor mill will think of their romance. The two fell in love because of their shared, quirky interests, and they are concerned that the locals won't approve of them sharing their unusual hobbies in public.

Lovable Lovers. As a table, create the two lovers and their connection to the party. They might be the younger siblings of two different party members, awkward with their first romance, or two older mentors of the group unsure of how to proceed with their relationship.

Unusual Interests. The lovers share a strange hobby—nothing truly scandalous, but unusual enough that the busybodies of Rookwood might look askance at anyone practicing it. Examples of this strange hobby could include:

- Keeping pigeons as pets, companions, and occasional living fashion accessories.
- Prototyping and inventing new forms of transportation. Dirty, noisy, and they make quite a scene when they arrive at a soiree!
- Preparing unique and chaotic meals—they are delicious, but they look so strange!

The lovers have come to the party to ask the party for help unveiling their relationship at an upcoming party being hosted by Lady Arabella Hartlebury at her palatial estate. They would like the Characters to help run interference and push back against the rumors so everyone leaves the party happy for the new couple.

PART 2: INVITE ONLY

Unfortunately, though the lovers have their own invites to Lady Hartlebury's soiree, the party does not. To be able to help their friends, the Characters will have to convince Lady Hartlebury to invite them to the event.

Impress Hartlebury. It is difficult to do, but the party can attempt to impress Lady Hartlebury by describing (or lying about) incredible achievements or having impressive family members.

Entertain Hartlebury. Much easier is to simply prove to Lady Hartlebury that the Characters being at the party will provide some kind of entertainment, whether it be scandal, gossip, or otherwise. Lady Hartlebury doesn't care if the "entertainment" provided is ruinous to the Characters' reputations as long as she and her friends have something juicy to talk about.

PART 3: THE BIG SOIREE

Once the party has secured invites, the night of the event comes quickly. The lovers arrive shortly after the Characters, entering with a flamboyant representation of both their love and their strange hobby.

An Encounter with The Rumor Mill ensues as the Characters stamp out the whispers and spin the couple's unusual hobby as a positive. Treat The Rumor Mill as a Scale 2 Adversary, so while it only needs one of its Traits Exhausted to be overcome, only Critical Successes on Action Rolls shift its Traits down. Every time a Character rolls a Critical Failure, Lady Hartlebury is ready with a quip, making an Action Roll against that Character to taunt them.

Once The Rumor Mill is overcome, the partygoers begin to recognize the lovers as a welcome breath of fresh air, and they spend the rest of the evening as the (positive) center of attention.

EPILOGUE

After their relationship's first big reveal to the public goes so well, the lovers are grateful to the characters, offering favors and big hugs to show their appreciation. A few months later, the lovers get engaged, and they come back to the party for help again—this time to plan an unforgettable wedding...



WELCOME TO BLISSVILLE

A HORROR SHIFT WORLD SPARK



Jacob Walker

CONCEPT

When their rickety passenger bus breaks down midway through their cross-country trip, a group of mismatched passengers find themselves stranded outside the seemingly idyllic town of Blissville. Despite its unnaturally pristine streets and too-friendly locals, the Characters soon realize that Blissville is a town lost in time, hiding something beneath its perfectly manicured surface.

In *Welcome to Blissville*, players take on the roles of stranded Characters navigating a town where nothing is as it seems. By day, the town's inhabitants are quick to smile and offer assistance at every opportunity, but come nightfall, those same inhabitants transform into monsters of all kinds, each eager to hunt. Meanwhile, the Characters themselves also begin to experience their own strange and unsettling changes. Survival is the immediate goal; however, the longer the Characters remain in town, the deeper the mystery grows.

Every morning, Blissville and its inhabitants are restored to picture-perfect form as if nothing strange ever occurred. The townsfolk continue to live their lives, unwilling—or unable—to acknowledge both the night's terrifying events and their consequences. As a result, each new day in

Blissville feels eerily like an episode of a TV show: repetitive, staged, and unnervingly familiar, trapping the Characters within a surreal loop of friendly neighbors and terrifying nights. The Characters will have to uncover the mysteries within Blissville both to learn more about their new and developing abilities and to free themselves from the supernatural force that keeps them trapped in the town.

WHO ARE THE TOWNSFOLK?

There is no specific origin of the townsfolk of Blissville—they could be mere fabrications of The Director with no true souls of their own, or they could be the first visitors trapped in Blissville, hollowed out and doomed to be The Director's puppets forever. Regardless of their origin, the townsfolk's behavior is always the same—warm and inviting during the day, cruel and unusual during the night. Do they have any humanity left? That is up for the players and GM to discover together.



BUILDING BLOCKS

CORE TRAITS

This world uses the Core Traits **Tangle**, **Husk**, and **Flicker**. These tweaked Core Traits suggest the Characters are somewhere that plays by different rules and that they need to call on chaotic forces to harness the powers of their minds, bodies, and souls.

Tangle (Mind). When a Character calls upon their ability to focus, strategize, or investigate, they reach into the **Tangle**. This endlessly complex web holds every thought and idea the world has or will ever know. Chaotically knotted together, the **Tangle** awaits the right mind at the right moment to untie the perfect thread for any given situation. Every plan or insight results from finding that hidden thread within the sprawling chaos. The **Tangle** can be affected by manipulative creatures, seeing horrible things, or witnessing the word of The Director (learn more about The Director in the “**Important NPCs**” section of the Welcome to Blissville SHIFT World Spark).

Husk (Body). When a Character employs their physical form to dodge danger, climb impossible heights, or perform acts of strength, they draw upon the **Husk**. Each time a Character relies on the **Husk**, they command their body to move, bend, or break in response to the challenges of the world, be it gracefully, with precision, or with reckless abandon. Damage to the **Husk** is almost always from physical attack, though it is also affected by toxins and illness.

Flicker (Soul). The force known as the **Flicker** is the inner fire burning within all things, representing the bonds between people, objects, and forces unseen. When Characters attempt to persuade, communicate, or bond with the world around them, they manipulate the **Flicker**. Like a candle's flame in the dark, the **Flicker** can be nurtured into a warm and inviting glow

or stoked into a raging inferno of passion and intensity, depending on the Character's intent. The **Flicker** may be a Character's most important Core Trait in Blissville, as it directly links to their connection with their own humanity. The longer they are exposed to The Director's machinations, the more monstrous they become, and the worse the **Flicker** gets.

TRAVEL

Within Blissville, Characters can take advantage of all the forms of transportation they might expect from a small 1950s town, including vintage cars, bicycles, and a quaint bus line. However, try as they might, the Characters find themselves supernaturally trapped within the bounds of the town. Any attempt to leave Blissville by simply traveling away from it quickly results in the Characters looping back and arriving at the town once more.

During the day, it's unlikely that the Characters encounter Adversaries that prevent them from simply transitioning to new locations by describing their intent. As such, traveling during the day uses the Simple Travel ruleset. However, traveling at night uses the Standard Travel ruleset, as the dangers of the town are awakened and force the Characters to navigate these new hazards carefully.

As the Characters continue to unravel the mysteries surrounding Blissville, they encounter supernatural rifts that allow them to travel “behind the scenes” and throughout the town. These regions always use the Standard Travel ruleset, as The Director does not want it to be easy for anyone to interfere with their plans.

REST AND RECOVERY

While the Characters find few safe havens in Blissville as night begins to fall, they need only survive until morning to find rest. As each dawn arrives and brings with it a new day, in a flash of white light, the town, its inhabitants, and the Characters find themselves reset and magically transported to their place of rest. With their memories still intact and as healthy as they were when they first arrived, the Charac-

ters are ready for what feels like the next episode of their lives within Blissville.

Should Characters need healing before sunrise, this World Spark uses the Standard Rest and Recovery ruleset; otherwise, all of a Character's Traits are restored fully at dawn each day. If any PC or NPC dies during the night, they are also fully restored, but PCs remember everything about their deaths, while NPCs do not.

LOCATION: BLISSVILLE

The atmosphere of Blissville differs greatly between day and night, while the master puppeteer of this strange place, The Director, controls everything from the shadows.

Daytime. Blissville is an idyllic and picturesque town that, from all outward appearances, looks like it hasn't aged a day since the 1950s. Complete with white picket fences, friendly neighbors, and a welcoming sense of community, the town presents itself with an air of unsettling perfection. The town square features a cozy diner, a hotel, a market, and a handful of specialty shops. During the day, the townsfolk are cheerful, helpful, and truthfully oblivious of their monstrous alter egos and their town's anachronistic atmosphere.

Nighttime. When night falls, the town's true nature is revealed. The once-friendly townsfolk transform into monstrous versions of themselves, each with their own unique Traits. The town's streets, peaceful just hours earlier, quickly fill with dangerous entities lurking around every corner.

The Truth. In truth, Blissville is the extra-dimensional pet project of a diabolical supernatural entity known as The Director. In addition to orchestrating every facet of life and each word spoken by the townsfolk, The Director is also responsible for regularly luring and trapping unsuspecting individuals within the town to fill the role of the protagonists within its twisted tales of horror.

The Characters must uncover this truth and break free from The Director's meticulous plans if they ever hope to escape.

BLISSVILLE AND REAL HISTORY

The aesthetic of Blissville is inspired by B movies from the 1950s and gets a lot of its themes from the idealized vision of 50s life. One thing Blissville does not have in common with that period of history is its prejudices—the monstrous denizens of Blissville have none of the racism, sexism, or homophobia of the time.



LOCATION TRAITS

Attitude (D4). The inhabitants of Blissville have no awareness of either The Director or their own monstrous forms come nightfall, and any attempt to convince them of their situation is more likely to be interpreted as an odd but innocent joke. While the sun is up, the townsfolk are almost *too friendly*, and they treat the Characters with kindness and warmth. But once the sun goes down, the townsfolk become *frenzied* puppets of The Director, hunting the trapped Characters and attempting to accelerate their transformations.

Wealth (D6). Wealth is a topic that rarely comes up in conversation within

Blissville, as all the needs of the townsfolk are, unbeknownst to them, ensured by The Director. The people live their lives in unquestioned and perpetual suburban comforts. The same goes for the Characters; whenever they go to pay for a meal or some other item, the person behind the cash register simply responds, "Don't worry about it. It's covered."

Security and Safety (D12). The atmosphere Blissville projects during the day is one of certain perfection, and nothing is ever expected to act against the town's perfect image. Every measure of security in the town, except for the inhabitants' terrifying nightly forms, is primarily a facade.

Behind the Scenes (D4). As the Characters interact with the town, unravel its mysteries, and encounter The Director, the reality that is Blissville and its ability to hide its secrets from the Characters and townsfolk ebbs and flows. As the Behind the Scenes die shifts down, the Characters may more reliably see beyond The Director's facade by finding scripts and storyboards, convincing daytime townsfolk of Blissville's truth, and calling upon rifts that allow them to travel from one location to another behind the scenes of Blissville.

USING THE BEHIND THE SCENES TRAIT

The **Behind the Scenes** Trait represents The Director's power over the players and control over Blissville itself. As the Characters learn more about this twisted reality, they should get opportunities to make Action Rolls against **Behind the Scenes**, shifting it down and weakening The Director. Some actions that might shift this Trait's die down include finding and destroying evidence of The Director's meddling, like movie props or scripts, or regularly disrupting the daytime patterns of the townsfolk.



IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

All the Landmarks in Blissville are Safe during the day and Unsafe at night, with the exception of the Blissville Hotel, which is Safe at all hours of the day. This safety is relative, however, as there is nothing stopping an Adversary from getting inside the hotel to stalk the Characters.

Blissville Hotel. This charming establishment is where the Characters wake up each morning, refreshed and revitalized. It's also one of the few places the Characters can escape the eager townsfolk during the day. The hotel and its rooms are warm and inviting, featuring floral wallpaper and antique furniture. The Characters never see any employees, yet the hotel is run flawlessly, with services always seeming to be rendered while no one is watching. There isn't an attendant behind the front desk in the lobby; instead, a single red rotary phone sits on the counter. Characters who use the phone are greeted, day or night, with the upbeat and eager-to-please voice of the hotel's unseen attendant and concierge.

Town Square. The town square is the heart of Blissville. It features a large fountain, community benches, various small stores, and the Town Hall. The Town Square is a central hub of activity where the Characters can gather information and interact with key NPCs during the day. Come nightfall, the atmosphere of the Town Square warps dramatically. As a dense fog settles over the square, the once-sparkling fountain sprays a dark and murky liquid into a whispering pool, while shadowy figures can be seen darting ominously behind the glass of the many storefront windows.

Blissville Diner. Owned by the bubbly Claire Cauldwell, the Blissville Diner is a bustling, nostalgic restaurant with mouth-watering aromas. Patrons can be seen coming and going from sunup until sundown, eating more apple pie than it seems possible for one diner to produce. While it's safe to eat at the diner during the day,

Characters can expect the menu to change quite drastically after the sun goes down—and they may even find themselves listed.

Tinker Tools Hardware Store and Mechanics Shop. What cozy little town is complete without the folksy local hardware store? Shop owner Armand Fournier is happy to help you with your DIY project, and Bob the mechanic can repair almost anything, though they never seem to have the right part to fix the bus the Characters arrived in. At night, the air around these two stores becomes weighted and toxic. The clanging of metal and machinery echoes all around, drowning out most other sounds, and in their monstrous forms, Armand and Bob are eager to “fix” anyone who comes too close.

Blissville Town Hall. The Blissville Town Hall is the largest building in town and is home to both the sheriff’s department and a never-before-used jail cell. The Town Hall is mostly used to host events and celebrations, and it is where the Characters find Mayor Rallings and Sheriff Canters. In the dark of night, the Town Hall transforms into a desperately cold and unwelcoming place. The shadows lengthen unnaturally far, and everything from the walls to common everyday items feel sharper to the touch and ready to inflict harm.

IMPORTANT NPCs

Apart from The Director, these NPCs represent the daytime personalities of key townsfolk. After dark, they transform into their Adversary forms.

Mayor Vincent H. Rallings [he/him]. Mayor Rallings is a charismatic and reassuring town leader with a bright smile and an air of authority that draws people in. In the eyes of the townsfolk, he is celebrated as the epitome of leadership, though it’s unclear what exactly he contributes to a town with so few problems. His **Attitude** toward the Characters is *welcoming*.

Sheriff Kam Canters [they/them].

Kam Canters is the diligent and trustworthy Sheriff of Blissville. During the day, they’re always ready to help with a friendly demeanor and a free ride wherever you need. Their **Attitude** toward the Characters is *helpful*.

Claire Cauldwell [she/her]. The sweet, southern belle Claire Cauldwell owns the town’s most beloved dining establishment, the Blissville Diner, and that’s not just because it’s the only one. Eager to ensure her customers have their fill, Claire sends them home with ample leftovers and sage advice. Her **Attitude** toward the Characters is *attentive*.

The Director [they/them]. The Director is the supernatural entity responsible for creating, maintaining, and manipulating every aspect of Blissville. Every blade of grass that grows and every word spoken in the town happens precisely by The Director’s design. The Director is meticulous and calculating, and their ego leads them to be equally uninterested in and curious about the Characters’ attempts to act against their intricate plans. Their **Attitude** toward the Characters is *dismissive*.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The First Rift. The night has come, and with it, the terrifying forms of the townsfolk. As the Characters seek sanctuary, a purple tear rips apart the air nearby, revealing an opening to a dull-looking soundstage that mirrors the landscape of the town itself. Stepping inside the rift, the Characters see precisely that: Blissville as a town in a supernatural illusion that sits on top of the behind-the-scenes set The Director has meticulously created. Inside the rift, the Characters might find additional clues, scripts, lost townsfolk, and perhaps even lost monsters that have followed them into this mysterious place.

The Stand-Ins. The Director has made some changes to their grand design. When the Characters wake, they discover they've been recast as completely different members of the town, complete with new jobs, families, and responsibilities. All other townsfolk continue to live as if nothing unusual has occurred. For example, one Character might now be the town's baker, with a family and employees who treat them as if they've always been here, while another Character may be faced with working side by side with a none-the-wiser towns person who was hunting them the night prior.

Meanwhile, now inhabiting the Character's "former roles" at the hotel are a group of newcomers. Are these stand-ins

a new group of stranded outsiders, or has The Director recast townsfolk to throw the Characters off their scent?

The Spec Script. As it happens every morning, a beautifully prepared breakfast is outside the door of each of their hotel rooms. However, unlike every other morning, alongside one of the Character's breakfast is a tome of countless pages with the words "Final Draft Script" and the day's date written on the front. As the Characters review the massive book, they quickly realize that not only does it describe to a tee every action they have taken since waking, but it also outlines in precise detail all that is to happen to every towns person that day.

FOCUS TRAITS

The Characters should start their adventures as relatively normal people. Their Primary Focus Traits might represent the job they had outside of Blissville or their interests and hobbies before they came to this strange place.

The Focus Traits listed here are examples of the abilities Characters may manifest after spending more time in Blissville, as The Director's dark power starts to corrupt and change them. Characters may

gain one of these Traits after surviving a few nights in town, or they might begin transforming the first time one of their Core Traits Exhausts.

These monstrous Focus Traits can normally only be used at night in Blissville, but as Characters begin to unravel The Director's plans, they may find they can manifest their strange abilities during the day as well.

BANSHEE

"They say no one likes to hear the sound of their own voice, but I never thought I'd be afraid of it. The first time it happened, it started as a whisper in my throat, and then suddenly, it was like thousands of voices were pouring out of me at once. I couldn't control it. It's probably best that I find the volume control ASAP."

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What were the first words you uttered in your terrifying new voice?

Have you learned to temper the surging voices within you? If so, how?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: disorient, premonition, shatter, soar, wail

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: alerting, destructive, outburst

FISH MONSTER

"When my skin began to change, I thought it might be some kind of infection. You see some strange things on the internet, y'know? I find myself drawn to the damp, being pulled there by something primal."

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How do you interact with creatures that live in murky waters?

How do the watery depths call upon you, and how do you respond?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *amphibious, commune, decay, growth, spore*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *corroded, malodorous, overgrown*

GORGON

"I was able to hide the first snake when it appeared on my head; the hard part was keeping its whispers from creeping into my thoughts. Now, with more of them forming a writhing crown and seeing the effect my gaze has on others, I wonder if things will ever go back to the way they were."

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How did you come to learn your gaze could petrify others?

What do the serpents whisper to you, and how do you cope?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *agile, mask, petrify, serpent, venom*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *audible, intrusive thoughts, uncontrolled gaze*

IMP

"It started with a tiny fire sparking to life whenever I got upset, and no, I won't tell you how many times it happened before I realized I was causing them. Now I find myself wanting to fling flame at all of my problems. I've never been petty or impulsive like this before!"

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How do you cope with the mischief you inadvertently cause?

Describe the first thing consumed by your fire. How did it affect you?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *agile, deceptive, fire, illusion, trickster*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *confused, consumed, enraged*

OGRE

"At first, I thought it was just a rush of adrenaline, but the strength kept building. When it happens, my skin turns to leather, my body grows, and my voice seems to shake the ground beneath me."

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How do you feel about the fear you instill in others?

What measures do you take to control your immense strength?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *crush, durable, intimidate, quake, titanic*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *lumbering, seeing red, unfeeling*

REPTILIAN

"The scales appeared one at a time, but before I knew it, my skin was as hard as a rock. My senses sharpened too; I can see in the dark now, and I can see the heat people give off. Then came the regeneration, and with it, a toxic taste in my mouth that never seems to go away and a desire to constantly hunt."

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Can you recall a moment when your predatory instincts almost took over?

How have you managed to adapt to your new senses?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *bite, camouflage, grip, regeneration, thermal*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *cold, predatory, territorial*

UNDEAD CONSTRUCT

"My body feels different now. I feel the seams and the places where it looks like I've been patched and stitched together. It's strange, unsettling even, that I can feel my strength grow while the rest of me feels less...me. At first, I thought I was imagining things, but the changes are more obvious each night. I can't help but wonder what—or who—I'm becoming."

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How do you deal with malfunctions or wear and tear on your body?

The memories of those whose flesh you wear speak to you. What do you hear?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *augment, durable, phantom memory, self-repair, strength*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *detached, heavy, impassive*

VAMPIRE

"I've realized the thirst isn't temporary...it's something more. I've changed. My reflection feels strange now, and at night everything around me becomes clearer to my senses in a way that's overwhelming during the day."

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Do you resist your vampiristic urges? If so, how?

How did you first discover your changed reflection?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: bat, drain, sight, stealth, reflex

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: bloodlust, silver, sunlight

WRAITH

"It's unsettling to watch myself become less solid in real time. Like I'm fading into a shadow. When I start to lose control, the people I care about seem to lose their energy or flee whenever I get too close, but it's getting easier."

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Have you found any way to anchor yourself to the physical world? If so, how?

Is there a memory or emotion you have recognized triggers these new abilities?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: drain, frighten, intangible, possess, telekinesis

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: bloodthirsty, insatiable, overwhelmed

YETI

"I'm just going to come right out and say it. I know it sounds strange, but I think my skin and hair are getting thicker. And it's not just that. I feel physically stronger too, and when the air outside might have felt biting cold before, it now feels more like a welcoming breeze. And sometimes...I can even control it"

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How do you manage the rage that comes with your new strength?

Which thoughts or emotions do you conjure when you summon and manipulate the cold?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: cold, intimidate, launch, power, resilient

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: blind rage, fear of flame, inhuman

PACK TRAIT KEYWORDS

After making their way inside the Blissville Hotel and into their respective rooms on the first day, the Characters find luggage delivered inside; however, the luggage isn't their own.

While the luggage may not belong to the Characters, the players should be

given their choice of equipment. Unbeknownst to the Characters, the luggage has been delivered to their rooms by The Director, and the contents reflect the role they expect the Characters to play while they're in town.

KEYWORD

EXAMPLE EQUIPMENT

Athlete

Baseball bat, spiked cleats, personal protective equipment, injury kit, small free weights

*Construction
Worker*

Tool kit, spare parts, personal protective equipment, portable battery pack, a large tool

Health Professional

Sharp medical implements, medical reference book, pen light, personal protective equipment, first aid kit

Journalist

Camera, notepad, tape recorder, press pass, disguises

Teacher

Textbooks, binder of notes, ruler, snacks, bandaids

TECHNIQUES

CURSED KNOWLEDGE

Shortly after arriving in Blissville, you begin to hear mischievous voices whispering in your mind. One use of this Technique while communicating with these thoughts allows you to ask the GM two questions on a single topic. The GM will offer an answer to each question. One answer will be true, while the other is false. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

FRIGHTENING RAGE

You can perform incredible feats of strength by unleashing your terrifying inner rage. When you use this Technique, shift down your **Tangle** Core Trait any number of times in order to shift up your **Husk** Core Trait by the same number of times. You may not increase your **Husk** Core Trait beyond its normal maximum, and you may not reduce your **Tangle** Core Trait to the point of Exhaustion. When you enter this rage, Adversaries who can see you must make an Action Roll using only their **Attitude** Trait. On a Failure, their fear overwhelms them, and they must shift down their **Attitude** Trait by one. A Critical Failure on this Action Roll instead shifts their **Attitude** Trait down twice. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

IRON WILL

Your resolve and determination are undeniable. When faced with mental manipulation or fear that would shift down one of your Trait die, you may use this Technique to prevent it. If the attempt comes from an Adversary, your mental fortitude reflects its attempt back toward the source, shifting down one of its Trait die instead. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

MONSTROUS AWARENESS

You can tap into your burgeoning inner monstrosity, gaining unique insights into other monsters at the cost of leaving a small piece of your humanity behind. When you use this Technique while interacting with a monster, shift down your **Flicker** die once to ask the GM two of the following questions about the creature, which they must answer truthfully:

- ▶ What does this creature desire most?
- ▶ How can I gain this creature's trust?
- ▶ What is this creature afraid of?
- ▶ What unique ability does this creature possess?

You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

SHADOW STEP

You can merge with shadows and move unseen. When you use this Technique, make an appropriate Action Roll to step into a shadow and emerge from another shadow you can see. On a Failure, you still move to the desired location, but those around you witness the action. You can use this Technique three times per Safe Rest or session.

ADVERSARIES

MAYOR VINCENT H. RALLINGS, VAMPIRE FORM

POWER 4 | SCALE 1



In vampire form, Mayor Rallings has an insatiable hunger for blood and stops at nothing to satisfy his thirst.

ATTITUDE

PREDATORY

Stalking the Characters long before he reveals himself, the mayor preys on those in the group he can quickly dispatch before vanishing back into the shadows.

TRAIT

BAT FORM

The mayor's supernatural gifts grant him the ability to take the form of a bat and enable him to fly.

TRAIT

HYPNOTIC GAZE

Rallings can mesmerize his victims with a glance, making them more susceptible to his will and commands.

When Mayor Rallings makes a successful Action Roll with this Trait against a Character, instead of shifting down one of the Character's Trait dice, the GM can choose to apply the enthralled Drawback to the Character's **Flicker** Core Trait instead.

TRAIT

REGENERATION

When injured, Rallings can take time to focus on healing his wounds, making him a persistent threat in battle.

On his turn during an Encounter, Mayor Rallings can shift this Trait's die down once to shift up any one of his other Trait dice once.

TRAIT

SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH

The mayor's vampire form grants him immense physical power, allowing him to easily overpower most foes.

TRAIT

DRAINING BITE

Eager to feed, Rallings uses his swift movements and piercing bite to drain the life of his adversaries.



SHERIFF KAM CANTERS, WEREWOLF FORM

POWER 3 | SCALE 1

Sheriff Canters towers over the Characters and most others in werewolf form, growing to an incredible size of nearly 8 feet tall. Despite their immense form, Canters can perform incredible feats of agility to make short work of their enemies.



ATTITUDE

RELENTLESS

As a werewolf, Sheriff Canters is driven by an unyielding desire to hunt and capture prey.



TRAIT

BESTIAL FURY

Canters' rage fuels their strength in their werewolf state, allowing them to deal devastating blows to their enemies.



TRAIT

ENHANCED SENSES

With heightened senses of smell, hearing, and sight, Canters can track their targets with terrifying accuracy.



TRAIT

RAZOR-SHARP CLAWS

The sheriff's claws can easily tear through flesh and bone, making them a formidable melee combatant.



TRAIT

TERRIFYING GAZE

Canters' imposing form and unflinching stare make most people freeze in place or flee for their lives.



FROM PROTECTOR TO HUNTER

As the moon rises, the town's sheriff transforms into a towering werewolf with sharp teeth, vicious claws, and keen senses they can use to track down the Characters.

CLAIRE CAULDWELL, WITCH FORM

POWER 2 | SCALE 1

In witch form, Claire uses her potions and spellcraft to subdue the Characters just long enough to make them her next victims.

ATTITUDE

WICKED

Claire's normally pleasant demeanour is transformed into one of twisted pleasure as she aims to corrupt and manipulate those around her.



TRAIT

HEXES AND CURSES

Claire can cast dark magic toward her targets to confuse them or inflict pain.



TRAIT

NOXIOUS CONCOCTIONS

By launching vials of her toxic brews toward her victims with deadly accuracy, Claire can stun and ensnare her victims.



TRAIT

FIENDISH CAULDRON

Claire wears her huge iron cauldron on her back, sloshing toxic liquids as she gives chase. It serves as a source of her power and can also be used to summon minions.



COOKING UP TROUBLE

By night, Claire transforms into a gnarled witch, keen to craft her magical concoctions using her less-than-conventional recipes.

MECHANIC BOB CRUISE, MONSTROUS OOZE

POWER 2 | SCALE 1

The oily, amorphous terror that is Bob Cruise in his monstrous form is slow but incredibly deadly. Cruise is formless and can squeeze through tight spaces, making him difficult to pin down and even more difficult to escape.

ATTITUDE

RAVENOUS

In his ooze form, Bob's hunger is never satiated.



TRAIT

ACIDIC TOUCH

Contact with Bob's ooze form causes severe burns, corroding both organic and inorganic materials.



TRAIT

SHAPE-SHIFTING

Bob can alter his shape to form weapons or defences, adapting to various combat situations.



TRAIT

ENGULF

Bob can attempt to engulf and suffocate his victims entirely, slowly dissolving them.



DESTRUCTIVE BLOB

After dark, and hours after the garage has closed its doors to patrons, Bob Cruise's form begins to deform, literally. Bob transforms into a giant, grotesque, shape-shifting blob that can ooze through tight spaces and engulf his victims.

BLISSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, SWARM OF FLYING IMPS

POWER 1 | SCALE 1

This swarm of cackling imps flits about causing mayhem and chaos everywhere they roam. Though small, they attack in numbers and can quickly overwhelm their targets with their dangerous antics.

ATTITUDE

MISCHIEVOUS

These imps revel in causing disorder and inflicting torment.



TRAIT

DISTRACTING LAUGHTER

The imps' incessant laughter and high-pitched screeching can disorient and distract those within earshot, making it difficult for them to concentrate.



TRAIT

FIRESTARTER

With reckless enthusiasm, the imps can throw small fireballs toward their targets, inflicting damage and panic.



MISCHIEVOUS MINORS

By day, the students of Blissville High School can be found in and around the school grounds and are polite, diligent, and cheerful. By night, they transform into a chaotic swarm of flying imps whose laughter can be heard echoing throughout the town as they swoop around causing mischief.

WELCOME TO BLISSVILLE ENCOUNTER: DEAD STUDIO AUDIENCE

Trapped in an small, idyllic town by day and a terrifying B Movie by night, you and your friends are subjected to strange experiments and scenarios at the whim of the enigmatic Director. Tonight's sideshow? A nightmarish sitcom built from your own memories!



DESCRIPTION

Play as regular people held hostage in a frightening TV show made just for you! Your Characters' memories will be twisted into living nightmares, all while a laugh track mocks your progress.

CHARACTER CREATION

Have players come up with their concepts first—encourage them to borrow ideas from their favourite B horror movies and stories if they aren't sure where to start. Once their concepts are settled, have them create their Characters as follows:

- Assign a D6, D8 and D10 Shift Die to their **Husk**, **Tangle**, and **Flicker** Core Traits, in any combination.
- Choose or create two Focus Traits, assigning one of them a D4 Shift Die and the other a D6. Additionally, each player will assign two Keywords to each of their Focus Traits. The Blissville World Spark has ten example Focus Traits for players to choose from, with example Keywords and Drawbacks included.

ENCOUNTER BREAKDOWN

PART 1: HOME AGAIN

The Characters wake up in the middle of the night, not in their hotel rooms but in bedrooms that look a lot like the ones

they had when they were young. These rooms are decorated with slightly off-kilter versions of toys, posters, and furniture they had when they were kids.

Memories of Youth. Have each player describe their room and another room or important place they remember from their childhood. These might include:

- A favorite play structure
- A cherished classroom
- The den where they played video games and watched movies

When the Characters leave their individual bedrooms, they find themselves on the landing of the second floor of a large house. Downstairs they hear the muffled but cheerful banter of two people talking, with the sound of a canned laugh track interjecting regularly throughout their conversation.

PART 2: HELLO MOTHER, HELLO FATHER

Down on the main floor of the house, the party finds Mayor Rallings and Claire Cauldwell in the kitchen. They are in their monstrous forms but are dressed and behaving very strangely. Claire is in an apron and has a large red beehive hairdo, quite different from her usually stringy hair style. Rallings is in his usual vampire garb, but he is wearing a pair of thick-rimmed glasses and carrying a briefcase. As the Characters enter, Rallings turns toward them with a forced smile and says:

"Hey there, kiddos, what are you doing up? Aw, did you have a scary nightmare?"

This line is punctuated by a tinny laugh track that echoes through the whole house, seeming to originate from everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

Rallings pauses awkwardly for the length of the laugh track. When it finally ends, Claire says in an uncharacteristically cheerful tone:

“Poor things, you must be so frightened! Let mommy tuck you in...”

As another round of laughter echoes through the space, the room starts to distort around the Characters, becoming much larger than before. The kitchen table that was at the Characters' waist height now looms over them. Both Mayor Rallings and Claire are enormous as well, and they begin to chase the Characters, all while the tinny laughter continues.

Escaping the Kitchen. The kitchen has two doors, but the Characters are now too small to reach the doorknobs, and they'll need to find a way to get a door open to escape. They might try to build a pile of kitchen appliances to get to the doorknob, brute force their way through the door somehow, or even trick one of the oversized monsters into helping them.

While the party scrambles, Rallings and Claire crack jokes and terrorize the Characters. They don't directly try to harm the Characters unless provoked, though the difference in size makes a fight one sided.

PART 3: EXIT STAGE LEFT

Once the party escapes the kitchen, the real nightmare begins—a chase through a strange house built from the Characters' memories. They must race through twisted versions of the rooms they described in Part 1 while being pursued by “Mother” and “Father.” The challenge of escaping each room is represented by the following Trait:

WARPED MEMORY



To escape each room, the party must Exhaust the Warped Memory Trait of the room, after which the chase continues

to the next altered memory. Some examples of what the Characters might need to overcome include:

- ▶ Their favorite childhood toys come to life with sharp teeth and claws
- ▶ Classic video game characters climbing out of static-filled screens
- ▶ Taunting and demoralizing voices of friends and family
- ▶ Beloved pets turned nasty

Every time a Character fails a roll, Rallings and Clare make an Action Roll against them, using their Traits unique Traits. If a Character's roll is a Critical Failure, the monster's Action Roll is Inspired. These attacks are not physical, but instead target the Character's **Tangle** and **Flicker** Core Traits to try and weaken the Character's resolve. Once the party escapes one room per party member, they successfully flee the house.

EPILOGUE

Right after escaping the house, the Characters wake up in their hotel room beds in a cold sweat. The sun is shining outside their windows, birds are singing in the trees, and the friendly neighborhood milkman is dropping off fresh milk. The small TV at the end of each of their beds flickers on briefly, static turning to “Father” Rallings and “Mother” Claire waving at them through the screen, standing in the same kitchen from the night before. A tinny voice says:

“See you next time on Welcome to Blissville!”

right before the screen cuts to black.

SECOND WORLD

A SUPER HERO SHIFT WORLD SPARK





CONCEPT

Second World is a place of hopeful heroes and dastardly villains. A place where ancient energies, mutation, and technology all coexist to create champions to save Earth from catastrophes, both natural and man-made. It is our second chance.

In the very near future, Earth narrowly avoids an apocalyptic WWII with a last-minute diplomatic solution. But tensions are soaring, and the world's armies and weapons are still at the ready, leaving citizens unsure of the future. The people are shaken.

Little did humanity know that an ancient entity was stirring in the heart of the Earth's core. Raspallion, an earth elemental of gigantic proportions, awoke from a thousand-year slumber just in time to witness the near-destruction of his home. Fearing that without his intervention humanity may not survive much longer, Raspallion made the ultimate sacrifice, shattering himself into thousands of shards, each one infused with a piece of his ancient power.

These shards were scattered across the whole of the Earth, granting great gifts to those who found them. Such lucky people are known as Champions, taking on Raspallion's final challenge to use their newfound superpowers to protect humanity and pull it back from the brink of destruction.

Raspallion's sacrifice also disrupted another world, hidden from humanity for thousands of years: the subaquatic civilization of Atlantis. Having believed themselves to be the chosen of Raspallion, the vengeful Atlanteans wage war on the coastlines of the world, trying to claim the shards for themselves.

Champions have inspired like-minded individuals to use innovative technology or natural advantages to become heroes as well. Of course, there are many who liked the world as it was—on the edge of destruction—and have wrestled power and influence to oppose the Champions.

And this time, if the Champions fail, there will be no third chance.

In this World Spark, players play as up-and-coming Champions acclimating to their new powers and responsibilities. Their adventures focus mainly on the small but thriving seaboard city of Port Angel, a tourist locale with beaches, a gambling promenade, and an international shipping port. It is protected by beloved Champions like Luminous, Fusion, and Gravitas, while it is exploited by villains such as Argonaut, Lifeless, and Rebound.

Port Angel is a place of hope for a better, kinder future, and heroes people can cheer for when they look up in the sky.

BUILDING BLOCKS

CORE TRAITS

This world uses the standard Core Traits, **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul**.

Body. For many Champions, their powers manifest as incredible strength, speed, and resilience. Even the less physically oriented Champions often find their bodies able to resist more than the average human. A high **Body** Core Trait could indicate abilities like super-speed, superhuman strength, or impenetrable skin.

Mind. A Champion whose abilities focus more on their intellect often lean more toward effects that seem supernatural. A powerful **Mind** Core Trait might contribute to powers like telekinesis, telepathy, and hyper-intelligence.

Soul. Champions whose abilities focus on their connections to others are often the most dangerous, as their talents commonly involve manipulating and coercing others against their will. Champions with potent **Soul** Core Traits might be able to affect people's emotions, control their minds, or drain their energy.

A NOTE ON POWER LEVELS

When creating super-heroic Characters like Champions in a SHIFT campaign, make sure to keep the idea of varying power levels in mind. A hero with super-strength may be able to easily crumple a tank, whereas an average person will struggle to scratch the paint. To represent this in your games, you may want to incorporate the optional Scale mechanics into your games, treating Champions as Scale 2 or greater. You can learn more about the optional Scale mechanic at the end of

Chapter 4: Adversaries.



TRAVEL

The Second World setting centers around a major metropolis called Port Angel. Though the city is sprawling, getting around isn't hard, and the recommendation for this World Spark is to use the Simple Travel ruleset. When the Champions are needed somewhere, they arrive on the scene right away, ready for action.

REST AND RECOVERY

The vibe in Second World is high-powered action with a little bit of grit. Champions will get injured, knocked out, or worse and will need to take time to patch themselves up. To represent this, this SHIFT world uses the Standard Rest and Recovery ruleset. For a game that feels more like a serialized comic or TV show, use the Simple Rest and Recovery ruleset instead—the Champions will bounce back from their injuries right away!

LOCATION: PORT ANGEL

Port Angel is a metropolitan seaside city with a striking skyline and a bustling boardwalk. It's a great spot for tourists and has a lively trade industry, and the citizens are proud of their Champions and their city's success and growth. Unfortunately, Port Angel's economic success and global influence make it a target of power- and glory-hungry supervillains.

LOCATION TRAITS

Attitude (D6). Many people consider Port Angel to be a party city for its watersports, gambling, and more. The population's *hopeful* attitude leaves them free to truly enjoy their leisure, and public opinion of the Champions is high.

Wealth (D4). Despite the potential risk of villainous activity, the economy in Port Angel is booming. The safety provided by the Champions makes business owners and investors feel safe about setting up shop.

Security and Safety (D6). With Port Angel being the home of such mighty Champions, it is considered one of the safest cities on the planet. Unfortunately, this overdependence on superheroes means that if something were to happen to the Champions, Port Angel would be left undefended.

Supernormal Activity (D8). Mutants, magic users, and technologically advanced heroes and villains have made their home here. It is not uncommon to stumble onto a super crime or battle in progress.

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

Port Angel is proud of its tourist attractions and exciting nightlife. These shining beacons of entertainment and fun bring in a lot of visitors, but it also opens them up as targets for villainy.

The Angel Cube (Unsafe). This giant arena hosts the city's sports teams, includ-

ing their baseball team, the Port Angel Slammers, and their football team, the Jaguars. Games at the Cube attract thousands of fans making them a prime target for supervillainous attacks, and Champions are commonly posted at the busiest games.

Champion Pavilion (Safe). A former convention center, the pavilion was gifted to the city's Champions for their use, be it leisure or tactical. Decked out with a gym, a command center for coordinating missions, and a fully stocked medical bay, many Champions make the pavilion their home away from home.

Commerce Square (Unsafe). The square is the international business center of Port Angel, with banks, tech firms, and more along with shops and restaurants for the business clientele. This area of Port Angel is such a common target for super-crime that the Champions have a watchtower base on the rooftop of Angel Investor Bank's towering office block.

Manta Boardwalk (Unsafe). When shark people aren't terrorizing the crowds, the Manta Boardwalk is the tourism center of Port Angel, with surfing, boating, fishing, and a small permanent carnival park. There are food trucks and sporting equipment rentals, and it's home to the cleanest beach in the state. The proximity to the Atlantean whirlpool portals means the beach often needs to be defended from strange and vicious creatures from the deep ocean.

Port Angel International Airport (Unsafe). The hub for travel in and out of the city, it also contains a station for statewide train travel and a subway station for access to downtown. Various gangs and supervillains move illicit goods through the airport, including high-tech or magical weaponry and Atlantean artifacts.

IMPORTANT NPCS

Port Angel has the usual political figures and a few local celebrities, some of whom interact with the Champions (or those who oppose them). The population is around 500 thousand and growing. Mostly, the government is positive toward the Champions, but there are exceptions.

Mayor Tom “Big Tom” Akins [he/him].

Mayor Akins is a populist and a larger-than-life character known for his sense of humor and big appetite. He genuinely wants to do well for his city and the people in it, and his wide frame and wild clothing make him an easily recognizable figure. His **Attitude** toward the Characters is *welcoming*.

Police Chief Mollock [she/her]. Police Chief Angela Mollock distrusts the secrets of the Champions and has more than a few secrets of her own. A tough-on-crime chief, she has been alleged to actually be working with those who oppose the Champions, so deep is her mistrust of them. If a conflict came down to the two forces, it is uncertain which side she would take. Her **Attitude** toward the Characters is *suspicious*.

Luminous [she/her]. The premiere champion of Port Angel, Luminous has solar powers of light and heat, including her Nova Vision, which can easily melt steel. She is beloved by the citizens and is willing to risk her life at a moment's notice to protect the innocent. She feels a responsibility to help up-and-coming Champions and takes on a mentor role with them when she can. Her **Attitude** toward the Characters is *protective*.

Argonaut [he/him]. One of the city's original champions, Argonaut's ego grew as his powers did, until eventually he felt the citizens should be worshiping him like the gods of old. Argonaut believes himself to be of Atlantean descent, claiming that the magic shard he encountered merely

unlocked abilities that were always there. With his magic spear, he is the most powerful of the enemies of the Champions. His **Attitude** toward the Characters is *contemptuous*.

PLOT HOOKS

The following story kernels can provide a jumping-off point for the Characters' adventures.

The Summoning. Argonaut finds a powerful Atlantean artifact that can summon giant monster octopi to the city to create havoc. As they leave the depths, they cause chaos in every direction, each with the power to demolish a building... or a Champion.

Our Fusion Is Missing. The popular young hero Fusion, known for their potent nuclear powers, is nowhere to be seen after a late-night seaside battle with the ghouls of the undead villain Lifeless. Concerned that Lifeless has captured Fusion to attempt to use them to amplify his powers, the Characters must track down Fusion, putting themselves in danger as Lifeless feels more threatened.

A Hundred-Ton Tantrum. The army has finally managed to take The Steel Giant mech away from teen genius Randy Ko, and he is not happy about it. Randy has deployed a fleet of drones to harass important military and government officials until they give him his robot back. No one has been hurt yet, but it's only a matter of time before Randy's carelessness gets him in hot water.

FOCUS TRAITS

These Traits represent a few of the abilities and powers a Champion might have gained from (or had enhanced by) exposure to shards.

ANIMAL HYBRID

A shard merged your DNA with an animal's, and now you share some of its natural abilities.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What animal did you merge with? Was the encounter with it calm or violent? You share some physical characteristics with the animal that are hard to disguise. What are they?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *bestial strength, leaping, natural weapons, preternatural senses, wallcrawling*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *conspicuous, feral, judged*

BLADES

Claws, daggers, swords, and more! You are the master of the sharpest edge.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How does your blade ability manifest? What is your style? How did you learn to master these blades?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *accuracy, bladesmithing, claw, dexterity, thrown*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *blunted, broken, chipped*

ENERGY CONTROL

Magician, mutant, or mentalist, you control a specific element. Fire, speed, ice, gravity, magnetism—whether one of these or something else entirely, you adeptly control that force.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How does your body manifest your element since you acquired your power? What happens when you lose control of your power?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *electric, fire, gravity, ice, magnetic, speed*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *concentration loss, exhausted, uncontrollable*

FLIGHT

You are able to soar over the city and spot trouble from above.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How fast is your flight? How long can you fly without resting?

How do you control your flight?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *momentum, navigating, observation, speed, transport*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *distant, lightheaded, vulnerable*

INVISIBILITY

Your newfound ability to instantly disappear makes you a useful ally and a terrifying opponent.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

Are you able to turn invisible because of a shard-powered technology, or is it something you now do instinctively?

What do you say to convince people you can be trusted once they learn about your talent?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *ambush, camouflage, eavesdropping, stealth, terror*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *disoriented, ignored, suspected*

ENERGY BEAM

You are able to conjure a burst of energy (solar, electric, mystical, or similar) capable of stopping a speeding truck—or a speeding supervillain—from a distance.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How do you control your power?

What kind of collateral damage has your power caused before?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *acidic, explosive, focused, freezing, incendiary*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *drained, misaligned, uncontrolled*

PSIONICS

Your mind has been expanded, and you can use it to manipulate the world around you...or other people's minds.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What terrifying incident revealed your powers to you for the first time?

How do your powers manifest when you use them?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *astral projection, levitation, mind-control, telekinesis, telepathy*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *backlash, mistrusted, stunned*

STRENGTH

Your incredible strength makes you an effective tank in combat and a valuable asset in any rescue mission.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How does your strength manifest in your appearance?

What is the hardest part of living in such a fragile world as someone with super strength?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *crush, grapple, slam, toss, trample*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *collateral damage, loss of control, overkill*

TECHMASTER

What you lack in powers you make up for in the brilliant use of secret technology. Armor, vehicles, weapons—you wield them masterfully.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

How are your inventions funded?

What is your speciality, and how does it put you on a level playing field against monsters and villains?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *armor, glider, grapple, rocket, transportation*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *malfunction, overcharge, power loss*

TELEPORTATION

Whether through shard-powered technology or the sheer force of your will, you can transport yourself instantly from one place to another.

STORY PROMPT QUESTIONS

What limitations does your teleporting have? How far can you go?

The act of teleporting leaves some evidence of your presence behind. What is it?

EXAMPLE KEYWORDS: *escape, long range, phasing, split second, transportation*

EXAMPLE DRAWBACKS: *lost, scattered, two places at once*

PACK TRAIT KEYWORDS

It pays to have the right equipment. These are some of the examples of a load out for the prepared champion.

KEYWORD

EXAMPLE EQUIPMENT

Fully Armed

Weapon case, silencer, scope, binoculars, grenades

Hand-to-Hand

Hand wraps, heavy boots, gloves, pain killers, mouthguard

In-Flight

Goggles, flight suit, GPS, tracking device, flare

Medic

Adrenaline, bandages, medscanner, surgical gear, hospital ID

Techy

Box cutter, cabling, laptop, night goggles, satellite uplink

TECHNIQUES

AN IN WITH THE FEDS

You've helped out the authorities enough that they trust you with even the most confidential situations, and you can usually get access to places that most people can't.

When you use this Technique, you can gain access to one building, crime scene, or similar that would normally require high-level security clearance or other privileges to access. You can bring your allies (within reason) and can request to be left alone while you investigate. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

CLOSE COMBAT PROFICIENCY

You have a hand-to-hand fighting specialty (grappling, martial arts, or MMX-style, for example), keeping you in the fight even if your powers or weapons fail. When making an Action Roll to attack or subdue an Adversary with your bare hands, you can use this Technique to treat the roll as Inspired. You can use this Technique three times per Safe Rest or session.

MEDICAL TRAINING

You are proficient in first aid and more advanced combat and rescue care. You can't perform surgery, but most common field procedures are available to you. When you use this Technique, you can shift down your **Pack** Trait die once to shift up your or an ally's **Body** Core Trait by two. You can use this Technique three times per Safe Rest or session.

HEROIC REPUTATION

You are known and respected for your previous feats, and your reputation precedes you. When you use this Technique while interacting with someone new, you can impress them by describing one of your fantastic feats. This can be a recounting of a previous session or a side adventure you are inventing on the fly. If you make up a new tale of glory, it becomes fact and is added to your heroic canon. The NPC is so impressed by the tale that they help you out in any way they can for the remainder of the session. They are enamored with you, but they won't do anything that puts themselves or others in danger. You can use this Technique one time per Safe Rest or session.

SHARD-POWERED CLOAKING DEVICE

You have developed or obtained a shard-powered gadget that lets you hide yourself from others. Though useful, the shard does drain some of your physical strength to activate the device. When you use this Technique, shift down your **Body** Trait once to immediately make yourself and up to three people within Close range of you effectively invisible from radar, sonar, cameras, and eyesight for the next 10 minutes. You can use this Technique three times per Safe Rest or session.

ADVERSARIES

MAKO

POWER 1 | SCALE 1

Terrifying half-human, half-shark denizens of Atlantis, who want their beach back.

ATTITUDE

ANGRY

The Mako believe that Port Angel is theirs by right and are willing to eat all the humans settled there.



TRAIT

SHARP TEETH AND MIND

A Mako's murderous giant jaws, speed, and cunning make them nearly impossible to escape.



TRAIT

PSYCHIC COMMUNICATION

Mako do not need to speak to communicate with each other. No need to communicate the hate they have for humans though—they make that clear by other, more violent means.



TEETH AND TERROR

When Raspallion opened magic to the world, he created a rift for the denizens of Atlantis, who normally had no access to our civilization, to enter our world. This rift allowed the shark people, the Mako, to travel to our shores freely, where they demand that the beaches belong to them and terrorize vacationers with their terrifying teeth and strength!

LIFELESS

POWER 2 | SCALE 1

Lifeless is a dandy-dressed zombie with the ability to give “life” to inanimate objects. They make these strange, unliving creatures enact their unusual plans.

ATTITUDE

HATEFUL

Lifeless is a person whose mental ability animates inanimate matter. Unfortunately, that includes themselves, and now they cannot die, despite wanting to very much.



TRAIT

ANIMATE THE INANIMATE

Statues, cars, even small buildings...Lifeless can turn them into living weapons and doesn't care who gets hurt as a result.



TRAIT

ENDLESS LIFE

Lifeless cannot be killed, even as they desperately wish they could be.



TRAIT

NO EMPATHY

Lifeless has no feeling of compassion or mercy. It would be comical if not so murderous.



LIFE TO THE UNLIVING

An uber-powerful being, Lifeless was an ordinary person until their power manifested: the supernatural ability to give “life” to inanimate objects. They dress like a dandy, but their face and limbs show they are decaying and zombielike, as their power prevents them from achieving true death.

ARGONAUT

POWER 3 | SCALE 2

Superstrong egomaniac with no qualms about punishing disrespectful, unappreciative denizens of Port Angel.

ATTITUDE

IMPERIOUS

Argonaut feels you should worship him and sees any disrespect as punishable by death.



TRAIT

FIERCE COMBATANT

Argonaut uses his great strength and his magic spear in deadly combat. He is a master of all martial maneuvers.



TRAIT

MAGIC SPEAR

The spear can summon creatures of myth such as kraken, hydra, and pegasus.



TRAIT

SUPER STRENGTH

Argonaut resembles a god in all ways, including his strength. He can easily lift a tank.



TRAIT

ARROGANCE

Argonaut's arrogance is often his undoing. He is simply incapable of believing he can be beaten, even after being beaten repeatedly.



EGO AND CORRUPTION

Argonaut was a simple man, Jeffrey Ranyard, who worked as a parking attendant when Raspallion left the power shards as a gift to humanity. Jeffrey was blessed with a shard but quickly became disillusioned with the Champion's life. As his body and appearance became more and more like a god, he felt he was owed fealty and strict adoration from the people whose cars he used to park. Argonaut uses a magic spear that can summon creatures of myth to fight for him.

THE STEEL GIANT

POWER 4 | SCALE 2

A spoiled brat genius, Randy Ko has made a giant robot and uses it like a kid with his first sports car in the suburbs, where giant robots do not belong.

ATTITUDE

OBLIVIOUS

Randy often feels bad when faced with how he has hurt someone. But it doesn't stop him.

TRAIT

ENERGY PULSE

In the robot's chest is an energy cannon capable of taking down a skyscraper.

TRAIT

FLIGHT

The Steel Giant is capable of supersonic flight that leaves careless damage in its wake.

TRAIT

GIANT ROBOT

It's a giant robot. It can lift a house.

TRAIT

INDEPENDENT PERSONALITY

Randy's genius is such that The Steel Giant is developing a separate, independent personality from that of his inventor-pilot.

TRAIT

MALFUNCTION

The Steel Giant has malfunctioned more than once, causing intense levels of danger. A meltdown is definitely on the way, probably sooner than later.



BRATTY BOY GENIUS

Randy Ko was a high school prodigy who loved robots and dreamed one day of making a robot that could change the world. Unfortunately, Randy is also a spoiled brat and doesn't take any safety measures when using his incredible giant mech, The Steel Giant. He's more careless than malicious, but that doesn't make him less dangerous, as he tries his new weapons and even bombs in quiet neighborhoods heedless of the risk to others.

SECOND WORLD ENCOUNTER: BEACH PARTY GONE BAD

"BREAKING NEWS: Just another day at the Manta boardwalk! Beach-goers are having their picnics ruined by angry shark people rising up from the water—again. This time, the watery villains mean business and have kidnapped several vacationers and are threatening to drag them back down under the waves. Scary! We will now head down to our reporter on the ground as the Champions arrive on the scene to make quick work of these foes..."



DESCRIPTION

Players will play as Champions, superheroes with incredible powers who defend the city of Port Angel—and sometimes the world—from super villainy of all kinds. The beach and boardwalk are major tourist attractions, but they are also constantly under attack from denizens of the lost city of Atlantis. Can the party clear out the Mako and safely return the captives to their beach blankets?

CHARACTER CREATION

Have players come up with their concepts first—encourage them to borrow ideas from their favorite superhero stories, movies, and TV shows if they aren't sure where to start. Once their concepts are settled, have them create their Characters as follows:

- ▶ Assign a D6, D8, and D10 Shift Die to their **Body**, **Mind**, and **Soul** Core Traits, in any combination.
- ▶ Choose or create two Focus Traits, assigning one of them a D4 Shift Die and the other a D6. Additionally, each player will assign two Keywords to each of their Focus Traits. The Second World World

Spark has ten example Focus Traits for players to choose from, with example Keywords and Drawbacks included.

ENCOUNTER BREAKDOWN

PART 1: SEASIDE RAIDERS

The Champions get a call from "Big Tom" Akins, the Mayor of Port Angel, in a frantic state. The beach has been raided by Mako from Atlantis who are holding several citizens hostage. From their HQ in the Champion Pavilion, the Champions can see the chaos unfolding on the board walk.

Make It Personal. On the news footage, the Champions notice that one of the hostages is a close friend or family member of someone on the team. Have the party decide who it is and answer the following questions about them:

- ▶ Does this person know that their friend/family member is a Champion?
- ▶ How does this person feel about the Champions? Do they love them or despise them?

Once the team is ready, they can head to the boardwalk to start reining in the Mako.

PART 2: COMBING FOR CHAOS

At the beach, the party finds the boardwalk in a state of complete disarray—the Mako have used arcane drones to stir up several small sandstorms that are terrorizing shoppers and beach-goers alike, tossing furniture and debris everywhere. The Mako and their hostages are located in a traveling battlement inside a shield of water pulled up from the ocean by an ancient Atlantean device. The party must stop the devices creating the small sandstorms and clear the beach before they can take on the battlement.

Shutting Down the Sandstorms. Clearing out the sandstorms and stabilizing the chaos on the beach requires exhausting the following Trait:

STOPPING THE SANDSTORM DRONES

6

Every time any of the Characters' dice shift down when making an Action Roll against the **Stopping the Sandstorm Drones** Trait, make an Action Roll with **Stopping the Sandstorm Drones**. On a Success, an innocent bystander is put into a perilous situation because of a sandstorm and needs to be rescued. On a Critical Failure, a drone malfunctions or is taken down by civilian efforts, inspired by the Champion's efforts.

Some ways a civilian might get threatened by the sandstorms include:

- ▶ Trapped under collapsed debris from the damaged board walk
- ▶ Flung out into the water
- ▶ Half buried in sand

After clearing out the sandstorms and securing the beach, the party can move their focus onto the hovering Mako battle platform just off shore.

PART 3: MAKING WAVES

Getting to the Mako and rescuing the hostages is no easy feat. Use the Mako stat block with the following Special Trait added:

A SMALL GROUP OF...

6

A small gathering that slightly increases fortitude. This Adversary represents a small group of creatures and can make one additional Action Roll on each of its turns. Characters must also Exhaust one more of this Adversary's Traits (in addition to the number indicated by its Power) before overcoming this Adversary.

Additionally, the shield of water surrounding the platform is represented by the following Trait:

WATER SHIELD

10

The **Water Shield** Trait must be fully Exhausted before the Mako can be targeted directly or the hostages can be rescued.

Negotiating with the Mako. It is not impossible to make a deal with the Mako in exchange for the hostages, but their demands are steep—they want the three shards that power Randy Ko's Steel Giant mech suit, claiming the shards rightfully belong to the people of Atlantis. The Characters can attempt to exhaust the Mako's **Attitude** Trait, but any whiff of a lie causes them to retaliate.

Rescuing the Hostages. The hostages are bound to the battle platform by "rope" made of water controlled by the same arcane engine that powers the water shield. Rescuing a bound hostage requires a successful Action Roll with a Trait strong enough to break through the arcane Atlantean energy.

EPILOGUE

Once the Champions deal with the Mako and rescue the hostages and if they keep injuries to a minimum), the people of Port Angel celebrate the victory by getting back to the beach and boardwalk within a few hours of it being reopened.

The mayor thanks the Champions personally by having a dozen pizzas from Port Angel's Pizzeria Perfecto delivered to Champion Pavilion. All in a day's work for the heroes of Port Angel!



APPENDIX A: 100 KEYWORDS

The following roll table provides some inspiration for players when choosing keywords for their traits. Players can choose from the table directly, or roll their D10 twice, once to determine the tens digit and the second to determine the ones digit.

1 Open	21 Reduce	41 Sense	61 Reveal	81 Maintain
2 Voice	22 Avoid	42 Guidance	62 Find	82 Fauna
3 Throw	23 Escape	43 Threaten	63 Wood	83 Recover
4 Paint	24 Confine	44 History	64 Wrestle	84 Shadow
5 Upset	25 Fly	45 Cycle	65 Shoot	85 Shake
6 Freeze	26 Attract	46 Martial	66 Gather	86 Mercy
7 Repair	27 Chain	47 Pierce	67 Calculate	87 Steal
8 Investigate	28 Slash	48 Channel	68 Enhance	88 Scout
9 Cross	29 Influence	49 Fire	69 Connected	89 Whip
10 Endure	30 Surround	50 Taste	70 Wear	90 Expand
11 Provide	31 Alarm	51 Passage	71 Become	91 Listen
12 Strike	32 Hide	52 Climb	72 Intimidate	92 Translate
13 Repurpose	33 Identify	53 Delay	73 Guide	93 Guard
14 Restore	34 Create	54 Fill	74 Gadget	94 Settle
15 Echo	35 Pursue	55 Faith	75 Dream	95 Operate
16 Poison	36 Sail	56 Study	76 Glove	96 Weave
17 Flora	37 Read	57 Sleep	77 Burst	97 Punch
18 Deal	38 Pause	58 Spore	78 Persuade	98 Anticipate
19 Natural	39 Cover	59 Fix	79 Sustain	99 Gift
20 Stink	40 Mark	60 Protect	80 Desire	100 Improve



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