

BERENGAD GAMES



FANTASY  
STORY  
GAME

CHRISTIAN GRIFFEN



ANIMA PRIME  
The Fantasy Story Game

DESIGNED AND WRITTEN BY  
CHRISTIAN GRIFFEN

DEDICATED TO  
LISA GRIFFEN

BETA VERSION 1.2 (MARCH 2009)

BERENGAD GAMES 2007-2009

CHRISTIAN@BERENGAD.COM

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Foreword .....	4
Acknowledgements .....	5
Structure of This Book.....	7
<b>2 Roleplaying.....</b>	<b>10</b>
The Basic Activity.....	10
Who Determines What?.....	11
Using the Mechanics.....	14
What You Need to Play.....	15
Player and GM Responsibilities .....	15
<b>3 Setting the Stage.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Mood and Content.....	17
Selecting a Setting.....	19
Group Story Seed .....	21
<b>4 Player Characters .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Character Overview.....	23
Name, Concept and Mark.....	23
Passion .....	24
Character Traits.....	26
Skills.....	26
Basic Stats .....	27
Selecting Powers .....	28
Background and Links .....	29
Character Story Seed.....	30
<b>5 Character Scenes .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Scenes to Play.....	32
Setting Up Scenes.....	32
Scene Benefits .....	33
Example Scene .....	34
<b>6 Conflicts.....</b>	<b>36</b>
Setting Up Conflicts.....	36
Starting Conflicts .....	39

## Table of Contents

Taking Turns .....	39
Maneuvers .....	41
Strikes .....	46
Achievements.....	47
Catching Your Breath.....	49
Sacrifice .....	50
Ending Conflicts.....	51
Involvement .....	51
Conflicts Without Combat .....	52
PC Versus PC .....	53
<b>7 Goals .....</b>	<b>54</b>
Basics.....	54
Creating Goals .....	55
Unique, Parallel or Individual.....	57
Joint or Solo.....	57
Single or Chain.....	58
Effects and Conditions.....	58
Goal Examples.....	59
<b>8 Character Development.....</b>	<b>63</b>
Overview .....	63
Personality.....	63
Seeds .....	65
Abilities .....	65
<b>9 Ghostfield .....</b>	<b>69</b>
Dragonspawn (Fiction).....	69
Here and Beyond .....	71
Player Characters.....	72
Skills.....	73
Powers .....	77
Technology.....	78
Factions.....	79
Setting Seed: Coming of the Dragon.....	79
<b>10 Internal Powers.....</b>	<b>80</b>
Passive Powers .....	80
Charge Powers .....	82

<b>11 Soulbound Weapons .....</b>	<b>89</b>
Weapons in Play .....	89
Powers .....	89
Weapon Effects .....	91
<b>12 Summoning .....</b>	<b>94</b>
Eidolons in Play .....	94
Powers .....	95
Creating Eidolons.....	97
List of Common Eidolons .....	101
<b>13 Items .....</b>	<b>108</b>
Powers .....	108
Drop Tables .....	109
Item Effects .....	110
<b>14 Conditions .....</b>	<b>114</b>
Conditions in Play .....	114
List of Conditions.....	115
<b>15 Sample Enemies.....</b>	<b>117</b>
An Assortment of Foes .....	117
Kanissians .....	117
Beyonders .....	120
<b>16 Game Modifications .....</b>	<b>123</b>
Pick and Choose.....	123
Refresh.....	123
Threat Die.....	123
Trait Bonuses.....	124
Creating a New Setting.....	125
<b>17 Essays .....</b>	<b>129</b>
The Purpose of These Essays .....	129
Playstyles .....	129
Flags .....	136
Spontaneous Play .....	139
Playing Over the Internet .....	142
<b>18 Example Characters.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>19 Index.....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>20 Attachments .....</b>	<b>150</b>

# I INTRODUCTION

## Foreword

Welcome to Anima Prime. The game is currently in development, and this is its second incarnation – the Beta version. It has been playtested by me at conventions and by outside groups, but there’s always a benefit in more testing. Hopefully you’re reading this now in preparation to do just that.

The game is meant to be spontaneous: easy to pick up and play without much preparation. The dice handling rules are intuitive, most of the bookkeeping can be done by moving dice around, and the focus is on spontaneous fun. At the same time, there is a lot of flexibility and support for involved stories and intense conflicts. The game works best with groups of 3-5 players in total.

I very much believe in customizing a game to your likings. The setting and powers provided are just examples, and I’m also providing guidelines on how to create your own. In the end, all of those things should work together; for example, the characters’ powers should have the appropriate flavor and feel of a particular setting.

By default, this is an unabashed anime game with many of the genre’s clichés. It’s also an homage to the *Final Fantasy* series of video games, most of all *Final Fantasy X*. However, it isn’t meant to completely emulate any particular source but to allow players to create their own stories in those veins.

As a beta version, this document has not been thoroughly edited, so there might be some rambling and potential changes. Some things are going to have funny names that I might later replace with something ingenious. (Probably not though.) If you find any errors or omissions, please let me know so I can fix them.

This game text is Creative Commons licensed. While there will be a book version with art and a better layout at some point, the complete game text—rules, setting, powers, eidolons, essays, and everything else—will always be available for free.

This document is laid out to be printed double-sided, due to its length. The pages are arranged, with alternating odd and even page numbers and section indicators, to make sense when you bind it on the left side. The idea is to put this thing into a notebook to be able to flip back and forth as needed.

The document also contains an introduction to tabletop roleplaying. If you're a beta tester, chances are you know how that works. But there are some differences between this game and a traditional setup, mainly regarding making up details and sharing responsibilities. I suggest reading the section in any case.

That all said, enjoy the game, and let me know how it went! If you play and provide feedback (preferably on a public forum like RPG.net, Story-Games.com, or Indie-RPGs.com, where we can discuss it with other players), you and your fellow players will be properly listed in the final version as playtesters and receive a PDF of the final version (with art, layout, etc.). If you do this for 3 or more play sessions, I'll also send you a free book version when it's done.

I have set up a website for the game at [www.AnimaPrimeRPG.com](http://www.AnimaPrimeRPG.com), where you can read the latest version of the rules, leave comments on specific passages of the text, connect with other interested players, and more. I'd be more than happy to see you there as well, and I appreciate every single contribution to making this game all it can be. In addition, the Berengad.com forums are always open!

The website for the game will also collect any additional materials that people would like to share. If you've created a cool setting, with or without special powers, factions, and so on, it would be great if you could post about it. I will also add additional thoughts and materials later on.

Again, thanks for your interest, and above all: have fun with the game!

- Christian

### Acknowledgements

First, the playtesters so far: **Andy, Arthur, Brandon, David, Hans, Jake, Jana, Jason, Joel, John A., John H., Lesley, Lori, Lukas, Nick, Ogre, Ryan, Skull and Willem.** Your dedication and input is highly appreciated.

Here's a shout-out to some people without whom this game would not exist, or at least not in this form. I can't possibly list everyone, and my memory is about as reliable as the performance of the Portland Trailblazers, so please don't start throwing rocks if I missed you.

**Lisa Griffen**, whose love and support mean everything to me.

**Ryan Macklin**, whose enthusiastic attempts at playing a Final Fantasy game using our previous game, *Beast Hunters*, launched my thoughts on making Anima

Prime. Playing his forthcoming game, *Mythender*, also gave me a spark of inspiration regarding the skills in this game. Which is a cool circular thing, since *Beast Hunters* inspired parts of *Mythender*. That's what I love about our community.

**Ben Lehman**, whose conversations with Jake and I about alternative cat-eared anime *Beast Hunters* also gave me a kick to get this going. Also for being a design pioneer with incredible vision.

**Jake Richmond**, for the above-mentioned conversations and for all he's doing for the Portland indie games scene, including organizing our local Go Play Portland events and pushing the Gamestorm Indie Hurricane forward.

**Colin Cummins** and **Matthew Gagan**, for looking at an early draft of the game and being the kinds of players that motivate me to make games.

**Lukas Myhan**, for reviewing this beta version, pointing out ways to make it better, and being an overall fountain of awesomeness.

**Travis Brown**, for setting up [www.goplaypdx.com](http://www.goplaypdx.com) and working hard to build and promote our local community, including Indie Hurricane.

**Ron Edwards**, whose thoughts on roleplaying as an activity were just as influential on me as his nailing-down of great techniques. Many of the techniques in this game were inspired by or stolen from the ones he lays out in *Sorcerer* and its supplements.

**Chris Chinn**, for his incredibly insightful writings on flags and conflict webs.

**Clinton R. Nixon**, for inspiring me to do this the Creative Commons way with his extraordinary game, *The Shadow of Yesterday*. Also for the Forge ([www.indie-rpgs.com](http://www.indie-rpgs.com)), with Ron.

**Andy Kitkowski**, for founding and moderating the most positive and inspiring gaming community on the internet that I've found, [www.story-games.com](http://www.story-games.com).

I'm sure there are plenty more, especially all the players who are supportive of and enthusiastic about *Beast Hunters*, *Anima Prime*, and other stuff that springs from the labyrinthine depths of our minds. Thanks to you all!

## **Structure of This Book**

This book is structured in chapters with individual sections. I've tried to arrange the chapters in a way that allows you to create and play, if you want to, as you read through the game.

After the basic chapters are out of the way, we get into explanations, options, and lists. These provide details on some aspects that were already introduced, contain essays to help you make the most out of the game, and finally list your options during character creation (mainly powers) all in one place for ease of reference.

The following is a quick walkthrough for the whole book, to give you an idea what's ahead of you.

### **Part I: The Basics**

#### **1 Introduction**

You're most of the way through it already. Keep up the good work! 😊

#### **2 Roleplaying**

This chapter introduces you to roleplaying with Anima Prime, whether you're new to the hobby or have some preconceived notions from other games about how roleplaying works. Things might be a bit different in Anima Prime.

### **Part II: Setup**

#### **3 Setting the Stage**

This chapter describes how to pick or create a mood and pick a setting (background world) for the game, determine the type of content you want to see, and create a "group story seed" that will tie all of the main characters together.

#### **4 Player Characters**

Now you get to make the main characters of the story and figure out who they are, what they can do, and how they are connected to each other and the setting.

### **Part III: Playing the Game**

#### **5 Character Scenes**

Characters interact in various ways. In Anima Prime, this often plays out in character scenes, which are comparable to cut scenes in video games or dialogue scenes in movies. This chapter tells you how to set up scenes and gain character benefits from them.

### **6 Conflicts**

Sometimes characters fight monsters, antagonists, giant robots, fiends, evil summoners, or even each other. This chapter tells you how to set up conflicts, establish goals, and use your powers to figure out who wins and at what price.

### **7 Goals**

The key to getting the most out of your Anima Prime experience lies in mastering the use of goals. This chapter introduces some different categories of goals and shows many examples of how to use them well.

### **8 Character Development**

In some stories (and most games), characters grow in power over time. This chapter provides you with several options on how that can be handled in Anima Prime, depending on the kind of story you're telling.

## **Part IV: The Ghostfield Setting**

### **9 Ghostfield**

The world of Ghostfield is provided as the default setting for the game. It includes places, people, setting seeds, powers (in the following chapters), a bunch of typical opponents, and more.

### **10 Internal Powers**

This is a listing of the internal powers in the Ghostfield setting that characters can possess, which are passive powers as well as those you activate with charge dice earned during a conflict.

### **11 Soulbound Weapons**

Some characters in Ghostfield own weapons that are imbued with special effects. This chapter tells you how to acquire, create, modify, and use these Soulbound Weapons.

### **12 Summoning**

Some characters summon creatures from the Beyond to assist them in conflicts. This chapter explains how to become a summoner and bond with these so-called eidolons, as well as how to conjure and use them during a conflict. I've also provided a detailed listing of almost a dozen common eidolons as well as rules for making your own.

### **13 Items**

The most precious and sought-after spoils from the world Beyond of Ghostfield are so-called Cores. This chapter describes how to earn them from defeated enemies and how to create powerful items with them for use in conflicts.

### **14 Conditions**

Some powers, as well as goals and other circumstances, inflict or grant conditions on characters. This chapter explains how to deal with Blinded, Poisoned, Quickened, and other conditions, and how to tie them into goals in a conflict.

### **15 Sample Enemies**

There are many foes that the characters can face in Ghostfield. This chapter gives you plenty of examples that are ready to be used in your game.

## **Part V: Additional Materials**

### **16 Game Modifications**

Once you're comfortable with the basics, you might want to introduce some more complexity to your game or create your own setting. This chapter contains suggestions, from the easily implemented Threat Die that provides pacing to an outline of how to create your own world to play in.

### **17 Essays**

These essays are my attempt at explaining techniques, playstyles, and other factors that you can use to make the most out of Anima Prime. They're not meant to be scientific or persuasive; they're very specific to this game and my play preferences.

### **18 Example Characters**

I've provided five example characters that use powers in interesting ways, to give you an idea of what finished characters look like and what all you can do with the various powers and mechanics in this game.

### **19 Index**

All of the important concepts of Anima Prime are listed in this index for ease of reference.

### **20 Attachments**

In the attachments, you'll find a summary of the conflict mechanics, a sheet for adversity during a conflict, a sheet for keeping track of the story seeds in your game, and a character sheet for your main characters.

## 2 ROLEPLAYING

### The Basic Activity

Roleplaying has its historical roots in miniatures war gaming, but it developed into its own creative endeavor that has a lot more in common with shared storytelling, collaborative writing, and method acting, depending on your playstyle. Most of the time, playing a roleplaying game consists of two equally important activities: listening and talking.

For this game, all of the players in your group are going to sit around a table or somewhere else that's comfortable and has a surface for rolling dice. One player at a time gets to contribute to a story you're creating together. The players all imagine what's happening, and then they react to it. Most of the players are in charge each of a specific character in the story, which all together make up the group of protagonists.

### **Example**

Here's an example of what roleplaying might look like when two players are involved in a scene between their characters. Zoe is going to set up the scene and play her character Syjika, and Alan is playing his character Egere. If you're curious, you can find the character sheets with all of the information for both of these characters in the attachments. Read this example as a dialogue between the players, showing what each one says in turn.

Zoe: Syjika is sitting on the wreck of the steambot, surrounded by the still smoldering ruins of the houses that were wrecked in the fight. She is tinkering with one of the gadgets she used in the battle. Next to her is an open flap in the steambot where she took out some parts.

Alan: Egere is looking up at her from the street below. He calls up to her: "We need to get going."

Zoe: She doesn't even look up from her little device as she bites her lip and very carefully inserts a tiny screwdriver into a crevice. She says: "Not yet. I have to fix this first."

Alan: He looks over his shoulder in the direction of the incoming mechanical footsteps, which are shaking the ground beneath him. "No, really. We need to go."

Zoe: Syjika curses under her breath as she breaks something inside her gadget. She says: “You’re always in a rush. Just leave me alone for a minute.”

Alan: “The city guards are coming. I don’t think they’ll be too happy to see that we turned their expensive steambot into your private workbench.”

Zoe: “Can’t you just go talk to them or something?”

Alan: Egere looks around again and takes a deep breath as the soldiers in power armor appear at the other end of the alley. “Talk to them. Sure. No problem.”

Zoe: Her large eyes look up for a moment to look into his and says: “Thanks! I really appreciate it.”

Alan: Egere just nods and heads for the guards. “Anything for you,” he mumbles quietly. Clouds of shadows form around his fists, like jet black smoke. He calls back. “Oh, and Syjika?”

Zoe: “Yes?”

Alan: “I hope you have night vision goggles in that backpack of yours.”

## Who Determines What?

### **Characters**

Most of the players will each take on the responsibility of creating and controlling one of the protagonists in your story. In roleplaying games, a protagonist character, also known as a player character, is usually abbreviated as PC.

PCs tend to group up. Examples of grouped PCs in other media are Yuna and Tidus in *Final Fantasy X* and Aang, Katara and Sokka in the outstanding animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. And just like Toph joined the PC group later on in *Avatar*, you can always invite more players and play a session about how their PCs joined in.

The players of the PCs create them with the rules in Chapter 4 and then play them during the game. This means that each player tells the other players what her PC does, says, looks like, and so on. Some of the things that happen to a PC will be determined by other means (such as using the conflict rules to see if the PC gets

hurt by an attack during a fight), but even then, what that specifically looks like in your story is still up to the player of that PC.

The previous section introduced you to Syjika and Egere, two of the example PCs that I created for purposes of showing how the game works. As you saw in that dialogue, Zoe described everything that Syjika did, and Alan described everything that Egere did. In addition, they both added some details to the scene that they just made up, which is perfectly fine (see Details below).

One of the players will be the Game Moderator, or GM. The GM sets up the backdrop of the story and controls all of the other characters in the story that oppose or assist the PCs. These other characters are traditionally called non-player characters or NPCs.

Examples of NPCs are Seymour, fiends, and everyone else not in Tidus' group in *Final Fantasy X*, and the vast array of firebenders, outlaws, earthbending wrestlers, and others in *Avatar*. Notice how these NPCs don't show up in every episode, unlike PCs, and their involvement is always in relation to the PCs.

### Details

In many other roleplaying games, the players have to ask for permission from the GM for every detail that they want to see in the story. "Is there a \_\_\_ here?" is a frequent player question in those games. That's not the case with *Anima Prime*.

As long as something is reasonable, the players can describe it as existing in the story. If they're in a forest, they can introduce sticks, stones, animals, and so on into the scene. If they are in a city, they can describe cracks in the street, ladders at the side of a building, and anything else that could be found in such a place, even if it's unlikely. Notice that the standard is reasonable, not probable. As long as it's possible and its introduction doesn't ruin other players' fun, it should stand.

The players can even describe their effects on some NPCs to varying degrees; the details on that are included in the section on maneuvers in the conflict chapter.

### Example

The following is an example of two players and the GM (Maura) playing together.

Alan: So... Egere is heading for the city guards.

Maura: Alright. There are a dozen of them, fully armored in steam-powered battle suits. You can see their faces

through bowl-shaped armored glass helmets criss-crossed with metal reinforcement bars. One of them has a higher rank, judging by the red insignia on his chest. They are armed and look quite unfriendly.

Alan: Great, and we only had one character scene to freshen up after the last fight. Alright, is there a carriage anywhere near?

Maura: That's up to you. You're in the middle of the city, so that sounds possible.

Alan: Oh yeah. I jump up on a carriage and spread my arms. I yell out: "The city guard! The protectors of all that is good and right! I'm so glad you're here."

Maura: The leader steps forward and eyes you carefully while the other guards aim their weapons at you. He says: "You're under arrest. Give in peacefully and no one gets hurt."

Alan: I guess it's not been a minute yet, huh?

Zoe: Hah, yeah, Syjika is still sitting up on that steambot, fixing her thing. Are there any soldiers near her?

Maura: No, they're all with Egere.

Zoe: I'll just keep on doing my thing then. He can take care of them.

Alan: Okay, so... what's the weather like?

Maura: I think we said earlier that it's sunny and bright. A nice spring afternoon.

Alan: Perfect. I'll hit them with Darkness.

As you might have noticed, sometimes the players refer to their characters as "I" or "we." That's a habit you can adopt or not, as you feel like it. Most of the time, it's just a useful shorthand for saying "my character" or "all of the PCs."

There are things that neither the players nor the GM directly determine, such as the outcome of conflicts (like the clash with the city guards that's now coming up in our example), and those are handled by the mechanics.

### Using the Mechanics

There are several groups of mechanics in this game. Mechanics are rules that involve dice, stats, and so on, and that change or resolve something connected to those. Character scenes have one at the end, which allows the players who were involved to get a specific benefit from the scene (such as healing up or recovering from exhaustion). These types are quick and easy.

The conflict mechanics are a bit more involved. Whereas character scenes are like cut scenes in a console RPG that you make up on the fly, conflicts are the moments when the game switches over into battle mode. Usually it's obvious when that switch needs to be made.

In the above example, Alan is about to use a power. That's something that can only be done in a conflict, so the GM sets up the conflict and then Alan can use his character's power. Conflict mechanics are explained in detail in Chapter 6.

Most of the time, you also should know when not to use the mechanics. For example, the conflict mechanics are only used when two or more characters are opposing each other. You do not need to roll dice for any other actions, such as when a character tries to climb a building. Even if it's a difficult action, the PC's player gets to determine whether the PC is successful or not.

There are four main reasons why things are handled like this in this game, and knowing them will help you decide when to use mechanics and when to let the game just flow on, so here they are.

First, this is a spontaneous game. Relying on mechanics to determine whether a character succeeds at some random task slows down the game too much.

Second, the action isn't that important when it's not aimed against other characters. The game is concerned with conflicts between characters and creating a cool story rather than representing some sort of model of how probable the outcome of any given action is.

Third, the PCs are highly competent and most likely capable of acrobatics and other acts far beyond the abilities of most normal humans (they're anime characters, after all).

And fourth, the players are as responsible for everyone's fun as the GM. They can keep track on their own whether what they have their characters do and succeed at is adding to or subtracting from the fun of the group.

## What You Need to Play

First, you need one or more friends. The game is mainly aimed at groups of three to five people. Playing with two (one GM and one PC player) means missing out on character scenes among PCs, giving each other dice for maneuvers, and all sorts of other things, but it can still be fun. Playing with six or more people will slow the game down considerably, but you can give it a try and see how it works out for you.

Second, you need printouts of the character sheet and the rules summary sheet for each player, a story seed sheet for all to share, and a couple of adversity sheets for the GM. You can find all of these sheets in the attachments to this game.

Third, you need dice. Lots of them. All dice used in this game are regular six-sided dice. I suggest having 20 dice per PC in your group on hand, plus 10 for the GM. The dice should not be too big, so that you can stack them up in the pool circles on your character sheets, but if they're too tiny you'll have a harder time reading them during conflicts, so I tend to pick a happy medium.

You can play with just a few dice instead, but then you need to keep track of action dice, charge dice and so on with some other form of token (like glass beads or poker chips) or by writing the changing numbers down inside the circles using pencils and erasers. This works fine, but it's not as intuitive and slows the game down a bit.

You'll also need a couple of tokens to represent Awesome Tokens during conflicts. You can use anything for these, from coins to buttons.

## Player and GM Responsibilities

Many other roleplaying games and groups distribute the workload in a very unbalanced way. The GM does a lot of preparation work, which includes drawing maps, creating NPCs with dozens of stats, making up plot points in advance, preparing encounters and battles, and so on. The players simply show up. Then the responsibility to entertain the players lies with the GM.

Not so with Anima Prime.

In this game, the responsibility for the group's enjoyment is evenly distributed among all of the participants. That means that in a group with a GM and three PC players, everyone has a quarter share of responsibility that the game is fun for

everyone involved. As a PC player, you are responsible for entertaining the other PC players as well as the GM, just as if you were playing a friendly non-competitive game of soccer, where you pass the ball to the other players without looking at who's the best shooter, to make sure everyone gets a chance to play together equally.

Anima Prime is meant to be picked up and enjoyed with little to no preparation. The key to doing this is to provide each other with usable materials—such as seeds, links, and traits—and then spontaneously riff off them during play. I call these things “flags” (thanks to Chris Chinn!) because they mark what each player would like to see brought into the game. You’ll learn about these things as the book goes on, and there’s an essay in Chapter 17 that talks about flags in much more detail. The GM as well as the PC players can use each other’s flags to play in a spontaneous way that keeps everyone interested.

Each player drives the story forward. It’s not just the GM who keeps on bringing up things for the PCs to do. Instead, the players of the PCs need to make sure, at any point in time, that their characters have something they’re striving for and some action they could take to get them closer to their goals. And if they can somehow tie those into the other players’ flags, you’re really starting to cook with high-powered gas.

### 3 SETTING THE STAGE

#### Mood and Content

The mood of your game is very important. The rules do not predetermine whether you play a dark urban game or a humorous adventure game. The group as a whole should discuss what mood you would like your game to have. Once you've agreed to it, you should try to stick with it when you pick the setting, make the characters, create your story seeds, and most of all play the game.

Setting the mood includes the following parts:

1. What's the overall feel of the game? Is it gritty, funny, dark, romantic? What kinds of movies, series, novels, and so on would fit this mood? What would you pick as the game's theme song?
2. What kind of content would you like to see in your story? Lots of intense fights, introspection, romance, intrigue, exploration, anime slapstick comedy? Are the combats wall-running, somersaulting action spectacles with no real blood, or gruesome shotguns-and-tentacles gore fests?
3. What kind of content do you *not* want in your story? This comes in two flavors, labeled in the game *Sorcerer* as lines and veils, which I find very helpful. What kind of stuff can happen but only off screen (veiled), and what kind of stuff isn't brought up by anyone at all? For example, you might agree that characters in your story sometimes have sex, but do you fade to black before the clothes come off or actually play out parts or all of the event? Would it ruin the game for you if children got abused or killed during the story? What is over the line and not okay at all, and what is fine but shouldn't be played in detail?

You might want to write down the mood and content guidelines you've come up with somewhere. Usually these things are large-scale enough that they're easy to remember, but it can help to have a few written lines in front of you when you go on from here.

*I'll create an example setup throughout this chapter. Let's say my group decides that we want something a little grittier than the standard Final Fantasy fare. Not quite Vampire Hunter D, but definitely not Kingdom Hearts. We decide that our mood can be*

*summed up as “Gritty, but not gory, and with hope.” Something that would probably get a PG-13 rating if it was a movie.*

*We figure there’ll be some romance, and characters might hook up, but any actual sexual content will be veiled. There’ll be lots of violence and some descriptions of blood and injuries, but no exploding heads or tearing out of guts or the likes. Children either don’t show up much at all, or when they do, they won’t get hurt.*

*Some joking around is fine, but slapstick is right out. That could ruin the gritty mood we’re going for.*

### **Discomfort During the Game**

Chances are that at some point, one of the players (including the GM) might do something that goes against your established mood and content. This can go by without effect or it can have a negative impact on one or more players. It could be offensive, off-putting, boring, annoying, mood-breaking, hitting a vulnerable nerve, and so on.

It also could be something you thought you’d be okay with, but it turns out you’re not. This is especially the case when you jump into a dark mood without being sure just how far you’d like to go. For me personally, this can happen when I agree to play in a gruesome setting without specifying that anything really bad that happens to children has to be out or at least behind the veil. Maybe I thought I’d be okay exploring those things this time, but once it comes up I realize just how much that hits me in the stomach—too much to still let me enjoy the game.

If you are only a bit uncomfortable, it’s best to wait until the end of the session before bringing it up in a “Oh, and by the way” sort of fashion. Alternatively, you can bring it up at a later point, if you’re too uncomfortable with doing it right then. Often these things are more easily discussed with some distance, for example via email. If you don’t feel like you can write your group an email telling them that you were uncomfortable with something, then there’s a problem with your group trust that needs to be resolved.

If something really hits you, then you should be able to call time-out, take a break, and then talk about it right then or agree to do it later. Again, doing it via email or posts on a forum can add needed distance here. Every player in your group needs to be okay with this kind of reaction and with talking about it. Caring about each other’s fun and feelings is what makes this whole thing work.

If you see one of your fellow players having a negative reaction, you should give them a chance to make their choice about how to approach it. But if you think they're too shy or otherwise incapable of bringing it up, you should think about how to help out.

Overall, it's a good idea to revisit your discussion of mood and content every now and then. It'll help give your game a coherent focus and prevent anyone from feeling annoyed, hurt, bored, or otherwise uncomfortable.

### Selecting a Setting

The setting is the backdrop for your story. It includes a core concept and lists some locations, NPCs, influential groups, special powers, the level of technology, different cultures, and so on. When the PCs act, they do so within the context of the setting. The setting often includes adversity for the PCs as well, though you should definitely add more personalized adversity based on the PCs' links and seeds.

For example, the setting for *Vampire Hunter D* is the far future, in which vampires have enslaved humanity. We see only a snapshot of that world, however, a town and the nearby vampire and demon lairs, so the defined setting is pretty small, but you could easily make up fitting locations and people from the mood and the inspiration of what's there. Vampires and their demonic minions are the built-in adversity here.

The setting for *Avatar*, on the other hand, is a completely different world with four element-based nations and lots of NPCs, cities, and legends of things past. These are introduced bit-by-bit throughout the show, which you can do with spontaneous setting development. The firebenders are the default adversity in this setting.

The default setting for *Anima Prime* is known as Ghostfield, which is described in Chapters 9 through 15. Directions on creating your own are included in Chapter 16. While I suggest starting out with using Ghostfield, there are hundreds of worlds in which you can set your game. These worlds are filled with all sorts of cultures and creatures. You can create any one of those worlds on your own, or even just a snippet of one, and don't have to worry about doing it "wrong." Then you can develop it as you play, spontaneously. Take a look at the *Final Fantasy* series of video games, too, which almost always introduces a completely new setting with each iteration and develop it bit by bit as the story progresses.

Settings in Anima Prime are supposed to be evocative rather than canonical. That means there won't be page after page of information that you're supposed to memorize and then recall during your game. This is a spontaneous game, after all, and you should be able to play without that kind of work beforehand and with the ability to make up the details of the setting through your input during play. This is *your* fantasy, *your* story, *your* game. For that, I suggest making the setting yours, too.

When you select your setting, you should figure out how that interacts with the mood you picked. Some settings are more geared toward certain moods than others. The powers available in the setting should fit in, too.

*My group decides to develop the setting on our own. We're going to start with a very rough sketch and just fill in the blanks as we play.*

*Our gritty game will be set in a post-apocalyptic world. There's a lot of wasteland, full of ruins with valuable items from earlier ages. This means there's still 20th-century technology around, but it's rare.*

*There are demons in our setting. They are not just mutants, but something otherworldly that invaded and led to the apocalypse. Now they roam the wastes, and every survivor needs to either be able to fight them off or find others to protect them. Communities are small, outlaws abound, and so on. It's a dangerous place with lots of opportunities for conflicts.*

*This kind of setting allows us to get away without much detail up front, because it's based on a common trope and has no overarching politics or societies to worry about.*

*We're going to use only the Internal and Soulbound Weapon powers from the Ghostfield setting, minus the ones that talk about Gating.*

### Setting Story Seed

The setting story seed is listed in the premade setting or created by the GM. It is an occurrence in the setting that goes against the usual events. These can range from the blatantly obvious and aggressive (an invading force) to the subtle (the water from the river has started to taste metallic) to the weird and ominous (a black skyscraper just appeared in the middle of the city, and most people act as though it's always been there).

Feel free to create more than one if you want to give players lots of choices of what to look into during the game, though that might make your game less focused. Just be aware that this is not a group seed—it cannot be something that directly and only affects the PCs like the other story seeds. It’s something that makes the whole setting dynamic and changing and allows the players to pick whether they want to help shape those changes.

*The GM tells us that the story seed for our wasteland setting is as follows: Someone has started gathering demons and human followers in a large ruined city. No one knows why they group up or what they’re planning, but something’s about to happen.*

*Even the GM doesn’t know yet why this is happening. I’m sure there’ll be ways to tie it into our group seed and the events of our story later on. Until our PCs actively get involved, there’s no need to flesh it out any further than this. We may never get to that city and ignore the seed, or we may set out to walk right into the middle of it—that’s up to us.*

### **Group Story Seed**

The group story seed is created by all players (except for the GM) for their group of PCs. It is an event that changes the circumstances of the group and keeps them together. It can be a simple mundane thing (our group of elite soldiers was just given a new commanding officer, and we don’t trust him), a mystery (we all woke up with matching crimson tattoos on the back of our necks), a disaster (the organization that protected our identity and allowed us to live a normal life was just wiped out), or anything that the group as a whole needs to address together.

Use this as a tool to make sure the group has a good reason to stick together and find common ground to act upon. Usually this seed is created before the characters, so that you can create the PCs to fit into the seed. But you can also create it afterwards, which requires some tinkering and a willingness of each player to alter their PCs a bit to make it all fit.

The group story seed works as the “crucible” for the PCs. It is the reason they stick together even if they have diverging interests or have personality issues with each other (which makes for good dramatic roleplaying during character scenes). The stronger the seed is, the more the PCs can struggle within it (all in good fun, of course). Examples for strong group story seeds often have one or more of the following ingredients:

## Setting the Stage – Group Story Seed

- The PCs share a powerful enemy that they each can't defeat on their own. They are either actively hunting the enemy or vice versa.
- An opportunity for gaining something the PCs desperately want or need has sprung up, and they can only get it together.
- The PCs are together in a situation from which they cannot escape, either because they are physically constrained or because their personalities won't let them back off.
- A higher authority has called upon the PCs and ordered them to work together. This requires either a very strong sense of duty on the side of the PCs, or an authority that severely punishes insubordination. Great stories can come out of eventually breaking free from the authority together.
- The PCs are tied together through near-unbreakable relationships. Family relations, love, honor, duty, oaths, debts, or something along those lines.

When your group story seed comes to a close, such as when the PCs escape their situation or defeat their common enemy, you should all consider together whether you want to make a new one with the existing characters or just start over with a new group of PCs. Sometimes their shared experiences will keep the characters together from hereon out, and they can help each other with their character story seeds. But other times you'll need something new to keep them together, and that new group story seed needs to be developed by the PC players as before. You can always decide to skip ahead a year or ten before something brings the group back together.

*Our group seed is that we're all part of a caravan across the wasteland when it gets nearly wiped out by demons, and now we need to find and rescue the people from our caravan who got kidnapped by the demons.*

*This seed kicks us into action. We've got a goal right from the start, something to do that involves our PCs directly. All of the PCs that we create need to have a reason for being on the caravan as well as for sticking with the group when we're setting out to find the survivors. It is each player's responsibility to make sure their PC fits those criteria.*

## 4 PLAYER CHARACTERS

### Character Overview

For all of the players except the GM, the character is their tool with which they contribute to the story. As such, PCs need to be well suited to be protagonists, like the main characters of other stories, novels, shows, movies, and so on.

The most interesting protagonists often have several aspects to them. They are at least in some way likeable and ultimately good at heart, even if they are grumpy or sometimes mean (otherwise they end up being antagonists). They care about things, and the characters with the most potential are those who care about one particular thing (person, issue, goal) more than they care about themselves. They try hard and are active instead of hanging back and letting things happen. And they are affected by the events around them, instead of being emotionally cut off from the world.

You can express the personality and issues of your character through your character's passion, traits, links, and character story seed. But first, you need some basic components around which you can build your protagonist character.

Use a character sheet from the attachments to keep track of your PC as we go through this creation process, starting with name, concept, and mark.

*I'm going to create a new character as this chapter goes on. We're playing in the post-apocalyptic setting that we developed in the previous chapter. My PC needs to fit the mood (gritty, but not gory, and with hope) and the group seed (the attack on the caravan).*

### Name, Concept and Mark

Pick a name. It should fit the mood, the setting, and your vision of your character. You're probably stuck with the name for a while, so make it something you'll still like after a few sessions.

*For our example character's name, I'm going to pick Zadie. It sounds nice at first, but it also has a certain zing to it.*

Make up a concept. An overall concept could be something like Spirit Warrior, Biomechanoid, Vengeful Ninja Bunny, or whatever. You'll find that having a 2- or 3-word concept in mind helps when picking powers. The mood, setting and

group story seed should give you a good idea on the kind of concepts that are available and a good choice. The example characters in Chapter 18 have their concepts listed after their name.

*Zadie is a survivor. She scavenges what she can. But she doesn't like going hand-to-hand against demons, so she's going to rely on keeping them at bay and picking them off from a distance. I'm picking "Hardened Scavenger" as her concept.*

Anyone with powers has some non-human aspect to them, which is called their mark of power. In settings where powerful characters live among regular people, marks can be something that can be disguised, but usually it's more fun if it's something obvious. You should also have an idea how the character acquired powers, if it's an uncommon thing in your setting.

*Zadie has no hair, and her scalp looks like a mosaic; that's her mark. Other than that, her eyes and skin are dark like most people's who live by the wastelands. She is usually covered in wide layers of sand-colored Kevlar strips, with only her eyes showing, and with leather and metal reinforcements at her joints, throat and chest and a metal breathing filter thing over her mouth area. Her powers are a result of demonic blood running through her family line, but she's not necessarily advertising that fact.*

### Passion

The passion describes the profound emotional state of the character, that is, not just their current mood, but the one passion that permeates everything they do. It tells you something about the character, thereby allowing you to roleplay them in interesting ways.

The passion also lets the character's player earn charge dice when certain conditions are triggered. Those conditions are listed with each passion. If the triggering of a passion would earn more charge dice than fit in the character's Charge Pool, the remaining dice are turned into strike dice instead.

*Zadie's passion is Vengeance. I'm going to have to figure out who wronged her, but I'm leaving that open for now. Vengeance won't give her additional charge dice during conflicts, but that fits, because she's not planning to get hurt or too involved if she can help it.*

### List of Passions

Pick one passion from the following list. You only have one passion at a time.

#### Anger

The character has a lot of stored-up aggression.

*Trigger:* Gain 1 charge die every time an opponent makes a strike roll against you, whether it is successful or not.

#### Bloodlust

The character revels in dealing out pain.

*Trigger:* Gain 1 charge die for every wound you inflict on an opponent.

#### Compassion

The character cares deeply about other people. She puts them first, even if that places her in danger.

*Trigger:* Gain 1 charge die every time one of your allies takes 1 or more wounds from a strike.

#### Glory

This character revels in victory and achievements.

*Trigger:* Gain 1 charge die each time you inflict a defeating wound on an opponent. In addition, gain 1 charge die after winning a conflict (after the regular halving of your Charge Pool).

#### Love

This passion is aimed at a particular other person. It can be a romantic interest, family member, or someone else who is very close to the character. It does not have to be requited.

*Trigger:* Gain 1 charge die every time an opponent makes a strike roll against your loved one, and another die if it inflicts at least 1 wound.

#### Self-Loathing

The character hates some part of herself, but doesn't necessarily have a death wish. She purposely puts herself in dangerous situations and revels in pain.

*Trigger:* Gain 2 charge dice for each wound that you take.

#### Vengeance

The character is out for someone or something. Any obstacles in the way, any setbacks, only serve to make the character more determined.

*Trigger:* Gain 3 charge dice (after the regular halving of your Charge Pool) after being defeated in a conflict (that is, all your wound circles were marked).

## Character Traits

Characters have 3 traits, which describe who the character is. The traits indicate what the character cares about, the special abilities that define her, the goals in her life, the unrequited love that drives her mad, the flaw that always makes her flustered, and so on. A trait can be focused on another character, or it can be general. Traits guide play and fuel the character's actions.

Making up a trait can be easy or hard, depending on how much practice you have with it and how strong your vision of your character is. A trait can come in many shapes: it can be your character's trademark battle cry, a fact about the character's personality, an attitude, and so on. Here are some traits from the example characters:

There is nothing that scares me.  
Beautiful singing voice.  
“You're going to regret that.”  
I can never tell Syjika how I feel.  
Always in the shadow of my mother.  
Unable to resist the tantalizing lure of flames.

You can gain a mark on a trait for playing a character scene (this is called “marking the trait”). You can then use those marked traits to reroll dice during conflicts. This mechanic is described in the conflict and character scene chapters.

You can save up one or two of the traits and fill them in during play (and you can change them later, anyway—see Chapter 8 on character development). This allows you to get a feel for the character first, and you can more easily connect the traits to the other PCs this way. In fact, for the most satisfying play experience, I suggest tying at least one of your traits to one of your fellow PCs at all times. And for maximum enjoyment, make it something that complicates both of your lives.

*For Zadie, I'm making up two traits that express who she is and what her life is like as a scavenging scout. I write down “I can use anything for any purpose” and “Don't test my patience.” I'm leaving the third trait empty so I can tie it to another PC later.*

## Skills

Every character has three skills that they can use in conflicts. The Ghostfield setting (Chapter 9) contains a list of skills that you can pick from. Simply select

three skills from the list that fit with your character or make up comparable ones. For your convenience, here's the list without the explanations from Chapter 9:

Acrobatics	Brawl	Courage	Dirty Tricks	Endurance
Engineer	Explosives	Feint	Firearms	Gadgets
Intimidate	Luck	Melee Weapons	Perceive	Quickness
Stealth	Strength	Taunt	Throw	Vehicles

If you are creating your own setting, you can either make your own skill list as a group, or you can allow freeform skills that you create much like traits. If you create skills at will, however, the group as a whole should make sure that you look all of them over and modify them for consistency before you begin.

Since skills help you in conflicts, if you create any on your own, be sure to make them something that could be useful in a fight, in ways that don't get too demanding for you (as you might have to come up with various uses of the skill a couple of times every conflict).

Once you've selected or created three skills, give one of them a rating of 4, one a rating of 3, and one a rating of 2. These determine how effective those skills are when you use them (the higher the rating, the more effective the skill is). The lowest-rated skill is often one that's used when you support another character in a combined maneuver.

*Zadie is a survivor and a warrior. I already know that I want to give her Firearms as her main skill. I'm also thinking that she knows how to handle Explosives, so that's her second skill. Finally, I imagine her as quick and agile, so her third skill is Acrobatics. I'm rating them as follows: Firearms 4, Acrobatics 3, Explosives 2.*

### **Basic Stats**

Every character starts with 3 wound circles, an Action Pool with a maximum of 10 action dice, an empty Charge Pool with a maximum of 6 charge dice, and a defense of 1. Collectively, these numbers are called your PC's stats. You'll learn how to use these stats in the conflict chapter.

When you select your powers, you can pick some that will impact your stats. When you've selected all of your powers, keep in mind how your stats are ultimately affected and note that accordingly.

*Zadie starts out with the same basic stats as anyone else: 3 wound circles, an Action Pool limit of 10, a Charge Pool limit of 6, and a defense of 1. I can already tell that I'll want to pick powers that make her tougher, due to her life in the wasteland.*

### Selecting Powers

Each main character, be it a protagonist or an important antagonist, has powers. There are four groups of powers: Internal powers, Soulbound Weapon powers, Summoning powers, and Item powers. Internal powers include passive powers and charge powers, which are listed in one chapter together because they form the core group of powers.

Passive powers work all the time; they include larger Action Pools, resistances, and so on.

Charge powers cost charge dice to use, which are stored up during a conflict and when passions are triggered. They can add bonus dice to strikes or achievements, inflict or remove conditions, and so on.

Soulbound Weapons are a distinct collection of powers that allow characters to have items infused with specific effects. Characters can have one or more weapons, and certain powers allow them to change the effects during the game.

Summoning deals with binding creatures (known as *eidolons*) from other worlds to oneself and being able to summon them to one's own location. Good-natured characters have a bond of friendship and loyalty with these creatures, while others enslave them to do their bidding.

Item powers let you create and use special disposable items made from resources collected from certain defeated enemies.

You get to select 9 powers from these three groups, in any combination, subject to the limitations set out with each power. Some settings restrict and/or add powers to the mix, so be sure to check your setting information before picking your powers.

Unless otherwise stated, you can only take each power once. This applies to all powers in all categories.

It's a good idea to have at least 1 or 2 powers that use up charge dice. Otherwise you'll earn these dice during conflicts but then don't get any benefit from them.

*Zadie is tough and quick, as well as resourceful. I'm picking the following powers for her:*

*Toughness, adding a wound circle, to show she's used to hardship.*

*Resilience II, bringing her defense to 3. She's learned to dodge and weave out of the way of blows, bullets, and anything else.*

*Body Resistance. She got poisoned, drained, and weakened by demons and other wasteland hazards enough times to build up immunities.*

*Soulbound Weapon. She has a self-assembled sniper rifle that she calls "Silent Reaper," as well as a little assortment of grenades and the likes. We'll let this power count for strikes with either.*

*Weapon Upgrade. She's modified and improved her sniper rifle and other items.*

*Soulsmith. Zadie can change the modifications and specifications of Silent Reaper or turn scavenged materials into grenades.*

*Force Attack. Zadie uses this power for super-precise shots with her sniper rifle or for grenade strikes.*

*Life Drain. As part of her demonic legacy, Zadie is able to soak up other beings' life force.*

*Now I have to pick the weapon effects for Silent Reaper. She can always change them due to her Soulsmith power, but I'm going to start off with Strike Boost and Power Strike, which allow her to take out individual targets more easily. That's a good fit for a sniper rifle.*

### **Background and Links**

Characters can have background items and links listed on their character sheets. If you've ever written a character background with important events in the character's past, made a list of the character's NPC contacts, and so on, you know what kinds of things to list here.

There is one big difference between background items and links: background items are the domain of the player to give their character depth, whereas links are provided as tools for the GM.

If your character has a long-lost brother, and you list him in your background, the GM is not going to bring him up in play. The brother plays a role for who your character is, but he won't be used by the GM for plot purposes.

If you list your brother under links, however, you are giving the GM the green light to have your brother show up in the game as an NPC. Or maybe you'll find clues to his whereabouts. Or you may find his corpse. How the link is used is up to the GM (though you should feel free to make suggestions, of course). You can add or change background items and links later on as well, just make sure to inform the GM so that the GM can use the new links (or stop using ones you removed).

*First, Zadie's background. Her parents were scavengers, too. I'm putting them in the background section because I don't want to deal with my character's parents in the game, but they're still alive somewhere and I might move them into links at some point.*

*Most of the stuff about her, however, I put down as links because I like my characters to be personally tied into the events of the game. I'm listing a younger sister, who's a priestess somewhere; an unreliable band of smugglers who buy stuff Zadie finds; an old enemy named Locust who used to be her partner; and the fact that Zadie once uncovered the entrance to an old underground system in the wasteland.*

*I have no idea what most of these mean or what their details are. I'm leaving that up to the GM and our developing story. What I do determine (and tell the GM and other players) is that her vengeance passion is aimed at Locust, though I haven't figured out yet what exactly happened there.*

### Character Story Seed

The character story seed is created by each player for his or her own character. It is an event, mission or personality issue that pushes the character into action. It could be a personal loss, falling in love, discovering a mystical item, swearing vengeance, being exiled, dealing with the character's self-loathing, and so on.

You shouldn't plan out a whole story arc—you don't even have to know who or what caused the event. As long as there's something going on that gives your character a goal to pursue or a mystery to explore, or something that complicates her life and makes for good dramatic character scenes, you're good to go.

Depending on your playstyle, your character story seed may or may not conflict with your group story seed. For most players, I would suggest that they should be intertwined in a way that they support each other or are completely independent. For example, if your group seed is that all of the PCs are stuck together in unknown territory after an airship crash, your character story seed could be proving your newfound love to one of the other PCs, overcoming your fear of the unknown, delivering that urgent message despite your crash, etc.

Advanced players can have character story seeds that conflict with the group story seed. This is great fodder for dramatic choices: the GM can put the PC in a position where she has to choose between one and the other and figure out what's more important to her. But it can also tear the PC group apart if you're not careful, which is why I only suggest it if you're up for that kind of tension.

*Our group seed ensures that we're sticking together for a while, and I know my fellow players well enough to know that we like to play some tension between our characters. I talk to a fellow player, and we decide that my character story seed is that his character Rasheem is wearing a necklace that I know belongs to my old nemesis Locust. In fact, I know that because I gave it to him when we were still partners and I had a crush on him. It's made from something unique I found in the wasteland ruins.*

*How did Rasheem get the necklace? Is he on Locust's side? Is my nemesis involved in the attack on the caravan? Those questions will be answered during our game. Notice that this is only a seed: I'll find out the answers soon enough, but it will hopefully lead to a whole story arc that involves one or more confrontations with my nemesis. By making this my seed, I'm telling the GM and other players that this is one of the things I'd like the game to focus on.*

*At this point, I also fill out my final trait: "Distrustful of Rasheem." It turns out that Rasheem's player picks "Grudgingly attracted to Zadie." That should be fun to play out.*

## 5 CHARACTER SCENES

### Scenes to Play

Most of the time, the PCs won't be in conflicts. They will interact with each other, with NPCs, and with the environment. Character scenes are there to allow you to roleplay your characters with some degree of purpose and pacing, and at the same time they provide some benefit for playing out your character.

Not all of the events have to happen in scenes or conflicts; you can have exchanges among the players and with the GM that talk about things that happen and that the characters do at other times. These are like short exposition paragraphs in novels. They take care of the times when the characters go somewhere and nothing special happens, for example. But when there's interesting character interaction about to take place, a scene begins.

Roleplaying in a character scene looks just like the examples in Chapter 2. The players each describe in turn how their characters react to everyone else, bringing in the events of the story so far, as well as trying to play up their traits, passion, seeds, links, and so on. Some scenes are introspective, some show something about the characters, some contain arguments or revelations, some bring about change, and others are more plot-oriented.

Not all of the PCs have to be included in every scene, but you should give each PC the same amount of screen time. That is, if two characters interact together without the third, that third character's player and the GM should figure out a scene that they can play out afterwards. This way, players will at times be the audience for each other, but you should care enough about your shared story and each other's characters to enjoy that. The GM can hand over control of NPCs to other players for the duration of a scene to include them and take some of the load off the GM.

### Setting Up Scenes

A scene must have a location, participating characters, and interaction. It ends when the interaction has run its course and the location or participants change substantially.

Most of the time, the scenes follow each other in a way that makes sense. After a fight, for example, the characters regroup, lick their wounds, talk trash about each

other's performance, worry about the consequences of their actions, and so on. But you can also kickstart scenes by making specific suggestions.

For example, a PC might have a character story seed that relates to her missing brother. She was told that someone in the city knows something about him, and the player decides that her PC will seek out that person. The GM and the player now figure out that the trip to the other character's house wouldn't include any substantive interaction, so they frame the scene to begin right when the PC rings the doorbell and the NPC opens the door. Or the PC might arrive at the house to find it burned down, which is not yet a scene because there's still no interaction (unless she brought another PC and they interact as they go through the rubble).

Once again, take your cue from animated series and other sources and see how the different scenes are set up in those, with time passing in between and minor activities not being shown. Only the scenes that have some character or story purpose tend to be shown.

Some people don't like to officially set up each scene, instead preferring to have a more organic flow of the game events. That kind of style can work, too. In this case, the GM just needs to pay more attention and, when a natural conclusion of a scene occurs, take a moment to point that out and let the players pick a benefit.

### **Scene Benefits**

At the end of each character scene that the players roleplay, they can do one of the following:

1. Heal 1 wound on oneself.
2. Heal 1 wound on one of the character's eidolons.
3. Fill up the PC's Action Pool to its maximum.
4. Mark a trait with a check, plussie, or whatnot.

Depending on the special circumstances of your setting and the powers you are using, there can be other benefits as well, such as changing effects on a Soulbound Weapon or extracting materials from a defeated enemy. These are listed with the appropriate powers. Whatever the benefit is, you should still play out character interaction during the scene.

PCs can often have several conflicts, take grievous wounds, and completely recover in very short time frames. They are some of the most powerful characters around, after all, and this allows the story and action to keep going without taking long breaks for recovery.

If your character already has all traits marked, all wounds healed, and a filled Action Pool, you won't gain any additional benefit from a character scene. However, that doesn't mean you have to jump right into a conflict. The benefits are additions to the scenes, but they shouldn't limit you. The fun of the game, after all, lies in playing your characters and creating your own story, and a lot of that happens in character scenes.

### Example Scene

Let's use the example character I created in the previous chapter, Zadie, and involve her in a character scene with Rasheem. This is the very first scene in our game, and we're using it to establish the characters before the group seed hits. Of course, Zadie and Rasheem have no idea that their caravan is about to be annihilated. The GM and the other players get to watch at first, but they can also jump in if a good chance comes up.

Christian: I'd like to have a scene with Zadie and Rasheem where she sees the necklace for the first time.

Daria: Sure, let's set it up where Zadie is out scouting ahead, and Rasheem shows up.

Christian: Okay. Zadie is lying on a ridge, with her trusted rifle against her shoulder. She is peering down into the valley ahead through the rifle scope.

Daria: Rasheem comes up behind her. He's not exactly sneaky. The hilt of his huge scimitar sticks out over his shoulder.

Christian: Zadie turns onto her back and aims the rifle at him.

Daria: He lifts his hands and says: "Whoa. There's no need for that."

Christian: Zadie makes some disapproving noise, like a growl. She lowers her rifle and says: "Maybe there is, if you're going to make all that noise and stand out like that. You're going to attract any demons within five miles."

Daria: “Well, it’s good that we have you to take them out, then.”  
He smiles in that cocky way.

Christian: She considers shooting him.

Daria: Hah. She can try if she wants to.

Christian: Zadio looks him up and down to see what he’s made of.  
And then she sees the necklace and her eyes lock onto it.

Daria: Rasheem smiles at her and says: “See anything you like?”

Christian: She says: “Where did you get that?”

Daria: “Huh? What are you talking about?”

Christian: She stands up, walks over, and grabs the necklace.

Daria: Well... Rasheem’s wearing it, so wouldn’t it be up to me if  
she gets her hand on it? It’s part of my character.

Christian: Oh sure. I meant she reaches for it.

Daria: Okay. Well... he doesn’t actually mind, so he doesn’t  
even look down as her hand closes on it. He says: “That’s  
a long story.”

Christian: “I think we can make some time now.” She looks very  
irritated.

Daria: I think it would be cool if something came up now to keep  
them from getting into it. I’m not even sure yet what the  
story is.

Christian: Oh, sure. GM?

Maura: Ah yeah. As Rasheem is about to answer, you hear yelling  
and screaming back at the caravan.

Daria: He says: “I don’t think we can.”

Christian: Zadio lets go of the necklace and dashes back toward the  
caravan.

Maura: Cool. We’ll have a conflict soon. But first you get a scene  
benefit each.

Christian: I’m marking my trait, “Distrustful of Rasheem.”

Daria: And I’m marking “Grudgingly attracted to Zadio.”

Maura: Alright. And now you get to fight some demons together!

## 6 CONFLICTS

### Setting Up Conflicts

Every conflict needs opposed parties who want different things, and the adversity represents whatever stands in the way of the PCs and what they want. If there is no opposition, then there's no conflict. This also means that, contrary to many other roleplaying games, if the PCs attempt something that's not opposed by actual characters, it's either ruled absolutely impossible by the group (such as summoning a nuke) or the players get to determine their PCs' success or failure.

The following section guides you through the process of establishing adversity. You can prepare adversity before the session or make it up on the spot.

You also can determine one or more goals that can be achieved during the conflict. You can have conflicts without goals, which tend to be duels or showdowns where all that counts is beating the other side just for the glory of it. But even then, adding a goal makes the conflict that much more interesting. The creation and advanced uses of goals are explained in the separate goals chapter.

In some circumstances, you can determine that starting conditions are in place. Conditions also have their own chapter that explain how to put them to use.

Once you've got all of these figured out, you can play out the conflict.

*I'm going to create some adversity and give you some examples of conflict actions as we go along. We're using Zadio and Rasheem as our example characters again.*

### **Adversity**

Creating adversity is relatively easy: you pick the adversity type of the opponent, determine the stats, and finally select the adversity's special powers, if any.

### **Type**

The opponents of the PCs come in 3 different types: individuals, squads, and swarms.

**Individuals** are powerful single characters. They can range from humanoids to demon lords to steam-powered robots. They have specific powers and abilities, and each time a wound is inflicted the individual is injured (or damaged).

**Squads** are multiple characters that act as a group. These can be reptile assassins that always work in threes, a small pack of demonic howlers, a special assault unit, or something along those lines. Squads lose members whenever a wound is inflicted.

**Swarms** are huge groups of similar creatures. A swarm can be an army of humans, a massive rush of crimson wolves, or a hundred vengeful spirits. Swarms lose members even during maneuvers against them, and wounds inflicted on a swarm represent serious blows to the integrity, morale, or leaders of the swarm. Still, wounds do not usually make swarms less effective, as they can only attack in small parts of the whole anyway.

The type of the enemy makes a difference for the effect of wounds inflicted upon it, as well as for the function of certain powers. Some powers and weapon effects are more effective against one type than against another. These differences are listed with the individual powers and effects.

*After the character scene between Zadio and Rasheem, the next scene (the conflict) starts in the middle of the attack on the caravan. Zadio finds herself confronted by a horde of demonic critters that look like a cross between reptiles and warhounds. There's a whole bunch of them, and the GM determines that they count as a swarm.*

*We're also facing a squad of humanoid demons as well as one individual opponent, a huge ravaging bull-like beast. But I'm going to take care of my critters here first before worrying about those.*

### **Stats**

There are several stats that the GM needs to determine for each opponent. They are:

**Action Pool (AP):** This is the number of action dice with which the opposition starts the conflict, and the maximum number it can have. A rating of 5 would indicate an opponent with little stamina, while a rating of 15 is quite dangerous. I suggest using the default value of 10 most of the time.

**Charge Pool (CP):** If there is a limit to the number of charge dice that this opponent can store, mark that down as the Charge Pool maximum. The default limit is 6, as with PCs. Most adversity will start with an empty Charge Pool, but the GM can rule otherwise if circumstances make that plausible.

**Strike Pool (SP):** Write down the number of strike dice with which the adversity begins the conflict if it's not the default (which is none).

**Skill:** This is the number of basic dice the adversity gets for a maneuver. Unlike the PCs' skills, most enemies only have one skill, and the rating is completely up to the GM (in addition, they do not mark their skill to earn bonus dice). A rating of 3 would be average, with 1 or 2 for easy opponents and 4 or more for challenging ones. Special enemies, such as recurring villains, can have 3 skills; only those enemies get to mark their skills to earn bonus dice like PCs.

**Defense:** How hard it is to injure the adversity. A rating of 1 is weak, while a rating of 4 is as high as PCs go without charge powers. A defense higher than 5 requires powers, effects and/or goals that reduce the defense to be overcome.

**Wound Circles:** How many wounds it takes to defeat the adversity. Just having 1 wound circle indicates a quick end in sight for this opponent, while 3 or more often make for extended conflicts (depending on the defense rating). A squad should not have more wounds than the total number of units in it.

*The GM picks the following stats for the demon critters: a regular Action Pool of 10, a Competence rating of 3, a defense of 2, and 3 wound circles. Every other stat is left at the default value.*

### **Powers and Weaknesses**

Assign the adversity any of the PC powers or make up your own. You can also add a weakness, which are listed at the end of the Summoning section on eidolon powers.

*The GM looks over the list of powers and decides that the critters can use Leap Attack when they swarm me. Great. He also gives them Soul Resistance, which won't impact me, since I can't use Life Drain on swarms anyway.*

*The GM also decides that my critters are weak to fire, but that doesn't do me much good right now, as I don't have any fire-based powers. I'll have to see if I can make use of that in some other way.*

Adversity that does not have any charge powers or other ways of using charge dice does not earn any charge dice. Instead, all 6s rolled during maneuvers turn into strike dice.

## Starting Conflicts

The conflict begins with a description by the GM of where the conflict is set and what adversity the PCs are facing. Use broad strokes here, with lots of room for the players to add their own details.

When a conflict begins, characters might have a lower Action Pool than their maximum and some charge dice stored up from earlier conflicts, and their Strike Pool is usually empty (see Ending Conflicts later in this chapter). Every player is responsible for having the appropriate number of dice (or tokens) in their pools on their character sheets.

*The GM tells us players what the general area looks like. The caravan is in the middle of the wasteland. There's barren, rock-hard ground underneath, with the wind blowing sand over it. There are bigger rocks all over the place, some several stories high. There are also some cacti around. The GM then describes how the critters flood out from behind a rock formation as we pass, and then the other demons jump out, and chaos ensues.*

*I've got my character sheet in front of me. This is our first conflict in this game, so I have no leftover dice. I'm stacking up 10 dice in my Action Pool circle, and that's all I have for now.*

## Taking Turns

The GM determines whether the PCs or the opposition go first. She can either figure this out based on the circumstances of the conflict or have players roll a die against the GM's die, with the higher one going first.

*The GM determines that the demons go first, because they're ambushing us. That means I'm acting after the critters, but that's fine. Let them have their best shot at Zadio, and they'll find out who they're messing with.*

When it's the PCs' turn to act, the players can figure out amongst themselves who goes first. They can change this order each round according to their needs and plans. When it's the GM's turn, she acts for each adversity in whichever order she likes.

Each player other than the GM gets one action per turn, which is usually a maneuver, a strike, an achievement, or an action power. The GM gets to take one action for each opponent in the conflict. In most cases you can use powers to modify or improve any of these actions, thus broadening your choices.

**Maneuvers** are used to gain strike dice and charge dice. You start out a conflict doing maneuvers until you've gained a few strike dice and charge dice, then use those for strikes and/or powers to inflict damage or conditions on your opposition.

**Strikes** are used to inflict damage on the opponent. They use up strike dice. Once you've inflicted enough wounds on your opponent to mark all their wound circles, you knock them out of the conflict. You also might have charge powers that you can add to a strike if you can pay the required number of charge dice.

**Achievements** are used to accomplish goals. Achievements use up strike dice. A goal can be aimed at a story outcome (save the hostage), weakening the opposition (find the steambot's weak spot to lower its defense rating), changing existing conditions, or similar things.

Some **powers** are actions in themselves. Examples are summoning an eidolon or using Life Drain. When you use those powers, they use up your action for that turn and cost the listed number of charge dice. If you don't have enough charge dice for a particular power, you can't use it yet.

### Playing Adversity

The GM controls the adversity much like the players control PCs: she takes an action per turn for each enemy (whether it's an individual, squad or swarm) using the same actions as the PCs. There are only two main differences.

First, most of the enemies only have one skill. As you will see below, PCs can mark the skills they use and gain bonus dice whenever they've used all 3 of their skills. Enemies that only have one skill do not get this benefit. But special enemies that have 3 skills do.

Second, some of the powers available to adversity are not available to PCs. In fact, the GM can make up powers at will. PC powers are somewhat balanced against each other, but there's no reason a powerful enemy wouldn't have some outstanding power, as long as the GM keeps the conflict entertaining for the players and doesn't use superpowers to one-sidedly push the conflict toward the outcome she wants.

**Maneuvers**

First choose one of your character's skills to use for the maneuver and describe it appropriately. Remember that this is an anime battle—you'll want to bounce off walls, do crazy stunt flips, swordfight in mid-air, and so on. You can also taunt your opponent, embarrass them, rally your own troops, trigger a trap, or whatever else you come up with that would work to bring you into a better or your opponent into a worse situation than before, whether it's physically, mentally, or socially—or that brings you closer to achieving a goal.

*Zadie is attacked by the critters, and it's my turn afterwards. I decide to start out with a maneuver, which is really my only choice because I don't have any strike or charge dice yet. I'm going to use Firearms as my skill for this maneuver.*

*I'm telling the GM and the other players that Zadie runs for one of the wagons in the caravan. She runs up the side, grabs the railing on top, and flips over onto the roof. She reaches underneath her layers of armored clothing and produces a scavenged block of a strange material. She tosses it into the mass of critters, who crowd around it, trying to tear it apart immediately. Zadie draws Silent Reaper from her back, aims, and fires into the block, which explodes and kills several of the demons.*

Now it's time to gather dice for your maneuver roll. First, you gain a certain number of dice for the action according to the rating of the skill you are using, ranging from 2 to 4 dice.

You now add a number of dice from your Action Pool based on how much effort your character is putting into the maneuver, ranging from 1 to 3 dice. You have to add at least 1 die. If your Action Pool is empty, you can't do maneuvers.

Other players can also give you a die each from their own Action Pools, if they think your maneuver was particularly impressive or if they want to support you. They do not have to have their characters actually assist. Granting another player a die does not use up the giving player's action for the turn.

Finally, add any dice from conditions, weapon effects, and so on. If you're using a charge power that impacts the roll or gives you extra dice, declare it and spend the charge dice before you roll.

*My Firearms skill is rated 4, which gives me 4 dice. Zadio is starting out carefully, so I'm only adding 1 die from my Action Pool, but one of the other players also throws in a die from her Action Pool because she liked my maneuver description. This gives me a total of 6 dice to roll.*

Roll all of those dice for a chance to gain successes, which are dice showing 3 and higher. Every 3, 4, and 5 earns you 1 die for your Strike Pool. Every 6 earns you 1 die for your Charge Pool. 1s and 2s fail to gain you anything and are discarded.

If you have enough dice, simply move the dice with the right numbers onto your Charge Pool and Strike Pool circles and put the 1s and 2s away. If you're using tokens, move those accordingly. If you're just writing things down, erase the appropriate number of dice from your Action Pool and write the gained dice into your other pools.

After your roll, if you have a trait marked from a character scene, you can "spend" (erase) the mark in exchange for rerolling your failed dice (1s and 2s). You need to describe how the trait figures into your current maneuver. Roll the failed dice and figure out dice gained as before.

*I roll my 6 dice for Zadio and get a less than satisfying result. 1 die shows a 4, another a 6, and the other 4 dice are all failures (1s and 2s). I move the die showing the 4 onto my Strike Pool circle and the one showing the 6 onto my Charge Pool circle, and I drop the other 4 dice into the big bowl from which the GM draws dice. I could use the trait I marked in the earlier character scene to reroll the 4 failed dice and probably earn a few more successes, but I decide to save that up in case things get really bad later on.*

If you earn no dice at all (that is, you roll all 1s and 2s), your action dice are returned to your Action Pool, gifted dice from other PC players go back to their Action Pools, and the GM dice and any bonus dice and used charge dice are discarded.

Unless you have a relevant power or weapon effect, you cannot earn more than 5 dice in a maneuver. If you rolled more than 5 successes, pick which 5 you want to earn (in other words, prioritize between strike dice and charge dice, if applicable) and discard the rest.

### Maneuver Descriptions

The player who acts describes their maneuver. The description should fit the mood, established environment, and so on. The description of the opposition is limited to the following:

Against **individuals**, you cannot describe whether you injure the individual with your action or how it otherwise affects them. Only describe the intent of your maneuver. The person controlling the individual gets to add how that actually affects that individual after you make your roll.

Against **squads**, you can describe injuring one or more of the squad members with your maneuver, but not in a crippling way. You cannot describe killing any of them or otherwise taking them out of the fight (that happens specifically with wounds). You can describe temporarily disarming them or otherwise creating handicaps. The other player will add reactions after your roll.

Against **swarms**, you can describe taking out several of the units of the swarm with your maneuver. However, if the player who controls the swarm has identified standout units within the swarm (a leader, an alpha dog, a champion), those are treated like individuals. Against those, only declare the intent of your actions, and the other player will describe how that plays out after your roll.

*When I described my maneuver earlier, because I'm fighting a swarm, I got to describe how the explosion tears apart a bunch of the critters, sending them flying in all directions, screaming and leaving behind trails of smoke.*

### Marking Skills

Every character has three skills that you chose (or created) during character creation. These skills are used for earning maneuver dice, as you've seen above. The rating of the skill indicates how many dice you earn from it when you use it in your maneuver. For example, a skill with a rating of 4 gives 4 dice for your maneuver roll. You can only use one skill at a time.

While this may tempt you to use the highest-rated skill all the time, there is a benefit to using all of your character's abilities. When you use a skill, make a mark in front of it. Once all three of your skills are marked, you earn 2 bonus dice of your choice (2 charge dice, 2 strike dice, or 1 of each) at the conclusion of your maneuver in exchange for removing all the marks. These bonus dice do not count against your dice earning limit for the maneuver, but they also do not count

toward earning Awesome Tokens (see below). Once you've earned the bonus dice and erased the marks, you can start all over again.

### Combined Maneuvers

PCs can gang up to perform a maneuver together. This uses up the action of every character who participates for this turn. Characters who already have acted this turn cannot participate in a combined maneuver.

One character needs to be designated as the leader for the combined maneuver. The combined maneuver takes place on the leader's turn to take an action. Every player involved in the combined maneuver can contribute 1 to 3 dice from their Action Pool. The leader's player describes the joint action, and the other players help out with their parts of the description.

The leader's skill dice are added to the maneuver as usual. Every character who participates in addition to the leader adds 1 die for the skill they are using instead of its rating. A combined maneuver involving 3 PCs with a leader's skill of 4, for example, earns 6 skill dice (4 from the leader plus 1 each from the helpers). All of the characters mark the skill they used in this combined maneuver.

The leader rolls the dice for successes as usual. She is limited to gaining 5 successes, and all successes have to go to the leader's pools. The leader can unmark one of her marked traits in order to reroll the failed dice.

*It's the next round, and Rasheem has climbed up onto the wagon next to Zadie's. We decide to team up this time, with Zadie taking the lead. Rasheem is fighting the demon squad, and he's having trouble, so I'll try to help him out. First, Daria describes how two of the demons climb up on top of the wagon. One of them jumps at Rasheem, who drops to the ground and kicks the demon up into the air. Then I describe how, after kicking some critters off the wagon, I see Rasheem from the corner of my eyes. I whip out Silent Reaper again, switch it on rapid fire, and send a hail of bullets straight over the supine Rasheem and at the demon that's still on the wagon, watching it fall backwards to the ground. The other demon is falling back down and Rasheem jumps up and hits it with his oversized scimitar, sending it flying sideways into a big boulder at the side of the road.*

*I'm using my Firearms skill again, which gives me 4 dice, and we get 1 extra die from the Melee Weapons skill Rasheem uses, for 5 skill*

*dice. Rasheem's player puts in 2 from her Action Pool, and I add 2 from mine. I roll all 9 dice, earning 4 strike dice and 2 charge dice. I can only keep 5, however, and I can't hand any to Daria, so I decide to keep 2 strike dice and 3 charge dice and discard the rest of the dice. My Firearms skill was already marked, so I don't get to make a skill mark this time, but Rasheem marks his Melee Weapons skill.*

### **Awesome Tokens**

If you manage to earn 5 or more dice (strike and charge dice combined, and not counting bonus dice from marking your skills) at once, the GM will award you an Awesome Token. You can use these during the conflict for some benefits or at the conclusion for others (see Ending Conflicts).

You can spend your Awesome Tokens during a conflict in the following ways:

For 1 Awesome Token, you can take a free strike, achievement, or charge power action, even if you've already acted in this round. You can do this at any time in between two other characters' actions, even right after you earned the token. You cannot use it to take a maneuver action.

For 2 Awesome Tokens, you can have your strike count against 2 opponents at once. Designate both targets and roll your dice once (with the option of using your traits to improve your roll), then apply the successes against both. If some of your dice only work against certain types of adversity and you're using the tokens to strike against different types, make a separate roll for the type-specific dice.

For 3 Awesome Tokens, you can combine both of the above effects.

You can use your Awesome Tokens on behalf of another player to benefit their PC.

*With our combined maneuver, I earned 5 dice, so I also get an Awesome Token. I decide to spend it right away and get to make an immediate strike. I'm going try take out the demon that I blasted with Silent Reaper. I could use the token on Daria's behalf and let her character do a free strike, achievement, or power action, but I just earned a bunch of strike dice while she doesn't have enough to overcome the demons' defense, so I'll use the token on me.*

## Strikes

When you're striking, take up to 6 dice from your Strike Pool. If you're using any charge powers, declare them now and pay their cost in charge dice. Then roll the strike dice plus any bonus dice from powers before you describe what you're doing, so that you can fit your narration to the impact of the roll.

Unless you have a relevant power, you cannot roll more than 6 dice from your Strike Pool in a strike. Bonus dice from powers are not limited in this fashion.

*I've earned a total of 3 strike dice and 4 charge dice for Zadio by now, and I'm using them all in a strike against the demon squad. I spend the 4 charge dice on using Force Attack, which gives me 5 bonus dice to my strike roll in addition to the 3 strike dice, for a total of 8 dice. My limit on spending strike dice is raised by 1 due to Silent Reaper's Strike Boost effect, bringing my strike dice limit to 7. 5 of my dice are bonus dice and only 3 are actual strike dice, however, so I'm not even close to hitting that limit.*

*Sadly, Silent Reaper's Power Strike effect only gives a bonus die against individuals, and I'm facing a squad, so I don't get that bonus.*

As with maneuvers, every 3+ is a success. You compare the number of successes to the opponent's defense. If your number of successes does not exceed the defense, the attack is failed and the strike dice go back to the Strike Pool. Bonus dice and spent charge dice are always used up.

If your number of successes exceeds the defense, you inflict a wound. Your strike and bonus dice are used up, and the opponent marks a wound circle. The player of the victim either describes the wound or lets the striking player do it.

You can inflict more than 1 wound at a time, but that requires overcoming the defense multiple times. If the opponent's defense is 2, you need 3 successes to inflict 1 wound, 6 successes for 2 wounds, 9 successes for 3 wounds, and so on.

*The demon squad has a defense of 3, so I need 4 successes to inflict a wound. I roll 5, 1, 6, 6, 4, 3, 2, 4. That's 6 successes! I inflict a wound and the GM lets me do the narration. I describe how the demon that I blasted off Rasheem's wagon falls to the ground, riddled with bullet holes. He won't get up again. Ever.*

You can unmark a trait to reroll your failed dice for a strike. If you still fail, all strike dice return to the Strike Pool as before, but the trait remains unmarked.

*I take a big chance and unmark my trait to reroll the 1 and the 2. I explain to the group that Zadio doesn't trust Rasheem at all. Just before she made the shot, she hesitated and thought about blowing him away instead because he might have attracted the demons on purpose; he is wearing Locust's necklace, after all. But the demons are more of a direct threat, so she overcame her distrust. For now.*

*I get lucky and score 2 more successes! Now my total is 8, and since I cause a wound for every 4 successes against defense 3, I actually do a second wound. I describe how the demon that Rasheem slashed into the rock smashes to the ground, and as he slowly tries to get up, Zadio snipes him in the back of the neck. Game over for the demon squad. Now back to those pesky critters...*

The only reliable way for characters to strike together is to use the Super Combo Strike power. There is no other combined strike.

### Achievements

You can use an action to try to achieve one of the conflict goals, which are either story-related or have special effects. Goals are introduced in Setting Up Conflicts, above, and are described in detail in Chapter 7.

Take up to 6 of your strike dice, add dice from a skill (and mark the skill), and roll them all. Every 3+ is a success. You need to get more successes than the difficulty rating of the goal you're trying to achieve. If you are unsuccessful, all of the strike dice return to your Strike Pool (bonus and charge dice are always used up). However, if you are successful, all of the dice that you rolled are used up.

Describe your actions after you know whether you've achieved the goal or not. You can describe part of your action beforehand if you want, to set up suspense for the roll, but you should wait until after the roll to complete the description appropriately.

You can unmark a trait to reroll your failed dice for an achievement. If you still fail, strike dice return to the Strike Pool as before, but the trait remains unmarked.

The GM can, but does not have to, allow powers usually used in strikes or as actions to give bonus dice to an achievement if it makes sense in the specific situation. The number of bonus dice does not have to equal what the power would grant to a strike.

*Later in our fight against the demons, we're having the hardest time with the demonic bull. The beast has a defense of 6 because of its armored hide of massive dragon-like scales, and we can't seem to get through with our strikes. I ask the GM to establish a goal that will help us lower the beast's defense. The GM establishes the following goal:*

*Overcome the Beast's Armored Hide [5]: Beast's Defense -2*

*I need almost as many successes to achieve the goal as I would need to wound it, but once we achieve the goal, we can inflict all 3 needed wounds to bring it down much more easily.*

*By this time, I've gathered new strike dice, 5 in total. I'm going to use Explosives for another 2 dice. I need to roll 6 successes to overcome difficulty 5, which seems doable with 7 dice and a good amount of luck. I describe how I jump on top of the beast and plant an explosive device under its scales to blow a hole into its armored hide. However, my roll of all 7 dice only turns up 4 successes, which is not enough. I already used my trait earlier, so I can't reroll the failed dice.*

*I return all of my strike dice to my Strike Pool and describe how Zadie jumps off the beast and holds her ears shut in anticipation of the explosion. But then nothing happens—it's a dud. She curses under her breath and jumps aside when the beast charges at her.*

If the skill you marked with the Achievement completed your set of three marked skills, you erase the marks and gain the 2 dice of your choice as usual, at the completion of this action.

### **Combined Achievements**

Most goals can be achieved with joint effort. Two or more characters can spend their actions together and contribute strike dice to a joint roll. One of the characters needs to be the leader of the achievement action just as with combined maneuvers, and only that character can use appropriate powers. Like with

Combined Maneuvers, only the leader gets to add their whole skill rating while the helpers add 1 die each for theirs.

While a player can usually only spend 6 strike dice on achieving a goal, this limit is raised by 2 for each additional player who contributes dice. This means that 3 PCs attempting to achieve a goal together can roll up to 10 strike dice total, drawn in any combination from their 3 Strike Pools.

*The next round, Daria and I decide to work together on the beast. In the story, Zadie tosses Rasheem a grenade while she distracts the beast. Rasheem somersaults over the beast, tossing down the grenade to blow up and trigger the explosive device. Rasheem has the Heroics power, so we determine that he's the leader of the combined achievement.*

*We can use up to 8 strike dice together in a combined achievement with 2 PCs. I give all of my 5 strike dice, and Daria adds 3 from Rasheem's Strike Pool. I'm using Acrobatics this time, for 1 skill die despite its rating of 3 (because I'm just the helper), but Rasheem's skill adds its whole rating for 3 more dice. Daria pays 2 charge dice for the Heroics power and gains 4 more bonus dice to our attempt. That's a total of 16 dice! Daria rolls 11 successes and easily beats the difficulty. She discards all used dice.*

*She then describes how Rasheem lands and, as he looks over his shoulder, the grenade and device go off on the back of the beast in a big explosion, sending scales and fragments all around. The GM tells us that the beast roars madly and looks like it's out for blood now, but we're not impressed: with its defense lowered to 4, we can take it down as soon as we get some more strike dice.*

### Catching Your Breath

Once the Action Pool runs empty, the character is seriously vulnerable. If the character takes an action (strike, achievement, power) while not having any action dice left, she takes a wound due to exhaustion. She can, however, catch her breath for 1 round to regain 2 action dice.

Catching your breath means the character cannot take an action for that round. It's okay to pass even if your Action Pool is not empty to gain back 2 action dice, up to your Action Pool's maximum (10 by default).

The action dice are earned at the end of the character's turn. This might matter when conditions or powers take away some of the character's action dice.

### Sacrifice

PCs don't die when they are defeated. In fact, there is nothing the GM can do to kill off the PCs. They are never going to die because of an unlucky roll, a bad tactical decision, or the failure to figure out the trap that the GM put in place. Accidental character death like that goes both against the spirit of spontaneous fun and against the types of stories that you're creating with this game. Protagonists in stories don't just die midway through the story, unless there's meaning to their death.

It's up to the PC players to decide when their characters' deaths would be meaningful. At any time during a conflict, a player can declare that her character sacrifices herself. The PC automatically achieves a specific goal, without the need for a roll, and either dies right away or soon after the end of the conflict (you can give them a character scene or two of being lethally wounded and uttering their last words).

The goal that the PC achieves can be something that was already established, it can be something the player now negotiates with the GM, including the defeat of one or all of the PCs' enemies.

A player can choose the sacrifice option even if her character already has been defeated in the conflict.

Death is not the only option here; depending on your story and setting, it can be anything that takes the character out of play. If the GM agrees, it can even be something that only temporarily takes the character out, so that the player has to play a different character for a while before the old one can come back, whether she is saved, is resurrected, wakes up from her coma, or whatnot. Then you can decide which one of your PCs to play from that point on.

For example, if your character story seed was that your PC is being chased by demons who want to take her soul, and you can barter with them to take your PC and leave the other PCs alone, that works as a sacrifice. Whether or not the other PCs (and your new character) can then save the sacrificed PC from the demons' home world opens up a whole new saga in your story.

I strongly suggest that, whenever you have a player permanently leaving the group, you give her a chance during her last session to make a really meaningful sacrifice.

### Ending Conflicts

The conflict ends when one side retreats or is defeated (meaning all of their side's wound circles are filled up). A defeated individual, squad or swarm cannot participate in the conflict any longer, though players can still grant a die from their Action Pool to other players' maneuvers if they have any left.

Half (rounded up) of every PC's unused charge dice remain while all unused strike dice are turned into action dice (up to the Action Pool's limit—any extra dice are discarded). The Action Pool remains at that level.

All of the conditions granted or inflicted by powers (like Poisoned and Shielded) vanish at the end of a conflict.

If you have Awesome Tokens left over at the end of a conflict, you can trade each one for one of the following benefits. Any Awesome Tokens you don't spend are lost.

1. Keep all your charge dice instead of half of them. Your character is emotionally pumped up and ready to wreak more havoc.
2. Fill your Action Pool to the maximum. Your character skips off the smoldering battlefield where others limp and crawl from exhaustion.
3. Keep up to 3 of your strike dice in your Strike Pool instead of converting them to action dice. In the story, your character takes something away from the conflict that will help in the next one (single-use weapons like grenades, the element of surprise, righteous anger, a battle suit, etc.). If you want to keep strike dice again at the end of the next conflict, however, you'll have to pay another Awesome Token then.

You can spend Awesome Tokens in this manner for other PCs as well.

### Involvement

Not all PCs are going to be involved in all conflicts. Depending on how your story is going, PCs might split up and go separate ways or have other reasons for not

participating in conflicts together. While players whose PCs are not involved in a conflict cannot earn or spend dice with actions, they can hand over a die for other PCs' maneuvers from their Action Pools as usual. This way, even when you're part of the audience, you're still involved in what's going on.

PCs as well as adversity can sometimes drop into the conflict after it has started. The GM can always introduce new enemies in the middle of a conflict, to represent reinforcements that arrive or other new foes. Players whose PCs are not involved in conflicts initially sometimes reach the conflict later (or are introduced when their fellow players achieve a goal, such as when some PCs were imprisoned, locked out, and so on). Whenever new adversity or new PCs are introduced, simply give them a place in the order of taking turns.

Sometimes PCs or adversity will drop out of the conflict. They could give up, flee, or otherwise stop being involved. This is up to the PC's player or to the GM regarding adversity. Characters who drop out simply stop taking turns. In some situations, the PCs need to fulfill a goal to be able to flee, else dropping out means giving up. This depends on the circumstances in your story and needs to be determined by the GM at the beginning of the conflict. PCs might also be able to keep adversity from fleeing; use goals to set this up.

### Conflicts Without Combat

Conflicts do not have to be combative, but they always have a chance to turn that way. The characters can all use maneuvers that consist entirely of talking, intimidating, browbeating, or otherwise gaining an advantage. They can then focus on achieving goals without ever throwing a blow. However, if it comes down to it, either side can escalate and use the strike dice for strikes, or use a power.

How much or how little combat is included in each conflict is therefore always up to the characters who are involved.

You can also have combat without conflicts. If one character acts against another, and both players agree on the outcome, you don't actually need to go to the mechanics. For example, if one character stands at the edge of a cliff and another pushes her, then both players might agree that she is surprised and falls (though outside of the conflict mechanics, she won't take any wounds from the fall). If the second player doesn't want her to fall, however, you've got a conflict to play out.

### PC Versus PC

Most of the time, it's not a good idea to use the conflict mechanics to have fights between PCs. Instead, the players should agree on how their fight goes, as in the section above, or play it out as a character scene instead. But if your group is up for it, you can certainly use the mechanics. Both players have to agree to this, however—if one of the players doesn't want to participate, her character gets to walk away unharmed.

The conflict then works exactly like a GM versus PC conflict. The players earn and spend dice, inflict wounds, and defeat each other as usual.

Goals during PC versus PC conflicts are tricky. If you're going to have any, all players in the conflict need to agree on them; the GM would not be involved.

## 7 GOALS

### Basics

Most conflicts have goals. They are things that can be achieved aside from just beating the crap out of the other people involved. There can be just one or multiple goals, depending on the situation. You should write down the goal somewhere where it's visible to all of the players; index cards for each goal or a central sheet of paper listing all goals both work.

Most goals are determinative: once the goal is achieved by someone, its outcome cannot be altered anymore during the conflict. Exceptions to this need to be specifically noted. An example of an exception is the disarming of a Soulbound Weapon: the weapon can be recovered through a new goal, then disarmed again, and so on. For more, see the section on chained goals below.

In general, a goal that is not achieved means that the status quo remains in place. If the goal was to rescue someone, and no one achieved it, that person is still captive. The GM rules after the conflict whether unresolved goals can still be achieved (maybe in a follow-up character scene) or, if not, how they turned out. The only way for players to determine the outcome is to achieve the goal before defeating the adversity (or being defeated).

### **Difficulty**

Goals have a difficulty rating associated with them that indicates how hard it is to achieve the goal. A player who wants to determine the outcome of the goal has to roll more successes with an achievement (see Achievements in the Conflicts chapter) than the difficulty rating.

An example of a goal would be:

#### **Determine Possession of the Gem [5]**

This goal refers to a gem in the scene that either the players or their opponents want to grab; it doesn't matter which side currently has it.

The goal has a difficulty rating of 5. Whoever first manages to do score 6 or more successes with an achievement will determine whether the gem gets taken, and by whom (it doesn't have to be the player's character, nor does it have to be in her favor if the player prefers another outcome). After this has been determined, no one else can end up with the gem for this conflict. It might change hands during

descriptions, if you like, but at the end of the conflict it ends up where the player who achieved the goal put it.

### **Weakening Adversity**

If the opposition in a conflict is strong, you can have goals that allow the players to weaken the opposition in actual game-mechanical terms. This allows for tactical decisions as well as cool combat scenes and tactics like the ones you see in good anime shows.

For example: The GM's adversity has a defense of 4, and she links some of those to conflict goals. They could be 1 goal that's harder to achieve:

**Destroy Fortifications [5]:** Adversity loses 2 points of defense

Or 2 goals that are easier to achieve:

**Destroy East Fortification [3]:** Adversity loses 1 point of defense

**Destroy West Fortification [3]:** Adversity loses 1 point of defense

You'll find listings of the possible effects on the adversity in the Effects and Conditions section below.

### **Creating Goals**

There are four ways in which goals are created. First, the GM establishes them when setting up the conflict. Second, the GM establishes them during a conflict. Third, the players suggest them during a conflict. And fourth, some goals always exist as default options.

Goals that are established at the beginning of a conflict tend to result from the way the story is going and the nature of the adversity in the conflict. Often, a fight is about something other than just beating the other side. Something's at stake. This is represented with a goal or two. If the PCs already planned for the conflict and put up traps or made other preparations, you can also have starting goals representing them using their advantage in that regard.

During the conflict, especially with an inexperienced group, the GM can establish goals that help out the PCs. If the PCs are facing a powerful enemy and have a hard time getting through the defense, or if they are faced with a condition that

impacts them but they just don't know how to deal with it, the GM can throw them a boon to spice things up.

Note that the goal does not have to describe how the PCs can do it, as this leaves the door open for the players to come up with creative ways to achieve a goal. In order to achieve a goal that exposes the adversary's weak spot and lowers its defense, for example, they could peel the armor off the enemy, toss gasoline at it and light it, or talk the arrogant evil summoner into letting his guard down.

Other goals can be established during a conflict to introduce story complications. For example, civilians could pop up that are caught in the crossfire, or important items show up that one of the characters could snatch on their way out. By establishing these during the conflict, you can alter the course of a battle and make it that much more interesting.

Player-suggested goals are a great way of allowing the players to express what they care about and how they want to handle a conflict. The example of exposing the enemy's weak spot could just as well be a suggestion from a player that the GM happily establishes.

When a player suggests something, the GM should always establish it in some form, unless it is completely nonsensical in the context of the story (blowing up the whole planet with a firecracker), would ruin other players' fun (stealing other PCs' pants in the middle of combat—if they aren't willing to play comedic right now), or is otherwise outright disruptive.

Finally, some goals are always available by the rules. The prime example is the ability of anyone to disarm a character with a Soulbound Weapon, and conversely, that character's ability to regain it. These goals do not need to be written down, because they're already described in these rules. A gentle reminder here and there might help keep players aware of their options, though.

### **Default Type**

The categories of goals listed in the following sections are all advanced uses of the concept of goals. You should be very familiar with basic goals before you use them, but once you do, you'll see how much variety they can add to your conflicts.

Always assume that a goal is the default type (unique, single, joint) unless you decide otherwise when you create it, and make sure to write any deviations from the default next to a specific goal.

### Unique, Parallel or Individual

Goals are by default unique. A unique goal is one that exists only once, anyone can try to achieve it, and when it's resolved it's put aside. Goals can also be parallel or individual.

A parallel goal exists for one or both sides of a conflict, and each side can only achieve their own. This represents events like races, where each side strives to achieve something faster than the other side. Parallel goals don't have to be the same on both sides, but they often reach toward the same end.

Sometimes a parallel goal only exists for one side. In the "Destroy Fortifications" example above, the goal would be parallel if one side could achieve it but the other side couldn't prevent it. If the defending side could somehow, for the rest of the conflict, keep the other side from achieving that goal (by achieving it themselves and determining the outcome accordingly), it would be a unique goal instead.

Individual goals exist for each character individually. For example, "Escape from the Pit" could be an individual goal: each character has to achieve it, and those that don't get stuck in the pit at the end of the conflict. While the goal has to be achieved for each character, one character can achieve it for another instead of herself (a PC in the example could give another PC a boost or toss her out of the pit while remaining in it herself until she or someone else achieves the goal for her).

Individual goals can also be limited to specific characters whose situation or opportunities differ from the others. For example, if one character is on board of an airship while the others are on the ground, but they're all fighting in a conflict together, the airship character might have goals that relate to properly steering the airship, something the other characters down below can't achieve.

### Joint or Solo

Most goals can be achieved by multiple characters acting together with a Combined Achievement, as described in the conflict chapter. These are called joint goals, and they are the default option.

Some goals, called solo goals, can only be attempted by one character at a time. Other characters cannot assist with these goals. The circumstances in which solo goals are used are pretty rare.

Often, solo goals are combined with other variant types of goals. For example, the characters could be in a situation in which they each need to achieve something on their own (like finding their way to the center of a maze) and can't see each other until they get there. That would be a solo individual goal, one which every character has to achieve on her own.

Still, as this is a group-oriented game, I would keep solo goals to a minimum. It's just usually more fun when the players can team up to do something together.

### Single or Chain

By default, goals are single events. This means that their effects are immediate, and once they are achieved, they're done with.

You can also create a chain of goals. In this case, characters need to achieve two or more goals in order. Think of events in movies where one achievement depends on another: first you hack the security computer, then you break open the vault, then you escape with the diamonds. You can't escape with the diamonds before you've cracked the vault, and you can't get to the vault unless the security system has been hacked.

Chained goals can still have effects at each chained goal that are in addition to leading to the next goal.

A very advanced use of chained goals would be to link parallel goals together, with a unique goal at the end, which creates a race for both sides to reach the final unique goal. An example for this is provided in the Goal Examples section, below.

### Effects and Conditions

Many goals only have story effects. Those are goals where the outcome makes a difference in terms of the story, but they don't have an impact on the stats, dice, or other mechanical parts of the game.

Goals that do have effects on the mechanical level can achieve a huge variety of things. They can:

- lower the enemy's stats (defense or competence, usually)
- boost the PC's stats

- cause strike rolls with dice of their own (instead of taking them out of someone's Strike Pool)
- make future strikes elemental (fire-based, etc.)
- inflict any of the conditions
- remove any of the conditions
- block one or more of the powers of an adversity
- lower one of the adversity's pools
- temporarily grant a new power to a PC

These can work in combination as well. Check out the examples below to see how some of these can easily be implemented.

### Goal Examples

The following are some examples of goals, of a varying degree of complexity. While even the most simple goals can spice up a conflict, there's a lot of potential in chaining them together or otherwise getting more involved, once you've become comfortable with how the system works. And if you feel like a conflict needs some change—whether your conflict appears to be too easy, too hard, too bland, or otherwise out of sync with what you want—these example goals give some inspiration on how to fix those issues on the spot.

#### **The Lone Survivor**

This is an example out of a playtest session. Our gang of heroes is fighting a gigantic hydra that appeared out of a crack in the ground. Four of the PCs are taking good care of it, while one is fighting off some hedgehog mutants in the nearby abandoned village (he ran away from the hydra, and the GM introduced new adversity to keep him busy). Three of the characters are getting close to disposing of the hydra, so the GM introduces a story goal to allow the other two players to have something to do as well:

#### **Save The Last Villager [4]**

The GM describes that the PCs spot a figure on a shaky old water tower, with one of the hedgehog mutants clawing its way up the ladder to get to it. Who's the

figure? Will our heroes save the villager before the mutants kill him or her? This story goal not only makes the fight a bit more interesting as the last few strikes against the hydra play out, it also opens up follow-up opportunities for character scenes involving the NPC after the conflict.

### **Fighting Ice with Fire**

The PCs are in the middle of a fight with a tough group of ice demons in the middle of a dark metropolis. The PCs are having a hard time hurting them, and while the ice demons are vulnerable to fire, the PCs don't have anyone with fire-based powers or weapon effects among them. What to do now? The answer: improvise.

The player of the first PC, Shoju, talks to the GM about thrusting his sword into the tank of a car, thereby covering it with gasoline, and then setting it on fire. The GM smiles and creates the following goal:

#### **Set Sword Afire [2]: Character's next strike counts as fire-based**

The GM makes the goal easy because it's a neat idea but the payoff only applies once; she doesn't think the fuel will stick after a serious strike. If the player comes up with a plan that could keep the sword fire-based, she will create a goal that applies the fire-based effect for the rest of the conflict.

The player of the second PC wants to lure an ice demon into a gas station, then blow it up. The GM creates the following goal:

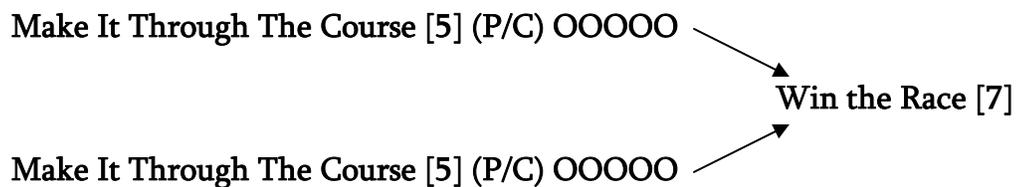
#### **Lure Demon Into Explosive Trap [4]: Trigger 10-dice fire-based strike on 1 enemy**

Goals such as these allow the PCs to trigger strikes with dice other than the ones in their pools. They still have to expend strike dice to achieve the goal, but the payoff is bigger (especially since the strike is fire-based, adding 3 bonus dice against those vulnerable to fire). On the other hand, the PC won't be able to add strike powers to the strike trigger.

But what if the PCs just focus on strike trigger goals from now on to get more out of their dice than they would with a regular strike, almost every time? In that case, rejoice: your players are finding new and creative ways to hurt the opposition all the time, and the resulting fights should never get boring.

### A Brutal Race

In the post-apocalyptic world from the example in the earlier chapters, the characters enter a race in which being fast doesn't help you if the other side blows you off the course. The GM creates linked goals to represent the race track and, to simplify things, just adds circles after the parallel chained (P/C) goals to represent the same goal several times. Once those circles are full, that side can attempt the unique goal of winning the race. During the conflict, the PCs can figure out how many of them focus on achieving the goals along the way, and how many attack the other side instead. The difficulties are high to promote combined maneuvers by each side.



Notice that the two tracks are parallel goals: neither side can achieve the other side's goals to prevent them from winning. The GM could also create 3 or more tracks instead of just 2, to complicate matters a bit and make it more of a crowded race.

### The Tournament Assassin

In this example, the GM is getting very creative with the rules about goals and conflicts. She sets up a combat tournament in which the PC participates only to get close enough to the emperor to assassinate him. However, getting close to the emperor is incredibly hard, so the PC has to win the emperor's trust and be invited to his close presence in order to carry out her mission. (This example was inspired by a particular movie; I won't name it to avoid spoiling it for you.)

The PC will get to fight 5 consecutively harder enemies. These are laid out ahead of time. The player will get to play only 2 character scenes in between each fight: her PC talks to the emperor, and then there's a flashback scene showing some of the PC's motivation.

During each fight, the following goal exists:

**Gain The Emperor's Trust [4]: +2 Strike Dice for Assassination Attempt**

The player can achieve this goal up to twice in each fight. At the end of the tournament—either when the PC loses a fight or after she defeats all 5 enemies—

## Goals – Goal Examples

the player first has another character scene with the emperor and then gets to make a strike roll against him, but only with the dice she earned through these goals. The emperor has a defense of 3 and 3 wound circles, so the player needs to roll 12 successes to kill him. Once that roll is made, the chance is over, and the player and GM play out the attempt accordingly.

You could also set this up for two or more PCs: they each fight on the opposite end of the ladder, and then they get to fight each other in the end to figure out who gets to strike at the emperor.

Finally, when the moment comes to strike against the emperor and the player has enough dice to succeed, the GM can throw in the following goal:

### **Teach The Emperor The Meaning Of Honor [15]**

Now the player can decide whether to try and strike or to achieve the goal instead (bringing in a trait for a reroll, possibly, or even invoking the Sacrifice rule).

## 8 CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### Overview

While characters are static in some tales, most stories tell us about the development of the protagonists. The characters achieve their life's passion, they have epiphanies, they grow up or grow old, they acquire abilities and use them for good or bad, and at the end of the story the main characters are not the same people that they were at the beginning.

There are three larger categories of change that your character can go through. They are personality, seeds, and abilities, and each of them is explained in its own section below.

### Personality

The PCs' personalities are expressed in several ways on the character sheet. While most of who they are comes out when they are played, those indicators on the sheet can change over time and express the development of the character's personality. Let's talk specifically about passions and traits.

### **Passions**

The character's passion expresses her overall emotional state. While her mood can change, her passion is something that's fundamental to who she is. A change in passion represents a fundamental shift in the character's personality. Someone whose life purpose used to be gaining glory now focuses on protecting the one she loves. Someone who used to be full of compassion now revels in her lust for blood.

These kinds of changes don't come about easily. The rules won't prevent you from switching your passion just because you want to earn charge dice in a different way. But if you want to get the most out of playing the game, I suggest using the passion as a core ingredient in developing your character.

You can change your passion on the spot, either during a character scene or at the beginning or end of your turn in a conflict, but only once per play session. Any additional changes need to be approved by the GM. Given that passions are profound states of mind of the characters, such changes should be reasonably rare, and even a change once per session is probably more than the events in the story warrant, but that determination is up to you.

The best moment to change your passion is when the PC is at a critical decision point. Either something very dramatic just happened to the character, or her decision will bring it about. If her loved one was severely hurt, does she choose to pursue vengeance or keep focusing on her love? If given the choice between helping innocent bystanders or raking in immortal glory, which way will she go?

The game gives you a mechanism to express this in addition to just describing it, and that's changing the passion. Use it sparingly and with the right timing, and it can be very powerful.

### Traits

Traits are used to give you a better feel for who your character is, as well as what's currently on your character's mind. They can express emotions, thoughts, quirks, mottos, and all sorts of other aspects of your character's personality.

You can use traits in two ways: either you treat them flexibly to indicate to other players what your character's current state of mind is, or you treat them more like passions, in that a change of a trait expresses a fundamental change of the character.

Contrary to passions, the type and content of the trait has no impact on how it works mechanically in a conflict or character scene. Your character might still be the very same person, just with a different focus. When you change the trait away from "In love with Bea," it doesn't have to mean that the character's not in love with Bea anymore—that's up to how you play the character. But it does indicate that you the player are not as interested in playing out that aspect of your character anymore.

In other words, traits are mainly used as roleplaying inspiration and as signals for your interest (see the essay on Flags in Chapter 17).

You can change your traits at any time. The more often you change your traits, however, the less likely your fellow players are to pay attention to them or to give them any weight.

If you use the optional rule for added trait bonuses (see Chapter 16), you have to change stars into checks when you change a trait.

## Seeds

When you kick off your game, you have a whole sheet full of story seeds: several character seeds, a group seed, and one or more setting seeds. These provide you with fodder to play out during the game and with a framework to which you can tie everything that happens in your story.

At some point, one or more of your seeds will have played out to a conclusion. There is no formula about how quickly this happens or what the conclusion looks like. It's something that you'll know when it happens.

In some cases, it's pretty obvious: Zadie's character seed about the necklace she had given to her old partner and current nemesis will eventually lead her to him, and they're going to find a way to settle the score. Once that's taken care of, the seed is fully developed and doesn't provide any more room for growth. Once that happens, you can consider that plot closed and start a new one.

Creating new seeds is as easy as coming up with ones in the first place. You make up an event, issue, or insight that will drive the character toward a new series of interesting events, decisions, and conflicts. This doesn't have to be something that comes up in play; you can just tell your fellow players that you've decided that something new happens to the character, and this is it.

If you tie seeds to the development of your abilities (see below), you have additional motivation to keep developing and wrapping up new seeds. But even without that, you'll find that fresh seeds are always a good way to breathe some new life into your story.

Sometimes you might think about abandoning a seed. If you really can't figure out a good way to tie it into the story, or it just somehow makes the game less fun for you, it's perfectly alright to abandon a seed. Just let your other players know so they won't play to it anymore and make up something new.

## Abilities

Many stories tell us about a character's journey to greater power. The need to acquire that power is often tied into the story seeds, such as in *Avatar*, where Aang has to master all four elements to battle the Fire Lord.

In *Anima Prime*, the way in which a character can become more effective is through the accumulation of additional powers. All other abilities are either

details (which the player can figure out on her own during descriptions and maneuvers) or can change in what they look like, but not in how effective they are (such as the ability to use traits for rerolls).

In many other roleplaying games, it is assumed that every single conflict brings some experience with it that accumulates over time until the character suddenly rises in power. That approach works well for many of those games, but Anima Prime benefits from a more story-based approach. The particular approach, however, depends on what kind of story you want to create.

The following is a list of suggestions for how characters in your story can acquire additional powers. Use them as a springboard for how you want to handle it in your game, and make sure that everyone in the group is involved in figuring this out before the game starts. The default for Ghostfield is the seed-based development.

Whichever kind of system you use for acquiring powers, no one character can ever have more than one power more than the character with the lowest number of powers in the group. With this rule in place, you can even use a different approach for each character; maybe one of them is looking for teachers while another can absorb the power of certain fiends.

### **Seed-Based Development**

There are three kinds of story seeds in this game: character seeds, group seeds, and setting seeds. These provide story fodder and some possible destinations for where the story is going. At some point, one or more of them will be resolved. If you select this option for power development, then the PC whose character seed is resolved, or all PCs if the group or setting seed is resolved, gains a power at that point in time (and then it's time to create a new seed).

Knowing when a seed is resolved is an intuitive thing that's hard to put into any kind of rules. If your group seed is that you're all out for vengeance against the same enemy, once that vengeance is fulfilled, your seed is obviously resolved. Others might be a bit more vague than this, such as character seeds that deal with an issue of the character. But the players who created the seeds are also the ones who determine when it's run its course.

Letting characters gain an extra power at the conclusion of a seed could happen often and fast, or rarely and slow, depending on how the seeds play out in your game. It can prompt players to actually address their character seeds as much as they can, but it can also lead to a point where the gaining of the power overtakes

the importance of the seed for the story. You'll have to see how that works for your group.

### **Teacher-Based Development**

This approach shows up in many stories. The student needs to find the right teachers, and each time she does, she learns a few things and progresses. Examples are Aang, Katara and Sokka in *Avatar*: while Aang is looking for all kinds of bending teachers, Katara learns new powers from waterbending masters (including the evil bloodbender, indirectly) and Sokka learns from a swordmaster.

In many of the stories, finding a teacher is also a story seed, so you could consider this a subsection of the previous approach. It is common enough, however, to talk about it in detail, and I quite like keeping character seeds more interesting than just “Find the next teacher” all the time.

This approach puts more control over the ability development of the PCs in the hands of the GM. If you're comfortable with this, and your story fits the teacher-based mold, this is one of the easiest approaches to implement and balance.

### **Adversity-Based Development**

In our previous game, *Beast Hunters*, the PCs are tribal warriors who set out to slay magical beasts that threaten their people and ravage their lands. After a Beast Hunter kills a beast, she uses its blood as ink for a tattoo carved into her skin by her elders, which bestows upon her a part of the beast's power. While the game also has other ways of making the characters more powerful, the tattoos of power are the core concept of the character's path of slaying more difficult beasts. This is one way of implementing adversity-based development.

I would not suggest using a system in which characters gain points for every single conflict they enter. That would be too much bookkeeping for a spontaneous system and takes some focus off the story you're telling.

If you create an adversity-based system in which the PCs gain powers from certain creatures that they defeat, you have to figure out the following parts:

- How often can the PCs do this?
- How difficult are the creatures?
- Which powers can be gained?

- Are powers to be gained specific to the creature?
- Can multiple PCs gain a power from a creature or only one?
- Do you make the creatures up on the fly or have a prepared bestiary?
- Is the game and/or setting all about the hunt of these creatures or are they just a means to an end?

I am planning to create a premade setting that uses this approach for a supplement to *Anima Prime*, which will be called *Soultakers*. The supplement would be Creative Commons-licensed, just as this main game, and therefore freely available.

### Changing Powers

Sometimes players will realize that one or more of the powers they picked for their characters either don't fit or turn out to be much less fun than they thought. At other times, characters could change through events in the story in a way that is best expressed through a loss or exchange of powers.

In either case, I would let players slowly change their characters' powers over time. That is, players can choose to lose a power at any time—after all, they could just decide not to use it anymore. Once they have lost a power, they can later replace it. The pace at which this happens is up to you, but in order to keep the game somewhat consistent, I would suggest not changing more than one power per game session. If the character lost her Soulbound Weapon and its associated 4 powers, for example, it might take her a while to learn how to get along without it and develop new abilities. The player might even want to go on with fewer powers for a longer time, if that makes sense for the story and the character.

Overall, this ties directly into having fun with the game. Players shouldn't have to work their way through a bunch of less-than-fun sessions only to "earn" having fun with the game again. If you and your players will have the most fun by changing powers around at will, by all means, go with that.

## 9 G H O S T F I E L D

Dragonspawn (Fiction)

Malley cursed under his breath as he chased after her, dodging the crooked trees in his path. Just once he wished that a rogue skipper would actually stop when ordered to, but that was just too much to ask. And this one was exceptionally nimble. She was weaving among the trees ahead of him, dipping in and out of his field of vision. But after two years of occupational guard duty the Kanissian Captain knew this stretch of Ghostfield better than anyone, even the Enendian locals, and he dashed around the side of a ravine to cut her off. Just when he thought she might have made an unexpected turn she came charging toward him.

He pulled his pneumatic rifle to his shoulder and took aim. The rogue skipper ran up a half-fallen tree trunk and, with a hissing burst of pressure from her boots, jettisoned into the air in a high arc. The very moment that his finger started pulling on the trigger, a gate flashed open between them and swallowed her.

*Damn.* It would have been too easy for her not to be a spontaneous gater as well. He quickly slung his rifle around his back, bounced off a tree trunk, then another one, and straight through her gate.

Even after dozens of excursions to the Beyond, his mind needed a moment to adjust to the sudden lack of up and down. He focused on the nearest rock floating in the vast expanse of space. He twisted around in mid-air, landed with a heavy thud on the barn-sized rock, and immediately turned his head in all directions to see where the rogue skipper had gone. Rocks of all different sizes floated around him in their inexplicable patterns, obscuring much of his vision. Finally he spotted her, jumping from one rock to another, like a Sumayan dancer.

He pushed off and gave chase. The rogue skipper was shooting thin ropes with metal hooks from her bracers, using them to swing around the rocks and every now and then hurl a smaller one his way. One of them even scratched along his back and tore open his shirt as he barely made it out of the way. It was no use wearing armor if you had to go Beyond; that would only slow you down and possibly trap you forever. Breathing heavily, but nowhere ready to give up, Malley made his way ever closer to her, his sense of up and down adjusting each time that he landed somewhere new. At least she didn't have time to grab anything of value while he was after her. Selling ores and gems from this place was an illegal but flourishing business, and he had a hunch that much of the benefit of that trade made its way to Enendian rebels.

Just when he thought he could intercept her with a couple more well-aimed jumps, something rammed one of the massive floating rocks and knocked Malley out of his trajectory. He saw a huge shadow rushing by, much too close for comfort. Chasing rogue skippers was his duty, but he could hardly fulfill it if he was torn apart by one of the Beyonders, so he searched for the nearest little gate and ricocheted several times until he made his way through.

The gate was twenty feet off the ground. Malley rolled with the impact as much as he could. He ended up on his back, looking up at the sky above, trying to calm his racing heart. Just when he was about to have some success in that area, his eyes widened and his lips parted as right above him, the largest gate he had ever seen tore through the fabric of reality, and a gigantic Beyonder burst through. Its body was elongated like a snake's, but with dozens of tree-sized spider legs, and even though it had no wings it flew through the air with an incredible agility.

He jumped to his feet to watch it whirl around a couple of times before setting down heavily in one of the abandoned villages nearby. The silence following the impact lasted only a few moments. A cacophony of little explosions followed as hundreds of things started shooting out along the Beyonder's carapace, from front to back, in high arcs and low. Malley was stunned. Nothing like this had ever come through. Nothing like this had ever happened before.

A nearby impact shook him out of his trance. He walked over toward the smoldering crater. Just as he tried to peer into it, something charged out. It took him by surprise and smashed him off his feet. Together he and the creature rolled across the ground. He felt something sharp sink deep into the flesh of his shoulder. Yelling out in pain, he kicked the thing off of him and, as it was flying through the air away from him, drew his pneumatic pistol and fired several rounds into the critter.

It landed on the ground and hopped right back to its feet, snarling and looking more angry than hurt. Malley got up and slipped his rifle from his shoulder, but before he could aim it the beast slammed it from his hands. Malley ducked and kicked and stabbed with his utility knife, but soon he found himself thrown to the ground, his head bashing against a wayward rock.

Dizzy and weak, he raised his head. The creature was approaching him again, rows of teeth bared, ready to turn him into its first snack in this world.

Something shot past it from the left, leaving a trail in the air. The sound of dashing steps came to Malley's ears, just before another shot missed the creature by just a couple of inches on its other side. A shadow fell over him, and he looked

up to see the someone sailing through the air. The thin ropes to either side of the creature wrapped around its neck, and just as the rogue skipper reached the ground behind it, she gave a hard tug, sending its head flying off its shoulders as she landed in a graceful crouch.

Malley managed to push up into a sitting position, warily eyeing the rogue skipper as she recalled her ropes and the hooks snatched back into place in her bracers while the Beyonder's head bounced across the ground. She gave him a little smile. Up close, she looked younger than he had expected.

She looked toward the site where the huge Beyonder had landed, then cast a sparkling gaze at Malley as she offered him a hand. "Looks like you've got bigger things to chase after than me."

### Here and Beyond

The area known as Ghostfield was long thought of as haunted. It's very close to another dimension, which people simply refer to as Beyond. Spontaneous gates open in various sizes that allow creatures to cross back and forth, ranging in size from tiny to building-sized. Smaller gates are more common; huge gates are rarely seen. People live in the vicinity of Ghostfield, but villages closer to its center have long been abandoned due to the unending appearance of strange and often dangerous creatures.

The Kanissian Republic has occupied Ghostfield and a large chunk of Enendia, its previous owner. The Kanissians, whose border was not far from the field, considered it a potential threat to their national security--and a great resource. The remainder of Enendia has barricaded itself behind the First River, leaving the occupied territory in Kanissian hands. There are several groups of rebels, however, who seek to free the realm from occupation.

If you step through one of the gates in Ghostfield to Beyond, you find yourself in a world without ground. It is filled with rocks of various shapes and sizes that float amongst one another. While they seem to repel each other and rarely crash into each other, their cores attract all other matter, serving as localized gravity. Many of these rocks are only as big as a room, yet they still have a gravitational pull much stronger than a comparable chunk would have in our world. Other rocks are as big as whole villages, but their pull is not much stronger; they all have the same tiny cores that are the source of the gravitational anomalies, with similar strength. Some of the huge rocks feature massive tunnel systems or other interior areas.

A vast range of strange creatures inhabits the Beyond, but what attracts humans to cross over are the cores and other valuables that can be found within the floating rocks. Scavengers who pluck them out are known as skippers. They bounce from rock to rock, traveling among them and looking for valuables. Only the First Expeditionary Corps of Kanissia is allowed to do this officially, but there are many rogue skippers who sneak through one of the gates and claim cores and gems to sell for a good price to one of the two crime cartels that has sprung up around the illegal trade of Beyond goods. Some of them finance the Enendian rebels. Others are just out for themselves.

### **Conflicts Beyond**

Sooner or later, the PCs will find themselves Beyond, trying to fight off Beyonders or Kanissian Expeditionary Troops (or both). One special rule that applies to conflicts beyond is that any maneuver costs an additional Action Die, which is not rolled but is nevertheless expended, independent of overall success or failure. For example, a maneuver using 2 Action Dice costs 3 Action Dice Beyond.

### **Player Characters**

The player characters can have any sort of background, as long as they have a good reason to stick together. They can be rebels, rogue skippers, Kanissian soldiers, villagers, criminals, or anything else that's workable. Here are the two example characters from the fiction piece above. If you like, you can play these in a sample character scene and/or conflict to get a handle on the setting before you create your own (or you can just use these characters for a whole story).

#### **Captain Malley – Kanissian Guard Veteran**

**Passion:** Anger

**Mark:** He has a huge shadowy discoloration on his back. Some might mistake it for a birthmark, but it's the spot where a Beyonder melted into him; right before he started exhibiting powers

**Traits:** I follow orders, but in my own way  
More experience than you'll ever have.  
Protective of children.

**Skills:** Firearms 4  
Courage 3  
Brawl 2

**Stats:** Action Pool 10, Wounds 4, Defense 3

**Powers:** Gate Sense, Leadership, Resilience II, Skipping, Soul Resistance, Squad Tactics, Tactical Maneuvering, Toughness

**Tikara – Rogue Skipper**

**Passion:** Glory

**Mark:** Eyes sparkle in all kinds of different colors.

**Traits:** I love the chase.  
Protect my family at all costs.  
Deep in debt.

**Skills:** Acrobatics 4  
Melee Weapons 3  
Quickness 2

**Stats:** Action Pool 12, Wounds 3, Defense 4

**Powers:** Force Attack, Heroics, Resilience III, Skipping, Spontaneous Gating, Stamina, Soulbound Weapon (Boots: Pneumatic)

**Skills**

There are 20 standard skills in Ghostfield. These should cover most of the types of actions that characters do when they are maneuvering during a conflict. They are:

Acrobatics	Brawl	Courage	Dirty Tricks	Endurance
Engineer	Explosives	Feint	Firearms	Gadgets
Intimidate	Luck	Melee Weapons	Perceive	Quickness
Stealth	Strength	Taunt	Throw	Vehicles

You can make up your own skills as well, subject to the agreement of your whole group. They should be roughly equivalent in scope to the ones listed above.

The following is a description of each skill, along with some suggestions on how to use it during a maneuver. If you want to use a skill during a conflict and are at a loss about how to narrate it or what you could do with it, ask your fellow players for some suggestions. There’s no shame in kibitzing, and it can actually make the game more fun.

Many times, the usage of the skills can overlap. You could do the same stunt maneuver using Acrobatics, Courage, or Quickness, for example. That’s perfectly fine. In these cases, the skill says more about who your character is and from what source of strength inside of her she does what she does. Don’t let the narrow meaning of a skill’s name or the overlap with other skills limit your imagination when it comes to your maneuvers.

## Skill Descriptions

### Acrobatics

This is quite a broad skill that you can use in many different ways. It includes jumping around, bouncing off walls, climbing up structures (or enemies), somersaulting over steambots, and any other cool stunts along those lines. If you're a first-time player, I suggest you take this as an easy-to-use skill.

### Brawl

Characters with this skill go hand-to-hand with their enemies. This includes punches, flying kicks, wrestling moves, elbow strikes, bicycle kicks, body slams, and any other attacks that don't involve any weapons other than those you were born with.

### Courage

Sometimes you can accomplish a lot if you just dare to do it. Courage allows your character to stand her ground in the face of danger, motivate her allies to follow her lead, and do things that others wouldn't, because she can control her fear. A maneuver using Courage can range from simply walking face-first into danger (at a dramatic camera angle, of course) to taking that leap from a building to the shoulders of a steambot.

### Dirty Tricks

You know that character who throws sand in other people's eyes, stuffs a grenade down a commander's shirt, or uses enemy soldiers as human shields? If you pick this skill, that's your PC. Your character needs a certain edge to pull this off, a rather malleable view of honor in combat. And you need to be able to think on your feet to use this skill a lot. Or else, remember to ask your fellow players for maneuver suggestions.

### Endurance

Some characters have more stamina and can take more punishment than others. Characters with this skill can use that ability to their advantage during battle. They could charge ahead despite of the acid raining down on them, or come back up from getting knocked down so quickly that they surprise their enemy, or shield their allies with their bodies. You may want to take powers like Toughness, Resilience and Guard to gain some related abilities.

### Engineer

Usually, you use your skills to make things. But in a pinch—that is, whenever someone's trying to hurt you or your friends—you don't hesitate to use your engineering skills to take out the weak points of a vehicle, throw a wrench into

the moving parts, or modify a blown-off steambot's flamethrower to turn it into an improvised portable weapon of doom. And if you're facing humans or Beyonders, you might just have to hit them with a wrench, or use your nailgun to tack their clothes to the nearest wall.

**Explosives**

If it blows up, you're an expert in using it. Explosives covers grenades, mines, rocket launchers, self-made exploding devices, fuel barrels, or anything along those lines. Not only do you know how to make and use these things, you can also turn your enemy's explosives against them.

**Feint**

Sometimes, the best strategy is to trick your opponent into thinking that they know what you're about to do. Then, of course, you do something completely different. While feinting is something all characters can do, those with this skill have turned it into an art form; no one can predict what they are going to do next.

**Firearms**

While anyone can shoot a gun, characters with this skill have acquired special abilities that go far beyond that. Maybe you can shoot a dime at a distance of a hundred feet, or ricochet bullets off walls and around corners, or reload a machine gun with one hand while juggling and firing three pistols with the other. You're an artist, and any firearm turns to a master's brush in your hands.

**Gadgets**

Characters with this skill are masters at having the right tool for all the wrong jobs. They've got the ability to either manufacture or store dozens of little contraptions that can help out in a myriad of ways, whether they are as simple as crow's feet or as complex as pocket-sized flying steambots. You never have to keep an inventory of them; instead, you just make them up as you go. This skill combines very well with certain Soulbound Weapon powers for an added punch for your gadgets.

**Intimidate**

Some characters are downright scary, and those with this skill especially so. Intimidate is used to keep enemies at bay, stare them down, make them afraid, or otherwise affect them with your posture, verbal threats, and intense stare. Even steambots and other mechanoids can be intimidated; in those cases, this skill works like the violence-backed opposite of Feint: you make an impression not by pretending to do something different, but by making sure the enemy knows exactly what you're going to do to them when you get your hands on them.

**Luck**

Some characters just have good things happening to them. When a building wall falls over, they're standing in the empty window slot. When a burst of bullets whizzes past them, they're outlined against the wall behind them, without a scratch. That kind of luck is not infallible, but it can be very useful. When you're using Luck in a maneuver, simply describe something very improbable happening that helps out your character.

**Melee Weapons**

If your character feels naked without a sword, lance, club, dagger, or any similar weapon in her hands, this is the skill for her. It applies to any close combat weapons (even when you decide to throw them for a change, though you may want to pick up the Throw skill for that one). And while anyone can swing a sword, characters with this skill have incredible abilities. Maybe they can deflect bullets, or climb walls with their daggers, or wield swords the size of tree trunks. Any crazy stunt that involves these kinds of weapons is in the character's repertoire.

**Perceive**

Most people are able to see, hear, feel, and so on. But characters with this skill have honed their perception to a completely new level. Maybe they can see tiny details at vast distances, or act without sight almost as well as with it (you might want to take the Darksight power to support this), or feel vibrations on the ground that give away enemy positions, or slow down time in their mind to take in everything that's happening around them. There are a huge range of maneuvers you can do based on perceiving things that other characters would not, especially in the heat of battle.

**Quickness**

Sure, some people are fast. But characters with this skill not only outrun them all, they are incredibly coordinated when they do so. Using Quickness in maneuvers allows a character to dodge missiles, move through swarms of enemies at ease, or run up the side of a building (or steambot).

**Stealth**

Sometimes the best way to maneuver yourself into position is not to be seen until you're ready to strike. Characters with the Stealth skill can suddenly disappear from sight even in the midst of battle, move without making a sound, and jump out of the shadows for surprise attacks.

### **Strength**

When you want your character to be one of the strongest people around, pick this skill. It allows you to do maneuvers based on incredible feats of strength, such as hurling enemies at each other across the battlefield (this works even better when you have the Throw skill), wrestle with a steambot, or push over trees on top of your opponents.

### **Taunt**

Characters with this skill have the ability to enrage an enemy to the point that they make mistakes. In some cases, Taunt can work like a mix between Dirty Tricks and Feint in this regard. Even steambots are not impervious to being lured into a trap by someone who's hopping up and down, waving her hands as she yells insults at the walking assortment of junk. Take note, however, that this skill can make the game lean more into a humorous direction, so make sure that fits with the mood you've established.

### **Throw**

Characters with Melee Weapons can throw them at times. Characters with Strength can toss people and trees. But characters with the Throw skill are unsurpassed at throwing, well, just about anything they can find. Whether it's special tiny daggers, or rocks from the ground, or that item that needs to land in your ally's hand some 200 feet away, if you have this skill, you'll be able to hit just about anything with anything.

### **Vehicles**

Some characters depend on having certain vehicles to use their skills. These can range from the smallest (like roller blades) to jetpacks to airships. The skill also helps out with knowledge of vehicles and their weak spots when the character opposes them. I would suggest this skill for PCs only when your character always has a vehicle at hand, or else there are plenty of them around to use in any situation. Most of the time, enemies in vehicles will use this skill.

### **Powers**

Powers are uncommon, but not absolutely rare. Having several powers like PCs do, however, is something few are blessed with. There are maybe a dozen characters at or above the PCs' ability level in all of Enendia and Kanissia.

The powers in Ghostfield are listed in several categories: passive powers, charge powers, Soulbound Weapon powers, Summoning powers, and Item Powers. Passive powers and charge powers together are called internal powers.

**Passive powers** are always active and do not require the use of charge dice.

**Charge powers** have a type listed, which tells you whether the power is an action in itself or supplements a strike, maneuver, or other power (Boost). You can combine as many non-action powers as you can pay for to supplement a single action, with listed exceptions.

**Soulbound Weapon** and **Summoning** powers have passive and charge powers among them, but they have their own chapters because they have some special rules associated with them. In addition, some characters (e.g., eidolons) can only have internal powers, but not Soulbound Weapon, Summoning, or Item powers.

**Item Powers** deal with creating and using one-shot items from Cores collected from Beyonders or their home world. These items allow a lot of versatility, but at the price of depending on Cores you collect and spend.

### **Selecting Powers During Character Creation**

Unless otherwise stated, you can only take each power once. This applies to all powers in all categories.

Some of the powers and weapon effects inflict conditions on characters. These conditions are listed in their own chapter. You might want to look those up before picking a related power.

When you select your powers for your character, make sure to include some charge powers so that you can make use of charge dice you are inevitably going to earn during a conflict.

Some coordination with your fellow PC players is also a good idea. Several powers work better in conjunction with the choices of other players, such as Leadership and Squad Tactics.

Finally, adversity is not bound by the listed powers. The GM can freely create powers for them or modify the ones listed (such as reducing charge dice costs, etc.). You can find some special adversity powers in the Sample Enemies chapter.

### **Technology**

Enendia is a less-developed realm, but the Kanissians have a vast array of steam-powered technology at their disposal. This ranges from pneumatic cannons to

airships. Some of these devices are used Beyond, specifically pneumatic boots that assist a skipper in jettisoning off a rock.

A new brand of technology has sprung up around the Cores from Beyond, which exhibit strange properties and can enable all sorts of unprecedented effects. There are rumors of experimental hover vehicles that can fly without steampower by using the strange gravitational properties of certain matter from Beyond.

### Factions

There are several factions in this setting: the Kanissian Guard, Enendian Rebels, crime cartels, and the Beyonders. Details will be worked out for the full version.

### Setting Seed: Coming of the Dragon

The setting seed for Ghostfield consists of a strange dragon-like creature that came through the largest gate that has ever been observed. It burst through into our world, flying for a few moments before setting down hard in one of the abandoned villages. It immediately shot hundreds of things out of its carapace into all directions. They could be seeds, eggs, or something of that sort; no one is exactly sure yet.

## 10 INTERNAL POWERS

### Passive Powers

#### **Achievement Boost**

The limit on the number of dice you can roll from your Strike Pool for achievements is raised by 2. A leader of a combined achievement can apply this power, but other participants can't.

#### **Body Resistance**

The character is immune to any charge powers that reduce her Action Pool or Strike Pool (Body Drain, Slow, Weaken) and to the Poisoned condition.

#### **Charge Boost**

The limit on the number of charge dice you can store in your Charge Pool is raised by 2. You can take this power up to 3 times.

#### **Darksight**

The character is not affected by Blinded or Darkness conditions.

#### **Gate Sense**

This power does not let a character open gates to Beyond, but she senses where one will appear shortly. The character can spend one character scene to find a gate and enter it at the end of the scene. That means she doesn't get any of the other benefits of a character scene, but any characters with her can enter the gate and still claim a benefit for the scene. Outside of the actual Ghostfield, this power cannot be used. The power also cannot be used during conflicts.

#### **Leadership**

When your character is the leader in a combined maneuver, you can distribute the dice gained among the involved players. The limit for earning 5 dice altogether still applies (unless your character has Tactical Maneuvering). Any player to whom you distribute 5 or more dice (including yourself) earns an Awesome Token as usual.

#### **Maneuver Boost**

The limit on the number of strike and charge dice you can earn in a maneuver is raised by 1. You can take this power up to 4 times. It does not apply to combined maneuvers.

### **Resilience**

Raise your character's defense by 1. You can take this power up to 3 times.

### **Resistance to Electricity**

Your character's defense counts as 2 points higher against electricity-based strikes (charged or weapon effect).

### **Resistance to Fire**

Your character's defense counts as 2 points higher against fire-based strikes (charged or weapon effect).

### **Resistance to Frost**

Your character's defense counts as 2 points higher against frost-based strikes (charged or weapon effect).

### **Skipping**

This character is trained and experienced at skipping among the rocks Beyond. Ignore the extra action die requirement for maneuvering Beyond and gain 1 bonus die to any maneuver made Beyond. Almost all Beyonders possess this power.

### **Spontaneous Gating**

This character can open a spontaneous gate to Beyond, costing 2 charge dice. Outside of the actual Ghostfield, spontaneous gating is impossible (and gates do not appear on their own, either). This power can only be used during a conflict, where it counts as an action, but the character can simultaneously enter the gate and go Beyond during this action. The gate remains open for 3 rounds, during which any character can spend an action to follow Beyond.

### **Squad Tactics**

This power grants 1 bonus die to the leader of any combined maneuver in which this character participates (whether the character applying this power is the leader or not). If more than 1 character in a combined maneuver has this power, the bonus dice from all such characters apply.

### **Soul Resistance**

Your character is immune to any charge powers that inflict wounds without requiring a roll against your character's defense. The following charge powers cannot be used against your character: Life Drain, Life Transfer, Vampiric Strike.

### **Stamina**

The limit on the number of action dice you can store in your Action Pool is raised by 2. You can take this power up to 3 times.

### **Strike Boost**

The limit on the number of dice you can roll from your Strike Pool for strikes is raised by 2. You can take this power up to 2 times.

### **Tactical Maneuvering**

The limit on the number of strike and charge dice you can earn as the leader in a combined maneuver is raised by 2. You can take this power up to 3 times. It does not apply to maneuvers your character performs on her own.

### **Toughness**

Your character has 1 additional wound circle, which means that your character can take an extra wound before being defeated.

## **Charge Powers**

### **Banishment**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2 plus Eidolon Level in Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power must be directed against an eidolon, who is thereby automatically banished. This means that the eidolon returns to its home world with all of its wound circles marked. This power is costlier for higher-level eidolons. For example, banishing a Level 4 eidolon costs 6 charge dice.

### **Blaze**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 3 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This strike is now fire-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against an individual, 3 against a squad, or 2 against a swarm. Blaze cannot be combined with electricity- or frost-based powers and weapon effects.

### **Blindness**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* Inflicts the Blinded condition on a character.

### **Body Drain**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 4 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power transfers stamina from the victim to the power user. The victim loses 3 action dice, and the power user gains 3 action dice, regardless of defense. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

**Brighten**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* Removes the Darkness condition from the area of the conflict.

**Chain Lightning**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 3 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This strike is now electricity-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against a swarm, 3 against a squad, or 2 against an individual. Chain Lightning cannot be combined with fire- or frost-based powers and weapon effects.

**Conjure Darkness**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* Inflicts the Darkness condition on the area of the conflict.

**Dispel**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2+ Charge Dice

*Effect:* Removes all of the following conditions from the targeted character: Darksighted, Empowered, Quickened, Shielded. You can target multiple characters by spending 2 charge dice per additional character. This power cannot remove Soulbound Weapon effects or passive powers.

**Elemental Surge**

*Type:* Boost

*Cost:* 1 Charge Die

*Effect:* This power adds 2 bonus dice to the effect of an elemental power (Blaze, Chain Lightning, Firestorm, Frost Spikes, Ice Hurricane, Zap).

**Empower**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2+ Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power grants the Empowered condition to a character designated by the power user. You can grant the condition to multiple characters by spending 1 charge die per additional character.

**Firestorm**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 3 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This strike is now fire-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against a swarm, 3 against a squad, or 2 against an individual. Firestorm cannot be combined with electricity- or frost-based powers and weapon effects.

**Force Attack**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 4 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power adds 5 bonus dice to a strike against any kind of opponent.

**Frost Spikes**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 3 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This strike is now frost-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against an individual, 3 against a squad, or 2 against a swarm. Frost Spikes cannot be combined with electricity- or fire-based powers and weapon effects.

**Guard**

*Type:* Maneuver

*Cost:* 1 Charge Die

*Effect:* Any strike against an ally that you dedicate when invoking this power must instead be directed at you. If someone makes a strike against you, whether directly or redirected because of this power, the effect of this power ends at the beginning of your turn following that strike.

**Heroics**

*Type:* Achievement

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power adds 4 bonus dice to an achievement roll.

**Ice Hurricane**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 3 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This strike is now frost-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against a swarm, 3 against a squad, or 2 against an individual. Ice Hurricane cannot be combined with electricity- or fire-based powers and weapon effects.

**Leap Attack**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 1 Charge Die

*Effect:* This power adds 2 bonus dice to a strike against an individual or 1 bonus die against a squad or a swarm.

**Life Drain**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 6 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power transfers life force from the victim to the character using the power. The victim takes 1 wound, and the user heals 1 wound (if applicable), regardless of defense. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

**Life Transfer**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 6 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power transfers life force from the victim to a character designated by the character using the power (other than herself). The victim takes 1 wound, and the designated character heals 1 wound (if applicable), regardless of defense. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect). The character to be healed must either be present or be an eidolon of the character using the power.

**Mass Effect**

*Type:* Boost

*Cost:* 1 Charge Die

*Effect:* This power can be used in combination with Body Drain, Life Drain, Life Transfer, Poison, Slow, Vampiric Strike, or Weaken to allow those powers to be used against squads and swarms.

**Nightvision**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 1+ Charge Die

*Effect:* This power grants the Darksighted condition to the characters designated by the power user, which works exactly like the Darksight passive power. The cost is 1 charge die per character affected.

## Internal Powers – Charge Powers

### **Poison**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* Inflicts Poisoned on a character. Until this condition is cleared, the character loses 1 action die from her Action Pool at the beginning of her turn each round. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

### **Quicken**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2+ Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power grants the Quickened condition to a character designated by the power user. You can grant the condition to multiple characters by spending 1 charge die per additional character.

### **Refresh**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2+ Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power strengthens a character's stamina. The target's current number of action dice in the character's Action Pool is raised by 4. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect). You can apply this power to several characters at once by paying 2 charge dice for each one.

### **Restore**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 1+ Charge Die

*Effect:* Removes Blindness or Poison from 1 character. You can remove several conditions (from one or multiple characters) by spending an additional charge die per condition.

### **Rise of the Phoenix**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 5 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power can bring a defeated character back into the conflict. The target character heals 1 wound circle and can participate as normal, with her current Pool levels, and resuming her position in the order of turns. This power does not work on squads or swarms and cannot be used with Mass Effect. It does not work on characters who still have one or more unmarked wound circles, that is, characters who are not defeated.

### **Shadow Strike**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 1 Charge Die

*Effect:* This power adds 3 bonus dice to a strike against an opponent who suffers the effects of the Darkness or Blinded conditions.

### **Shield**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2+ Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power grants the Shielded condition to a character designated by the power user. You can grant the condition to multiple characters by spending 1 charge die per additional character.

### **Slow**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power slows down a character temporarily. The victim's current number of strike dice in the character's Strike Pool is reduced to half (rounded up). This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

### **Super Combo Strike**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 1+ Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power allows the user to make a combined strike with another character. These are the kind of strikes that teams do together at the climax of a showdown. For each charge die you spend, a character of your choice gains a bonus die to their strike this round. Your character now actively participates in that strike, which probably includes all sorts of flashing lights, energy beams, tremors, thunderclaps, vaults high into the air, characters tossing each other at the enemy, and so on. You can combine this power with other strike powers, if you have the charge dice to pay for them.

### **Superior Power Control**

*Type:* Boost

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power allows the user to use a strike power *after* rolling the strike dice. The player first rolls for the strike, then invokes this power and pays 2 charge dice plus any charge dice costs for the additional power(s) to be applied. Then the player rolls any dice granted by the power and adds them to the strike roll.

**Vampiric Strike**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* If this strike inflicts 1 or more wounds, the character using this power heals 1 wound. If the strike does not inflict a wound, the effect evaporates. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

**Weaken**

*Type:* Action

*Cost:* 2 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This power weakens a character's stamina. The victim's current number of action dice in the character's Action Pool is reduced by 3. This power does not work on squads or swarms (but see Mass Effect).

**Whirlwind Attack**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 1 Charge Die

*Effect:* This power adds 2 bonus dice to a strike against a squad or 1 bonus die against a swarm or an individual.

**Zap**

*Type:* Strike

*Cost:* 3 Charge Dice

*Effect:* This strike is now electricity-based. You gain 4 bonus dice to roll in this strike against an individual, 3 against a squad, or 2 against a swarm. Zap cannot be combined with fire- or frost-based powers and weapon effects.

## 11 SOULBOUND WEAPONS

### Weapons in Play

Regular weapons do not have specific numerical bonuses, although they can be used in maneuver descriptions in an attempt to get more GM dice. Soulbound Weapons, on the other hand, contain their own powers, which are called effects.

Characters first need to acquire the Soulbound Weapon power, which allows them to have 1 weapon with 1 effect slot. Further powers are available to raise the number of slots on the weapon, allow the character to change the effects, or let the character own more than 1 Soulbound Weapon.

You can consider Soulbound Weapons a pretty broad category: instead of an actual weapon, it could be any item that imbues the character with additional effects, such as a suit of armor or a charm.

Characters are assumed to always have access to their Soulbound Weapons, unless the character's player specifically agrees not to bring it into a particular conflict. A character with Multisoul can choose which weapon she is holding at the beginning of a conflict. Switching weapons counts as the character's action for the turn.

A character can only use her own Soulbound Weapons and never anybody else's. Similarly, weapon effects cannot benefit anyone but the original owner of the Soulbound Weapon.

Soulbound Weapons always have a default goal associated with them (see the chapter on goals): Any opponent can try to disarm the character at a difficulty rating of 3. The difficulty of the follow-up goal of regaining one's weapon is always 5.

### Powers

#### **Soulbound Weapon**

The character forms a spiritual or demonic bond with a weapon. The weapons can range from human-sized swords to gauntlets with claws to magical pistols or any other kinds of items that grant the wielder power. The weapon has 1 effect slot that you fill in when you first acquire it. Any character with the Soulsmith power can change the effects during the course of your story, if your PC allows this to happen.

### **Weapon Upgrade**

This power can be taken up to 3 times. Each time, it adds an effect slot to all of the character's Soulbound Weapons.

### **Quickdraw**

The character can switch weapons during a conflict at the beginning of her turn without using up the character's action.

### **Multisoul**

This power can be taken up to 2 times. Each time it is selected, the character gains an additional Soulbound Weapon. Weapon Upgrade applies to all of these weapons. A character with Multisoul II and Weapon Upgrade I can have 3 Soulbound Weapons with 2 effect slots each.

### **Improved Grip**

Disarming the character is now a difficult goal with a rating of 5. This power can be taken a second time, which makes it impossible to disarm the character—either the weapon does not leave the character's hands, or she can magically call it to herself, instantaneously, without using an action.

### **Soulsmith**

This power can be taken up to 4 times. The first time it is taken, it allows the character to place (or replace) an effect of 1 slot level on a Soulbound Weapon. This takes 1 character scene of ritualistic incantation. The character does not earn any other benefits from a character scene during which she places an effect. The character can place 1 effect at a time, so she can place single-slot effects on all 4 slots of a 4-slot weapon (taking 1 scene per effect). For each additional time the power is taken, the character can place an effect of 1 additional effect slot. So a character with Soulsmith III can place effects that take up 1, 2 or 3 slots, but not 4-slot effects. Each slot takes 1 scene to affect; placing a 3-slot effect takes 3 scenes.

### **Immediate Imbuement**

The character can use their Soulsmith power instantaneously. Instead of taking 1 hour per slot, it takes 1 conflict round per slot. This can be done in the middle of a conflict, but it takes up both the Soulsmith's and the weapon owner's turns if they are not the same character. This power can be taken a second time, in which case the replacing of effects takes just 1 turn even if 2, 3 or 4 slots are changed at once. Outside of a conflict, the character can change the effects on a weapon during a character scene and still gain one of the regular scene benefits.

## Weapon Effects

Each effect is listed with the number of effect slots it takes up. Effects can only be placed once on each weapon.

### [1] Area Strike

You gain 1 bonus die to all strike rolls against swarms.

### [1] Charge Boost

The limit on the number of charge dice you can store in your Charge Pool is raised by 1. This effect is cumulative with the power of the same name. If you stop using this weapon (switch, being disarmed, etc.) and have an extra charge die above your adjusted limit, it is discarded.

### [1] Charged Summoning

Any summoned eidolon has 1 charge die in its Charge Pool when it is summoned. This effect is cumulative with the power of the same name.

### [1] Electricity Resistance

Your defense counts as 1 point higher against electricity-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). This effect is cumulative with the Resistance to Electricity power.

### [1] Elemental Surge

Double the bonus dice you get from Fire Aura and Frost Aura.

### [1] Fire Aura

Your attack is now fire-based. Add 1 bonus die to your strike rolls. If you have an electricity- or frost-based effect on your weapon, you need to pick which one applies before the strike. This cannot be combined with elemental charge powers other than fire-based ones.

### [1] Fire Resistance

Your defense counts as 1 point higher against fire-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). This effect is cumulative with the Resistance to Fire power.

### [1] Frost Aura

Your attack is now frost-based. Add 1 bonus die to your strike rolls. If you have an electricity- or fire-based effect on your weapon, you need to pick which one applies before the strike. This cannot be combined with elemental charge powers other than frost-based ones.

**[1] Frost Resistance**

Your defense counts as 1 point higher against frost-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). This effect is cumulative with the Resistance to Frost power.

**[1] Maneuver Boost**

Your limit for gaining dice in a maneuver is raised by 1. This effect is cumulative with the power of the same name.

**[1] Multi Strike**

You gain 1 bonus die to all strike rolls against squads.

**[1] Pneumatic**

This item improves maneuverability Beyond with air pressure thrusters. You gain 1 bonus die to all maneuvers and achievements Beyond. The maneuver bonus die stacks with the Skipping power.

**[1] Poison Immunity**

You are not affected by the Poisoned condition.

**[1] Power Strike**

You gain 1 bonus die to all strike rolls against individuals.

**[1] Protection**

You benefit from the Shielded condition as long as you hold the weapon.

**[1] Quicken**

You benefit from the Quickened condition as long as you hold the weapon.

**[1] Shining**

The character is not affected by the Darkness condition.

**[1] Shock Aura**

Your attack is now electricity-based. Add 1 bonus die to your strike rolls. If you have a fire- or frost-based effect on your weapon, you need to pick which one applies before the strike. This cannot be combined with elemental charge powers other than fire-based ones.

**[1] Strike Boost**

The limit on the number of dice you can roll from your Strike Pool is raised by 1. This effect is cumulative with the power of the same name.

**[1] Summoning Gateway**

The charge die cost for summoning eidolons is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

This effect is cumulative with the Natural Summoner power, subject to the minimum cost restriction.

**[2] Cursed**

When you inflict a wound on a character, the current number of charge dice in the character's Charge Pool is reduced by 2. This does not work against squads or swarms.

**[2] Poisonous**

When you inflict a wound on a character, you inflict the Poisoned condition on her.

**[2] Weakening**

When you inflict a wound on a character, the current number of action dice in the character's Action Pool is reduced by 3. This power does not work on squads or swarms.

**[3] Soulcharge**

Every round at the end of the character's turn, she gains 1 charge die. If the character's Charge Pool already has hit its limit, this effect does nothing.

**[3] Banisher**

When you inflict a wound on an eidolon, it is automatically banished. This means that the eidolon returns to its home world with all of its wound circles marked.

**[4] Ultimate Weapon**

This effect is customized for each character, consisting of five effect slots' worth of effects. A player can only choose the contents of this power once for her character. After that, it cannot be changed outside of drastic character developments. The following are examples of Ultimate Weapons:

**Bridge of Worlds:** This package combines Charged Summoning, Soulcharge, and Summoning Gateway.

**Energy Nexus:** This package combines Charge Boost, Protection and Soulcharge.

**Flaming Wrath:** This package combines Area Strike, Elemental Surge, Fire Aura, Quicken, and Strike Boost.

**Freezing Vengeance:** This package combines Elemental Surge, Frost Aura, Power Strike, and Weakening.

## 12 SUMMONING

### Eidolons in Play

Summoning is the art of bonding with, summoning, and empowering eidolons. Eidolons are creatures from Beyond that have the ability to *jump* between the worlds to the one they are bonded with, but only at the command of the summoner. They can only stay for short visits and automatically return to their own worlds if they are severely wounded.

There are several known types of eidolons from various areas Beyond. Other eidolons can be discovered by adventurous summoners, but they are exceedingly rare. Those are handled by the Creating Eidolons rules below.

There are several powers related to summoning: Summoning allows a character to summon eidolons she is bonded with, Open Bond lets the summoner have a bond to an eidolon, and Empower Eidolons lets the character create bonds with higher-power eidolons and strengthens the lower-power ones.

### **Summoning Eidolons**

Summoning an eidolon counts as the summoner's action for that turn and costs 1 plus the Eidolon's Level in charge dice (for example, summoning a Level 3 eidolon costs 4 charge dice). The eidolon appears instantaneously. Check out the eidolon's entrance description to see what that looks like for a particular eidolon.

A summoner can always only have 1 eidolon summoned at any time. An eidolon that is a squad or swarm still counts as 1 eidolon for all intents and purposes.

### **Controlling Eidolons**

If the summoner wants the eidolon to take an action in any given round, she needs to spend her own action and 1 die from her own Action Pool to order the eidolon to take the action. This means that only one of them will do a maneuver, strike, etc., in any round. In your description, the summoner doesn't have to be just standing around idly, though; she could be riding on the eidolon, running for cover and dodging attacks while giving orders, etc.

Eidolons use their own Action Pool and other dice that the summoner needs to keep track of separately. Summoners can unmark one of their own traits to reroll failed dice when the eidolon is acting, however.

Eidolons have 1 skill, like most enemies. This means they do not mark the skill and never gain bonus dice in the way that characters with 3 skills do.

The summoner and her eidolon cannot both do a combined maneuver together, but either one of them can do a combined maneuver with other PCs (and possibly eidolons). However, eidolons can never be leaders in a combined maneuver, so there always needs to be at least one PC involved in any combined maneuver.

The summoner can still be targeted with strikes while the eidolon is around, unless the eidolon has the Auto Guard power or uses the Guard power.

Dismissing the eidolon is a free action that the summoner can take at the beginning of her turn. It does not use up her action for that turn. It does not hurt the eidolon. A dismissed eidolon can be summoned back in the same conflict.

If the eidolon is defeated (that is, if it takes enough wounds to fill up all of its wound circles), it immediately disappears back to its home world and cannot be summoned back until at least 1 of its wounds has been healed.

Eidolons do not retain their Pools after a conflict. Instead, their Action Pool is considered filled and their Charge and Strike Pools are empty. Eidolons do retain their wounds, however, which can be healed through character scenes.

### Powers

#### **Summoning**

The character has the ability to summon eidolons. Please see Eidolons in Play, above, for details on how Summoning works. Without also choosing Open Bond, this power cannot be used.

#### **Open Bond**

The character can bond with an eidolon, in which case the power is renamed to Bond: [name of the eidolon]. This power can be taken multiple times and is required every time that the summoner wants to add a new eidolon to her collection. Summoners can, under rare circumstances, break a bond with an eidolon to free up a bond for a new eidolon. However, this could have very bad consequences, and should not happen more than once in any given story arc. Note that this power is useless without the Summoning power. You can take this power up to 3 times.

### **Charged Summoning**

Any summoned eidolon has 1 charge die in its Charge Pool when it is summoned (normally, eidolons always start with an empty Charge Pool and do not retain charge dice after conflicts). You can take this power up to 3 times to raise the number of charge dice with which your eidolons enter the conflict.

### **Natural Summoner**

The charge dice cost for summoning eidolons is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

### **Empower Eidolons**

This power has 2 effects. First, it is a requirement for bonding with higher-level eidolons. In order to bond with a Level 2 eidolon, for example, the character needs to have Summoning as well as Empower Eidolon II. Second, each eidolon with which the summoner has bonded receives an additional eidolon power for each Empower Eidolon level above the one required to bond with it. For example, a summoner with Empower Eidolon II's Level 0 eidolons would have 2 extra powers, any of her Level 1 eidolons would have 1 additional power, and her Level 2 eidolons would not have any powers other than the ones they come with. The additional powers are selected by the summoner when she acquires a new level of Empower Eidolon or bonds with a new eidolon and cannot later be changed.

### **Companion**

One of your Level 0 eidolons can remain in your world for prolonged periods of time. It stays by your side and does not need to be summoned at the beginning of a conflict. If the eidolon is defeated or banished, it returns once at least 1 of its wound circles is healed. The companion cannot be changed unless the summoner permanently loses their companion (in other words, the bond is broken and the eidolon is no longer available to the summoner). I suggest creating a custom eidolon for a companion.

### **Magnificent Companion**

The summoner's companion can be a Level 1 or Level 2 eidolon. Note that this power is useless without the Companion power.

### **Unbreakable Bond**

Your companion is immune to being banished by powers or weapon effects. Note that this power is useless without the Companion power.

## Creating Eidolons

The custom creation of eidolons is something that GMs and players should approach together. You might not want to introduce too many custom eidolons unless your campaign is all about summoners.

You will see that an eidolon starting out at a higher power level will be more powerful than a lower-level eidolon with Empower Eidolon powers. This is intended to make up for the customizable nature of Empower Eidolon. Higher-level eidolons also are more costly to summon.

### ***Eidolon Creation Steps***

In order to create a custom eidolon, follow these steps:

1. Figure out the nature and details of the eidolon. What is it called, what is its home world like, what does it look like, and so on. You also need to determine its Level (ranging from 0 to 5) and type (individual, squad, swarm).
2. Write down the eidolon's beginning stats. Note that these are different than PC stats. Every eidolon starts out with 1 wound circle, defense 1, an Action Pool Limit of 5, and a Charge Pool Limit of 4.
3. The eidolon has one skill at a level of 2 plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  its Level. This means that Level 0 eidolons have a skill rating of 2, Levels 1 and 2 a skill rating of 3, Levels 3 and 4 a skill rating of 4, and Level 5 a skill rating of 5.
3. Every eidolon can choose 4 eidolon powers from the list below.
4. For every level of the eidolon, add 3 more powers. Level 0 eidolons do not get additional powers and therefore have 4 total powers, Level 1 eidolons get 3 extra powers and therefore have 7 total powers, Level 2 eidolons have 10 total powers, and so on.
5. Determine what the entrance of the eidolon looks like when it is summoned. It needs to have aspects of at least 2 of the following 4 groups: sight, sound, smell/taste, and touch. Here are some examples:

**Sight:** bright flash, colorful sparks, ripples in spatial perception, a window into the home world with flames lashing out, flickering lights, etc.

**Sound:** loud bang, screeching, roar, humming, buzzing, chains rattling, mechanical noises, etc.

**Smell/Taste:** sulfur, sweet, acidic, smoky, etc.

**Touch:** hot, cold, oily, burst of wind, etc.

The eidolon's entrance should be personalized to the eidolon's characteristics. You can look at the existing eidolon's entrances for examples.

6. Give the eidolon a weakness from the list provided after the eidolon powers.

### **Eidolon Powers**

#### ***Passive Powers***

Some of these are the same as the powers for characters, but are slightly different (like the lesser effects of boost powers). Therefore and for ease of reference, they are all listed here.

#### **Auto Guard**

As long as the eidolon is in the conflict, any strike against the summoner has to be aimed at the eidolon instead.

#### **Body Resistance**

This eidolon is immune to any charge powers that reduce its Action Pool or Strike Pool. The following charge powers cannot be used against you: Body Drain, Slow, Weaken.

#### **Charge Boost**

The limit on the number of charge dice the eidolon can store in the Charge Pool is raised by 1. An eidolon can take this power up to 6 times.

#### **Darksight**

The eidolon is not affected by Blindness or Darkness.

#### **Resilience**

Raise the eidolon's defense by 1. An eidolon can take this power up to 3 times.

**Resistance to Electricity**

The eidolon's defense counts as 1 point higher against electricity-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

**Resistance to Fire**

The eidolon's defense counts as 1 point higher against fire-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

**Resistance to Frost**

The eidolon's defense counts as 1 point higher against frost-based strikes (charged or weapon effect). An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

**Soul Resistance**

This eidolon is immune to any charge powers that inflict wounds on it without requiring a roll against your defense. The following charge powers cannot be used against you: Life Drain, Life Transfer, Vampiric Strike.

**Stamina**

The limit on the number of action dice the eidolon can store in the Action Pool is raised by 2. An eidolon can take this power up to 5 times.

**Strike Boost**

The limit on the number of dice the eidolon can roll from the Strike Pool is raised by 1. An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

**Toughness**

The eidolon has 1 additional wound circle. An eidolon can take this power up to 4 times.

**Charge Powers**

Eidolons can select all of the general charge powers and use them in exactly the same way that PCs do. Those powers associated with Soulbound Weapons and Summoning are excluded from the list of options for eidolon charge powers.

**Weaknesses**

Every eidolon has a weakness. Some combinations of powers and weaknesses should be avoided, for example Resistance to Frost with Vulnerable to Frost and Resistance to Fire with Vulnerable to Fire. I'll leave those up to your good judgment; it's something for the GM to consider when making or approving custom eidolons.

Other opponents might have a weakness as well—in that case, pick them from this list and modify them as necessary. You can also roll a die for each opponent that the characters face, skipping over two weakness you exclude beforehand (for example, if you are creating a fire demon, skip over Vulnerable to Fire and Darkbound).

### ***List of Weaknesses***

#### **Cowardly**

The eidolon returns to its home world whenever it suffers a wound, even if it still has unmarked wound circles left. It can be summoned back during the current conflict, but at the usual cost (spending an action and the associated charge dice), and the eidolon loses any accumulated strike and charge dice while retaining its wounds and the current Action Pool. Eidolons that only have 1 wound circle cannot have this weakness. A non-eidolon opponent with this weakness will be considered absent during the turn immediately following the taking of the wound, after which it returns with the same wounds and Action Pool while having lost any charge and strike dice.

#### **Crazy**

The eidolon's action for each turn is determined randomly. If the roll shows an action it cannot do (such as strike when it has no strike dice), the eidolon passes for that round. Every turn, roll 1 die and consult the following list: 1-3: Maneuver, 4: Strike, 5: Power (summoner selects which), 6: summoner's choice.

#### **Darkbound**

Unless Darkness is in effect, this eidolon has to subtract 1 success from every roll. This weakness does not automatically grant Darksight; you have to select that as a power.

#### **Overwhelmable**

Squads and swarms gain 2 bonus dice to their strikes against this eidolon.

#### **Restless**

The eidolon cannot do the same type of action (maneuver, strike, achievement, power) 2 turns in a row. For example, the turn after it makes a maneuver, it has to choose a strike, achievement, or power. Eidolons above Level 1 cannot select this weakness.

#### **Vulnerable to Electricity**

Any fire-based strikes (through charge powers or weapon effects) against this eidolon gain 3 bonus dice.

**Vulnerable to Fire**

Any fire-based strikes (through charge powers or weapon effects) against this eidolon gain 3 bonus dice.

**Vulnerable to Frost**

Any frost-based strikes (through charge powers or weapon effects) against this eidolon gain 3 bonus dice.

**Weak Spot**

The eidolon has a weak spot that can be used to instantly defeat it. The weak spot is represented by a default goal in any conflict. Its difficulty rating is 2 plus the eidolon's Level. If anyone achieves this goal, all of the eidolon's wound circles are marked and it returns to its home world. Only eidolons of Level 2 and higher can have this as their weakness.

**List of Common Eidolons**

The following is a listing of known and common eidolons. When a character has an Open Bond and a reasonable amount of time to conduct the necessary rituals, that character's player can freely choose 1 of these types of eidolons for the bond, subject to the power level restrictions (that is, the character needs to have Empower Eidolon of the appropriate level).

The stats for the eidolons are listed taking their powers into account. An eidolon with Strike Boost III will be listed with Strike Pool Limit 9 (the basic value is 6, plus 3 boosts). This is for ease of reference, so that you won't have to calculate those numbers during play.

The listings use AP Limit for the maximum number of action dice in its Action Pool, CP Limit for the maximum number of charge dice in its Charge Pool, and SP Limit for the highest number of strike dice it can use at one time from its Strike Pool.

**Shaleya**

*Level:* 0  
*Type:* Individual  
*AP Limit:* 5  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 3  
*Wounds:* 1  
*Skill:* Acrobatics 2  
*Weakness:* Vulnerable to Electricity  
*Powers:* Resilience II, Restore, Shield

*Entrance and Description:*

A cacophony of sounds and melodies fills the air as a colorful circle appears and the shaleya flies out of it, making a few loops and turns before it settles down. It is an eight-foot snake with six rainbow-colored wings and 2 pairs of bird legs. Shaleya are usually very friendly, but also fiercely protective of those they care about.

**Kyanet**

*Level:* 0  
*Type:* Individual  
*AP Limit:* 5  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 2  
*Wounds:* 2  
*Skill:* Brawl 2  
*Weakness:* Overwhelmable  
*Powers:* Resistance to Frost, Resilience, Toughness, Blaze

*Entrance and Description:*

A cold wind breezes through the area, followed by a fur ball rolling into sight and around the summoner. The kyanet unfolds from it, looking like a very young, 3-foot tall polar bear, with thick white fur and a wide bushy tail. Its home world is incredibly cold, but their internal heat allows the kyanet to survive. They are faster and climb better than their appearance indicates.

**Inkots**

*Level:* 0  
*Type:* Swarm  
*AP Limit:* 5  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 3  
*Wounds:* 2  
*Skill:* Quickness 2  
*Weakness:* Restless  
*Powers:* Leap Attack, Resilience II, Toughness

*Entrance and Description:*

Inkots are a collection of tiny black demonic beasts that burst individually from the ground when they are summoned. They are covered in retractable spikes and bounce around all the time, which makes them hard to hit.

**Caragu**

*Level:* 1  
*Type:* Individual  
*AP Limit:* 7  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 3  
*Wounds:* 2  
*Skill:* Endurance 3  
*Weakness:* Vulnerable to Fire  
*Powers:* Guard, Ice Hurricane, Leap Attack, Resilience II, Stamina, Toughness.

*Entrance and Description:*

Ice spreads out in the air, growing out of nowhere. Suddenly the caragu bursts through the icy layer, landing with a growl as glimmering shards of ice fall all around it. Caragu are large wildcats with exceptionally long necks and rich dark-purple fur. Despite their feral nature, they can be very affectionate.

**Farillia**

*Level:* 1  
*Type:* Individual  
*AP Limit:* 5  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 3  
*Wounds:* 1  
*Skill:* Firearms 3 (using its fire-shooting abilities)  
*Weakness:* Vulnerable to Frost  
*Powers:* Blaze, Brighten, Fire Storm, Refresh, Resilience II, Restore  
*Entrance and Description:*

Flames shoot in from all directions and circle around each other, forming a ball of fire. The farillia bursts out of it, soaring toward the sky as it leaves a trail of fire behind it before it comes back down in a spiraling pattern to settle next to its summoner. Farillia are two-foot fairies with beautiful butterfly wings, always surrounded by the shimmer of heat.

**Harklings**

*Level:* 2  
*Type:* Squad  
*AP Limit:* 7  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 4  
*Wounds:* 2  
*Skill:* Stealth 3  
*Weakness:* Crazy  
*Powers:* Auto Guard, Blindness, Darksight, Force Attack, Resilience III, Slow, Stamina, Toughness  
*Entrance and Description:*

There is a very low, vibrating horn sound in the distance, followed by creaking and screeching sounds. Many people feel the hairs at the back of their necks standing up. The air is filled with an earthen scent. Finally the harklings come around different corners, rise from behind objects, or step out from behind someone's back. They are three humanoids, all completely robed and hooded, each holding a different weapon ending in a crescent blade. No one knows what their intent or purpose is, and they rarely follow orders, though they do protect the one who called them. When two of them have been defeated (they've taken two wounds), the third one gathers them up and simply walks away.

**Yiyon**

*Level:* 2  
*Type:* Individual  
*AP Limit:* 5  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 4  
*Wounds:* 2  
*Skill:* Feint 3  
*Weakness:* Cowardly  
*Powers:* Blaze, Frost Spikes, Resilience III, Resistance to Fire II, Resistance to Frost II, Toughness

*Entrance and Description:*

A ball made of large scales falls from the sky and slams onto the ground, then bounces from one object to another until it finally comes to a halt. The yiyon's eyes carefully peek out above on their feelers, before the yiyon unfolds. It stands on four insectoid legs, and its two upper arms end in flaming fists while the lower two give off a chilly mist.

**Hykeor**

*Level:* 3  
*Type:* Individual  
*AP Limit:* 9  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 7  
*Defense:* 4  
*Wounds:* 3  
*Skill:* Brawl 4  
*Weakness:* Overwhelmable  
*Powers:* Body Resistance, Guard, Leap Attack, Resilience III, Soul Resistance, Stamina II, Strike Boost, Toughness II, Whirlwind Attack

*Entrance and Description:*

The earth rumbles and cracks appear. A chilling howl fills the air. The Hykeor, a huge wolf with bat-like wings, bursts out of the ground. It descends amidst a shower of debris and lands surprisingly gracefully, immediately starting to pace back and forth as it eyes its first victim with red glowing eyes.

**Stormravens**

*Level:* 3  
*Type:* Swarm  
*AP Limit:* 9  
*CP Limit:* 4  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 3  
*Wounds:* 4  
*Skill:* Courage 4 (they swarm enemies without fear)  
*Weakness:* Vulnerable to Fire  
*Powers:* Auto Guard, Elemental Surge, Frost Spikes, Ice Hurricane, Resilience II, Resistance to Frost II, Stamina II, Toughness III

*Entrance and Description:*

Snow begins to fall, and the sky darkens. The crowing of ravens is heard as they gather above (if you're inside, they come rushing in through various openings or seem to emerge from the shadows). The ravens circle for a moment before their formation dashes downwards, led by one huge raven that lands on the summoner's shoulder or arm. The remaining stormravens fly around them, waiting for orders.

**Kulos**

*Level:* 4  
*Type:* Individual  
*AP Limit:* 9  
*CP Limit:* 6  
*SP Limit:* 6  
*Defense:* 3  
*Wounds:* 3  
*Skill:* Luck 4 (strange and highly improbable things happen)  
*Weakness:* Weak Spot  
*Powers:* Body Drain, Charge Boost II, Life Drain, Mass Effect, Refresh, Resilience II, Slow, Soul Resistance, Stamina II, Toughness II, Weaken

*Entrance and Description:*

A short, hairless, naked, and genderless human appears with a blinding yet soundless flash, accompanied by a strong metallic taste any spectator's mouth. Around it, space and time seem to bend. Kulos does not move—it makes things come to him with its mind. The only moving thing about this creature is its eyes, which seem to command reality around itself. As it never moves, its back presents a blind spot, assuming the Kulos does not have extrasensory perception.

**Uyar**

*Level:* 5

*Type:* Individual

*AP Limit:* 13

*CP Limit:* 6

*SP Limit:* 8

*Defense:* 4

*Wounds:* 5

*Skill:* Intimidate 5 (whatever it does, it makes an impression)

*Weakness:* Darkbound

*Powers:* Auto Guard, Body Resistance, Conjure Darkness, Darksight, Force Attack, Poison, Resilience III, Stamina IV, Strike Boost II, Toughness IV

*Entrance and Description:*

Lights flicker violently, even sunlight, as the Uyar's thundering steps are heard. If it is summoned within a confined space, this huge eidolon will break through the nearest wall. Out in the open, it appears as a slowly manifesting outline behind the summoner in the strobes of occasional light until it towers above all. The uyar is covered in a thick black oily substance, which constantly drips from his hulking form and turns to smoke soon after hitting the ground. Metal spikes are sticking out of its arms and legs.

## 13 ITEMS

The main draw of the Beyond in Ghostfield, and the reason that several factions are fighting over access to it, is that there are magical essences to be found within the heart of it. They are called Cores, and they come in different varieties. Many Beyonders have one (at the very least, all that can fly), and the Cores can sometimes be mined from the very center of the floating rocks as well.

PCs can earn these Cores when they defeat a Beyonder or one of the special Kanissian constructs that use the Cores as a source for power, accelerated movement, or flight (like steamboats, power armors, flightpacks, and so on). They can either trade these in for favors or other benefits that are purely within the fiction of your story, or, if they've got the right powers listed below, they can actually manufacture and use special items.

### Powers

#### **Create Items**

This power is needed in order to turn raw materials into usable items. Take it once to be able to make standard items. Take it twice to be able to create advanced items as well. If you don't have this power, you can trade twice the needed materials for an item of that type whenever you get in touch with one of the crime cartels (you need a link to one or both cartels to do this). Creating an item out of raw materials takes a character scene; spend an Awesome Token to create an item in one action during a conflict instead.

#### **Use Items**

This power is needed to actually use items. Take it once to be able to use standard items. Take it twice to be able to use advanced items as well. Without this power, you cannot use items at all. Using an item counts as the character's action for that turn, which uses up the item. Use Item can be done as an action with an Awesome Token, just like any other power.

#### **Mix Items (free power with Create Items II and Use Items II)**

A character who has Create Items II as well as Use Items II can use an action to use two items together for a special effect. Mix Items can be done as an action with an Awesome Token, just like any other power.

**Drop Tables**

Roll a D6, add the skill rating of the adversity (use the original value if it was lowered via goals during the conflict; use the highest skill rating +1 for enemies with 3 skills), and consult the appropriate table below to figure out which materials can be gained from the defeated enemy.

Gaining materials takes a character scene per enemy, during which the PCs extract the items from the remains. You should still play out character interaction during this scene and you gain none of the usual scene benefits.

If the adversity is not among the categories listed below, the PCs cannot gain any materials from the enemy. Alternatively, the GM could give the PCs a coin to represent other salvaged materials and let them exchange 5 coins for a Fire, Frost, or Shock Core; they'd still have to use a character scene to harvest the coin.

**Steampowered Kanissians (elite soldiers, power suits, steambots, etc.):**

2	Frost Core	6	Fire Core
3	Fire Core	7	Shock Core
4	Shock Core	8	2 Fire Cores
5	Frost Core	9+	2 Shock Cores

**Beyonders:**

2	Fire Core	8	Vile Core
3	Frost Core	9	Shadow Core
4	Shock Core	10	Soul Core
5	Fire Core	11	Phoenix Core
6	Frost Core	12	Soul Core
7	Shock Core	13+	Phoenix Core

When the PCs are Beyond, the GM can create goals that allow the characters to retrieve some materials from the floating rocks. This is up to the GM. Note that characters can, in the absence of adversity, fulfill goals during character scenes. Use this in conjunction with the Threat Die (optional rule) for fast-paced and dangerous excursions Beyond.

As a final note, I might consider giving at least Item Use I to all PCs for free, just so that they can actually make use of their spoils without having to give up anything else, but that's up to how your group wants to handle this. It might also be a good first power to pick when characters complete their first seed

### Item Effects

The following tables list 3 things: the item name, its required materials to create it, and the effect it has when you use it. In this case, the items often work like a specific power, and a player has to spend her action using an item. The PC does not need to expend strike or charge dice to use an item.

Some of the items trigger strike rolls. These have their own dice that do not come out of anyone's pools. Those dice are all discarded after the strike, and they cannot be rerolled with the use of traits.

Some of the items have effects that are ineffective against characters with certain powers. Body Resistance and Soul Resistance apply here, for example.

#### Standard Items:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Cleansing Serum	1 Phoenix Core, 1 Soul Core	The cleansing serum removes Blindness and Poisoned from 1 PC.
Fire Gem	2 Fire Cores	The fire gem causes the next strike of the target character to be fire-based.
Frost Gem	2 Frost Cores	The frost gem causes the next strike of the target character to be frost-based.

Items – Item Effects

<i>Name</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Grenade	4 Fire Cores	The grenade triggers a fire-based strike roll against 1 opponent. This roll is made with 8 dice and cannot use any other dice or traits.
Icicle Explosion	3 Frost Cores	The icicle explosion triggers a frost-based strike roll against 1 opponent. This roll is made with 6 dice and cannot use any other dice or traits.
Phoenix Gem	2 Phoenix Cores	The phoenix gem has the same effect as the Rise of the Phoenix power.
Poison Dart	2 Vile Cores	The poison dart inflicts Poisoned on 1 character.
Protection Serum	2 Frost Cores, 1 Soul Core	The protection serum grants Shielded to 1 PC.
Shadow Sand	2 Shadow Cores	The shadow sand inflicts Blinded on 1 character.
Shock Gem	2 Shock Cores	The shock gem causes the next strike of the target to be electricity-based
Smoke Bomb	3 Shadow Cores	The smoke bomb inflicts Darkness on the area of the conflict.
Soul Gem	3 Soul Cores	The soul gem heals 1 wound of 1 PC. It cannot be used on a defeated PC.
Speed Serum	2 Fire Cores, 1 Soul Core	The speed serum grants Quickened to 1 PC.
Strength Serum	2 Shock Cores, 1 Soul Core	The strength serum grants Empowered to 1 PC.

## Items – Item Effects

<i>Name</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Thunderball	5 Shock Cores	The thunderball triggers an electricity-based strike roll against 1 character. This roll is made with 10 dice and cannot use any other dice or traits.

### Advanced Items:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Blessed Serum	3 Soul Cores and any combination of 3 Fire, Frost, and Shock Cores	The blessed serum grants Empowered, Quickened, and Shielded to 1 PC.
Cleansing Shower	2 Phoenix Core, 2 Soul Cores, and any combination of 2 Fire, Frost, and Shock Cores	The cleansing shower removes all Blinded and Poisoned conditions from all PCs.
Flare Bomb	Any combination of 8 Fire, Frost, and Shock Cores	The flare bomb triggers a non-elemental strike roll against 2 opponents. This roll is made with 12 dice and cannot use any other dice or traits.
Mega Phoenix	2 Phoenix Cores, 4 Soul Cores	The mega phoenix brings back a defeated PC and heals all of her wounds.
Mega Soul	6 Soul Cores	The mega soul heals all of the wounds of 1 PC. It cannot be used on a defeated PC.
Poison Bomb	3 Fire Cores, 3 Vile Cores	The poison bomb inflicts Poisoned on all enemies.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Shadow Spear	4 Shadow Cores and any combination of 4 Fire, Frost, and Shock Cores	The shadow spear inflicts 1 wound on 1 enemy.
Triple Curse	3 Shadow Cores, 3 Vile Cores	The triple curse inflicts Poisoned and Blindness on 1 character and reduces her Action Pool by 3 dice.

**Mixed Items:**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Mixed Items</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Apocalypse	Shadow Spear and Triple Curse	The apocalypse inflicts 1 wound on each enemy and empties their Strike and Charge Pools.
Grand Blessing	Blessed Serum and Cleansing Shower	The grand blessing grants Empowered, Quickened, and Shielded to all PCs and removes all of their Blinded and Poisoned conditions.
Grand Curse	Poison Bomb and Shadow Sand	The grand curse inflicts Poisoned and Blinded on all enemies and reduces their Action Pools by 4 dice.
Mega Bomb	Grenade and Flare Bomb	The mega bomb triggers a non-elemental strike roll against all opponents. This roll is made with 15 dice and cannot use any other dice or traits.
Ultra Phoenix	Mega Phoenix and Mega Soul	The ultra phoenix brings back all defeated PCs and heals all of their wounds.

## 14 CONDITIONS

### Conditions in Play

Conditions are effects that are in place due to certain circumstances, powers, or Soulbound Weapons. They affect one or more characters in the game in a way that's specific to the particular condition. The effects are listed with the conditions below.

You can also link up conditions to goals for some fun possibilities. For example:

**Activate Toxic Defense System [3]: Inflict Poisoned condition on all**

And then, in reverse:

**Activate Antidote Dispenser [4]: Remove all Poisoned conditions**

Using conditions in this way adds more variety to your conflicts. The GM should be open to the players suggesting goals that inflict or heal conditions.

### **Individual and Overarching**

Most of the time, conditions are individual effects. This means that they affect only one character. Individual conditions can be countered in many ways, including with the appropriate powers.

Sometimes conditions are overarching. This means that the condition is not just an effect on one character, but it is something that is continuously inflicted on everyone around. Darkness is the only standard condition of this kind, but in the above example, Poisoned could be determined to work as overarching if the Toxic Defense System keeps pumping toxic gas into the room until it is shut down.

Overarching conditions cannot be countered with powers that remove conditions from individual characters, because the condition would immediately be inflicted on the character again. Instead, special powers (such as Brighten for Darkness) or goals are needed to remove the effects of overarching conditions.

If you feel like you're going to have a lot of changes in conditions during a conflict, I suggest keeping a separate sheet on the table to keep track of them. You should mark overarching conditions as such, so that players don't plan on using their powers to counter them.

### **Starting Conditions**

Some conflicts take place under unusual conditions, and the GM can determine that the conflict starts with certain conditions in place.

For example, the GM can declare that a fight at night in the absence of strong light sources begins with the Darkness condition in place. Or maybe the PCs find themselves in a cave filled with toxic gas, where all characters (including the adversary) start with the Poisoned condition on them.

The GM should either create or allow the players to suggest goals to counter or perpetuate the starting conditions.

The GM can also establish new conditions during the conflict, either by creating a (possibly parallel) goal for the adversary to achieve, or just because circumstances in the story warrant it. Still, the players should have the option of overcoming them during the conflict with more goals.

### **List of Conditions**

A character can benefit or suffer from the effects of a condition only once. Two or more sources of the same condition do not stack (for example, a power and a weapon effect that both grant Quickened). All conditions are erased at the end of a conflict.

#### **Blinded**

While this condition is in effect, the character has to subtract 1 success from any and all rolls that she makes.

#### **Darkness**

This is an overarching condition that works like Blinded on everyone in the conflict until it is removed. It does not stack with Blinded.

#### **Darksighted**

The character is not affected by Blinded or Darkness conditions.

#### **Empowered**

This condition adds 1 bonus die to the character's strikes.

## Conditions – List of Conditions

### **Poisoned**

Until this condition is cleared, the character loses 1 action die from her Action Pool at the beginning of her turn. If the Action Pool is empty, the condition has no effect.

### **Quickened**

This condition adds 1 bonus die to the character's maneuvers.

### **Shielded**

This condition adds 1 point to the character's defense.

# 15 SAMPLE ENEMIES

## An Assortment of Foes

There are many dangers in the world of Ghostfield. Kanissians guard the territory and suppress any activity that might threaten the occupation. Beyonders break into our world and wreak havoc. And with the advent of the Dragon, those incidents are only going to become more frequent and drastic. And then there are rebels who consider anyone not on their side to be an enemy, and crime syndicates thriving on Core acquisition and black market trade that defend their turf with all means available to them.

The chapter on conflicts tells you how to create your own adversity for the PCs. However, it's always good to have some ready-made examples, both to show what a finished enemy actually looks like and to give GMs a pool of options for times when making your own adversity might take too long.

The enemies in this chapter are samples for those purposes. Use them in play or just as examples for your own creations, whichever suits your style best. Just remember that you'll get some of the most fun out of being the GM by creating memorable, unique, and personality-driven enemies.

## Kanissians

The Kanissians are governing Ghostfield and its surrounding Enendian territories with an iron fist. They are utterly sure that the Ghostfield poses a lethal threat to their nation, and therefore, they are ready to do anything to keep it under their control and protect their people and their empire. Not all of them do so willingly, however; many soldiers are drafted into service.

With their access to the Ghostfield, the Kanissians also developed advanced machinery that mixes steam-power with the wondrous properties of the Cores from Beyond.

Whenever a Kanissian individual is listed with three skills instead of one, you should flesh them out a bit for use in your game. Give them a name and some context. They're especially useful when you can bring them back as recurring enemies.

### Footsoldiers

The standard group of Kanissian soldiers is dressed in gray uniforms and armed with pneumatic rifles. They are led by a Sergeant and have undergone basic training together as a unit. Most Kanissian soldiers are loyal, but that doesn't mean they would pick death over defeat. In fact, many of the soldiers had little choice but to join the ranks, and they value their own lives highly.

Type: Swarm  
Skill: Firearms 2  
Wounds: 4  
Defense: 3  
Powers: None.  
Weakness: Cowardly

### Skirmishers

For its skirmishers, the Kanissians select soldiers with behavioral issues and fill out the ranks with petty criminals and other unwanted elements. Skirmishers are sent ahead of the standard troops to soften the enemy without regard for the skirmishers' safety. While they are not as organized as the regular soldiers, they tend to be more aggressive and enjoy combat. That said, they are not driven by loyalty, and many of them wouldn't pass on a good opportunity to defect.

Type: Swarm  
Skill: Melee Weapons 3  
Wounds: 3  
Defense: 3  
Powers: Force Attack  
Weakness: Vulnerable to Frost

### Shock Troops

Shock troops are elite units of the regular army. They are fearless and often operate behind enemy lines. They have training in explosives and interrogation, which makes them perfectly suited for sabotage missions. Depending on the mission, they may wear camouflage armor or street clothes. If they need to attack an enemy unit, they prefer to set an ambush.

Type: Squad  
Skill: Explosives 4  
Wounds: 4  
Defense: 3

Powers: Darkness, Dark sighted, Shadow Strike  
 Weakness: Vulnerable to Fire

### Interplanar Operatives

Ever since discovering the Beyond and its potential, the Kanissians have trained special troops that explore and exploit that parallel world. The Kanissian Operatives, which officially are part of the Expeditionary Corps, are elite soldiers working in small groups. They are trained in using gates and maneuvering Beyond, but they also are highly efficient in all other situations. Only the most loyal and most competent soldiers are selected for the Interplanar Operations program. Their standard outfit consists of a light pneumatic exoskeleton, and their basic weapons are pneumatic high-rate spike shooters that are built into the bracers of the exoskeleton as well as lightning grenades. Operatives are allowed additional weapon per their personal preferences.

Type: Squad  
 Skills: Firearms 4, Quickness 3, Explosives 2  
 Wounds: 4  
 Defense: 4  
 Powers: Blindness, Force Attack, Restore, Skipping, Stamina II (Action Pool 14)  
 Weakness: None.

### Steam Armor Lieutenant

Some branches of the Kanissian army have squads and units that are led by highly-trained officers with individually-fitted steam-powered and Core-enhanced suits of armor. These suits provide a great amount of protection as well as integrated weaponry. Most Kanissian outposts are overseen by a Lieutenant outfitted with this armor, which protects the leading officer while giving her or him the ability to command the troops from the midst of even the most heated battles.

Type: Individual  
 Skills: Firearms 5, Brawl 4, Endurance 3  
 Wounds: 3  
 Defense: 6  
 Powers: Blaze, Dark sighted, Shield, Stamina (Action Pool 12)  
 Weakness: Vulnerable to Electricity

### **Steambot Dreadnought**

The largest bots in the Kanissian regular army, individual steambots are used for crowd control, occupational support, and straight-forward attack power. Unless one finds the weak spots in the steambots armor, these dreadnoughts are near unstoppable, although their lack of speed and detailed coordination make them a minor threat to mobile foes.

Type: Individual  
Skill: Brawl 3  
Wounds: 3  
Defense: 8  
Powers: Force Attack, Soul Resistance  
Weakness: Vulnerable to Electricity

### **Steambot Guardians**

The guardians are smaller versions of the looming dreadnoughts. What they lack in raw power and armor, however, they make up for in quickness. In addition, they are outfitted with flame throwers and short-bursting jetpacks.

Type: Squad  
Skill: Brawl 4  
Wounds: 3  
Defense: 5  
Powers: Blaze, Leap Attack  
Weakness: Vulnerable to Electricity

### **Beyonders**

There are many creatures that live Beyond, and while some of them are completely harmless, many pose a threat. They could either actively invade our world to wreak havoc, or they could simply defend their territory when skippers enter the Beyond.

Many of the Beyonders have strange and dangerous powers. Most of them can fly or, at the very least, jump long distances. This is necessary for their survival Beyond.

These Beyonders are not eidolons; that is, they have no one who controls them and have entered Ghostfield through gates rather than summoning. That means they cannot be banished.

### Critters

These beasts appear in large swarms. They are tiny but ferocious, resembling multi-colored geckos with four wings. While they are not dangerous as individuals, they have the ability to overwhelm others with their sheer numbers.

Type: Swarm  
 Skill: Quickness 3  
 Wounds: 4  
 Defense: 2  
 Powers: Leap Attack, Skipping  
 Weakness: Vulnerable to Fire

### Toxic Beast

This monster looks like a giant, pitch black gorilla, which is always surrounded by a haze of poisonous mist. It is much more intelligent than its looks might indicate.

Type: Individual  
 Skill: Brawl 5  
 Wounds: 3  
 Defense: 4  
 Powers: Body Resistance, Force Attack, Poison Cloud (like Poison, but affects all PCs at once), Skipping  
 Weakness: None.

### Flaming Harbinger

Only very few of these creatures have been spotted so far, none of them outside of the Beyond. That, however, may change with the advent of the Dragon. Flaming Harbingers have six legs, but they tend to fly with their gigantic wings that seem to be made of fire.

Type: Individual  
 Skills: Firearms 6 (fire breath), Acrobatics 5, Intimidate 4  
 Wounds: 4  
 Defense: 5  
 Powers: Leap Attack (in this case, diving attack), Inferno (like Blaze, but the roll counts against all PCs), Resistance to Fire II, Skipping, Soul Resistance, Strike Boost II  
 Weakness: Vulnerable to Frost

## Hydra

Only one of these creatures has been encountered so far, but more like it may appear as the Dragon spews forth its minions. Hydras appear to be plants, as they burst out of the earth and are rooted deep underground. They have several heads as well as tentacle-like branches that grab and throw hapless victims. Defeating a Hydra takes much more than just hacking away at it.

Type: Individual

Skills: Brawl 7 (bite and grab), Throw 6, Endurance 5

Wounds: 5

Defense: 8

Powers: Aura of Weakness (like Weaken, but affects all PCs), Auto Refresh (like Refresh, but used as part of a maneuver), Banishment, Body Resistance, Darksight, Dispel, Life Drain, Shield, Skipping, Soul Resistance, Spawn Critters (Cost: 6 charge dice, Effect: creates a swarm of Critters in the current conflict), Stream of Power (gain 2 charge dice at the beginning of each turn)

Weakness: Hydra Heads. Whenever one wound is inflicted, the player who caused it picks one of the following powers that was associated with the head that is no longer available to the Hydra: Aura of Weakness, Auto Refresh, Banishment, Spawn Critters. If the Hydra regains a wound (for example, by using Life Drain), it regains a power of the GM's choice.

## 16 GAME MODIFICATIONS

### Pick and Choose

Optional mechanics are a tricky thing. They are not included in the basic game for a reason: they don't fit everyone's game. But they are still neat extensions to the way the game works, if you don't mind the little bit of added complexity. You can introduce them into the game bit by bit after getting used to the basic mechanics.

Choosing to include too many optional mechanics in your game can slow it down quite a bit. They might also have unintended consequences. You can always decide to toss them out again later if they don't fit with what your group is doing.

### Refresh

Every now and then, the PCs can catch their breath for an extended period of time. This usually happens at the conclusion of a story arc, or a big chapter thereof. In these cases, you don't need to play through all of the character scenes that would usually be necessary to heal up. Instead, remove all marks on traits and consider all wounds (on self and eidolons) healed. If the players want trait marks, they will have to play new character scenes.

You should agree as a group, like with all optional mechanics, whether or not to have refreshes included in your game.

### Threat Die

There are several reasons why character scenes are kept as discrete units rather than a stream of continuous events. For example, that's how it works in the fictional pieces that inspired this game, such as anime TV shows, comics, video games, etc. But another very important reason is the way that you can use scenes to pace the game. One option to intensify the pacing is the Threat Die.

At any point during the game, the GM can slam a Threat Die on the table. The number it shows on top indicates how many scenes away a specific looming threat is. The threat might be unknown, or it might be something the PCs are aware of. It could be a powerful enemy hunting the PCs, a disaster waiting to happen, or something else along those lines.

At the beginning of every scene—and a conflict counts as a scene in this regard—the die is turned down by 1 number. If the die showed a 3 before, it now shows a 2. If it showed a 1, this is the scene in which the threat manifests. Remove the Threat Die and play out the event.

The Threat Die severely limits the amount of recovery that PCs can indulge in between conflicts—use it sparingly to insert tension and suspense into the game.

If during a conflict or character scene the players come up with a clever way to delay the threat, the GM can establish a goal that they can achieve. For example, the threat is a pack of demonic guard dogs that were stirred up by an alarm that the PCs triggered, and they will take 3 scenes to arrive. If the players are in the middle of fighting off other guards, and they realize they can barricade a door to keep the dogs out a bit longer, the GM can create a Barricade Door goal that will turn the die up 1 or 2 notches, or they could escape the threat completely (the specific effect needs to be declared when the goal is created, as usual).

You can also let PCs do actions that will delay the threat in scenes when there's no conflict going on, but one or more PCs will not be able to gain any character scene payoffs for that scene as they focus on fulfilling the goal. This is also used for setting up “you guys run while I'll hold the door shut as long as I can” situations of self-sacrifice. In fact, you can have a whole session during which players need to come up with new ways to delay the impending doom as they run toward salvation and even sometimes sacrifice one of their own to buy a delay for the others (think *Aliens*).

### Trait Bonuses

If you want traits to be a little more relevant for play, and you'd like to link that into a reward structure, you can expand the way traits work in the following way. It's a bit more involved than the basic mechanic, which is why I'm not suggesting to use it from the start, but after you're used to the way Anima Prime works you might be ready for the following added complexity.

When you play a character scene and mark a trait, there are two different ways to do so. First, if you didn't really bring out the trait in the scene, mark it with a check. This is the regular mark, used for a reroll. But if you brought out the trait in the scene and used it to make the story in the scene more interesting, mark it with a star instead. When you unmark a starred trait, you get a bonus die to add to your reroll.

In addition, if you can tie the trait into your description of whatever action you're taking when you unmark the trait, whether it's a checked or a starred trait, you also earn a bonus die to the reroll.

This more involved mechanic allows traits to become more important, both in the story and in their mechanical impact. Make sure your group agrees on whether you're using this added mechanic before you start a session.

### Creating a New Setting

Having a good setting is vital for having a good game. Characters cannot exist in a vacuum—they come from somewhere, and more importantly, they have somewhere to go.

A good setting is full of potential, but it doesn't force the characters to do anything in particular. It allows a lot of freedom for creating a variety of characters, but also ties them all together. Good Anima Prime settings should be painted in broad strokes, so that the players and the GM can fill in the details during play and don't have to worry about memorizing a whole bunch of stuff. Providing too rigid a setting stifles spontaneous play, because the players are always afraid of forgetting something and "doing it wrong." That's why Anima Prime should be inspirations that kick off the players' imaginations, rather than exercises in scholarly anthropology, history, engineering, and whatnot.

Settings are created from a basic concept, much like characters. Some unifying theme should be present, some basic seed from which the rest grows. That gives the setting a good feel of coherence and lets you add to it during play.

Settings often have specific powers, effects, idolons, factions, and so on that express the concept. They give a particular feel to the mechanics that matches the rest of the setting.

Finally, settings have setting seeds. They are story seeds like character and group seeds, that is, story ideas that can blossom into many different shapes depending on how play is going. The PCs don't have to address the setting seed if they don't want to, but it lends a dynamic vibe to the setting that makes it more exciting. Things are happening, the world is in flux. In Anima Prime, nothing is ever static.

I've included some short fiction pieces set in the premade settings, because I often get more of a feel for a setting if I imagine how characters would act within it. You don't need to do that for settings you create with your group, but you should

still always think about this: What are the PCs able to get involved in, and how can I insert more opportunities for adventure and conflict?

### **Basic Concept and Description**

The basic concept for your setting should tie directly to the mood and content that you've selected for your game. If your mood is dark and gritty, your setting should have a fitting concept, such as a nation under the rule of an oppressive force, a free-for-all area where might makes right, and so on. If on the other hand your mood is bright and silly, your setting would have a concept that fits that mood.

Your setting can be large or small, depending on what the focus of your game is. It can consist of a whole star system with different planets or of a single high school class in the middle of a big city. Either way, you can always expand on it or add additional detail during the game.

Describing your setting doesn't have to take very long. You can usually express the concept and basic details of a setting in just a paragraph or two. The rest of the setting can be developed through the PCs' background items and links, various story seeds, and whatever you happen to throw out in play.

Many people like to establish large-scale facts about their settings. For example, they'd say: "In this setting, there are migglys, which are small humanoids that love to play tricks on people." That's fine for creating a rough impression, but for a game like *Anima Prime*, it's important that those facts are generalizations and don't need to all be memorized and always followed. So while most migglys are culturally trained to play tricks, there are sure to be some migglys who are completely turned off by the whole affair. In other words, feel free to create large-scale generalizations, but don't be constrained by them. Actually, these kinds of generalized facts are most interesting when the PCs or other main characters prove to be the exception to the rule.

Creating a setting can take a few minutes or a couple of hours, depending on how customized you want it to be regarding powers, factions, and so on. Both GM and players can and should be involved in most aspects of setting creation, and PC creation will help to flesh out the setting and tie the main characters of the story into it.

### **Player Characters**

The PCs are going to be tied into the setting. They either live inside of it or are thrust into it at the beginning of your story. Either way, they need to interact with it.

When you create your setting, keep an eye on what kinds of characters could be PCs and what they would be doing. Is there room for different roles? Are there struggles going on that the PCs could join in? As long as there's room for adventure and drama in your setting for strong protagonists, you're good to go.

### **Powers, Effects, Eidolons**

One of the things to consider in creating your setting is the place that powers have within it. Are they common or rare? Inborn, trained, cybernetically implanted, or magically bestowed? How do everyday people feel about people with powers?

You also need to decide whether all of the powers are available, or whether some of them just don't happen in this setting. Once you've got that figured out, think about whether your setting could use a custom power or two that you make up at this point. The Ghostfield example setting has a few you can look at to see what I mean.

The same goes for custom effects and eidolons. If your setting needs a few of those that are specially designed for it, making them up before you start playing allows the PCs access to them right away.

It might be tempting to come up with a whole bunch of new stuff for the players to pick before you start playing, but it's definitely not a prerequisite. There are enough powers, effects, and eidolons available that you don't need anything else to have fun. And if you want to add things later on, you can always do that, and PCs can acquire additional powers according to whatever character development system you've set up (see Chapter 8).

### **Factions**

As an extension of the basic concept as well as the question of what the player characters can get involved in, you can create specific factions that exist within the setting.

Factions add an element of choice and depth to the setting. The PCs can join or side with one faction over another, play one against the other, suffer the animosity of a whole faction because they messed with one of their members, and so on.

Factions also provide a great opportunity for links with PCs, NPCs, and story events.

You can always add factions later on during play as well.

### **Setting Story Seed**

Once you've figured out what your setting usually is like, it's time for the GM to create a way in which it is changing. This is called a setting story seed. Such a seed is an event or dynamic that has the power to change things about the setting and in which the PCs can get involved, if they want to.

Setting story seeds can range from the blatantly obvious and aggressive (an invading force) to the subtle (the water from the river has started to taste metallic) to the weird and ominous (a black skyscraper just appeared in the middle of the city, and most people act as though it's always been there).

Like with all story seeds, you don't have to know a thing about why this is happening, who's doing it, or where it's going. It's a seed that you can develop spontaneously as you play. You can tie it to other events, the group story seed, individual character story seeds, links, traits, and other in-game occurrences. Over time, you'll figure out a way to make it matter, and the PCs can decide if they want to get involved and push the development of the seed and the setting in one direction or another.

You can develop more than one setting story seed for your setting, but one is usually enough to get things going.

## 17 ESSAYS

The Purpose of These Essays

The following essays are all about how to make the most out of this game. In many cases, this requires some explanation of different aspects of roleplaying. I wouldn't call this RPG Theory so much as RPG Practice, based on the following questions: What do we do during play? What kinds of decisions do we as players make? What's fun for us? What kinds of specific techniques support this kind of fun?

I owe a lot of insight in these regards to the dozens of people who, in their blogs or on forums, have shared their thoughts on these issues. I hope you forgive me for not trying to name them all.

I'm not trying to persuade anyone of anything here, and I suggest you read through these essays with an open mind and one specific purpose: to figure out how you can play Anima Prime to its fullest potential. If these essays work for you, great, if not, just ignore them whole or in parts.

Playstyles

One of the main aspects of this game, and most other roleplaying games, is conflict. In most cases, this manifests as battles between the PCs and others. The joy that players get out of these battles can come from different player goals and interests, and among those are being challenged, being badass, and being involved in dramatic storytelling. Other playstyles certainly exist, but for the purposes of improving your Anima Prime experience, I just want to talk about the ones I personally know well and enjoy, in part because they are actively supported by these rules.

Please keep in mind that, like all playstyle issues, these are not absolute: most players like to do several of these to some degree, at various times, even during a single play session. When I talk about "this kind of player," it's just shorthand for "a player who has this interest at this particular moment of play."

**Three Broad Categories**

Players who are interested in **challenges** like to prove their skill at something. They enjoy having to work for a payoff. If you are the kind of person who plays video games on the highest difficulty level, working on your mastery of the game

until you finally get the reward of beating it against all odds, then you're very familiar with the thrill of challenge-based playing. I love to play this way, and our previous game *Beast Hunters* was built specifically for this playstyle.

Players who enjoy **wish fulfillment** like to be successful in the game. They like their characters to be not just good, but undeniably great at what they do. They don't mind if the difficulty of the game is low, because the payoff is being able to pretend, just for a little while, that they're unstoppable asskickers who can reliably make a difference in the world. I used to play *Werewolf: the Apocalypse* partly for this reason: it allowed me to be a badass who can tear apart anyone in his way while fighting the corruption of our modern world.

Players who enjoy **drama** in their stories like to put their characters through the wringer. They are not thinking in terms of how they as players can beat the challenge, and they definitely don't want their characters always to come out on top. Quite to the contrary, they understand that the most dramatic stories involve loss, sacrifice, defeat, tragedy, and other ways of suffering. They may act contrary to their characters' interests in order to make the outcome of a conflict more dramatic, and they purposely set up stories to lead their characters to the toughest choices they could possibly be forced to make. More often than not, this is the kind of play I enjoy.

Here's an example. In the movie *Die Harder*, terrorists have taken over an airport and messed with the landing guidance system. The hero runs out onto the runway and tries to warn the incoming plane. However, the plane crashes and burns, and hundreds of innocent people die. You could look at this event, if it happened as a conflict in an RPG, in different ways. You could say: nice effort on his part, but not good enough; I would have done x, y and z (that is, you think of the situation as a challenge to be solved). You could feel bad that the hero didn't succeed and think that the story's worse for it; maybe you were in the mood for something uplifting and not all this death and suffering. Or you could be excited at the dramatic impact of the hero who tried his hardest and failed, and imagine the potential for how that will play out during the rest of the story.

There are other possible playstyles out there as well: genre emulation would be an example, where the players enjoy creating moments and experiences that are comparable to a particular genre or style. *Anima Prime* is designed to emulate a certain type of source material, namely anime series and movies and *Final Fantasy* games. That's directly built into the way conflicts work: lots of cool maneuvers and stylish action, customized weapons, summonable creatures, and so on. I think

that this emulation is fully compatible with any of the playstyles I'm talking about, so there's no need to balance it against anything else.

And surely there are more playstyles than I'm listing here, but the three above are the ones Anima Prime is most suited for, the ones I personally know and like, and the ones that you'll have to balance against each other because different approaches tend to support or frustrate them to varying degrees.

### **Relation to Game Mechanics**

Many games are skewed from the outset for supporting one playstyle much more than any other (whether by design or because of unexamined notions of how an RPG is supposed to be structured). If the mechanics make it hard to be successful even at moderately difficult tasks, for example, wish fulfillment will be constantly frustrated by the characters' failures. This is often obvious when the odds for doing what characters regularly do in the game are low, such as when a 40% chance of hitting an opponent in a combat-centric game is on the high end within the game. Players sometimes like to rationalize this by redefining what a failed roll means, but in the end, the player rolls more failures than successes.

When I first roleplayed with my kids many years ago, they became quickly bored and frustrated with *Dungeons&Dragons* because their characters were frequently failing, and that wasn't much like playing Legolas or Aragorn at all.

The death of a PC is especially frustrating for this playstyle. After all, random death just doesn't fit with the idea of a competent hero.

At the same time, a game with a high failure rate may not promote challenge-based play either. This is because that playstyle not only needs difficulty, but also plenty of options to improve one's odds. If the best way to achieve something is obvious, and most of the options are within character creation rather than during play, the challenge-oriented player will quickly get bored during conflicts.

But if there are many options during a conflict and, in my preference, the ability to use elements from within the story (that is, narrative options rather than just mechanical ones), this kind of player can address each conflict in a satisfying way. The player might even enjoy the possibility of character death in a conflict, because it raises the stakes of the challenge.

Finally, dramatic story-oriented play works best if the player has the ability to control the setup and outcome of a conflict to some degree, not just regarding winning and losing, but also how much to give up in the process and which things

to prioritize. Sometimes this coincides with challenge-oriented options. But often, other kinds of options are needed that allow the player to express character priorities, make tough choices, and sacrifice something in the process.

Character death is only good, in this case, if it's meaningful, not if it's based on bad luck during any conflict. This doesn't mean PCs can't die a lot, if that's the theme of the game. In the RPG *Classroom Deathmatch*, based on *Battle Royale*, a whole class of students is forced to kill each other off, and players go through character after character. The game gains its meaning from the collective horror of all the deaths and how characters find something to hold on to during all of this. But in most cases, PC death for dramatic play needs to be based on a climactic choice.

### **Promoting a Playstyle**

You can create conflicts in a way that appeals to these different playstyles to varying degrees. For example, if you ramp up the difficulty very high, you might promote challenge-based play, but you might frustrate wish fulfillment-play and take away dramatic choice. If you make the difficulty very low, there's no real challenge and not much room for drama, but the characters' success is virtually guaranteed.

In this game, there are several ways to address these different playstyles. First, of course, you need to talk with your players about what they like, and how much of each playstyle they'd like to see in their game. This involves the establishment of your game's mood when you're setting up the game. Revisit this conversation every now and then to make sure everyone's still on the same page, and watch for the players' reactions. You'll see whether they are excited at a challenge, upset that they lost a conflict, or smiling about the suffering of their character. You can also let them rate the three styles on a scale (say, 1 to 5, with 5 being most enjoyable), and adjust your game accordingly.

Once that's figured out, use the following techniques to promote particular playstyles. While there are several things to consider, the secret to getting the most out of this game lies in the conscious use of goals. You can use goals to promote all three playstyles in different ways, as you'll see below.

### **Challenge-Oriented Play**

For challenge-oriented play, start with difficult adversity. There needs to be a good chance that, unless the players step up, their opposition is going to kick their asses all around town. For maneuvers, there's already a mechanism in play to allow players to show their skill: the GM-awarded dice. These range from one to

four dice, which makes for a substantial difference in character effectiveness. If the player puts in two action dice, then going from three to four GM-awarded dice raises their chance of earning an Awesome Token from 13% to 35%. If they're impressive enough to gain a die from another player as well (or the players just work together well), the odds go up to 57%, with an 83% chance to gain at least four strike and charge dice. Powers and action dice rationing allow for tactical choices as well.

The second important lever for challenge-based play is the ability of players to suggest goals. You should emphasize the ability of creating goals that give players tactical options to lower the adversity's stats, inflict conditions, or boost their own side. This enables the players to beat the kind of opposition that they would not be able to overcome without their ingenuity.

Combining the narrative nature of maneuvers with the endless possibilities of situation-specific goals will enable you to throw conflict after conflict at the players while constantly keeping them challenged and entertained. The one thing you need to remember in such instances is that challenge-oriented players need a lot to work with: environments with lots of usable content, descriptions of the adversity, inside knowledge, and other narrative sources of tactics. It's up to the GM to provide those, and remember that the players have the ability to make up scene details in their maneuvers as long as they fit with what's already been established.

### **Wish Fulfillment Play**

When creating conflicts for this playstyle, keep the difficulty generally low. The game should revolve around the characters as the ones who are the movers and shakers, and when they step up to the plate, they generally succeed in what they do. During maneuvers, be more generous with GM-awarded dice than you would be in a challenge-based conflict.

Goals you create for and during the conflict should also have low difficulties, and they should be focused on allowing the characters to really shine. Basically, where in challenge-based play goals are opportunities for making a win more likely, here they are opportunities to add additional laurels to the win. Not only do the PCs beat the opposition, but they humiliate them. Not only do the PCs save the day, but they look damn good in the process.

The adversity should rarely go for achieving goals; taking them away would frustrate the players. Instead, the adversity drives toward a (mostly futile) attempt

at winning, thereby framing the window for what's at stake for the PCs: yes, you win, but what else do you achieve?

Think of your game as a Steven Seagal movie. The bad guys constantly throw up new roadblocks and get closer to achieving their ultimate goal, but the good guys keep catching up, freeing the hostages and disturbing the evil plans, until the final confrontation (which the heroes win, of course). If anyone on the good side dies, the heroes were never in a position to help them (that is, it's not their fault).

Keep in mind what I said about playstyles being in flux: sometimes it's good for the characters to have an easy battle, even if they're usually out to be challenged or have dramatic situations. It shakes things up, allows the characters to show off, and makes the hard and tragic parts stand out that much more. A character who's first established as a badass makes for good challenge and drama situations when the opposition gets really tough, and all of the character's powers may not be enough to avert a tragedy or two (see *Pitch Black*).

### **Dramatic Play**

The basic difficulty of adversity for dramatic conflicts needs to be moderate to high. It should be in a range where the characters could overcome the opposition, were it not for the important goals that will use up valuable resources. That's the kind of stuff that sacrifice stories are made of.

The goals you create for a dramatic conflict must tap directly into who the characters are and what they care about. If they are compassionate, put the fate of friends or innocent bystanders at risk. If they are idealists, allow them to pick between winning the fight and sticking to their ideals. Establish goals that give the PCs an edge at a horrible cost.

The nature of goals is very important in this context. If you didn't notice this on your first read-through of the rules, let me emphasize the following: A player who achieves a goal gets to determine its outcome, but it does not have to be the one their character strives for. If the conflict has a "Save My Character's Father" goal, and I achieve it, I can declare that the attackers manage to kidnap or kill him. People who are not familiar with the dramatic playstyle might think: Why on earth would I want to do that? The response is: It makes for a great dramatic story, and that might be more important to me than doing what my character wants.

In conclusion, set up plenty of goals that force the characters to pick what they care about most. Allow the players to achieve some of the goals and figure out in

which direction they want to take the story, and make sure that the consequences of their decisions have a powerful and lasting impact. In order to set this all up, establish sympathetic NPCs and use character scenes to get the PCs tied up with them.

### **Sacrifice**

Remember the sacrifice rule: the only way a character will die in this game is if the player sacrifices the character for the achievement of a goal. This keeps wish fulfillment characters alive (avoiding the biggest possible frustration for those players), allows you to make really challenging conflicts without fear of destroying hours of investment into a PC, and provides an opportunity for the most dramatic move any character could make: to give one's life for the one thing the character cares about more than herself.

If you're thinking about changing this rule and introducing the chance of death as a conflict outcome, you should understand that this will put all of those benefits at risk. The only situation in which I would advise this is if your players like high-stakes conflicts where the intensity of the challenge is increased because of the possible death of the PCs. This will lead to characters turning more into disposable playing pieces than otherwise, but it might be worthwhile for the added intensity. Just be sure that that's what everyone wants.

### **Mixed Playstyles**

Chances are your group is not 100% on the same page regarding these playstyles at all times. As I said before, each player might go through different phases where they are interested in one playstyle over another, sometimes even during a single session, and not all of the players will line up with each other when this happens. So what do you do to balance different preferences?

The first step is to vary the way you set up conflicts. Some of them might be challenging. Others might be easy. And some of them will have dramatic choices to make. Throughout these conflicts, the challenge-oriented players can strive for GM-awarded dice in maneuvers, the wish fulfillment-oriented players will survive the harder challenges and still be able to often look good (thanks to the high success rate in die rolls), and the drama-oriented players can consider most conflicts preludes to the dramatic showdowns.

Within conflicts, you can do several things for each type of preference. Create a range of adversity and send the difficult ones against the challenge types while customizing others to be vulnerable to the wish fulfillment-types' strengths.

Make some goals that the challenge types can use to their advantage, and others that are specifically aimed at the dramatic ones. Over time, the group will learn to use the different parts of this game in a way that's fulfilling to most players most of the time.

Finally, talk to your group about having spotlight sessions. These would be tailored specifically to one of the characters and their player, and everyone would get a turn. One session might focus on the first character and consist of her saving the day with plenty of style while the other characters help out and do their best to make the spotlight character look awesome. The next session could be all about the second character, giving her the opportunity to make tough choices and explore what the character's really made of, with the other characters pushing her or giving her openings to act. And in the following session, the third character can take the lead, with everyone supporting her against overwhelming odds and following that player's tactical lead against a powerful challenge.

In the end, whichever way you end up playing is up to you, and no one playstyle is superior to another, just like taste in music or movies. It's all about balancing the interests of a group of friends during your shared hobby. My design goal with this game was to give you the tools to do just that, but remember: the first and last step is always open communication with your fellow players.

### Flags

For the purposes of this essay, I'll define "flag" as follows:

"Something that tells the GM what she wants to play out during the game."

Flags help to focus the game on what's fun for each particular player and allow the players an indirect input into the direction of the game and story. They can come in many shapes and forms: the powers (or feats, class, race, skills, etc.) that a player chooses, background items that a player writes out, a diagram of the PC's relationships, and so on. The GM can look at a flag and put something fitting into the game, which makes it more enjoyable to the players.

In many games, there are no obvious flags. One of the learned skills of a GM for those games is to figure out from the players' choices about their characters what the players are interested in and then delivering that. Basically, the GM is trying to find hidden flags on the players' sheets or in the choices they make during play. While that can work well, it's not very reliable and really depends on how well the GM can guess at the players' reasons for doing things.

### Misunderstanding Flags

Flags based on character abilities (such as powers in Anima Prime), for example, can be easily misunderstood. As an example, let's say your player picks "Darksight" as a power for their character, which allows the character to be resistant to Blinded and Darkness. The player could do this for different reasons. Some possible ones are:

1. The player wants to have fights in the dark and against creatures of darkness. That would make this power a flag. This is often the case with "niche" powers, skills, and classes (picking the rogue because the player wants to do sneaky stuff, picking the socialite because she wants to play out social intrigues, etc.).
2. The player expects that the PCs' adventures will take the characters into situations where they will be blinded or it will be dark, and she wants to be prepared. This is not a flag but a preparation based on specific expectations of what's going to happen. This is basically a reverse flag, where the player tries to read the GM.
3. The player has had bad experiences in this or other games where her character became much less effective by being blinded or having to fight in the dark, and the player hated that experience, so she wants to be protected against it. This is an anti-flag, a way of protecting against things that the player doesn't want to experience.

Therefore, just looking at powers (or feats, skills, etc. in other games) won't give you the complete picture. This is an area where talking about it is a great way to figure out what the player's reason is and whether the player is really expressing an interest. A second solution is for the player to rate their powers, feats, and whatnot: let them assign a number from 1 to 5 to each, indicating how much they would like to use each one during the game (and let them change their minds about it whenever they want). Then design your conflicts, encounters, and other opportunities to use the powers that the players are most interested in.

Many players also write out backgrounds for their characters. In most games, this has little effect on the actual game mechanics. And now the GM has some or a lot of background material and doesn't know which parts of it the player made up to explain who the character is (but wants to keep that way), and which parts the player made as possible story hooks for the GM to use.

An example of a misunderstanding of background flags is a story I heard from someone about a character whose background was the loss of his wife. The PC was transporting her body around with him, looking for a way to resurrect her. At one point, the GM played an NPC who just gave the PC the means to do that. But the player didn't really want to resurrect the wife. It was a character motivation that was necessary in order to play the character the way he wanted to, and his character's story was suddenly at an end because now the PC would simply retire with his resurrected wife. The GM thought it was a flag: an indication of what the player wanted to play out in the game. But the player meant it as a motivation for the character that he'd keep for much longer. It might have turned into a flag at some point when the player was ready for it, but there was no way inside of the game to signal this.

### **Flags in Anima Prime**

In order to avoid these kinds of misunderstandings, Anima Prime has some direct and obvious flags. The first ones are story seeds. They give the GM very obvious ideas on what the players want their characters to deal with during the game. The GM should always try, as best as possible, to guide the game along according to the seeds that your group has developed. They give your game good plots and subplots to develop through play and provide a framework to tie conflicts into.

Links are also direct flags: the player puts all of those things about the character into links that she wants to come up during the game, and she puts all of the stuff she doesn't want to play out in the background section. This avoids the problem of the GM meaning well but addressing the wrong things about the PCs. The division between background items and links is a neat little trick that you can easily use for any other game, with very little effort but guaranteed payoff.

As a third flag group, traits tell the other players and the GM what the player would like to play out during character scenes and conflicts regarding the character's personality. The GM can now bring up situations where the PCs' traits can come out and become important to the story. Traits can also be easily plugged into other games as an add-on if you allow some sort of reroll in that game in exchange for the players bringing up their character traits in play.

### **Using Flags**

Flags might seem unnecessary if you have excellent communication among your group. You might have regular meetings where you sit down and tell each other what exactly you like about your game, what each player would like to do and have happen, which parts about the characters are off-limits, and so on. But even

then, flags can accelerate the process and save you some time, and they allow the players to change their minds during the game and have the GM react to it without stopping the game for a discussion.

As a GM, you should look at flags in two situations. First, when prepping a game, you can use the flags to tie events and future conflicts together. If one player has a lost brother link, and another has a link to a cult he used to belong to and now opposes, let the lost brother be connected with the cultists. Was he kidnapped by them? Is he leading them? Tying the characters together through their flags, and weaving it into the game story, is a great way of ensuring that both the characters and the players care about what's going on. You should be flexible here: feel free to change your mind mid-game about your prepped work if a better, cooler, more dramatic opportunity arises.

Second, during a game session, you can look at the flags when you're trying to figure out what to throw at the players next. They should always provide you with enough fodder that you can use to spontaneously create meaningful events and opposition for them. Don't forget the story seeds, either. A link they have might be connected to the setting seed, or a trait will get them into trouble with a faction connected to their group seed. Whenever you are about to introduce something new into the game, or when you have an opening to do so, quickly think about (or look over) all of the flags and try to work one or more of them into the game.

### **Spontaneous Play**

This game was designed for spontaneous play. I describe this type of play as one where the players, including the GM, don't need to spend hours preparing the game, and they don't plan or think much about what they are going to do in the game. Instead, you prepare some basic materials that you can spontaneously use during the game to develop your story.

Spontaneous play works best when you use a couple of techniques that are suited for it. I'm going to describe some of them below; maybe they'll be useful for you.

### **Reincorporation**

Keith Johnstone, in his book *Impro* (on improvisational theater), describes a concept that he calls shelving. The actors introduce a certain item or fact into the story, then "put it on the shelf" until later in the scene, when they finally realize

that they can use that item or fact again within the story. I like to call this reincorporation, to describe the whole cycle.

Reincorporation is a powerful tool for spontaneous play. The GM or the other players put things out there spontaneously, and later during the game, you can reach back to the things you've established and tie them back into your game.

This can happen already on a very small scale. In one of my playtests, we had a character scene (with the example character Sijyka) during which the player described how his character salvaged a part out of a steambot. In the conflict that followed, the player used that part to make an ad-hoc gadget that he used against his opponents. He reincorporated the item, for which other players gave him plenty of gift dice from their Action Pools.

Reincorporation works on a larger scale as well. All those links on your character sheets are facts, characters, and other material that can be reincorporated later.

Related to the concept of reincorporation are seeds: those are story elements you throw out there to shelf and later tie together.

### **Seeds**

Seeds, to me, are ideas and events that we put into the story without knowing how they're going to turn out or what all their details are.

During play, don't hesitate to throw things into the mix even if you have no idea how they connect to everything or anything else. Mystery and revelations in stories don't have to be painstakingly designed. They can just evolve organically as you play, if you're flexible enough.

For example, when the PCs are in familiar surroundings, throw out something unusual. Maybe there's a strange object attached to the characters' airship. Maybe an enemy who attacks the characters has a weird tattoo. Maybe instead of paying the PCs with gold, the strange old man hands them his greatest treasure, an arcane looking piece of machinery that hasn't worked in eons. Maybe the same NPC keeps showing up at random times to make cryptic statements.

What's going to happen? Why is it happening? And how is all of that connected to the PCs and their story?

You don't have to know the answer to these questions when you introduce seeds. Once they're in the story, you can actively look for ways to tie them into what's

going on, and at some point you'll most likely end up with some sort of coherent picture. As coherent as any *Final Fantasy* plot, in any case.

In many cases, the PC players will come up with their own explanations. Listen to them as they discuss ongoing events in their character scenes. If what they say makes sense—and it might be a lot better than what you had planned—just go with it!

### Situation Webs

One way of keeping track of what's going on in your story, and how things are connected, is to start a situation web. You can write the various seeds and links onto a big sheet of paper and start to connect them with lines. Along the lines, you can write how they are connected.

For example, let's take Zadie and Rasheem from the earlier chapters. They both share a link, namely Zadie's old partner and current nemesis Locust. You could tie them together in a simple triangle. Just draw a line from Zadie to Rasheem that says, "on convoy mission together," one from Zadie to Locust that says "nemesis," and one from Rasheem to Locust that says, "?" That "?" could turn into "contact to black market," or "ex-lover," or "killed during raid," or something completely different, depending on how Rasheem figures out what happened between him and Locust.

It could also be more complicated, however. Rasheem could have received the necklace (which, as you might recall, Zadie had given to Locust) from another character. Now you have a relationship between Rasheem and that new character, and then one between that new character and Locust. How are they connected? And how does that connect to the attack on the convoy and the gathering of demons in the ruined city? Those are all connections you can fill in as you play, and the more you can somehow create connections between all of the links, seeds, and PCs, the better.

You'll end up with a big web of interconnected characters. They all should have a strong impact on each other. One way to have such an impact is with powerful emotions, another is with needs or goals. Zadie feels hatred toward Locust and wants him dead. Rasheem might be on the run from the unknown fourth character, who in turn lives in fear of Locust (or is his new lover). And so on.

Having a situation web drawn out allows you to tie new events, items, and characters visually to the rest of the story. That ancient item the old man gave the PCs? That's needed for a ritual in the ruined city by the demon lord. Those

tattoos on the PCs' enemies? They're the mark of Locust's new gang of elite raiders, on the lookout for the ancient item. That strange object on the characters' airship? Maybe a bomb that the raiders placed, or a beacon from the demon lord, or maybe a present from a third faction that the PCs haven't encountered yet, but who are tied to the ones they know.

Speaking of factions, they obviously play into the situation webs, as they usually relate to each other in a large scale kind of way. People within a faction relate to one another in any number of personal ways—and vengeance, betrayal, espionage, secret affairs, and other things create ties between characters in different factions. The deeper the PCs are in the middle of all this, the better.

### **Just Play**

It can be daunting to play a spontaneous game, where even the GM doesn't know what's going to happen. There's a fear that it could fall flat, that nothing happens, and that nobody has fun, because the program hasn't been developed in advance.

This fear is most common with groups who are used to putting most of the responsibility of what's happening in the game with the GM. But remember, this game is different. If you've got a GM and 3 PC players, the PC players are responsible for 75% of what's going on in the game. Their characters should be driving the story forward. They should interact with each other. They should throw out links and seeds left and right, to make sure there's enough material to play. They should always have something in mind that their characters could do next. And with all the seeds and links you've got, there's always a way to make things matter.

In the end, it's worth it getting over the initial apprehension. Trust your spontaneity, trust the power of seeds, and most of all trust your friends who are playing with you. As long as you're all in it together, you're going to be just fine.

### **Playing Over the Internet**

I used to roleplay over the internet for around 10 years. It's not my preferred medium anymore, but if you're interested in playing Anima Prime over the internet, I've got some thoughts on the matter that might help you out.

### **Interface**

There are two kinds of ways in which one can roleplay over the internet. The first one is basically done over any chat interface where all players play together at

the same time. The second one is done over any interface where players make their contributions at various times throughout the day or week, such as on message boards. In jargon terms, these are called synchronous and asynchronous play, but I'll just call them chat-based and post-based for the purposes of this essay.

First the bad news: Anima Prime is not suited for post-based play. Character scenes work just fine this way, especially when you've got several scenes going on at the same time, but conflicts don't. There are too many parts of the game that rely on potential input from other players, from chiming in with a die in a fellow player's maneuver to establishing goals in mid-conflict. These kinds of things can be handled within seconds at the gaming table, but over a message board where people wait for each other to come back and reply, they can turn a conflict into a months-long affair.

Therefore, if you're thinking about using Anima Prime in a post-based game, I would think there are better options for you out there. You can try it, but you might want to impose time limits on die contributions, have off-board communications via email about goals and other issues, and so on. If you can't post back and forth a couple of times a day at least, it's going to take frustratingly long.

Now the good news: Anima Prime works just fine in a chat-based game. Like all chat-based games, this will be about 20%-25% the speed of table-based play, but you should be able to handle an average conflict within a session. Players can easily make sends to indicate their die contributions, for example. You could set up a list of keywords that make this even faster. For example, just sending "+1" after another player's maneuver can indicate that you're giving them a die to their maneuver.

### **Dice**

In either type of interface you're going to have to make a basic decision: are the dice going to be handled by each player on their end, by the GM all the time, or via a die-rolling program?

If all players handle their own dice, you're going to need a certain amount of trust among the players. Otherwise you're always going to wonder if the other player (or the GM) didn't just fudge their roll. This is often much less of an issue than most people think, but it can be a deal breaker for some players.

If the GM handles all dice, obviously the players need to trust the GM as the independent facilitator. The GM needs to make sure that she's not too invested in any particular outcome, because otherwise the temptation to fudge dice arises.

If you have access to a dice-rolling program, you can alleviate the trust issues. Those are sometimes integrated into chat programs, but there are also stand-alone solutions out there on the internet, if you search a little bit (I'm hesitant to mention specific links due to the fickle nature of the internet).

Overall, I think that the best Anima Prime experience will take place when you gather your friends locally, but hopefully this has been of some use for you in setting up your online game.

## 18 EXAMPLE CHARACTERS

### Unusual Heroes

The following are a few characters that show you the different ways to use some of Anima Prime's character creation rules. Some of these use the rules in interesting ways that don't necessarily fit the description of a particular power. The mechanics remain in place, even when you use powers in such unusual ways.

For example, Yara is using Multisoul to represent two different modes of the same weapon instead of having multiple weapons. Syjika uses her Soulsmith power with Immediate Imbuement to represent having a huge variety of gadgets at her disposal, rather than one that she reconfigures. Kassala's eidolon, rather than being a summoned creature that fights for her, is a suit that envelops her. Notice how her passion works with Natural Summoner and the cost of summoning the mecha suit. You also can create shapeshifters by using the "summoning" of eidolons as the moment in which the heroes shift and eidolons as the other forms.

#### **Yara – Gunblade Warrior**

Yara is a human who, through an accidental summoning of her father, merged with a demonic eidolon as a little child. Her skin is a deep crimson, and she has a row of little spikes running along her spine, usually covered by her full mane of jet black hair. She wields a Soulbound Weapon by the name of Gaekalliet, which has 2 barrels of an integrated fully-automatic rifle set into the lower half of its gigantic blade. She can switch back and forth between the 2 modes of the weapon at will.

**Passion:** Anger.

**Mark:** Spinal spikes and crimson skin.

**Traits:** "I was hoping you'd do that."  
Shunned by her family.  
Unable to resist the tantalizing lure of flames.

**Skills:** Melee Weapons 4, Firearms 3, Courage 2

**Stats:** Action Pool 10, Wounds 3, Defense 3.

**Powers:** Leadership, Multisoul, Quickdraw, Resilience II, Resistance to Fire, Soulbound Weapon (Gaekalliet), Weapon Upgrade II.

**Weapons:** Gaekalliet (Blade Mode): Elemental Surge, Fire Aura, Power Strike.  
Gaekalliet (Gun Mode): Area Strike, Protection, Strike Boost.

### Evanon – Frost Hunter

Evanon's tribe lives in the frozen wastes of Asiye, among glittering glaciers and towers of gray stone. His powers allow him to slow down and weaken more dangerous prey so that he can bring it down. Senja, a Caragu eidolon, is his hunting companion. Together they set out to explore the lands beyond their borders as strange dreams lead them toward Ghostfield.

**Passion:** Glory.

**Mark:** His head and face resemble a bear's.

**Traits:** There is nothing that scares me.  
Family lineage of hunters.  
Beautiful singing voice.

**Skills:** Brawl 4, Endurance 3, Intimidate 2

**Stats:** Action Pool 10, Wounds 4, Defense 2.

**Powers:** Bond: Senja, Companion, Empower Eidolons, Magnificent Companion, Resilience, Slow, Summoning, Toughness, Weakening.

#### Eidolon:

Senja (Caragu)

*Level:* 1

*Type:* Individual

*AP Limit:* 7

*CP Limit:* 4

*SP Limit:* 6

*Defense:* 3

*Wounds:* 2

*Weakness:* Vulnerable to Fire

*Skill:* Endurance 3

*Powers:* Guard, Ice Hurricane, Leap Attack, Resilience II, Stamina, Toughness.

#### *Entrance and Description:*

Ice spreads out in the air, growing out of nowhere. Suddenly Senja bursts through the icy layer, landing with a growl as glimmering shards of ice fall all around it. Like other Caragu, Senja is a large wildcat with an exceptionally long neck and rich dark-purple fur. Despite her feral nature, she can be very affectionate.

### Kassala – Spirit Mecha Pilot

Kassala is a fragile cat-like humanoid with the ability to summon a powerful semi-sentient spiritual battle suit to encapsulate her. She feels a great urge to frequently use the power of her suit, which is an addiction she tries her hardest to resist. When injured, she often succumbs to the impulse to call it to her and vanquish anyone who dares get in her way, but she hates herself for her weak will.

**Passion:** Self-Loathing.

**Mark:** Feline humanoid.

**Traits:** “You’re going to regret that.”  
Quick, agile, and never where you expect me to be.  
Behind the teasing hides genuine shyness.

**Skills:** Luck 4, Feint 3, Perceive 2

**Stats:** Action Pool 10, Wounds 3, Defense 1.

**Powers:** Bond: Kasitaka Living Armor Suit, Charged Summoning II, Empower Eidolons III, Natural Summoner, Summoning.

#### **Eidolon:**

The Kasitaka Living Armor Suit is a unique custom eidolon:

*Level:* 3

*Type:* Individual

*AP Limit:* 9

*CP Limit:* 4

*SP Limit:* 6

*Defense:* 4

*Wounds:* 4

*Skill:* Acrobatics 4

*Weakness:* Vulnerable to Frost

*Powers:* Auto Guard, Fire Storm, Force Attack, Leap Attack, Resilience III, Stamina II, Toughness III, Whirlwind Attack.

#### *Entrance and Description:*

A whirlwind filled with flashing lights appears around Kassala as she is lifted into the air. Parts of the Kasitaka Living Armor Suit fly in from all directions, hurling the summoner around as they attach themselves forcefully to her body. Once the whole suit is assembled and completely covers the summoner, she lands with earth-shattering force, steam hissing out of some of the suit’s vents. The suit boosts the wearer’s speed and strength and has an integrated organic rocket launcher with an overdrive setting that creates a flaming inferno all around.

### Egere – Shadowbringer

Egere’s demonic mother raped and killed his father before giving birth to him. He grew up in the shadows of a megacity, surrounded by demons and abominations, and he believed that everyone was horrible at heart. However, when he encountered Syjika, his whole worldview was turned upside down. Even as he continues to wrap himself in shadows, there is now a glimmer of light in his life, even though she doesn’t know about it.

**Passion:** Love (Syjika).

**Mark:** Skin made of tiny dark green scales.

**Traits:** Darkness is comfort.  
 “I can show you secrets.”  
 I can never tell Syjika how I feel.

**Skills:** Stealth 4, Dirty Tricks 3, Brawl 2

**Stats:** Action Pool 10, Wounds 3, Defense 3.

**Powers:** Blindness, Conjure Darkness, Darksight, Life Drain, Nightvision, Poison, Resilience II, Shadow Strike.

### Syjika – Gadgeteer

Syjika grew up tinkering with all of the devices her mother, a famous inventor, and she became a steamtech engineer herself. Her attention span is tiny, however, so the items she makes tend to be small, barely finished, and not always thought through. She carries a huge backpack around with her that is filled with her own creations, one for each imaginable need, though it often takes her a while to dig through the pile and find what she’s looking for.

**Passion:** Compassion.

**Mark:** Pointed ears and unusually large eyes.

**Traits:** A tool for every occasion... uhm...somewhere in here.  
 “It wasn’t supposed to do *that*.”  
 Always in the shadow of my mother.

**Skills:** Gadgets 4, Engineer 3, Throw 2

**Stats:** Action Pool 10, Wounds 3, Defense 2.

**Powers:** Heroics, Immediate Imbuement, Improved Grip, Resilience, Restore, Soulbound Weapon, Soulsmith II, Weapon Upgrade.

**Weapon:** Syjika does not have a permanent weapon. Instead, the Soulsmith II and Immediate Imbuement powers are used for her gadgets.

## 19 INDEX

Achievement .....	47	Maneuver.....	41
Adversity .....	36	Combined Maneuver .....	44
Playing .....	40	Description.....	43
Stats .....	37	Mood.....	17
Type.....	36	Passion.....	24
Awesome Token.....	45, 51	List .....	25
Background.....	29	PC .....	11
Catching Your Breath.....	49	Play Style	
Competence		Challenge.....	129
Adversity .....	38	Dramatic.....	130
Condition .....	114	Game Mechanics .....	131
List of Conditions .....	115	Promotion .....	132
Starting Conditions.....	115	Wish Fulfillment .....	130
Conflict.....	36	Powers .....	28
Ending.....	51	Refresh.....	123
Without Combat .....	52	Skills.....	73
Essays.....	129	Skill Descriptions.....	74
GM .....	12	Stats.....	27
Goal.....	54	Story Seed	
Chain .....	58	Character .....	30
Individual.....	57	Group.....	21
Parallel .....	57	Strike.....	46
Single.....	58	Threat Die.....	123
Solo .....	57	Traits .....	26
Unique.....	57	Turn.....	39
Link .....	29		

## 20 ATTACHMENTS

### List of Attachments

**Conflict Rules Summary:** Each player should have one, including the GM. It summarizes the conflict rules so that you don't have to break the flow and crack open the rulebook in the middle of a conflict.

**Adversity Sheet:** The GM should have several of these to fill out during the game.

**Story Seeds Sheet:** Fill these out when setting up your game and keep them visible for everyone, especially the GM. Seeds can be resolved and new ones created during play, so either use pencil or fill out a new sheet when that happens.

**Character Sheet:** Each PC player uses one of these to keep track of their character. The pool circles are meant to physically hold your dice, stacked up, during conflicts. Writing down your powers' effects and costs is another way to avoid having to look into the rules during conflicts.

### Downloads

You can print these attachments from this file, if you have it. If you've received this game as a hardcopy only, you can download the full electronic version on our website at:

<http://www.berengad.com>

or via the website I specifically set up for this game:

<http://www.AnimaPrimeRPG.com>

There, you can also discuss the game or find new versions of it.

## **Conflict Rules Summary**

Choose one action per turn: maneuver, strike, achievement, or action power. Anytime you roll dice, you can unmark a trait to reroll all of the failed dice (summoners can use their traits for their eidolons). You can use an Awesome Token for an extra action at any time in between other players' actions.

### **Maneuver:**

1. Describe your action. Remember what you can say regarding individuals, squads, and swarms.
2. Get 2-4 dice from a skill. Mark the skill (when all 3 skills are marked, earn 2 bonus dice).
3. Add 1-3 dice from your Action Pool.
4. Other players may give 1 die each from their Action Pool (optional).
5. Add any bonus dice from weapon effects and conditions.
6. Roll dice. 1s and 2s are discarded. 3s, 4s, and 5s go into your Strike Pool. 6s go into your Charge Pool. If all dice are 1s and 2s, return action dice (not bonus or skill dice) to Action Pool. Gaining 5 or more dice at once earns you an Awesome Token.

### **Strike:**

1. Take 1-6 dice from your Strike Pool and designate a target.
2. Spend charge dice on charge powers for bonus dice and other effects.
3. Add any bonus dice from weapon effects and conditions.
4. Roll dice. 1s and 2s are discarded. 3s and higher are counted as successes. If the number of successes overcomes the defense, mark 1 wound (plus 1 wound for each additional time that the defense is overcome). If no wound is inflicted, return strike dice (not bonus dice) to Strike Pool.
5. Describe the strike once the effects have been determined.

### **Achievement:**

1. Take 1-6 dice from Strike Pool, add dice from skill and mark it, and designate a goal to achieve.
2. Spend charge dice on charge powers for bonus dice (optional).
3. Add any bonus dice from weapon effects and conditions.
4. Roll dice. 1s and 2s are discarded. 3s and higher are counted as successes. If the number of successes surpasses the difficulty, the goal is achieved. If not, return strike dice (not bonus or skill dice) to Strike Pool.

### **Power:**

1. Determine which action power you use on which target and whether you use any of its options and any boost powers.
2. Pay the associated charge dice and mark the effects. Keep track of inflicted conditions.

### **End of Conflict:**

1. A character is defeated when all of her wound circles are marked. At that point the character can no longer participate in the conflict.
2. Once all characters on one side have been defeated, the other side wins the conflict.
3. All conditions are erased, remaining strike dice are turned into action dice (with leftovers discarded), and the number of charge dice in each character's Charge Pool is halved (rounded up). Eidolons return to their home worlds with all pools reset (action full, others empty).

# Adversity Sheet

Name:	Type:	
Skill:	Defense:	
Powers:		
Weakness:		
AP	SP	CP

Name:	Type:	
Skill:	Defense:	
Powers:		
Weakness:		
AP	SP	CP

Name:	Type:	
Skill:	Defense:	
Powers:		
Weakness:		
AP	SP	CP

Name:	Type:	
Skill:	Defense:	
Powers:		
Weakness:		
AP	SP	CP

Name:	Type:	
Skill:	Defense:	
Powers:		
Weakness:		
AP	SP	CP

Name:	Type:	
Skill:	Defense:	
Powers:		
Weakness:		
AP	SP	CP



**Character Sheet**

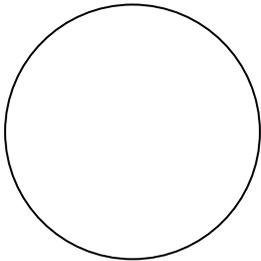
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Concept: \_\_\_\_\_

Passion: \_\_\_\_\_ Mark of Power: \_\_\_\_\_

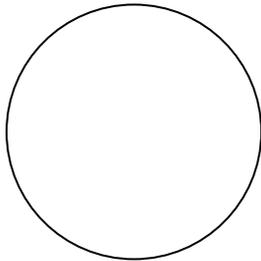
Traits: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Skills: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

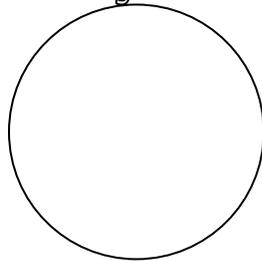
Action Pool



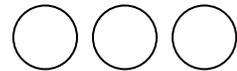
Strike Pool



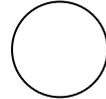
Charge Pool



Wounds



Defense



**Power:**

**Effect:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Background:**

**Links:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_