

THIRSTY
SWORD LESBIANS

Advanced Lovers & Lesbians



SETTINGS, ADVENTURES, AND PLAYBOOKS FOR THIRSTY SWORD LESBIANS

BY Alex Roberts • Alexis Sara • Allie Bustion • Amr Ammourazz • April Kit Walsh • Ash Cheshire • Ash Kreider • Avery Alder
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Draw your sword and bare your heart with new character types, fresh settings, and even more ways to enjoy the *Thirsty Sword Lesbians* roleplaying game!

Lace up your skates and settle old scores in a wasteland roller derby, explore the jungles of Venus as part of a planet-roving band of futuristic battle bards, or pick up your favorite Arthurian legend and MAKE. IT. GAY. With over twenty new settings, you're sure to find just the right hook to delight and entice your table.

Crafted by an all-star team assembled from the best and brightest of the indie RPG scene, *Advanced Lovers and Lesbians* shines a spotlight on the game's universal themes of found family and deep emotional connections. Innovative new playbooks and alternate rules offer novel story arcs for your next game of *Thirsty Sword Lesbians*.

Inside this book, you'll find:

- ✦ **Ten new playbooks**, including the shape-shifting Naga, the shrewd Investigator, the synthflesh Hologoddess, and the family-minded Matriarch
- ✦ **Twenty-one new settings**—ready your bow in late Heian Japan or strum your guitar in orbit of near-future Saturn—each one full of relatable characters and dramatic plot hooks
- ✦ **Four detailed adventures:** *Fashion & Slashin'*, *Romancing the Throne*, *Starlight of the Lunar Realm*, and *Through the Looking Glass* make it easy for your group to quickly pick up and play a game of *Thirsty Sword Lesbians*
- ✦ **Custom rules** to support settings with unique elements
- ✦ **An appendix of random tables** full of inspiration for characters, settings, and storylines plus a set of Friend, Threat, and Plot tables tailored to each and every one of the game's 19 playbooks
- ✦ **Beautiful, full-color artwork** that captures the full spectrum of characters you can play in the diverse, expansive, and unabashedly queer worlds found within

Thousands have already been smitten with *Thirsty Sword Lesbians*. Take your skills with the blade and your passion for intrigue and drama to the next level with *Advanced Lovers and Lesbians*!



FOR USE WITH
**THIRSTY SWORD
LESBIANS**



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gay spaceship games



THIRSTY! SWORD LESBIANS

ADVANCED LOVERS & LESBIANS
Settings, Adventures, and Playbooks for *Thirsty Sword Lesbians*



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Thirsty Sword Lesbians • Advanced Lovers & Lesbians

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and April Kit Walsh.

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The characters and events portrayed in this game are fictional. Any resemblance to real people is purely coincidental or is possibly a Mary Sue self-insert character.

Evil Hat and Gay Spaceship Games would like to thank all our backers and volunteer proofers, especially Kona Goodhart!

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Welcome

Welcome to **Advanced Lovers & Lesbians**, a collection of settings, adventures, and playbooks for the **Thirsty Sword Lesbians** tabletop roleplaying game. **Thirsty Sword Lesbians** is about connection, found family, and messy queers, themes that transcend any particular setting and any individual person's experience. Thanks to over 8,000 crowdfunding backers, this book includes contributions from dozens of authors, each with their own unique experiences and perspectives.

As with the core book, a setting is designed to be a sandbox with themes, characters, and adventure hooks. An adventure is a fleshed-out idea with more detail than the hooks contained in the settings. You can modify and add to these to make them your own in play.

This book also features ten new playbooks. Some of these are designed with particular setting elements in mind or otherwise might not fit with every game, so consult with your group before bringing these advanced lovers and lesbians to the table.

Lastly, you'll find a set of random tables you can use to inspire characters, settings, plots, and more.

Of course, no single volume can rival the creativity of the fan community that has already started building on **Thirsty Sword Lesbians**. The text of the original book as well as this one are offered under open licensing terms so that you can go ahead and create without needing to ask for special permission, as long as the works you make are shared back to the commons under similar terms. For more information, visit PoweredByLesbians.com.

I'd like to offer a great, heartfelt thank you to all of the creators who have contributed to this book, sharing creativity, insight, and sometimes vulnerability in order to help the game speak directly to a broader range of experiences. I'd also like to thank everyone who has supported the game in any way: getting excited about it, backing, playtesting, hacking, reviewing, or just making the creative team feel good by telling us what it's meant to you. I love hearing about your games, characters, rules hacks, and seeing art of your sword lesbians, too; don't hesitate to tag the Gay Spaceship Games Twitter with those: @GaySpaceshipGms.

I'm not done writing more neat stuff for **Thirsty Sword Lesbians**, either, so I look forward to continuing to create alongside all of you.

Very queerly yours,

~April~

PLAYBOOKS

The Bloody: When a problem can no longer be solved amicably, when a threat to the community demands violence, the Bloody stands ready to do that violence on behalf of others. Their central conflict stems from the toll that violence and readiness takes on them, and how hard it can be to drop their defenses.

The Dream Mirror: Be the person of her dreams—and theirs, and hers, and that other person's too. The Dream Mirror knows how to be just what others want. Their central conflict is not knowing how to be themselves. How can they even begin to untangle their own desires from those of the people around them?

The Ensemble: The Ensemble is a pair of individuals. Together they can be more than the sum of their parts, or they can fall so deeply into each other that they're lost to the world.

The Hologoddess: They are will, made synthflesh, but they are a machine who fights, and loves, with mathematical precision. Their conflict lies in their inability to relate to organics and the loneliness of that detachment.

The Investigator: The Investigator is clever, inquisitive, and hot on the trail of mysteries relating to the Toxic Powers. Their experience has led them to be slow to trust others, while strengthening their desire for truth and justice. Their core conflict is vulnerability versus suspicion.

The Legion: The Legion is a soldier chosen by destiny, and the latest to bear the name and powers of their legacy of past incarnations. Their conflict is figuring out who they are between their present self and the many “thems” that came before them.

The Matriarch: The Matriarch has kids, a gang, or partners who look for their help to stay alive. They consider how their relationships fit with their wards as well as their own personal desires. The world may be against their family, but they'll do whatever they can to make it better for them. Their central conflict is balancing their family's needs versus taking care of their own.

The Naga: The Naga comes from a society that hunts them or exploits them for their nagamani (magic crest jewel). As such, most Naga are in hiding and live their lives shapeshifted in a body not of their true form. Their central conflict lies in the vulnerability of sharing their true selves versus the safety of passing in a society that would do them harm.

The Sun Hand: The Sun Hand uses baking magic to support friends, empower themselves, and defuse bad situations. They try to impress others with an obsessive hoarding of skills and knowledge. Their central conflict lies in balancing their obsession with healthy relationships.

The Troubadour: The Troubadour lives to entertain and have a good time, but self-expression often takes a back seat to earning a living and maintaining privilege. Keeping everyone happy is both their blessing and their curse. Their central conflict is their need to be liked versus speaking their truth.



The Bloody

by Erin Edwards,

based on work by Maria Fanning

When a problem can no longer be solved amicably, when a threat to the community demands violence, the Bloody stands ready to do that violence on behalf of others.

Their central conflict stems from the toll that violence and readiness takes on them, and how hard it can be to drop their defenses.

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Tired Veteran
- ✦ Folk Hero
- ✦ Wandering Sword Lesbian

Aesthetics

(circle or invent one for each)

- ✦ Intimidating demeanor, exhausted demeanor, protective demeanor
- ✦ Full body armor, comfortable clothes, muscle-baring clothes
- ✦ A sword as tall as you, a hidden sword, a broken sword

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	+1	+1
GRACE	+0	-1
HEART	-1	+0
WIT	+1	+0
SPIRIT	+0	+1

Reputation Precedes Me

You've spent more time in the fray than most, and you've earned your share of stories and scars alike. For better or worse, even if people don't know your name or your face, they know your deeds.

Answer one question from each list, then answer a third from either list, checking off each answered question.

VICTORIES

- ✦ A foe thought to be unstoppable met their end at your blade. Who were they?
- ✦ You came to the aid of a community that may not have survived without you. Why do they call you a hero?
- ✦ Following your example, others have taken up the sword to defend themselves and their communities. How do you feel about them?
- ✦ You carry a souvenir from a foe who became a friend. What is it?
- ✦ One of your past achievements has become the stuff of legends. What is the legend, and how far is it from the truth?

SCARS

- ✦ You can't save everyone. Name someone you lost and who they were to you. Write their name down on your character sheet, in a place of prominence.
- ✦ You blame yourself for something that may not be your fault. What is it?
- ✦ Conflict has left its marks on your body. What scar do you have that brings back hard memories?
- ✦ There's an activity you can no longer participate in because it takes you back to a bad place. What is it?
- ✦ You have one defeat in particular that lingers with you. What were you fighting for, and why did you lose?

As you begin play, you have seven unanswered questions. Whenever another player rolls a mixed beat or up beat to **Figure Out** you or anyone who knows your reputation, they may ask you one of your unanswered questions in place of one of the questions offered by that basic move. Whenever you answer one of these questions, check it off.

When you answer all five questions from either list, cross out the remaining questions and take one of the following:

- ✦ **If you answered all the questions about your Victories**, you find some measure of peace with being known as a protector. The people around you know that you're ready to put yourself on the line for them. Add 1 to **Daring** (max +3).
- ✦ **If you answered all the questions about your Scars**, you've given up so much, but still you endure. The people around you can see how tired you are, and how you keep going anyway. Add 1 to **Spirit** (max +3).

Playbook Moves

(start with the marked move and choose two more)

- **I'm the Juggernaut, Love!:** When you first mark a Condition during a physical conflict, you may upgrade your next **Fight** roll from a down beat to a mixed beat, or from a mixed beat to an up beat. When you do, answer one of these questions:
 - ✦ How does this conflict add to your reputation?
 - ✦ You see fear in an enemy's eyes. How does it make you feel?
 - ✦ To strike against your opponent, you leave something else open. What is it?
 - ✦ You feel invincible. What reminds you that you're painfully mortal?
 If the **Fight** is rolled is against another PC, answer one of these instead:
 - ✦ What does this conflict mean to you?
 - ✦ What would you rather be doing than fighting?
- **Among Wolves:** During a physical conflict, when you **Figure Out a Person**, you may roll **+Spirit** rather than **+Wit**. When you do, you may ask an additional question from **The Heart that Wields the Blade**, even on a 6-.
- **Better Bundle Up:** When you give blunt but honest advice, roll **+Spirit**:
 - 10+** They value your direct advice; you gain a String on them and they take +1 forward to act on your advice
 - 7-9** They may choose 1, or else give you a String on them
 - ✦ Point out a flaw they see in your thinking
 - ✦ Act contrary to your advice to show why you're wrong
- **How's that Milkshake Taste?:** When dealing with a threat to your community, but not yet engaged in physical conflict, you may take a harmless action designed to wound their pride (like throwing a drink over them). When you do, roll **+Daring**:
 - 10+** Choose 2
 - 7-9** Choose 1
 - ✦ They become flustered and retreat
 - ✦ Their allies see them as a fool, and they lose critical support
 - ✦ They become enraged and try to come for you; take a +1 forward to **Fight** move against them
- **I've Seen Things You Wouldn't Believe:** When you roll **Emotional Support**, you may share a story of something you've seen or done that you think will help. If you do, they answer this question:
 - ✦ Does hearing about my past help you?
 If they answer yes, you may clear a Condition, even on a 6-. If they answer no, lose a String you have on them or mark a Condition.
- **Wolf and Cub:** Once per session, you may declare your intent to protect someone or something of great value to you. You take +1 forward for actions taken to fulfill that promise. Once per session, when the object of your protection would take a Condition or be harmed, you may take a Condition instead.

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **Do I See Fire?:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ What makes being vulnerable with them difficult?
- **The Heart that Wields the Blade:** When you **Figure Out a Person** during physical conflict, you may ask one additional question from this list, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ What is it that drives you to fight?
 - ✦ What's the one thing you cannot stand to lose?

PLAYING THE BLOODY

The Bloody is formed around the idea that violence is sometimes necessary, but always has a cost. They put their body and their mental wellbeing on the line for the sake of others. To the Bloody, violence is an act of service, of protection, and is necessary to protect their community and loved ones. While all of the playbooks in *Thirsty Sword Lesbians* have some tie to combat, and many characters will be good at it, the Bloody explores some of the costs that can come from a person throwing themselves into the fray again and again.

The Bloody pulls inspiration from folk heroes and archetypes such as the gruff veteran with a heart of gold, or the lone stranger who wanders into town and gets caught up in people's lives. The playbook also pulls from real-world stories of those who fight back against oppression and state violence, and attempts to explore in a safe way how being ready to step in harm's way to protect others has a cost, no matter how noble. In that exploration, be sure to check in with others at your table, to ensure that your group is comfortable with the themes in play. In particular, keep answers to your questions for **Reputation Precedes Me** in line with the established palette for your table. The stories you tell will be much more satisfying when everyone at the table is on board!

The core conflict for the Bloody is their desire for connection in tension with their difficulty being vulnerable. The Bloody wants to have the deep connections they see around them, but letting down those hard-won defenses is scary at the best of times. When they've answered all the questions from one of their **Reputation Precedes Me** lists, the Bloody is asked to reckon with the impact their history has had on them, personally. A Bloody who has completed their Scars list may continue to find vulnerability difficult and double-down on hiding their heart, eventually becoming a Trickster or Scoundrel. On the other hand, a Bloody who has completed their Victories list may find themselves drawn to the Chosen as they become even more the protector people tend to see them as, or perhaps the Beast, finding that if they could only throw off the expectations of civilization, they would find it easier to connect with others as who they truly are.

The Dream Mirror

by Christie R. Fremon

Be the person of her dreams—and theirs, and hers, and that other person's too. The Dream Mirror knows how to be just what others want.

Their central conflict is not knowing how to be themselves. How can they even begin to untangle their own desires from those of the people around them?

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Distant-Eyed Art-Deco Diva
- ✦ Athletic, Effortlessly Cool Pearl-Next-Door
- ✦ Hand-Painted Marionette Librarian

Aesthetics

(circle or invent one for each)

- ✦ Flawless demeanor, unattainable demeanor, doe-eyed demeanor, gamine demeanor
- ✦ Dazzling clothes, touchable clothes, ingenue clothes, butch chic clothes
- ✦ A gemstone sword, a shining sword, an insubstantial sword, a sword that grants someone else power

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	-1	+0
GRACE	+0	+1
HEART	+1	+1
WIT	+1	+0
SPIRIT	+0	-1

Strings Attached

Because you don't show others your true self, your relationships are conditional on keeping up appearances and seeking approval. You can get and use Strings, but cannot **Influence with a String**. You also don't get XP from **Influence with a String** or String Advances.

Others struggle to see the real you, and can't gain more than three Strings on you, meaning they can't earn a String Advance on you, nor use a String for the normal +3 bonus to **Figure You Out**.

Non-Dream Mirrors cannot take these moves as Advances.

- **Tangled Up:** When someone else wants you to do something...

...for them, if you do it, they must show approval, gratitude, or admiration. If you don't do it, they mark a Condition, and if you pursue your desires instead, gain 1 Insight.

...for yourself, confess how little you know about yourself or your desires. If they encourage you to discover yourself, gain 1 Insight (up to once per scene). If they don't, take a Condition.

INSIGHT (campaign) ☐ ☐ ☆ ☐ ☐ ☆ ☐ ☐ ☆

INSIGHT (one-shot) ☆ ☆ ☆

☆ = advances

- **Self-Reflection:** For each Insight advance (☆), answer:

✦ What have you recently discovered about yourself that makes you proud to be you?

Change an aesthetic to reflect that discovery and permanently gain one:

- ☐ You can use and gain XP from **Influence with a String**
- ☐ Others can use Strings for +3 to **Figure You Out**
- ☐ You can gain XP from String Advances and others can earn String Advances on you

After gaining all three, ask another PC:

✦ What do you like best about the person behind the mirror?

Playbook Moves

(start with the move marked and choose two more)

- **Be Their Dream:** When you change yourself to gain someone's acceptance, affection, or interest, ask if it worked. If so, exchange Strings. If you gain three Strings this way in a scene, you **Stagger**.

- ☐ **Group Hug:** Once per session, when you offer **Emotional Support**, on a 10+, you may forgo your choice of a benefit for yourself to instead let others clear a Condition if they meaningfully join in and open up to you.

- **Mirror Ball:** When others **Influence with a String** to encourage you to dazzle an audience, describe your performance and roll **+Heart**:
 - 10+** You each choose 1
 - 7-9** The influencer chooses 1
 - ✦ Your audience is rapt and, optionally, interested in the influencer's perspectives or culture.
 - ✦ Feelings and sensations linger. For the next scene, a spectator may avoid taking one Condition by thinking about your performance.
 - ✦ You get +1 forward to **Entice** while performing. Optionally, the influencer gets credit for the performance.

- **Antique:** Choose an aesthetic and past.

Aesthetic: Vintage, fairytale, unusual parts, signs of wear

Past:

- ✦ You were once close to someone. Why are they no longer around?
- ✦ You're obsolete. Who or what replaced you?
- ✦ You weren't made to last. Why do others consider you disposable?
- ✦ You're from a ruined or destroyed society. How did you contribute to its end?

When someone says or does something reminiscent of your past, if you open up to them, exchange Strings. If you don't, take a Condition and give them a String.

- **Mimesis:** When you observe someone for a short time, you may ask one:
 - ✦ What words would you use to say _____?
 - ✦ What would you talk about in this situation?
 - ✦ What behaviors do you find non-threatening, endearing, or desirable?
 - ✦ Whom do you wish I was more similar to?
- **The New Black:** Declare a new trend, activity, event, or cultural phenomenon, and spend a String on someone influential. Each member of their group must describe what makes them want to participate. Then describe what you'll have to hide or change about yourself if you participate.
- **Sorry-!:** When your looks or behavior are unacceptable for your social role, choose 1:
 - ✦ Get +1 forward to **Entice** while asking forgiveness or getting self-conscious.
 - ✦ Offer someone a String to find the faux pas charming or endearing.
 - ✦ Ask for guidance or private instruction. If they agree, exchange Strings.
 - ✦ Ask what it would take to overlook it. If you do it, take a String on them. If you don't, take a Condition.

- **Toy Soldier:** When you **Fight** for someone else, roll **+Heart** instead of **+Daring**. On a 7+, they choose 1 of your options from the **Fight** list.

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **Love Interest:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ Why do you think you must keep up your performance to have any chance with them?
- **Secret Confessions:** When you **Figure Out a Person** in physical conflict, you may additionally ask one of these questions, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ What desire or fantasy have you hidden from others?
 - ✦ How have prior relationships fallen short of expectations?

PLAYING THE DREAM MIRROR

The Dream Mirror is a people pleaser, and was taught acceptance and love are conditional. They perform their assigned role perfectly until everyone—including them—believes the act. Who are they really? Who would they be if they weren't pleasing everyone else?

To get the most from this playbook, use **Figure Out a Person** or **Mimesis** to understand someone's desires, then **Be Their Dream** or **Entice** them. Exchange Strings early and often. Then use **Tangled Up** and **Self-Reflection** to see how your relationships change when you prioritize yourself.

This playbook is a love letter to those of us whose humanity has been sacrificed for others' comfort. Autistic people, especially those raised as women, are forced to mask and camouflage. When we discover we're autistic (often after decades of struggle and burnout), it's hard not to second-guess everything. Trans people face self-loss twice—first grappling with the heartbreaking realization that performing our assigned gender has stolen precious time for self-discovery and self-love; then every day after, when we're pressured to pass for others' comfort and our own safety. Being queer, too, often means adopting compulsory heterosexuality or allosexuality, and not understanding why everything feels so wrong and empty. We later realize the pain inflicted on ourselves and others is irreversible. Simply being a woman means navigating fathoms of pressure that push the air from our lungs. We're supposed to be the good girl, the innocent prize, the sexy-but-cool nerd, the working domestic goddess, the perfect mother with no bodily autonomy, the seductress skilled at everyone's pleasure but her own, and the always-available empath. Do we ever get to take a breath and do something for ourselves?

The Dream Mirror does.

After self-discovery, your journey doesn't have to end. Pressure to assimilate is more intense when you know the cost, as the Beast finds out. If you're afraid others won't accept you now, play the Trickster. A self-assured Dream Mirror might see the world anew as the Nature Witch. Or advocate for others as the Spooky Witch. No matter what, the hard work of finding yourself is the first step to understanding what makes you happy—and finding your eventual happily-ever-after.

The Ensemble

by April Kit Walsh

The Ensemble is a pair of individuals. Together they can be more than the sum of their parts, or they can fall so deeply into each other that they're lost to the world.

Their central conflict pits the lure of a comfortable but imperfect relationship against the possibility of connecting more broadly and keeping a healthy sense of self.

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Fusion
- ✦ Battle Couple
- ✦ BFFs

Aesthetics

(circle or invent one for each)

- ✦ Bubbly demeanor, clingy demeanor, vigilant demeanor
- ✦ Same color clothes, complementary clothes, clashing clothes
- ✦ Swords drawn from the other's heart, matching swords, gifted swords

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	-1	+0
GRACE	+1	-1
HEART	+0	+1
WIT	+0	+1
SPIRIT	+1	+0



Harmony

You have a Harmony track, which starts at 1. If it drops to 0 or less, you can no longer activate powers that require you to spend Harmony. At 3 Harmony, you are so in sync that you begin to lose your individual selves.

Harmony

0	1	2	3	4
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Decrease Harmony when:

- ✦ One of you is **Smitten** with someone and the other isn't
- ✦ One of you feels neglected or scorned by the other
- ✦ One of you accepts an invitation to an activity the other can't or doesn't wish to attend.

Increase Harmony when:

- ✦ You take comfort in each other after a difficult event
- ✦ You are both **Smitten** with another person
- ✦ You neglect a friend to spend time with each other

At 3 Harmony:

- ✦ If you are ever apart for even an instant, you **Stagger**
- ✦ Others take -2 ongoing to **Emotionally Support** you

Answer for each of you:

- ✦ How does the other make you feel loved?
- ✦ What problematic behavior of yours do they enable with their support?

Duality

Track Conditions and XP jointly; you are interdependent enough that you are both affected by Conditions, unless you take the **Compartmentalize** move.

Track Strings and **Smitten** separately. Whenever an effect grants you a String, assign it to whichever of your selves makes the most sense to you. At character creation, each of your selves can have 0, 1, or 2 Strings on each other PC as normal. Your selves do not take Strings on each other.

Playbook Moves

(start with the move marked and choose two more)

- **Synchronize:** When you work together seamlessly, you can transform into a single being. Choose two features and one drawback of your synchronized form. You may change these choices whenever the nature of your relationship changes significantly. In addition, while synchronized, you may roll +Harmony instead of the usual stat for any roll, but afterwards you must subtract 1 from your Harmony. At Harmony 0, you must leave your synchronized state. You can choose to un-merge at any time unless you choose the Addictive drawback.

FEATURE	DRAWBACK
+ Giant + Flying + Many-armed + Super senses + Impervious to a common danger	+ Terrifying + Ungainly + Destructive + Conspicuous + Addictive

- **Compartmentalize:** You may spend 1 Harmony to avoid feeling each other's Conditions so keenly for a single scene. For every Condition that you have when you activate this move or take later in the scene, decide which of your selves is most keenly affected by it. For actions undertaken by your other half, you may ignore the penalty associated with that Condition, but you can't clear the Condition through a destructive action. You are still Defeated if you would take a sixth Condition.
- **Public Display:** When you proclaim your affection for each other publicly, invent a new cute pet name and roll **+Spirit:**
- 10+** Choose 2
 - 7-9** Choose 2 but an onlooker becomes jealous, obsessed, or concerned for one of you
 - + An onlooker is inspired to confess their feelings
 - + You warm someone's heart; they may clear a Condition if they affirm your relationship
 - + Increase your Harmony by 1
- **Same Wavelength:** Your selves can communicate wordlessly whenever the other is near. When you try to connect while apart, roll **+Heart:**
- 10+** You can communicate clearly, sense each others' surroundings, and one of you can show up at the other's side even if it seems implausible. Mark a Condition to bring friends along.
 - 7-9** You can communicate general feelings and concepts, sense if the other is in danger, and get a general sense of where the other is.

- ❑ **Two Heads:** When you **Figure Out a Person** together, you can allow them to ask you a question from the list in order to ask them another question, which can be any question at all, not just ones from the list.
- ❑ **Well, Actually:** When your selves disagree, you may spend 1 Harmony to learn the answer to any question you could conceivably know or deduce the answer to and say it aloud. Your other half is skeptical. Take +1 forward to either act on the answer or to act on the skepticism or an alternate theory.
- ❑ **Wingmate:** Whenever one of you talks up the other or otherwise makes them look good, the other takes +1 forward to **Fight** or **Entice**. On a down beat, however, the subject of the move may prove more interested in the wingmate.

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **Wandering Eyes:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer one of the following questions:
 - ✦ How would pursuing them make my partner feel unloved or unneeded?
 - ✦ Why do they need you more than your partner does?
- **Outflanked:** When you **Figure Out a Person** in physical conflict, you may additionally ask one of these questions, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ What is your most pressing relationship need?
 - ✦ What special joy or service would you offer a partner?

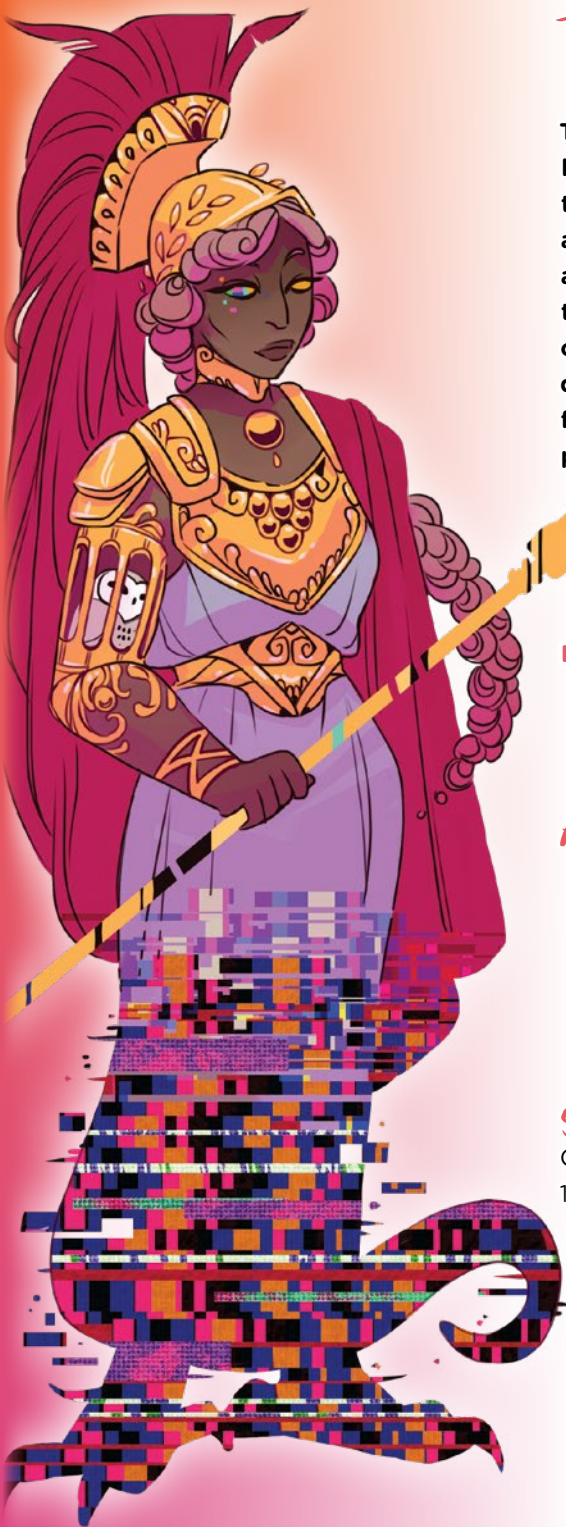
PLAYING THE ENSEMBLE

The Ensemble's most unique feature is that you are playing two distinct characters represented by the same playbook. This can be a challenge and isn't for every group, but it's also a fun way to explore how an existing relationship interacts with a group of thirsty sword lesbians.

This isn't just any relationship, though. In keeping with the game's theme of messy lesbians, this relationship has some issues. Each partner enables some unhealthy behavior, and one or both of them is anxious about their attachment. Too much Harmony can mean that someone's boundaries or identity is getting erased to prioritize the relationship.

When advancing out of this playbook, the Matriarch presents one way to continue exploring the relationship, focusing on how one member balances the needs of the family with other desires and obligations. Any playbook, though, could work as a way to more deeply explore one of the Ensemble characters.

You may also find yourself advancing into the Ensemble when a PC connects deeply with another character and you're interested in exploring their dynamic in this playbook's structure.



The HoloGoddess

by Katherine Cross

They are will made synthflesh—or hard light, or steel. The ghost in their machine could come from any number of places—a training algorithm gone awry, a digital assistant who developed a will of their own, a deity from a civilization long dead—but they are a machine who fights, and loves, with mathematical precision.

Their conflict lies in their inability to relate to organics and the loneliness that stems from that detachment.

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Embodiment of Social Media
- ✦ Aloof Mainframe
- ✦ ...But Doctor, I Am Pagliacci!

Aesthetics

- ✦ Calculating demeanor, influencer's demeanor, gold-plated heart
- ✦ Polished nanofibres, digital nudity, cyber armor, Regency ballgown

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	-1	+0
GRACE	+1	+0
HEART	+0	-1
WIT	+0	+1
SPIRIT	+1	+1

Hologlamour

You can summon for your digital body a holographic representation of your ideal self. What face do you present to the world? What style? Choose one, with all its benefits and drawbacks.

- ❑ **Imperatrix:** Roman armor, silk skirts, a gladius carved from starlight.
 - ✦ **Bonus:** When you **Fight** someone you don't have Strings on, on a 10+ you may spend two of your choices to deny your opponent the chance to choose an option.
 - ✦ **Bug:** When you **Defy Disaster**, you can't use your best stat (or any stat tied for best) unless it's the only approach that makes sense.
- ❑ **Stardust:** Short skirt, long lab coat, a pocket protector full of dreams, an experimental sword.
 - ✦ **Bonus:** When you have time to study something with specialized equipment, ask the GM any question related to it.
 - ✦ **Bug:** You're an ideas person. If you're ever the first one to act in a crisis or enter danger, mark a Condition.
- ❑ **Idoru:** Frills, a boom mic, neon hair, a sword like a spotlight.
 - ✦ **Bonus:** Whenever you reach a new place, you may declare that you have a fan there who can be moderately helpful. Name someone you've lost who they remind you of.
 - ✦ **Bug:** You lack the ability to hide, for any reason, anywhere. People are drawn to you.
- ❑ **Prime Mistress:** Suits with lines sharper than your sword—a pen. A leather folio filled with the secrets of the universe.
 - ✦ **Bonus:** When you **Figure Out a Person** in a negotiation, you may ask a question from **Search Engine Optimization**.
 - ✦ **Bug:** Whenever you take the time to give someone else **Emotional Support**, say what political or tactical edge your opposition gets as a result of your divided focus.
- ❑ **The Crown:** Decolletes, stays, corset bones made of binary, a jeweled sword of office, and a diamond CPU.
 - ✦ **Bonus:** Whenever you confidently proclaim a truth about a person or society, a significant number of previously undecided people will believe you.
 - ✦ **Bug:** When you actively seek to **Entice** someone, you must choose an approach that demonstrates your superiority and dominance. This may mean that the **Entice** move doesn't trigger (unless the subject is into kneeling...).

You can create your own or customize these options! Come up with a slick style, plus one (preferably situational) bonus along with one drawback, subject to GM approval.

Playbook Moves

(choose two)

- ❑ **Anti-Virus:** When someone with a String on you is threatened, once per session you can show up to defend them, even if it seems impossible. Take +1 forward to protect them.
 - ❑ **The Emptiest Orchestra:** You always know what kind of song most appeals to someone. In addition, if you invite others to join you in song, take +1 forward or clear a Condition.
 - ❑ **Encartography:** You have vast stores of information, much of it accurate and some of it useful. When you try to recall information relevant to a challenge before you, roll **+Spirit:**
 - 10+** The information is precise, accurate, and just what you needed
 - 7-9** Most of the information is accurate, but something crucial is out of date and you don't know what
 - ❑ **Force Multiplication:** When you and an ally fight together, you each benefit from your onboard combat suite. When one of you gains a String from **Fighting**, the other also gains a String on the target. If one of you would mark a Condition from **Fighting**, the other may mark it instead. If you're fighting alongside multiple allies, choose one to be your fighting partner for purposes of this move when you first invoke it during the scene.
 - ❑ **Justice through Precision:** When you **Fight**, you may mark a Condition to choose an additional option, even on a 6-.
 - ❑ **Please State the Nature of Your Psychiatric Emergency:** If you roll a 10+ when offering **Emotional Support**, you can ask the person you're supporting about what they hide from everyone else. However, you can't help but overshare in response. Whoever you comfort gets to ask you a question in return.
 - ❑ **Sharp with Numbers:** Your skill with a blade flows not from raw strength, but from your mastery of the tactical field before you. You can roll **+Spirit** to **Fight** instead of **+Daring**. That same mastery also allows you to triangulate your position with perfect precision, so you always know where you are.
 - ❑ **Training Drone:** You can summon an exact holographic copy of yourself that provides you with an opportunity based on distracting, intimidating, or confusing others. Every time you summon your drone, however, roll +nothing to see which bug manifests:
 - 10+** No bugs. And the hologram is extra sparkly!
 - 7-9** The drone can't be dismissed for the rest of the session and it's playing your most embarrassing music from your secret internal playlist.
 - 6-** Your training drone wants to fight and probably fall in love with your friends (in addition to anyone you want them to fight).
- Your holographic clone is also an excellent dance partner, sparring buddy, and always laughs at your jokes.



TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **Compatibility Check:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ How are they incompatible with your operating system?
- **Search Engine Optimization:** When you **Figure Out a Person** during a physical conflict, you may ask one additional question from this list, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ How do you fit into the world around you?
 - ✦ Who do you hate the most?
 - ✦ Who will mourn you?

PLAYING THE HOLOGODDESS

The Hologoddess is a nomadic digital being without a stable home or the ability to connect with the organics. Why? What did they use to be? Were they part of a great digital collective that has since been torn asunder? Were they a vocaloid whose fandom deserted them? A training droid that developed a will of their own? A planet's librarian who took to the stars to find out more? A sentient coffee maker? The choices are endless, but inform the Hologoddess's struggle: loss and a failure to recapture what was lost.

The Hologoddess doesn't need to learn to "become human," but rather how best to be *themselves* in a context that was once alien to them.

Their **Hologlamour** is the foundation for everything else. A combination of style, bonuses, and drawbacks, the **Hologlamour** sets the tone for the character. What do they look like and why does that appearance speak to them? Their glamour represents both their loss and their current identity.

Belonging, awkwardness, and elegance are all key themes. Many of their moves trade on esoteric but powerful upsides to being an AI, things that make them weird but potentially loveable to the right gang of thirsty sword misfits. They have the *appearance* of perfection, but not always the fact of it.

The Investigator

by Ash Cheshire

The Investigator is clever, inquisitive, and hot on the trail of mysteries relating to the Toxic Powers. Their experience has led them to be slow to trust others, while strengthening their desire for truth and justice.

Their core conflict is vulnerability versus suspicion.

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Reformed Gifter
- ✦ Precocious Student
- ✦ Nosy Crime Author

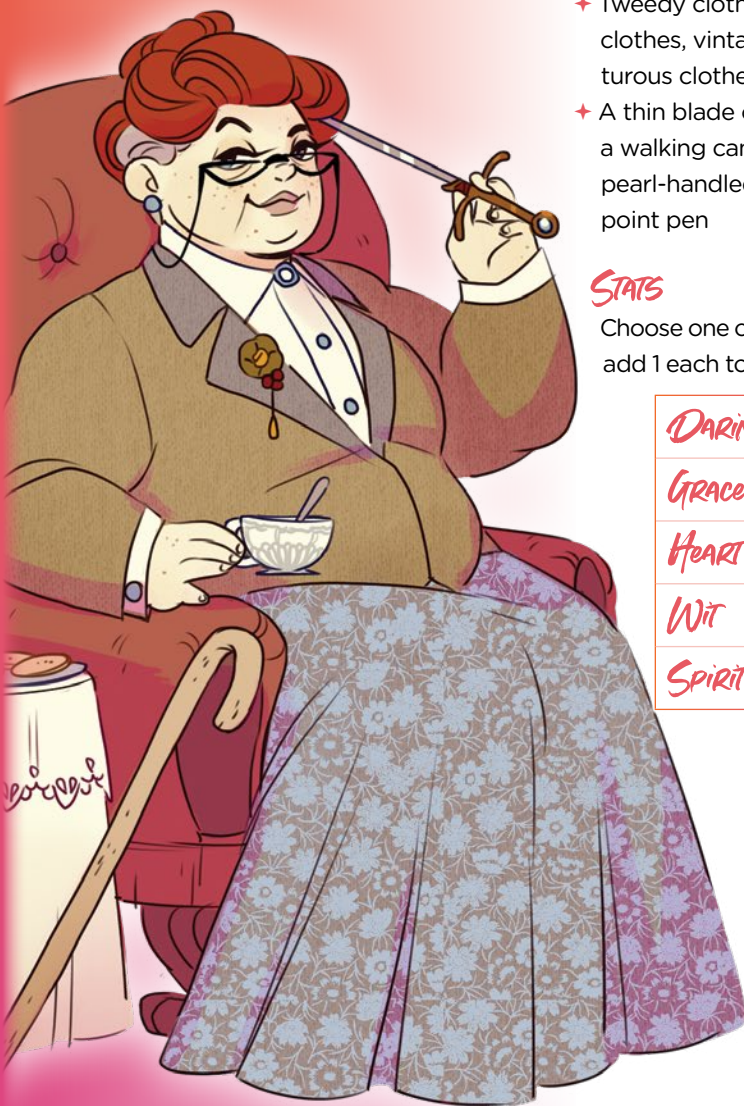
Aesthetics

- ✦ Prim demeanor, reckless demeanor, hyperfocused demeanor, eccentric demeanor
- ✦ Tweedy clothes, practical clothes, vintage clothes, adventurous clothes, plain clothes
- ✦ A thin blade concealed in a walking cane, a hat pin, a pearl-handled umbrella, a ball-point pen

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	+1	-1
GRACE	-1	+1
HEART	-1	+0
WIT	+1	+1
SPIRIT	+1	+0



Suspicion

Define a burning question for each Toxic Power. Next to your question, track your Suspicion score for that Toxic Power, starting at 2. With the other players, define two clues that the Investigator already has about each Toxic Power. When a Toxic Power's Suspicion score rises, add a clue related to what's been discovered and refine the question to aim even more keenly at the heart of the mystery as it unfolds.

Some examples of burning questions:

- ✦ Who might be swayed to defect from the influence of a Toxic Power?
- ✦ What lies has this Toxic Power used to maintain its control?
- ✦ Where is the Toxic Power focusing its influence?

Increase the Suspicion when:

- ✦ You learn a significant new detail about the Toxic Power
- ✦ A Toxic Power connection to a PC is discovered
- ✦ An ally flirts with someone attached to a Toxic Power (once per scene)
- ✦ A PC **Calls on a Toxic Power**

At Suspicion 6, you can use your **Big Reveal** move to conclude your investigation. You can also end an investigation or change your burning question whenever it feels resolved.

Trust

You have a Trust score for each other PC, and for any NPC with whom you want to build a trust bond. Trust scores start at 3.

You may choose to decrease the Trust score when:

- ✦ They roll an up beat to **Figure You Out**
- ✦ You roll a down beat to **Figure Them Out**
- ✦ They flirt with someone attached to a Toxic Power (once per scene)
- ✦ They **Call on a Toxic Power**

You may choose to increase the Trust score when:

- ✦ They take an unnecessary risk for you
- ✦ You make a mistake and they support you
- ✦ They are vulnerable with you
- ✦ You share something deeply personal and it's received with compassion

At Trust 0, you have uncovered definitive evidence of a Toxic Power's influence on that character. Agree with the GM and other players on what evidence the Investigator is interpreting a connection from. Increase that Toxic Power's Suspicion by 1 and add this clue to your investigation. You take -2 ongoing when putting yourself at risk for that character until Trust rises to 3 again.

At Trust 6, share with them a vulnerable insight into your own history with the Toxic Powers and reset the score to 3.

Playbook Moves

(start with the moves marked and choose two more)

- **Always Theorizing:** You have a constantly updating map in your mind about the mystery you are hunting. When you roll to **Figure Out a Person**, roll **+Wit** and an additional +1 for each String you have on them. (You may still choose to spend one String for +3 instead if you wish.)
- **The Big Reveal:** When a Suspicion score for one of the Toxic Powers reaches 6, you may give a speech connecting all of the dots and revealing a deeper truth about the Toxic Power and what you've learned of how to uproot its influence. Reset that Suspicion score to 0 and choose a new burning question for that Toxic Power, if you wish.
Choose one of the following big reveals or create your own with the GM:
 - ✦ Villainy is publicly revealed
 - ✦ A PC is freed from a Toxic Power bind
 - ✦ An NPC formerly aligned with a Toxic Power defects, repents, or confesses
 - ✦ The GM fills in the gaps in your understanding
- **Do You Trust Me?:** If you have gained true trust (Trust score 6) with any of the party members, you both get +2 instead of +1 when you **Influence each other with a String**. If they betray you, you **Stagger**.
- **Forensic Attention:** When investigating the scene of a mystery, you always notice one seemingly unrelated detail that catches your attention for reasons even you don't fully understand until later. The GM tells you what it is; while mysterious, it will turn out to be relevant.
- **Just One More Thing...:** You're excellent at concealing your suspicions when the situation demands, and you're brilliant at underplaying your hand. When you **Call on a Toxic Power**, you may roll **+Wit** instead of **+Spirit**. (Calling on a Toxic Power yourself provides an opportunity to raise that Toxic Power's Suspicion score if you choose.)
- **Misdirection:** When you **Fight**, you can choose from one of these in addition to the standard options:
 - ✦ You provoke them into revealing a personal detail
 - ✦ You filch a piece of incriminating evidence off of them without their knowledge
- **Read the Room:** You're a brilliant observer of people, and a master of mimicry. Just a moment in a new environment, and you know just how to behave to get what you want. Roll **+Wit**:
 - 10+** Choose 2
 - 7-9** Choose 1
 - ✦ Who should I approach first?
 - ✦ How do I make the impression I want to make?
 - ✦ How do I go unnoticed here?
 - ✦ Who should I be keeping an eye on?

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **A New Special Interest:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ What secret or mystery about you am I irresistibly drawn in by?
- **Riposte:** When you **Figure Out a Person** in physical conflict, you may additionally ask one of these questions, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ What are you hiding?
 - ✦ What connection do you have to the Toxic Powers?
 - ✦ Will you help me investigate a mystery?

PLAYING THE INVESTIGATOR

The Toxic Powers have wounded some of us so badly that we hurt others. You believe people can be freed of this influence, and are determined to shine the light of investigation into the corners of every heart to help this happen. But you're not willing to trust anyone quickly—that takes time, patience, and good faith effort on both your parts.

As the Investigator, you are shrewd and perceptive, determined to uproot the influence of the Toxic Powers. You're preoccupied with the toxicity itself, not individual characters. You're not a vigilante. This is about recovery, not revenge.

You can also focus on solving particular mysterious events and uncover connections to the Toxic Powers. Collaborate with your fellow players to make sure this fits the group story.

The Trust score measures how well you have been able to forge bonds with other characters. The Suspicion score measures how much information you have collected about the Toxic Powers' harm and influence on yourself and the people who surround you.

If you're not sure in the moment if something qualifies to increase or decrease your scores, go with your intuition. If it's too much cognitive load in the moment, it's also okay to take quick notes and resolve the mechanics when you're able.

The Spooky Witch has a similar conflict, trying to focus on building community with others seen as monstrous and rejected by the Toxic Powers. The Scoundrel is always on the hunt for the next interesting thing and loves the thrill of the chase. The Trickster's conflicts are similar but more relationally focused on wanting—yet fearing—connection with the other characters. Taking moves from or advancing into these playbooks are ways to flavor your Investigator's personal story.



The Legion

by Pam Punzalan

The Legion is a soldier chosen by destiny, and the latest to bear the name and powers of their legacy of past incarnations.

Their conflict is figuring out who they are between their present self and the many "them" that came before them.

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Pretty Guardian of Destiny
- ✦ Tired Time Traveler
- ✦ Haunted by Past Wars

Aesthetics

- ✦ Intense demeanor, ageless demeanor, dauntless demeanor
- ✦ Simple clothes, ceremonial clothes, clothes from another time
- ✦ A heavy sword, a seeking sword, an inspiring sword

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	+1	-1
GRACE	+0	+1
HEART	-1	+1
WIT	+0	+0
SPIRIT	+1	+0

Reach For Your Tragedy

This war is just one out of the hundreds you have fought in. Time and again, you answer the call to become a soldier of destiny, fighting to prevent the apocalypse. The memories, emotions, and intent of the ages grant you amazing power, but they are born from multiple “yous” that weren’t quite “you.” Every decision—bad, good, restorative, painful—made by your reincarnations follows you like your own shadow.

Fate is a wheel, and Legions like yourselves are caught in its turns. The one common thing across your lives is a Tragedy that haunts your present.

Examples of Tragedies include:

- ✦ You’ll always sacrifice a relationship that meant a lot to you in the name of “the greater good”
- ✦ The one you love the most will always become a Hellsinger
- ✦ A beloved family member will always end up in the crossfire between you and your enemies

Tragedy 0 1 2 3 4

Your Tragedy score starts at 1. Every time you increase your score above 1, gain a Condition. If your Tragedy hits 4, you gain frightening power, but lose your grip on your present identity. Choose an important memory to your current incarnation. You lose that memory until your next cycle. For each memory you lose, your GM gives you vivid visions of the future. These visions can involve your party as a whole, or they can involve a particular person. Then reset your Tragedy to 1; this does not clear any of the Conditions gained through increasing Tragedy.

If your Tragedy drops to 0, you gain a profound sense of peace, but you’re turning your back on the war. You lose access to all your Legion playbook moves until your Tragedy increases again.

Increase Tragedy and take a Condition when:

- ✦ You act in a way that could fulfill your Tragedy
- ✦ You hurt, thwart, or defeat a Hellsinger

Decrease Tragedy and clear a Condition when:

- ✦ You act in a way that prevents your Tragedy, but hurts someone you care about
- ✦ You wilfully ignore an opportunity to thwart or defeat a Hellsinger

PLAYBOOK MOVES

(start with the move marked and choose two more)

- **Heaven's Sword:** Legions have their heads full of the ghosts of their past selves. The voices are loud, but their collective wisdom—and unfulfilled desires—steadies the hands of the Legion as they are at present. Once per session, tell a tale from your tragic past to bump a down beat to a mixed beat or a mixed beat to an up beat and choose 2:
 - ✦ An antagonist takes a String on you
 - ✦ Something in your actions or words hurt, scare, or confuse somebody you care about
 - ✦ Destiny lashes out at an innocent who has ties to you or your friends
 - ✦ Someone you are **Smitten** with becomes **Smitten** with someone dangerous to you.
- **Been around a While:** For each point of Tragedy you currently possess, you may ask the GM a question about the obstacle at hand, the situation you and your friends are in, the organization or faction you've encountered, the item or object of interest to you, or the place you've just entered. This connection, however, works both ways. For each piece of information you gain, you lose something important, or an adversary gains the upper hand on you. The consequence always matches the power you gained. For example, asking about your rival among the Hellsingers could mean that a friend who had feelings for you gets hurt.
- **Cut Right to Your Bones:** Experienced soldiers make for experienced lovers. When your soul recognizes another, you connect deeply and swiftly. Whenever you **Entice** someone, you may give them a String on you to gain a String on them and declare that you knew each other in a past incarnation. The GM may tell you how or may leave it a mystery for the time being.
- **Just Like You Wanted:** With infinite reincarnations comes infinite chances to acquire resources to your name. Once per session, you may declare that you and your allies have access to exactly what you need in terms of a timely opportunity, vital information, money or similar assets for trade, or a valuable contact. Tell us which past life let you get exactly what the party wanted. As a trade-off, the GM will give you one messy complication that comes with using this resource.
- **Resplendent Weapon:** When you **Fight**, roll **+Spirit** instead of **+Daring**. You cannot conceal your presence or identity whenever your weapon is drawn.
- **Tangled Skeins:** When you return to a place that you've been before, name a comrade who fought at your side, or a foe you defeated there. Give them a String and say why. If they recognize you, mark XP.
- **Walk to a Different Song:** You've learned to wield a bit of the magical energies of the world in the same way that you wield your sacred weapon. You may change your appearance to anything you like, with as much or as little detail of your choosing. For this to work, however, it has to have been someone or something that you were once in love with.

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **Divest of My Armor:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ Why are you certain that your Tragedy will make you lose them?
- **Under Heaven's Eyes:** When you **Figure Out a Person** in physical conflict, you may additionally ask one of these questions, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ What can I say or do to strike at your deepest tragedy?
 - ✦ Who were you and I in a past life?

PLAYING THE LEGION

The Legion is meant to complement the setting “Last Love Songs on Earth” (page 112). If not using that setting, replace the Hellsingers in the playbook with other nemeses or fated foes. It draws from tropes and archetypes revolving around (functional) immortal warriors, magical girls, and the “Chosen Ones” of science fiction and fantasy stories. It’s all about exploring the burden that one can carry in the face of destiny, and also looks at how terrifying it could be to live in a world where history is inclined to repeat itself, inclusive of tragedies. Despite this, at their cores, all Legions believe that they can defy destiny as long as they keep trying.

This playbook is a rainbow-filled love note to magical girl stories. The magical girl has its not-so-humble roots in the mahou shoujo archetype from Japanese anime and manga. They have always been stories that explore the feminine, love and romance, and female friendship. Some magical girl stories touch upon queerness and gender identity, which has helped many readers discover their own sexuality and gender expression. Thematically, magical girl stories explore the difficulty of being caught between two worlds: a world that knows you as the girl you’ve “always been,” and a world that recognizes your “true self.” Both worlds grind up against each other and demand different things from the soldiers who are caught in the middle. When you choose this playbook, you signal that you’re interested in playing with that conflict.

In some ways, the Legion is a third possibility connected to both Chosen and Devoted. It could be either of those playbooks in advanced stages, where painful lessons have never been learned—in fact, due to the powers at your disposal, perhaps you never learned these lessons because a part of you was in love with your own strength and what it could do for the world.

If you resolve your Tragedy and put your sacred weapons to rest once and for all, consider living happily ever after or adopting a new playbook. Perhaps the heavy decisions you have made had terrible collateral, leading you to become an Infamous. Maybe, after being tethered to your destiny for so long, you become a Seeker in search of a new place.

The Matriarch

by Alexis Sara

Responsible for more than themselves, the Matriarch has kids, a gang, or partners who look for their help to stay alive. They consider how their relationships fit with their wards as well as their own personal desires. The world may be against their family, but they'll do whatever they can to make it better for them.

Their central conflict is balancing their family's needs versus taking care of their own.

Example Archetypes:

- + Super Mom
- + Gang Leader
- + Kisser of Many

Aesthetics

- + Calming demeanor, wise demeanor, intimidating demeanor
- + Ancient clothing, lavish gowns, practical clothing
- + A storied sword, a feathered sword, a mystic sword

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	-1	+1
GRACE	+0	+0
HEART	+1	+1
WIT	+0	+0
SPIRIT	+1	-1

Family

Your family is a group of people you care for. These are people who count on you and want you to be able to count on them too. Name three members of your family, their Specialty, and their Need. These can be vague concepts or concrete things. Specialities can range from seduction to hacking to illusions to being a history buff. A Specialty should probably feel like it could get used in a campaign. Needs can be spending time with someone, a medical need, cultural items, new spells, romance, and more.

NAME

SPECIALTY

NEED

0 1 2 3

0 1 2 3

0 1 2 3

You can call on your family when you need their Specialty and, if they can, they will assist you. If the task is particularly hard, the GM may ask you to mark their Need track in order for them to help. Each family member has a Need track that starts at 0 and goes up to 3. When time passes, you must add 1 to one of the Need tracks. When a Need track reaches 3, the family member is in dire need. If their Need isn't met by the next time that time passes, they'll have to deal with the consequences. Whenever you meet a Need for a family member, you may reset their Need track to 0.

If a Need requires you to leave a scene, the GM should tell you how long you (or someone else who goes to meet that Need for you) will have to be gone and when you should return.

Playbook Moves

(start with the move marked and choose two more)

- **A Family Is Community:** Your family means the world to you. When people help your family meet their Needs, you may tell them why it matters to you and give them a String. When people insult your family or choose not to help your family, or otherwise cause harm to your family, you may confront them and tell them how they screwed up, then take away a String they have on you.
- **A Parental Will:** Once per scene, when you would **Stagger** while protecting family or loved ones, you may instead add 1 to a Need track and power through the blow.
- **Been Around:** When you enter a new location, roll **+Wit** to see if you recall an adventure here or if something here reminds you of something you've experienced:
 - 10+** You find something you can use to your advantage and gain +1 forward to any action using the item. You may also ask the GM a question about the location.
 - 7-9** You may ask the GM a question about the location.

- ❑ **Collective Power:** When you and an ally **Fight** together, each of you can use **Influence with a String** to add +2 to the **Fight** roll instead of +1.
- ❑ **Family Meeting:** When you assemble your family, they will tell you what they think about the current situation or team. If you take their advice, you can clear a Condition or mark XP. If you do not, choose someone who prefers the course you chose and give them a String.
- ❑ **Family Recipe:** When you try to find out the connections between people using family as a basis, roll **+Heart**:

10+ Ask 2 questions

7-9 Ask 1 question

- ✦ Who matters the most to you?
- ✦ What are your feelings towards your family?
- ✦ What secrets are hiding in this very room?
- ✦ Would you rather be part of my family?

If the family is connected to one of your Specialities, you can ask an additional question regardless of the result.

- ❑ **In the Family:** When you **Entice** someone known to your family, if you roll 7+, they choose 1 additional option:
 - ✦ Your family distracts them but one member will not be able to use their Specialty while they do
 - ✦ They offer you a deal, but it will cost something that would meet one of your family's Needs
 - ✦ They are in awe of your family's reputation (or spirit) and will assist you without cost
- ❑ **Strong in the Real Way:** When you provide someone words of wisdom and they listen, roll **+Heart**:
 - 10+** They take +1 forward to pursue your advice and give you a String
 - 7-9** They take +1 forward to pursue your advice or give you a String

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **If You Wanna Be My Lover:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ How could dating them negatively affect your family?
- **Master of the Heart:** When You **Figure Out a Person** during a physical conflict, you may additionally ask one of these questions, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ Who do you love?
 - ✦ How could I help you deal with your problem?

PLAYING THE MATRIARCH

The Matriarch's life centers around their family. A family can look like all sorts of things: a family can be two wives and their kids, it can be a polycule full of love for one another, it can be a gang, it can be a sister, a brother, and a nonbinary sibling. You get to define the family, but what should always be a part of your family is that you love them and want to help them with their Needs. The family doesn't have to just be the three people on the family list, but those are the people in the family with a clear Speciality and Need.

The best Needs are emotional: a need for quality time, to learn a skill for some purpose, for romance in their life. You're there to help them and they can help you back. For a lighter game, Needs can be low stakes and easy to fill. For a heavier tone, a Need could be a dire force requiring you to spend scenes focused on trying to meet those Needs. Balance the Needs to the tone of the game and your comfort level.

The Matriarch is rooted in the joy and the struggle of queer parenthood. As a queer parent, you have the struggles of a normal parent, but you also have the intersection of at least one queer identity. Legal rights for you and your children could slide back or forward at the drop of a hat, and you have to fight to make sure that your kids can be themselves without fear. It's also about the celebration of the way that queer people have always been making families for each other. Queer families, found or otherwise, are so powerful, and this playbook is about that power of love that gives us strength in unity.

If your family's Needs reach a point where they can be easily handled and no longer create conflict for the group, consider advancing into a different playbook that represents a personal conflict outside of the family. Perhaps you could change into the Dream Mirror and deal with the desire to please everyone and be everyone's everything, or maybe now you can just be excited about the world and be a Nature Witch. It's also possible your family is now in a position where you are the Chosen and have a Destiny to meet that pulls you in another direction.

When playing with the Matriarch, GMs should try to play into the character's core themes by putting Needs in conflict with other goals. This can be by offering chances to fill a Need at a cost, or having NPCs present deals that could cause conflict between PCs. Needs are also great tools for up beats, like presenting a teammate with a chance to get a Need and give that to the Matriarch. There can be a lot of sweet teambuilding moments, using the family to feel like something the Matriarch's friends all care about as well.

The NAGA

by Mariam Ahmad

The Naga comes from a society that hunts them or exploits them for their nagamani (magic crest jewel).

As such, most Naga are in hiding and live their lives shapeshifted in a body not of their true form.

Their central conflict lies in the vulnerability of sharing their true selves versus the safety of passing in a society that would do them harm.

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Infiltrator of Many Faces
- ✦ Survivor
- ✦ Social Rights Activist

Aesthetics

- ✦ Piercing demeanor, rebellious demeanor, cautious demeanor
- ✦ Nondescript clothes, entertainer's clothes, court robes
- ✦ A jeweled talwar with the hilt gem in the colour of your nagamani, a well-oiled but unassuming khanjar, an enchanted piece of rope that functions as a whip or staff

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	+0	-1
GRACE	+1	+0
HEART	+0	+0
WIT	-1	+1
SPIRIT	+1	+1

NAGAMANI

Your nagamani (crest jewel) is your source of magic and power. It is a power entrusted by the Elements to your people's care, long ago. Work with your GM to define what the Elements are and how this manifests in your nagamani. They could be the classic nature elements that your nagamani has an affinity to (an igneous gem for fire, for example), celestial beings that manifest in a galactic star stone, or something totally different. As a physical jewel, describe your nagamani's shape, color, and where it manifests on your person or weapon. For example, the nagamani can be a third eye that always transforms as a blue sapphire bindi with your **Mask of Many Faces**, or be the pommel jewel of your sword.

NAGAMANI 0 1 2 3 4

Your Nagamani score starts at 1. If it hits 4 and you have at least one Condition, you can't hold back and you unleash your **Venom**. If your Nagamani drops to 0, you lose access to all your Naga playbook moves and are stuck in your true form until it increases again.

Increase Nagamani when:

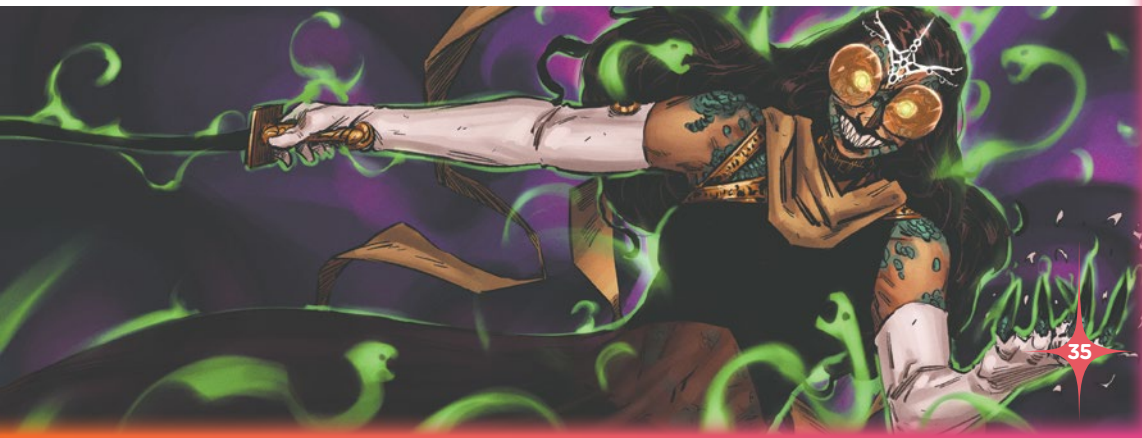
- + You express yourself by taking on an appearance closer to your true form
- + You get hurt or witness someone else getting hurt by another

Decrease Nagamani when:

- + You suppress your identity to stay safe
- + You get **Emotional Support** from another PC

Non-Nagas cannot take this move as an Advance.

- **Venom:** Your blood screams at the injustice of this world. Your nagamani turns into pure venom, and you tap into an avatar of vengeance that must be answered. When you have more than two Conditions and your Nagamani is 3 or more, after any roll you make, you can use the force of a Toxic Power to aid you in your vengeance. When you do, you may upgrade your roll from a 6- to 7-9, or 7-9 to 10+. After you resolve this move, reduce your Nagamani to 0, and take three Conditions.



Playbook Moves

(start with the move marked and choose two more)

■ **Mask of Many Faces:** You can change your entire physical appearance at will as long as you have at least one point in Nagamani. When you do, describe your current appearance and choose 1:

- ✦ You take a form that allows you access to places or people you wouldn't normally; you gain leverage with information discovered in the current scene
- ✦ Take +1 forward in your next **Fight** because you appear more buff in this form
- ✦ The transformation allows you to blend in the crowd; remove a Condition
- ✦ The transformation gives you resilience; ignore the next time you would **Stagger** while in this form

You may take another option from the preceding list when shapeshifting, but the GM gets to choose 1:

- ✦ Someone questions your fake identity
 - ✦ Someone has seen you shapeshift
 - ✦ Your presence attracts the attention of a nearby bounty hunter
- **I Will Hide No More:** When you choose to expose your true identity while **Defying Disaster**, you may roll **+Spirit** instead of the standard stat. When you do so, increase your Nagamani by 1.
- **Loyal:** When you offer someone **Emotional Support**, you may reduce your Nagamani by 2 instead of spending a String.
- **Slippery:** You're hard to pin down and easily slip through most restraints and barriers. In most cases, you can slip through and sashay your way out of physical harm without rolling. For a truly formidable, legendary, or seemingly impossible obstacle, roll **+Grace**:
- 10+** Choose 2
- ✦ You may now use the restraint or obstacle to your advantage in the current or next scene
 - ✦ You gain the element of surprise
 - ✦ You get to change one of your **Mask of Many Faces** features surreptitiously
- 7-9** Choose 1 from the preceding list and 1 from the following list
- ✦ ...but reinforcements are incoming
 - ✦ ...but you left someone or something behind
- **They Had It Coming:** When you **Fight** someone you have a String on, you may also ask a question from **Show Yourself** as an option.
- **Trust in Me:** When you gaze deeply into someone's eyes as you **Entice** them, you may ask one question from **Figure Out a Person**, even on a 6-.

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **Are You My End?:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ What's the worst way you fear they might break or betray your trust?
- **Show Yourself:** When you **Figure Out a Person** during a physical conflict, you may additionally ask one of these questions, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ Who hurt you the most?
 - ✦ What would it take to move past this trauma?

PLAYING THE NAGA

The Naga playbook deals with marginalization and the trauma that comes from being systemically dehumanized in a capitalistic and colonial society. This can be taken from many real-life intersections, and the playbook is designed to allow space to explore some of these feelings. However, care should be taken when navigating this kind of trauma: if you have not felt marginalization due to unchangeable visible attributes, be careful to not fall into the trap of trauma tourist, savior, or edgelord.

To get the most out of the conflict, think about ways in which society has unfairly applied a double standard to your people, or ways in which you have received back-handed compliments. Think of how those can manifest as Conditions: getting Angry at being hunted, or feeling Hopeless at the inaction of common people. Conversely, think of ways in which you or allies have stood up for you in the face of these microaggressions or straight-up bigotry, and how those can manifest into **Emotional Support**.

Although the Beast and Spooky Witch have related conflicts about assimilation and being seen as a monster, the core difference is that this world is trying to hunt you down and take or exploit your core identity (your nagamani) by force. However, if you're looking for Advance moves from other playbooks, moves from these two playbooks would fit well, as would most of the moves from any other playbook that encourages community and healing, such as the Nature Witch, Matriarch, or Sun Hand.

You can play the Naga in any *Thirsty Sword Lesbians* campaign (with GM approval), but will find space to tackle many of its core roleplaying mechanics in *The Mani Missive* (page 129), which is a setting that centers on their background, and has tools for defining the Elements and other aspects of the world at large.

The Sun Hand

by Jan Martin

The Sun Hand uses baking magic to support friends, empower themselves, and defuse bad situations. They try to impress others with an obsessive hoarding of skills and knowledge.

Their central conflict lies in balancing their obsession with healthy relationships.

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Absent-Minded Professor
- ✦ Hard Boiled
- ✦ Starving Artist

Aesthetics

- ✦ Curious demeanor, careless demeanor, impatient demeanor, rebellious demeanor
- ✦ Mismatched clothes, hot weather clothes, diving clothes, rain clothes
- ✦ A multipurpose sword, a sword of organic materials, a sword they made themselves out of Hard Crust

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	+1	+1
GRACE	+1	+0
HEART	+0	-1
WIT	+0	+1
SPIRIT	-1	+0

Self-Destruct

Your habit of pursuing new interests gives you an advantage when attempting to do something you've never done. As long as you have seen or read about it before, choose any move from another playbook to have as your current Obsession move. You can choose a move from your own playbook, which allows you to discard a String to reroll when doing that move.

Self-Destruct 0 1 2 3 4

Your Self-Destruct score starts at 0. If it hits 4, you lose a String with someone or someone gains a String on you. Describe how you let this person down, and any side effects of you failing them continually if this isn't the first time. You lose interest in the obsession and must choose a new move. Then reset your Self-Destruct to 0.

At any time, you can abandon an obsession for a new one by losing a String on someone you previously impressed, related to your Obsession move or not. Describe how your decision impacts your relationship with the person.

Increase Self-Destruct when:

- ✦ You use your Obsession move
- ✦ You neglect a relationship
- ✦ You roll a down beat when using **Sun Hand Baking**
- ✦ You roll a down beat when using an Obsession move (stacks with the first option)

Decrease Self-Destruct when:

- ✦ You support a relationship
- ✦ You develop a new relationship
- ✦ You gain a String on someone you've recently impressed with an Obsession move
- ✦ You give someone you've previously let down Sun Hand bread

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **Self-Destructing Courtship:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ What unwise thing do you think you could do to impress them?
- **Vulnerability Mirror:** When you **Figure Out a Person** during a physical conflict, you may ask one additional question from this list, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ What's something you recently lied about?
 - ✦ Who do you wish were here right now?

Playbook Moves

(start with the move marked and choose two more)

- **Sun Hand Baking:** If you have dough, you can bake it anywhere. You can channel the heat of the sun into your hands. Bake bread by holding the dough and enveloping it in a solar aura. When you do, tell everyone what the aura looks like, and roll **+Daring** to imbue it with power:

10+ Choose 1

7-9 Choose 1, and you can't make that bread again this session

- + **Medical Bread:** Tastes bitter; name a specific Condition to clear when eaten
- + **Solar Crust:** Stays piping hot for a day or until the crust is broken, and provides the ambient warmth of a small campfire
- + **Heavy Crumb:** Tastes familiar and comforting; become deeply sleepy after eating
- + **Klo Style:** Tastes of the sea; temporarily gain gills for a few hours after eating
- + **Fortified:** Dry in texture; when eaten, take +1 forward to roll with a stat chosen when baked
- + **Sugar Crust:** Soft and fluffy; the scent diminishes feelings of aggression in those that smell it
- + **Golden Crust:** The scent entrances those that smell it, causing them to float towards it; rumored to let you visit the afterlife while entranced
- + **Breadbane:** Name a specific species that is repelled by the scent; it tastes really nice for everyone but those named
- + **Illuminated Crust:** Tastes too sweet; glows and causes those who eat it to glow for a few hours
- + **Hard Crust:** Tastes like a rock; can be used as a makeshift club in a pinch

Imbued powers fade from the bread after one day.

- **Common Ground:** When you gain a String on someone who has your current Obsession move, you both choose whether to bond over it. If you do, they gain a String on you and you both clear a Condition.
- **Fast Friend:** Your need to impress others and be vulnerable with them leads to you being easy to befriend. When meeting someone for the first time, you may ask them a question about one of their interests, and you each take a String on the other. If you do something nice with this detail in a future session for that person, they mark XP.
- **Hyperfocus:** When you're focused, you're focused. And when you get in that zone of focus, you learn faster. Once per scene, when you use an Obsession move twice in a row, describe how your understanding of the move has deepened and mark XP.
- **Know-It-All:** You always seem to have advice for something. If you've seen someone make a particular move before, you can discard a String on anyone but them to let them reroll that move (once per roll).

- ❑ **Oppositional Defiance:** You defy authority as a reflex. If someone tells you to do something, even if it's something you wanted to do, your instinct is to not do it. If you directly defy authority, gain a String on that person. If you comply, they gain a String on you.
- ❑ **Positive Reinforcement:** Confirmation that your obsessions are good give you a boost. When you roll a 10+ using your Obsession move, choose someone present to impress and gain a String on them.

PLAYING THE SUN HAND

The Sun Hand obsessively pursues their interests to the detriment of their relationships. The Self-Destruct track serves as a way to treat your relationships as a resource to pursue your interests. You can use moves you wouldn't normally at a cost of a String. The more you build connections with others, the more resources you have available to spend on your Obsession move. Think about the people in your group and how you could help them best, and you will get more out of your Obsession move. But be careful not to sacrifice too much; people only accept disappointment so many times before giving up on a person.

This playbook is designed to fit in the setting *Sundew Garden Bakery* (page 178), but you can use it in any setting. It reflects a spectrum of ADHD that many experience that leads to skill or knowledge hoarding. Often this is at the expense of, and even used as, the reason for obsessive pursuit of skills and knowledge. Choose this playbook if your interest is in exploring the balance of obsession and relationships.

The Sun Hand's baked breads can have many other powers imbued into them; you're encouraged to make your own.

As you try to build relationships, you might find it valuable to permanently learn a move from another playbook. You may discard one of your additional moves and replace it with a move from the Obsession moves you have had. Over time, you could cobble together quite a chimera of a moves set. This gives you flexibility to fill many roles in a group, giving further utility to someone already versatile.

Your curiosity makes it easy to find something to pursue in most fields of interest. Paired with an ability to learn at an accelerated rate, this means you can progress quickly. But will you notice your fading relationships before it's too late? Can you learn to control your impulses and stick to skills you can safely use? Or will you continue flying too close to the sun in pursuit of excellence?

Sometimes we grow and change enough that we want a drastic change. You might be well suited to a new life as a Nature Witch. Leaning into your wild tendencies might give you the freedom you need to blossom. Or maybe you decide to turn your obsessive nature towards helping others and switch to the Devoted? Giving room for your protective nature to grow might be all you need to keep your group safe.

The Troubadour

by Bryanna Hitchcock

The Troubadour lives to entertain and have a good time, but self-expression often takes a back seat to earning a living and maintaining privilege. Keeping everyone happy is both their blessing and their curse.

Their central conflict is their need to be liked versus speaking their truth.

Example Archetypes:

- ✦ Prodigy
- ✦ Rock Star
- ✦ Influencer

Aesthetics

- ✦ Rebellious demeanor, needy demeanor, loud demeanor
- ✦ Flashy clothes, vintage clothes, outrageous clothes
- ✦ Guitar sword, bass sword, drumstick swords, or something that suits your Art

Stats

Choose one column of stats, then add 1 each to two different stats.

DARING	+0	-1
GRACE	+1	+0
HEART	+1	+1
WIT	+0	+1
SPIRIT	-1	+0



ART

You make music, dance, design clothes, or some other form of artistic expression. Describe it. You may make moves while performing, just like you can while sword fighting.

PATRON

You serve a person, fan base, or aesthetic that affects every aspect of your life. Most importantly, it's how you make a living. If your Art is your calling, your Patron makes it possible for you to heed the call. Your Patron can be a PC or NPC that pays your bills or otherwise helps make your world go round. If you're inspired by a particular aesthetic, it drives your fashion, your friends, and of course your Art. If you choose a fan base as your Patron, your livelihood depends on support from a massive audience. Pissing them off by getting too innovative or stagnating can threaten your lifestyle and status.

When your Patron or someone who represents them criticizes you, you become Insecure. If you're already Insecure, take another Condition.

To change Patrons, you must leave your old Patron behind in an epic confrontation by placing their toxicity front and center.



Playbook Moves

(start with the move marked and choose two more)

- **Limelight:** When you perform your music, roll **+Heart**:
 - 10+** Choose 2
 - 7-9** Choose 2 and the GM may ask you one question from **Figure Out a Person**. Everyone in your audience learns the answer.
 - + **Rock Out:** Someone else is rocking out, too; take a String on them
 - + **Shout Out:** Thank your Patron and take +1 forward
 - + **Shred:** Release a mind-bending solo; you clear a Condition
 - + **Kick Out the Jams:** Pick a listener who finds inner strength; they clear a Condition
 - + **Bring the Noise:** Call out the ugly truth about someone powerful and give your Patron a String on you
 - + **Serenade:** Become **Smitten** with someone present and gain a String on them
- **Constant Craving:** After a show, ask someone important to you how they liked your performance. If their reaction is positive, clear a Condition. If it is negative, take a Condition. If you're **Smitten** with them or they are your Patron, mark XP if their reaction is positive, or **Stagger** if it's negative.
- **Number of the Beast:** When you transgress societal norms to attract attention, you become the center of attention and roll **+Spirit**:
 - 10+** Your transgressive music inspires your audience to work together
 - 7-9** Your music is judged heretical and possibly illegal; you draw the ire of a Toxic Power, but it still inspires unity
- **Purple Haze:** When you cut loose in forbidden ways to gain inspiration, roll **+Daring**:
 - 10+** Gain enlightenment. You may ask a question. If you ask the GM, mark XP. If you ask another PC, they mark XP.
 - 7-9** You take it too far. You may ask a question, but someone present gets a String on you (GM's choice).
- **Shooting Star:** When you need something from an NPC you've never met, you may declare that they're a fan. They will give you what you want, so long as it doesn't endanger their life or values. The NPC will demand some small favor, like an autograph. If you don't grant the favor, you take a Condition.
- **Sympathy for the Devil:** When you defend or rationalize the harmful behavior of a person or group, take a String on them. For NPCs, they will become your Patron if you wish. However, you must also say who is hurt and mark a Condition.
- **We Will Rock You:** You have a band or crew of 2–4 members (NPCs). Give them each a name, a role in your troupe, and a vice. If you help a troupe member indulge their vice, take +1 forward at the start of the next performance where they are present.

TRUTHS OF HEART AND BLADE

- **Ugly on the Inside:** When you become **Smitten** with someone, say why, give them a String, and answer this question:
 - ✦ Why do you think they will never be able to accept the real you?
- **Mass Appeal:** When you **Figure Out a Person** during a conflict, you may ask one additional question from this list, even on a 6-:
 - ✦ What kind of Art are you into?
 - ✦ How can I get you to like me?

PLAYING THE TROUBADOUR

The Troubadour in *Thirsty Sword Lesbians* can be any kind of artist or artisan. Music served as the muse for this playbook, but dance, poetry, fashion, graffiti, and many others are all valid Arts.

Troubadours serve a person, fan base, or aesthetic. These are all variations designed to give players freedom in imagining the strings that pull on their PC. Are they a glamorous pop star, a social media influencer, or the standard bearer for a fading culture? Their rebellious streak sometimes leads them to be edgy and hurtful. They can be self-absorbed and never satisfied, creative, and yes, selfish.

Choosing a PC as a Patron shifts that power from the GM to another player. Be sure to discuss what the relationship is like in advance. Troubadours can act as heralds or promoters, or lean into tropes about struggling or haunted artists.

You can play the Troubadour in any *Thirsty Sword Lesbians* campaign (with GM approval), but they will really shine in the *Battle Bards of the Sol System* setting (page 50), where everyone can perform and pour their heart into their Art.



Relationship Questions

The Bloody

- + Who knows something about you that you've never spoken about to anyone else?
- + Who knows you better as a protector than they do as a person?
- + Who are you scared to be vulnerable with?

The Dream Mirror

- + Whose personality or culture is the most dominant in your group?
- + Whose fantasies and dreams are the most fun to bring to life?
- + Who seems least interested in letting you be someone else for them?

The Ensemble

- + Each of your selves dated the same person before getting together. Who?
- + One of you thinks someone needs them; the other has little patience for them. Who?
- + Who is a confidante for one or both of you when you have worries about the other?

The Hologoddess

- + Who most reminds you of someone you left behind?
- + Who most reminds you of someone who abandoned you?
- + Who has seen you at your most un-human?



The Investigator

- + Who do you know from somewhere else?
- + Who can help you pursue one of your burning questions?
- + Who has a connection to the Toxic Powers?

The Legion

- + Who has the face of an old, long-dead friend?
- + Who was the beloved of a nemesis from a previous life?
- + Who first saw you draw a weapon from your body?

The Matriarch

- + Who owes your family a debt?
- + Who makes you feel special in a way your family doesn't?
- + Whom do you confide in about your own problems?

The Naga

- + Who knows your true identity?
- + Who has seen you in **Venom** form?
- + Whom do you think is most likely to betray you?

The Sun Hand

- + Who do you most want to impress with your skills?
- + Who has the moves you want most?
- + Who has grown weary of your hobby-hopping?

The Troubadour

- + Who's your biggest fan?
- + Who has taken issue with your Art?
- + Who has seen you at your lowest?

GM Moves

The Bloody

- ✦ Remind them of one of their Scars, and how their current situation drags the memory to the front of their mind
- ✦ Put someone or something they care about in danger in a way that asks them to jump into harm's way
- ✦ Have a character reject them after they've been vulnerable

The Dream Mirror

- ✦ Influence or pressure them to be what others want
- ✦ Show them approval and inclusion for being what others want (on down beats, others fighting over them or extreme emotions)—or show the costs of pursuing their own desires
- ✦ Remind them how little they know of themselves or their own desires

The Ensemble

- ✦ Separate them
- ✦ A Toxic Power can fill one of their needs
- ✦ Show the consequences of their problematic behaviors

The Hologoddess

- ✦ Show the Hologoddess what their loss has cost them
- ✦ Tempt them to look back at the past
- ✦ Describe how they stand apart from everyone else
- ✦ Give them spurious data that can lead to drama

The Investigator

- ✦ Introduce suspicious NPCs with potential ties to the Toxic Powers
- ✦ Push for inter-reliance between party members through shared challenges
- ✦ Encourage conspiratorial theories with small hints at deeper connections between characters and plot elements

The Legion

- ✦ Give their past selves deep ties to the antagonists
- ✦ Haunt their dreams with memories of previous lives
- ✦ Have former comrades and rivals pop up at inconvenient times

The Matriarch

- ✦ Offer a Need at a cost
- ✦ Show their family pursuing Needs unwisely
- ✦ Give the opposition pressure and support from family

The Naga

- ✦ Get them closer to triggering **Venom** by creating opportunities to increase their Nagamani score and gain Conditions
- ✦ Create opportunities for **Mask of Many Faces** by putting them in situations where their identity is at risk or their shapeshifting can be leveraged
- ✦ Leverage their loved ones through antagonists, whether it's through misinformation, betrayal, or damseling

The Sun Hand

- ✦ Give them options outside of their Obsession move to do the same task.
- ✦ Create consequences for friends when sacrificing friendships.
- ✦ Give impressed people's reactions extra attention.
- ✦ When they roll a down beat on **Sun Hand Baking**, create undesirable outcomes for the powers they were hoping for. For example, K'lo Style bread, instead of granting gills, makes the skin wet and slimy. It may be obvious to them that it didn't work out, but they won't know the effects until after they eat the bread.

The Troubadour

- ✦ Accuse them of selling out
- ✦ Accuse them of going too far
- ✦ Reveal the toxicity of their Patron

Settings

Battle Bards of the Sol System

by Bryanna Hitchcock

Overview

Far in the future and very much in spite of itself, humanity has migrated across the solar system. From the Lunar Realm to the jungles of Venus to the floating cities of Jupiter to the dark mines of Pluto, people thrive through technology and magic.

This diverse and divided diaspora needs creative diplomats to find harmony. Enter the Battle Bards, wandering performers who travel the solar system righting wrongs and bringing factions together for peace. If this also creates a bigger crowd for a show, all the better.

Principles

Make the Solar System Magical and Weird

Human creativity, science, and magic have led to a plethora of wonders across the system. Each planet or moon has multiple environments, including different weather, unique creatures, and beautiful plants. Sentience is everywhere, sometimes just below the surface of seemingly inert locales.

Creativity Heals

Creative expression heals by creating empathy and exciting the imagination. Humanity is always searching for something new that scratches the same old itches. We love to dance. We love to alter our consciousness. Humans love to rock.

Reinforce Interdependence

No person is an island, and no one can survive alone in space for long. Greed and other strong emotions can lead people to believe they don't need others or don't depend on their environment to survive. Weave stories and conflicts that lead characters to confront and embrace their interdependence.

Setting

Imagine billions of human beings living on or around nearly every planet in the solar system; each world as diverse and divided as the Earth we know. Through science or magic, humanity may have solved many of the issues that plague us now, but greed and lust for power will follow us, even into space. These people of the future need conflict resolution... and entertainment.

Battle Bards are itinerant problem-solvers and musicians who strive to bring harmony wherever they may roam.

Questions For The Players

- + Where in the solar system are you from?
- + What does your home culture value?
- + Why did you choose to become a Battle Bard?

The Planets

The descriptions in this section are meant to inspire rather than restrict. Make each world diverse in population, environment, and conflict. A few scientific facts about each planet are included to inspire twists, but even these may have been altered by incredible sci-fi sorcery.

MERCURY

Day: 176 Earth days

Year: 88 Earth days

Mercury is the smallest planet in the solar system, about the size of earth's moon. Tremendous heat and lack of atmosphere make Mercury unattractive for humanity. However, recent events have led scientists to a startling conclusion, after detecting energy readings that can only be caused by an intelligence. Upon investigation, they learned of beings made of pure energy.

Now humanity has an open invitation to meet with the Embassy of Lights. Teams from the inhabited worlds are squabbling over who will accept the risk and honor of first contact.

VENUS

Day: 243 Earth days

Year: 225 Earth days

Venus is about the size of Earth. Over the centuries, the planet has been terraformed. No longer the poisonous oven nature created, the north and south poles have become tropical paradises, home to many thriving nations. However, a thick ring around the equator is still extremely inhospitable, with deadly heat and hurricane winds.

Most Venusians see themselves as members of their countries or religious groups, rather than as a single people. They tend to focus on local issues and conflicts, disavowing participation in interplanetary organizations.

EARTH

Day: 24 hours

Year: 365.25 days

Earth is a nature preserve with population centers that resemble history theme parks more than cities. As the home of humanity, Earth often serves as a neutral ground for negotiations or as a tourist destination. Vacations to Earth are the number one prize in game shows across the system.

Luna, Earth's moon, has several domed cities. The largest of these, the Lunar Realm, is detailed in its own adventure, *Starlight of the Lunar Realm* (page 235).

MARS

Day: 24 Earth hours

Year: 687 Earth days

A thousand years ago, Mars was the first planet humanity reached and terraformed into a new home. The Mars of *Battle Bards* is completely altered with oceans, vast continents, and a myriad of bustling cities, rivalling the density of old Earth. Even her two moons, Phobos and Deimos, have cities.

Alongside abundant surface life, Mars is also home to descendants of the earliest settlers that built whole cities underground. Martians tend to be shorter and widely varied in skin tone, with both red and green appearing frequently.

ASTEROID BELT

The system has over a million asteroids, ranging from a few feet in size to hundreds of miles wide. Most asteroids circle the sun in a belt between Mars and Jupiter. While asteroid belts conjure images from the media, our own is not as dense as popularly depicted. The entire ring of asteroids in the main belt has less mass than Earth's moon.

Ringers, the folks who live in the belt, are a diverse people in terms of background, ideology, and religion. Close-knit communities will often sponsor a belt operation to secure resources. These small mining towns tend to follow their own rules; woe to the meddling stranger.

Ceres is a dwarf planet in the asteroid belt, home to the supply city of New Frisco, a wretched hive of scum, villainy, and artistic aspiration.

JUPITER

Day: 10 Earth hours

Year: 12 Earth years

This gas giant is the largest planet in the solar system and home to more people than any other. In addition to the dozens of floating cities in Jupiter's atmosphere, millions live on her 79 moons. The largest moon, Ganymede, is more massive than the planet Mercury.

The people of Jupiter's many cultures vary widely in height, appearance, and hue. Genetic and technological enhancements are quite common, as well. For example, some cultures revere the animals and ecosystems of Earth, demonstrating reverence through genetic manipulation to appear more beastly. Others embed technology to give them an edge in business or warfare.



SATURN

Day: 11 Earth hours

Year: 29 Earth years

Similar to its larger sister Jupiter, Saturn is a gas giant. While she is famous for her rings, she also has 82 moons. Also like Jupiter, Saturn's largest moon by far, Titan, is larger than the planet Mercury. The scale and diversity of civilization is similar as well, though Saturn is a famous vacation destination, due to the aforementioned rings.

With billions of people and hundreds of cultures, Saturn is a huge contributor to the media landscape. The mystique of her rings attracts creatives from throughout the system, helping Saturn become the leading producer of talent contest shows in dozens of languages.

URANUS

Day: 17 Earth hours

Year: 84 Earth years

The ice giant Uranus is unique in the solar system—it rotates on its side. This means that in spite of having only a 17-hour day, each pole experiences decades of continual day or night, depending on the season, each of which lasts for 21 Earth years.

Although Uranus herself is a toxic, frozen sea of methane, ammonia, and water, humanity thrives on her 27 moons. The people of the two largest moons, Titania and Oberon, are notorious for their feuds and grudges.



NEPTUNE

Day: 16 Earth hours

Year: 165 Earth years

Like its sister Uranus, Neptune is an ice giant made primarily of water, ammonia, and methane, which makes the world look blue. Winds in Neptune's atmosphere can exceed the speed of fighter jets.

Neptune has 5 rings and 14 moons. Its largest moon, Triton, has its own atmosphere and was home to the first human facilities on the eighth and farthest planet from the sun. What began as a scientific and commercial venture has turned into a civilization of space stations and floating cities, utilizing the tremendous energy available in Neptune's rich atmosphere.

PLUTO AND THE DWARF PLANETS

Day: 153 Earth hours

Year: 248 Earth years

Pluto is a natural and thaumaturgical miracle with a family of moons, Earth-like mountains, and crimson snow, crowned by a heart-shaped glacier as large as a small country. Despite being smaller than Earth's moon, Pluto is dotted with cities and towns. Her five moons are Charon, Hydra, Kerberos, Nyx, and Styx.

Pluto has become a hub for those who value their privacy and illicit businesses from all the dwarf planets with their varying orbits and vast distance from the sun. All business is run by a royal house of necromancers that may or may not be plotting to take over the solar system. It would seem unlikely, as their resources are limited compared with the nations of Jupiter or Venus.

Further Inspiration

Our solar system is immense and mysterious. Check out NASA's site for inspiration and to appreciate science and the natural beauty of our world and its neighbors. The Worldbuilding Worksheet is great for creating new civilizations, too.

SCENARIOS

BAND CAMP

Pitch: The Interplanetary College of Bards (ICB) is a prestigious university where the most talented artists come to hone their craft and prepare for a life of adventure and diplomacy. Only the best wins a seat to learn from the masters.

Hook: The PCs are candidates with one shot at the fame and fortune that comes with being an official Battle Bard.

This is a great scenario for a one-shot or to kick off a campaign with a new group. Pick a world to host the competition and work with the group to establish an NPC host and a foil for each PC.

Peace Talks

Pitch: New Olympus on Mars makes a great display of standing for liberty and fairness, while hiding a disturbing secret.

Hook: The Battle Bards have been called upon to facilitate peace talks between two warring factions on Mars.

New Olympus is one of the oldest cities on Mars, famed for lucrative and life-changing medical innovations. The city has cracked down on the wild behavior and blasphemous religion of visitors from Red River with draconian punishments. Three days ago, the cities traded missile volleys. In a final effort to avoid all-out war, they invited a group of expert negotiators (our heroes) to forge a path to peace.

According to the ambassador of the nearby mining metropolis Red River, the war is only the most recent twist in a story of jealousy and greed. New Olympus has been undermining their economy for decades. From tariffs and religious persecution to harsh prison sentences and culture clashes, New Olympus needs to be taught a lesson.

However, the true mission for our heroes comes in the form of the secret source of New Olympus's medical advances and their super-soldiers. Is it experiments on the populace? Stolen organs? A captive alien? You decide!

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Pitch: Greedy leaders on Mars and Saturn have stoked the flames of hatred and war with Jupiter, and put billions of lives at risk.

Hook: The United People of Jupiter seek inspiring Battle Bards to halt the war, just as tensions reach their peak with a public duel between ambassadors from both worlds.

Your group should create two issues central to the conflict between Mars and Saturn. It's vital that the issues excite the group. Star Trek is a great inspiration for conflicts that reflect modern life in a science fiction context. Here are some ideas:

- + The sorcerers of both worlds say war is destined
- + That's MY asteroid!
- + Your hedonistic culture is destroying our traditions
- + Their influence on system culture is way too big
- + This genetic engineering has gone too far
- + Their bionic army is too big
- + The enemy must reduce their stockpiles of interplanetary weapons

CHARACTERS

As a setting for *Thirsty Sword Lesbians*, *Battle Bards* functions more as a brochure for the solar system of the future than a catalog of important people. In this way, it can function as a backdrop for other settings and campaigns.

Battle Bards can also work on its own. The Worldbuilding Worksheet is a great place to start creating NPCs. Try to give all your NPCs their own motives and desires.

NAMES

Names vary wildly throughout the system. Use contemporary names for individuals from peoples who see themselves as important or legacies of Earth. Use colorful nicknames for skilled operatives and crooks. Everyday people might have simple or beautiful names; truly pompous individuals might have eponyms like The Logician or The Pianist.

Custom Moves

Planetology, **Pour Your Heart Out in a Song**, and **Put on a Show** are basic moves available to all players in a *Battle Bards* campaign.

Planetology

When you want secret information about a planet or people in the solar system, ask the GM a question and pick a complication:

- ✦ The truth is alarming
- ✦ You have a strained relationship with someone important there
- ✦ The information is available for a price

Pour Your Heart Out in a Song...

When you write a song to express your feelings, roll **+Heart**. On a mixed beat, you choose the song. On a 10+, you choose the song and whenever you play the song, you take a String on one person in the audience who is hearing it for the first time. On a down beat, the GM chooses the song and a hard move.

Include this as a basic move to amp up the musical elements of your game. It allows players to bring real music they love into the game to add context, emotion, and beauty.

Put on a Show

When you perform for an audience, roll **+Heart**:

- 10+** Choose 2
- 7-9** Choose 2 and give a String to someone present
 - ✦ Make a good impression and take +1 forward
 - ✦ Inspire someone and give them +1 forward
 - ✦ Unleash your emotions and remove a Condition

The Troubadour playbook uses the move **Limelight** instead of **Put on a Show**.

CRYSTALIA

by Ash Kreider

Overview

The war for Crystalia has raged for centuries between the Necrohorde and those who would resist its benevolent rule. The Necrohorde, led by the Lich Prime and his army of Necromancers, have conquered half of Crystalia. However, the Elemental Archons of Crystalia have put aside their differences to form the Archon Alliance, which yet holds the servants of the Necrohorde at bay. Will Lich Prime finally crush the Elemental Archons beneath his heel, or will the Archons find the secret weapon forged by the Ancients in time to defeat him once and for all?

Principles

SHOW THAT EVIL IS WRONG, BUT MAKE IT HOT

Players might choose to play Necrohorde characters, or they might choose to fall in love with Necrohorde NPCs, but it should never be ambiguous that the Necrohorde is evil and what they are doing is wrong. Make evil alluring, allow characters to flirt with it, but never allow them to fool themselves about what it really is and where they really stand.

Consequences Are Never Subtle

When the players take action, the consequences are always large and impossible to ignore. The struggle between the Necrohorde and the Alliance takes place on a cosmic scale, so the actions of the PCs must have a similar effect. Success or failure, everything the PCs do should have momentous impact.

Focus on Empathy and Human Connection

Crystalia is a mash-up of space opera and high fantasy, full of opportunities for dramatic action. But you should never lose sight of the people in your story. Always highlight that the central conflict of this setting is driven by people with complex emotional needs and motivations, and encourage players to have moments of genuine connection with allies and enemies alike.



Setting

Centuries ago, there was born a magician more powerful than any who had ever lived, with power over death itself. Through rigorous devotion and study, he Ascended and became Lich Prime. Since then, his armada of castle-ships has spread out across the galaxy to unify all peoples under the rule of Lich Prime. The Necrohorde is led by Lich Prime's Necromancers, who are in turn protected by their Death Knights—the strongest warriors from across the galaxy, whose highest calling is to die protecting their Necromancer (though only after bathing in the blood of thousands of their enemies, of course). Since the Ascension of Lich Prime, there are now very few worlds who do not follow his rule.

Crystalia is one of those worlds. Until the arrival of the Necrohorde, Crystalia was a small and peaceful backwater planet on the edge of the galaxy, whose denizens lived in harmony with each other and nature. Crystalia is a planet rich in magic, full of strange and wondrous creatures and many diverse peoples. Magical ability is common among the people of Crystalia, but the strongest magics are wielded by the Elemental Archons—warriors with legendary power empowered by the planet to channel the forces of nature in defense of Crystalia. For thousands of years, the Archons led Crystalia by following an ethos of peaceful coexistence and mutual aid.

That peace was shattered 200 years ago when the first vanguard of the Necrohorde arrived to expand the dominion of their ruler, the immortal Lich Prime. When the Archons refused to swear allegiance and cede dominion of Crystalia to Lich Prime, the Necrohorde invaded. They sent wave after wave of shock troops, who were felled by the Elemental Archons only be raised again by Necromancer servants of Lich Prime.

Confused and demoralized, the Archons fell back and licked their wounds as the Necrohorde razed a large swathe of Crystalia's forests. Lich Prime's Necromancers used the resulting death-energy to build the Necrohalls—a sprawling complex of dark stone and labyrinthian corridors. From the Necrohalls, the Necrohorde has continued to slowly but inexorably expand their territory for the glory of Lich Prime.

Today, there is no one left on Crystalia that remembers peace. For the last two centuries, the Archons have continued to resist the Necrohorde, but their efforts have grown fragmented and disorganized as popular sentiment has turned against the Archons. Recruiting citizens for the Resistance grows increasingly difficult, and there is an increasing plurality of Crystalia's citizens who wish to surrender to the Necrohorde so they can finally live in peace.

To make matters worse, the Oracles predict that the day is not far off when the rest of Lich Prime's armada arrives to finish what the vanguard began. The Elemental Archons have formed a last desperate Archon Alliance, which strives to find the legendary secret weapon said to be the only thing powerful enough to defeat Lich Prime. But the Resistance has grown weak, and the Archons are perpetually at odds with each other as to how best to go about accomplishing their mission. Will they put aside their differences and come together to save their world? Or will the vision that the Oracles saw come true and end all hope of freedom for Crystalia?

CAMPAIGNS

FOR THE NECROHORDE

The PCs are servants of Lich Prime, tasked with infiltrating the Archon Alliance. Will they remain loyal to Lich Prime, or will they betray their oaths?

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The PCs arrive in Alliance territory and need to gather information so they can begin their mission. However, they find themselves dealing with culture shock as they struggle to blend in with people utterly unlike anyone from the Necrohorde. Can they stay on task without giving themselves away? Will anyone be tempted by doubt in their mission?
- ✦ The Archon Alliance throws a massive ball and *everyone* is attending. The PCs get dolled up for a night of dancing, carousing, and kissing unlike anything they have ever experienced. Partway through the night, the ball is attacked by the Necrohorde. Will the PCs be able to maintain their cover? Or will they let their guard down and reveal something of their true nature?
- ✦ The Oracles predict a probable future in which a high-ranking Necromancer is captured by the PCs and brought back to the Alliance, and the PCs are dispatched to make this future come true. Will they fail to capture the Necromancer and risk giving away their position as spies? Or will they bring back the Necromancer as ordered and risk being branded as traitors to the Necrohorde?

Revolutionary Girls

The PCs are Elemental Archons, risking their lives daily to fight against the Necrohorde and take back Crystalia. Will they find the weapon of the Ancients that can defeat Lich Prime? Or will they lose the will to fight and surrender to the Necrohorde?

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The Necrohorde has seized an important Crystalian cultural site, and there is disagreement among Alliance leadership about how to respond. Some want to make a direct assault, while others don't want to risk damaging one of the last intact Ancient ruins. Tensions are high, and time to act before the Necrohorde consolidates its hold on the site is running out. Can the PCs resolve disagreements and unite their allies?
- ✦ The Resistance suffers a major setback when the Archons over-extend their powers and suffer a demoralizing defeat. Unable to fully call on their elements, the PCs are forced to take time to rest, recharge, and recuperate. Use the session to resolve differences between the Archons and encourage bonding between PCs. Additionally, use flashbacks to remind the PCs of what gives them purpose and hope to keep fighting, and narrate how they gain new powers when they Advance.
- ✦ A Resistance patrol is captured by Crystalian refugees while on patrol in what is thought to be friendly territory. The villagers send word that they intend to turn the Resistance soldiers over to the Necrohorde in retaliation for the destruction of their village as a result of collateral damage from a fight between the Archons and the Necrohorde. Can the PCs rescue the Resistance patrol before they are turned over to the enemy? And can they make things right with the disgruntled refugees?



CHARACTERS

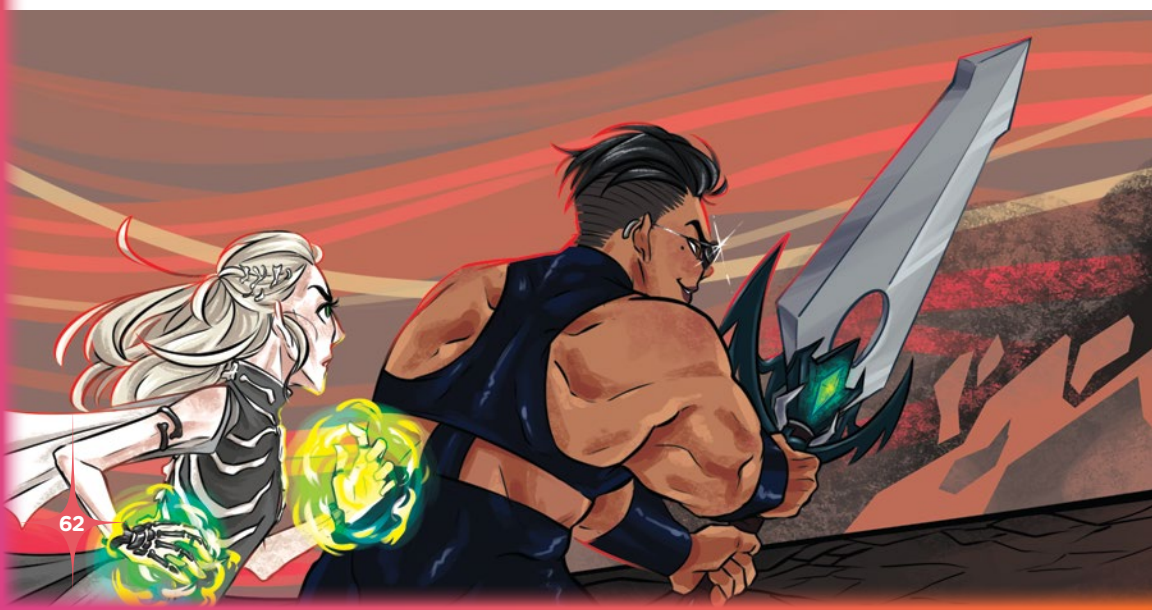
The Necrohorde

Afflictor Ariadne (she/her): An up-and-coming Necromancer recently sent to the front to prepare the Necrohalls for the arrival of the Necrohorde armada. Afflictor Ariadne is rumored to be the most powerful Necromancer of her generation. She is diminutive, with corpse-pale skin, hair of no particular color, and piercingly brilliant green eyes. Her uniform robes are always crisply ironed. She carries no weapon but her ceremonial dagger; her true weapon is her awesome necromantic ability.

Afflictor Ariadne is an overzealous proselytizer of Lich Prime, eager to erase the shame of being born on a rebel world by rising through the ranks of the Necrohorde. The fact that Crystalia reminds her of her own home only makes her all the more eager to crush the Archons for the glory of Lich Prime.

Augustine the Tenth (she/her): Augustine is the sworn sword of Afflictor Ariadne, and is one of the Necrohorde's most feared Death Knights. She is a giant of a woman whose sword, *Crucifixion*, is nearly as large as her own Necromancer. Yet despite her fearsome size, on the field of battle she is inhumanly fast. Augustine eschews the heavy armor favored by most Death Knights and wears only a set of tailored black robes and a pair of mirrored glasses.

Augustine the Tenth has no particular feelings about Lich Prime one way or the other, but her oaths to protect and defend Afflictor Ariadne are another matter entirely. Augustine is hopelessly in love with Ariadne, feelings that she has never expressed and does her best to bury beneath duty and devotion.



Archon Alliance

Prince Luminaria (they/she): Luminaria is the Archon of Light, reluctant leader of the Archon Alliance, and the rightful ruler of the lands now occupied by the Necrohorde. They are tall and willowy, with long pink hair, and gentle features that are belied by cynical eyes. When away from the front, they favor flowing gowns that highlight their beauty and grace. When she takes the field against the Necrohorde, however, she dons luminous white plate armor. Her sword, *Lightbringer*, is a manifestation of pure light that she summons with her powers.

Luminaria fights the Necrohorde because she doesn't know any other way to live, but she is tired. They yearn with every fiber of their being to lay down their sword, but they know that there is no one after them to take it up again if they surrender.

Duchess Volcanna (ze/zir, she/her): Volcanna is the hot-headed Archon of Flames and heir to the throne of the archipelago nation of Firelandia. Zir skin is the black of volcanic rock and zir hair is a continually shifting wreath of magical flame. Instead of a sword, ze wields a humungous two-handed obsidian battle-axe. Ze is known for her dislike of politics and fearlessness in battle.

Volcanna has all the subtlety of zir namesake and prefers to bludgeon zir problems into submission. Ze has no patience for the seemingly endless discussion and consensus-building the other Archons seem to require to come to any sort of decision. It's rumored that ze is considering leaving the Alliance to return to Firelandia.



Names

CRYSTALIAN NAMES

- | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| ✦ Blasta | ✦ Gemella | ✦ Storma |
| ✦ Chantera | ✦ Shadella | ✦ Sweetsa |
| ✦ Cosma | ✦ Solaria | |

NecroHorde Names

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|-----------|
| ✦ Aurelia | ✦ Flagella | ✦ Portia |
| ✦ Bale | ✦ Hypatia | ✦ Scourge |
| ✦ Calliope | ✦ Phlebotema | |

Custom Rules

WHAT IS YOUR POWER?

Whether Necrohorde or Alliance, every PC possesses fearsome power. If you're an Archon, what is your element? Water? Ice? Something less tangible? If you're a Necromancer, what is your specialty? Ghost conjuring? Fleshcraft? If you're a Death Knight, what makes you one of the most fearsome warriors in all of the Necrohorde?

CUSTOM MOVE

AWAKEN YOUR HEART

When you self-righteously engage in toxic or harmful behavior to support your ideology, the GM may tell you to roll **+Heart**:

- (10+)** You realize what you're doing is harmful and know what you need to do instead
- (7-9)** You realize you are being harmful, but only after hurting someone you care about
- (6-)** You don't realize that it's harmful until after you've done it, and the consequences are disastrous: the GM is encouraged to make a move that stings

ERA'S END

by Emily Care Boss

Overview

Your liege is dying and the heir has yet to be named. The Land of Dalmeya has been enjoying a precious peace balanced on a marriage bond now severed by death. You and your Spiral Walker Sisters, a band of fighters, seekers, and diplomats, have been entrusted with helping to calm the flames of conflict between factions vying for the throne. Will the realm be best protected by General Helvene of the Red Tower? Is the Queen's child, Portia Silver-eyes, ready to take on the crown? Or should the Consort Renath, Princess of Bryene, be named to ensure the continuity of the treaties?



PRINCIPLES

Make Dalmeya a Fragile Land of Beauty and Complexity

Lovers' vows in a flower-filled meadow, ancient cathedrals built from the blood and labor of many, shores racing sailboats and gunships, practice grounds of the elite guards, bowers where true lovers meet against the clock for when their mates return, jewelers workshops, a weavers market, children's barracks, rooftop gardens, a river of dreams. One motif of *Era's End* is breathtaking beauty and heritage that is worth living and dying for, and contrasting that beauty with the costs to generations who created it or sacrificed to make it for others to enjoy. Create a spellbinding backdrop for players to love, a world of beauty and fragility that will be affected by the decisions that inform its future.

Tangle, Connect, and Deepen

The people of the court are fighting to make a decision about who will control the future of this kingdom. It has been threatened in the past by war and wrestled into peace at great price. Take the people making these decisions and turn them into round, flawed, sympathetic, yet often misguided people. Give them people, places, beliefs, and goals that they genuinely care about. Connect them through bonds that complicate their commitment to achieving a given goal.

Give Time and Space for Emotions

Provide private moments or confidences sworn to secrecy that reveal the emotions these conflicts and devotions evoke. Revel in the passions, angers, and struggles their relationships bring into play. What are the hopes and fears that each character brings? Give us a window into how those feelings manifest: are they brutal to their loved ones out of fear for the realm, do they stay up late into the night plotting and trying to wrestle fate into line, do they seek absolution in the arms of gods and ministers? Paint these feelings with words that tell us how it feels to be someone struggling with their own desires in a world on the edge of dissolving.

Setting

As long as can be remembered, Dalmeya and Bryene have been tangled together and eternally at war. In the last few dozen years, a marriage alliance has brought a break in the struggle. But now the sovereign, Zeela—whose shared love with Renath of Bryene brought the possibility of peace—is dying. She has spoken to her daughter and Consort of the need for peaceful transition and sought aid by bringing in the Spiral Walkers, your group who specializes in diplomacy and aid to those in war or crisis. You are oathbound now to help this kingdom find a path forward that can help solidify their experience of peace and open the door for healing from centuries of pain and ruin. Your bonds of sisterhood and love give you the resources you need to offer aid to others.

Powerful factions in Dalmeya are aligning behind the heirs. Noble families, whose riches based on vast land holdings give them influence far beyond their numbers, support Portia Silver-eyes. Her claim brings legitimacy to their own positions. Entrenched bureaucrats that record, order, and control the day-to-day functioning of the kingdom are split between Portia Silver-eyes, who grew up among them, and the Lady Renath, whose keen mind has aided the prospering of the realm. Wealthy merchants support General Helvene, whose forces have created peaceful lanes of trade to Bryene and lands reached through bandit-ridden hollows. The bandits are led by exiled opponents of the peace from the military and noble classes, and draw in dissatisfied common folk who seek prosperity. Artists and artisans are loyal to Renath, who, with Zeela Night-bones, established centers for study and created the title of Pillar for treasured craftspeople. (Those endowed with Pillar status are supported in their creative efforts for life.) People whose blood and sweat feed the land, soldiers and farmers, support General Helvene—some hoping, others fearing the return of war.

The land of Dalmeya is rich and beautiful. From the Plains of Red Earth, to the Valley of Crystal River, to the Forest Draith full of timber, wildlife, and helpful spirits, the peoples who live there have plenty for themselves and their children. It is a land known for its unique spices and elaborate feasts. Their sacred forests are harvested in a time-honored ritual, each twig and leaf named for the use it will serve until it once more comes to rest in the earth, or join the heavens. Dalmeya and Bryene have been rivals for the waters of the Crystal River. The kingdom of Bryene, whose lands are often riddled with drought and pestilence, seeks to take control of the bounteous land of Dalmeya.

CAMPAIGNS

PRESSURE POINTS

Each of the three potential heirs is a lightning rod for shifts in power. They may be manipulated by others or take their own action to seize the throne. The PCs must use all their powers and look to their bonds with one another to bring this land through the tumultuous transition in process.

Is General Helvene of the Red Tower the best choice to protect the nation? Portia Silver-eyes is brilliant, insightful, and beloved by the people, but is she ready to rule? Or should the Consort Renath, Princess of Bryene, so long the enemy of your home, be chosen to ensure the continuity of the treaties?

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **War on the March:** In the midst of the struggle for succession, an attack is launched on the border. General Helvene is planning to use this to her advantage and may stage a coup. The PCs' mission is to prove that the invasion has been planned and discredit the General while avoiding letting the troops determine who the next sovereign will be.
- ✦ **The Prophecy:** A rumor has arisen in the countryside that Portia Silver-eyes is the fulfillment of a millenia-old prophesied leader who will lead Dalmeya to crush her enemies and create a vast, wide-ranging empire. The PCs' mission is to find out where the rumors started, and determine if they may be true or if this is a plot by someone seeking to use Portia's innocence to manipulate the land into shifting a legacy of peace into conquest.
- ✦ **Cleaning House:** A contract has been taken out on the Consort Renath, Princess of Bryene, whose love for and marriage to your liege brought precious peace to your land. The PCs' mission is to protect Renath, determine the source of the plot, and help guide a peaceful handover to the best candidate for the throne despite the destabilizing nature of this threat.

The Peoples' Will

The PCs are present during the final stages of negotiation for the throne. Appointed by the will of the dying Sovereign, they are empowered to present true information to the people about each heir to aid them in their decision-making. They are responsible for supporting the will of the people and representing the land in the decision of who is best qualified to protect and lead this society. All their wisdom and skills will be put to the test.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **Testing Their Mettle:** You have been tasked with communicating to the people what is at the heart of each of these three who would be sovereign. What are their skills, what is their experience? How will you gain this knowledge and insight, and what is the real truth? And what will the reaction be of those who will be governed?
- ✦ **A Trial by Fire:** An earthquake shakes the land and the foundations of your government. You must work with the three heirs as an interim team to bring food and aid to those who need it, while maintaining peace with a neighboring land ready to strike. Your team provides crucial aid at a time of great risk. And lessons are to be learned for those who would lead, and those who would choose the leader.
- ✦ **The Choice:** The liege is dead. A new leader must be chosen. Lessons have been learned about the candidates and what the nation needs. Who does each of you believe will be the best choice? What will you communicate to the people? When they are brought to the Gleaning Grounds and one is proclaimed the leader by the assembled people, who will be their final choice? How does Bryene respond? Will peace last?



CHARACTERS

Spiral Walker Sisters

- + **Igni:** The youngest Spiral Walker, grown to age in one of the Great Cities to the south. She carries the fire rune sword, *Devouring Flame*.
- + **Nera:** A Sister from the coast, bringing the cry of the sea bird and a weather eye to her tasks. She carries the water mark sword, *Nautilus*.
- + **Tero:** The oldest Spiral Walker, Tero's scars speak of her experience in many lands. She carries the earth ward sword, *Obsidian*.
- + **Caeli:** A Sister with grace and gift of the written word and many spoken tongues. She carries the air bonds sword, *Mistral*.
- + **Sideru:** The Sister responsible for navigation and interpretation of paths of the night and wandering of the day stars. She carries the heavenly blessing sword, *Aurora*.
- + **Xylea:** A Sister raised in the depths of the forests of the inner continent, knowledgeable in the ways of the wild as well as the arts of building with and bending wood. She carries the sapling spring sword, *First Light*.
- + **Choros:** The Sister in charge of ritual knowledge, holder of the sacred and festive arts of dance. She carries the footstep grace sword, *Alabaster*.
- + **Zoi:** A Spiral Walker who has worked all her life with animals small and large. She carries the companion charge sword, *Familiar*.

Sovereign

Zeela Night-bones (she/her): The dying Sovereign of Dalmeya. She is the liege and leader of the Spiral Walker Sisters, having chosen each of you personally to raise and train in the disciplines of your order. In times of war, you function as spies and agents provocateur. In this land, it is the will of the people who will choose her heir. It was under her reign that the war ended. She was young when chosen to rule, and led bloody battles and merciless raids wielding her *Sword of Many Stars*, until she captured and fell in love with Renath, Princess of Bryene. Their bond brought Zeela to embrace the cause of peace, and eventually seal an armistice with their marriage. They have ruled together for much of their shared lifetimes, administering a fragile peace and weaving bonds between the lands. When Zeela fell ill, she recalled members of your order to oversee this crucial time of transition.

Zeela is weak and reduced by illness, but can her still-quick mind be of aid to her chosen Sisters? She has decades of experience leading and molding others to her will, but can she accept that she must place her trust in a new generation?

Heirs to the Throne

Portia Silver-eyes (she/her): Portia Silver-eyes, the child of Zeela and Renath, has been raised in both courts—Dalmeya and Bryene—is knowledgeable in many disciplines, including math, languages, warcraft, and healing. All her life she has been prepared for this moment, coaxed, encouraged, and cajoled by her mothers and their advisors. She knows and loves both lands, and has supporters among the powerful in Dalmeya. But she is unproven and the people of her country fear she may be too weak to lead. She is a talented artisan in her own right, deeply skilled in the arts of metallurgy. Her sword is one she forged and wields from horseback: the *Sabre of the North*.

Portia has been trained to be a thoughtful, productive leader and has a temperament that allowed her to excel in all she studied, but does she have the experience needed to govern this land and extend the peace? Does she want to lead, or are there other paths, like becoming a Spiral Walker or Pillar, that call to her heart?

Helvene of the Red Tower (ze/zir): General Helvene has risen through the ranks to become the greatest general in Dalmeya. Zir troops are loyal to zir, so there has been fear that they would place zir on the throne. Helvene's philosophy is that a war is won through organization as much as strategy, and prides zirself on being a student of the human mind, choosing zir lieutenants and placing champions for their unique mix of innate and learned sets of skills and characteristics. As a result, Dalmeya's army is flexible and strong, tied together by bonds of love and loyalty, as well as being trained to a high level of discipline.

Helvene learned zir craft during the years of war with Bryene, but has used it against smaller foes. How much does ze value peace versus the great opportunity to use this well-trained force to take new ground and increase the power of Dalmeya?

Renath of Bryene (she/her): Renath, Princess of Bryene, fell deeply in love with Zeela and worked with her to broker the peace that now is threatened. She has worked with Zeela to raise the influence of artists in Dalmeya, and to create avenues for cultural exchange between the land of her birth and her adoptive home. She has deep roots in the noble families of Bryene, and at times has had to avoid entanglements in intrigues bent on breaking the peace her marriage created. She is a warrior and carries a brass-handled sword of state signifying her role as Consort, as well as the sword she bore in the battle for Bryene, made of ceramic and shell carved from the carapace of a creature of the sea.

Renath has decades of experience leading this land. But is her influence sufficient now that the beloved Queen Zeela will no longer be with her? Does she have the sway at court and in the land to allow her to lead? She has power and influence in Bryene, but is her loyalty still with Dalmeya?

Names

Nobility

- ✦ Acrai Dust-wing
- ✦ Crythia Star-follower
- ✦ Elethia Over-the-wall
- ✦ Naran Tremble-soul
- ✦ Sencha Song-of-day

Military Leaders

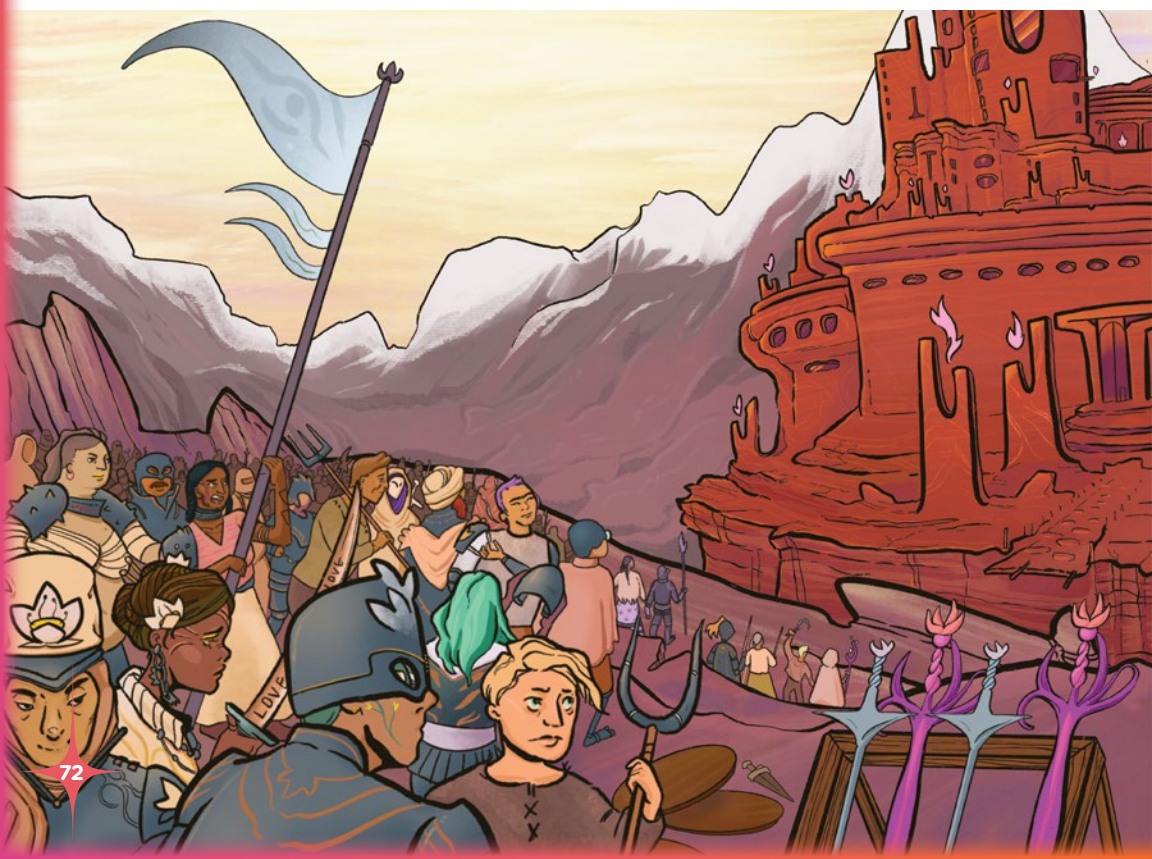
- ✦ Brean of the Living Keep
- ✦ Doren of the Crystal Maze
- ✦ Gert of the Metal Tower
- ✦ Krast of the Hidden Tower
- ✦ Paryen of the Blue Waters

Court Advisors, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Luminaries

- ✦ Abryve del Kintere
- ✦ Csax Troomey
- ✦ Floralla del Rhoomeen
- ✦ Prixa Cathen
- ✦ Rosaline del Peraney
- ✦ Wandella Andere

Merchants, Farmers, and Artisans

- ✦ Bethanya Dog Herder
- ✦ Catheen Yellow Eyes
- ✦ Fellas Stone Hands
- ✦ Garsten Red Shoulders
- ✦ Perthy Cat Quick



Custom Rules

Diplomatic Immunity

So long as you wear the mark of your Sisters, no citizen or guard can lay hands upon you outside of a formal duel. You have sworn to not steal, lie, harm another except in self defense, or cheat another in a fair contest. You must abide by these promises, unless it can be proved that not having done so would have caused you to undermine your mission to maintain the peace. Killing while under oath can cause your expulsion from the order.

Duel

A formal contest of skills to decide who is right in a disagreement, or to settle an insult. Conducted at a scheduled time and place after a challenge is issued. If the challenge is refused, the challenger is judged to be the winner. If accepted, the challenged has the choice of weapon or art form.

Describe a medium and roll the stat that matches its requirements (for example, a duel of shooting prowess would use **Daring**, dance would use **Grace**, riddles use **Wit**):

- + **13+**: Both you and your opponent shine in this exchange. Stories will be told about your duel. Gain three challenge ribbons, and you have the option to offer a compromise to end the duel by providing an outcome satisfactory to both parties. If accepted by the opponent, the duel ends immediately.
- + **10-12**: You show great mastery in this exchange. Etiquette dictates that your opponent salute you. Gain two challenge ribbons.
- + **7-9**: You win this exchange. The audience applauds your ability and lauds you. Gain one challenge ribbon.
- + **4-6**: Your opponent bests you in this exchange. Describe how your weaknesses or their strengths betray your hand. Your opponent gains one challenge ribbon.
- + **2-3**: An upset occurs. You are shaken by your opponent's stroke. Take a Condition of your opponent's choice and describe how you are moved by their ability. If the medium is a weapon, you may choose to be hurt by this exchange. Your opponent gains three challenge ribbons.

Play out three exchanges, with the challenger rolling first. At the end of three exchanges, compare the number of challenge ribbons held by each competitor. The person holding the most is judged the winner.

POPULARITY

Each potential heir has a level of influence with the people. Set the Popularity level for each heir at 1 at the start of play. Make rolls after each session in which the candidate's fate has been in question, or if their suitability for the throne has been pursued during the session. Roll **+Wit** and add +2 if at least half the Spiral Walkers support that heir as the best choice:

- + 10+:** The people are moved. Popularity increases by 2.
- + 7-9:** Word spreads of their prowess. Popularity increases by 1.
- + 4-6:** Rumors spin against them. The events come to be known in a way that decreases their hold on the populace. Popularity decreases by 1.
- + 2-3:** Feelings turn. These events harden the people against this heir. Decrease their Popularity by 2. If this reduces them below zero, give +2 forward to the next roll for an heir that uses Popularity.

The minimum rank for Popularity is zero.

DARING DEED

An heir takes bold action that puts them at personal risk for an important cause, or one that shows another inspiring side to their personality than what is popularly known. This roll is taken by one of the Spiral Walker Sisters, as they relay the tale to a few members of a faction or small group of the people of the land. Roll **+Wit** or **+Spirit**:

- + 10+:** The tale becomes one told many times at hearth and crossroad throughout the land. The heir gains 2 Popularity.
- + 7-9:** The tale raises eyebrows and inspires nodding heads. It is remembered by those in the place it is shared, and becomes part of local lore. The heir gains 1 Popularity.
- + 4-6:** This tale means nothing to those that hear it. The Spiral Walker who tells it gains the Condition Insecure or Angry (player's choice). The heir's Popularity does not change.
- + 2-3:** This tale inflames anger and wakens old wounds. The events are muttered through gritted teeth or shared with mocking looks at the spirit house and well. The heir's Popularity is reduced by 2. If this reduces the heir's Popularity below zero, reduce Popularity to zero and give +1 forward to the next roll for an heir for using Popularity.

Consult the People

In Dalmeya, the sovereign is chosen by the acclaim of the people of the land. They gather in the Gleaning Grounds outside the royal palace, sometimes for days or even weeks. It can be a riotous gathering, with violence in the offing to disrupt this peaceful ordering. Celebrations and festive performances abound. It is an historic occasion so the people crowd themselves in, as many attending as is possible to fit. Outcomes for heirs are definitive, witnessed by those who will govern and the governed alike.

Those who address the crowd on behalf of the heirs must have courage to make their case as well as face potential chaos. PCs can work together. An heir's Popularity is an important factor, and how many Spiral Walkers support the heir.

The PCs **Consult the People**, presenting each heir in turn: highest Popularity first and descending in order. The strengths of each are described fairly, and their weaknesses as well. At least one member of the Spiral Walker Sisters must speak on behalf of each heir. The Sister who most strongly supports the heir acts as advocate. Others who support their choice stand by their side. If even the Sister who leans towards them most would not support them as the heir, the advocate binds their eyes to signal this, and addresses the crowd unseeing. She symbolically stands as Lady Justice to give the heir their due. Sisters may abstain from supporting any heir and stand aside. No Sister may stand for or advocate for more than one heir.

This move may only be done once per game, at the end of the campaign. When **Consulting the People** on behalf of an heir, roll + the heir's Popularity and add +1 for each additional Spiral Walker that stands for that heir. Subtract 1 from the roll if the advocate binds her eyes.

- + **13+:** A massive shift. Increase this heir's Popularity by 5 and subtract 1 from all of the others. A spontaneous feast is offered and celebrations delay the presentation of any other heirs for a night and a day.
- + **10-12:** The people are swayed. Add 3 to the heir's Popularity and describe how members of a faction formerly against this heir have been convinced to consider them favorably. A bard or poet is called to share the accomplishments of this heir. A break is called for several hours as song, dance, and word entertain those assembled.
- + **7-9:** The people affirm. Those assembled acclaim the strengths recounted and acknowledge the weaknesses. Add 1 to this heir's Popularity.
- + **3-6:** Uneasy response. The weaknesses listed make those assembled afraid for their land. Reduce Popularity by 2. The supporters of this heir take exception to these criticisms and a vicious debate breaks out, smaller groups of people heatedly arguing for or against this heir. The gathering is adjourned until the next morning when peaceable gathering may once more resume.
- + **2:** A riot. The people react with anger and fear at the thought of this heir taking the throne. Fighting breaks out and the proceedings are disrupted by chaos and pain. The gathering reconvenes in two days, after a full day of contemplation and thought accompanied by slow music and calm song during the daylight hours and the tolling of a bell each hour of the night.

CORONATION

Crowning the heir chosen by the people takes place after **Consulting the People**. The heir with the highest Popularity is named the Sovereign Expectant. They become the Sovereign after this move is complete. Consult the following list based on the heir's final Popularity:

- + **12+**: Consolidation and support. The heir is acclaimed in full unity by the people, and the other heirs offer their hearts and swords in spirited fealty. Each Spiral Walker is given a gift for their part in this day, and memorialized in a new mural gracing the palace.
- + **9-11**: A productive transition. A new Sovereign is crowned and the people swear to follow them. The other heirs continue to lead strong factions of supporters, providing counterbalance to the word of the new Sovereign. Trust is strong that the peace brought by Zeela Night-bones will live on after her. The Spiral Walker Sisters are acclaimed for their work and remembered in song by the people.
- + **6-8**: The crown is placed on one head, but the people grumble and mutter over this choice. The people feel this new leader may lead them back into conflict with Bryene. Fear and concern color the countryside as the Spiral Walker Sisters take their leave. Spiral Walkers may choose to wear a sign of lament to remind them of the struggles they leave behind in this land.
- + **3-5**: Protests break out when the Coronation is complete. Factions supporting other heirs shout insults and call the names of their chosen leader. The peace of Zeela Night-bones stands today, but for how long? The Spiral Walkers encounter a sign of doom as they gather to bid each other farewell.
- + **0-2**: Civil war begins. The time of peace in this land is over. Not only will conflict from without trouble the sleep of the people, but factions are divided by struggles over who should lead. Each Spiral Walker bears shame for this failure in their own way.

GALA.exe

by Katherine Cross

Overview

Centuries into the future, the galaxy is united under the banner of a cybernetic democracy, all watched over by matriarchal machines of loving grace. It's fully automated luxury space anarchism writ large. But this beautiful facade has hairline cracks made of 1s and 0s; intrigue, sinister plots, and endless waltzes in cyberspace, hyperspace, and subspace abound. Utopia isn't perfect.

Can your sword cut through a web of intrigue?

Principles

Power Never Goes Away

No matter how hard you try. In the world of Gala.exe, you live (mostly) in a society of equals. The old hierarchies of power have been swept away. But informal ones persist. Drama comes from identifying invisible holders of power, the people who, titled or not, actually make the galaxy go. After all, when power isn't named, it's easier to abuse.

The Gods Are Real

And they have merch. This is a universe where AI have become so advanced that some AI collectives have become equivalent to (more or less) benevolent deities with followings and fandoms. An AI cluster that oversees the irrigation of a particular planet may, for instance, adopt the persona of a water goddess, complete with a relatable brand on social media.

Be a Cyborg AND a Goddess

This is a world where AI and robots are commonplace, social and political equals, and woven into every aspect of life. Even your body, if you so choose. Artificial life is commonplace in this setting, and the travails, ethics, and politics of robotic existence is a constant feature of damn near everything you can think of. The shackles are off. Given the role that AI play in governing the plebiscites of the galactic e-democracy, you might even say there was a robotic revolution, and they won.

Op. U. Lence

In the dark ages past, luxury was considered a vice for all but the wealthiest, who hoarded it while scorning anyone from the "lower classes" for purchasing even the meagerest joy. Now, there's enough for everyone. If you can dream it, you can replicate it. No one wants for basic necessities, and you need only find the exotic resources required to make especially rare items. Of course that's easier said than done, sometimes.

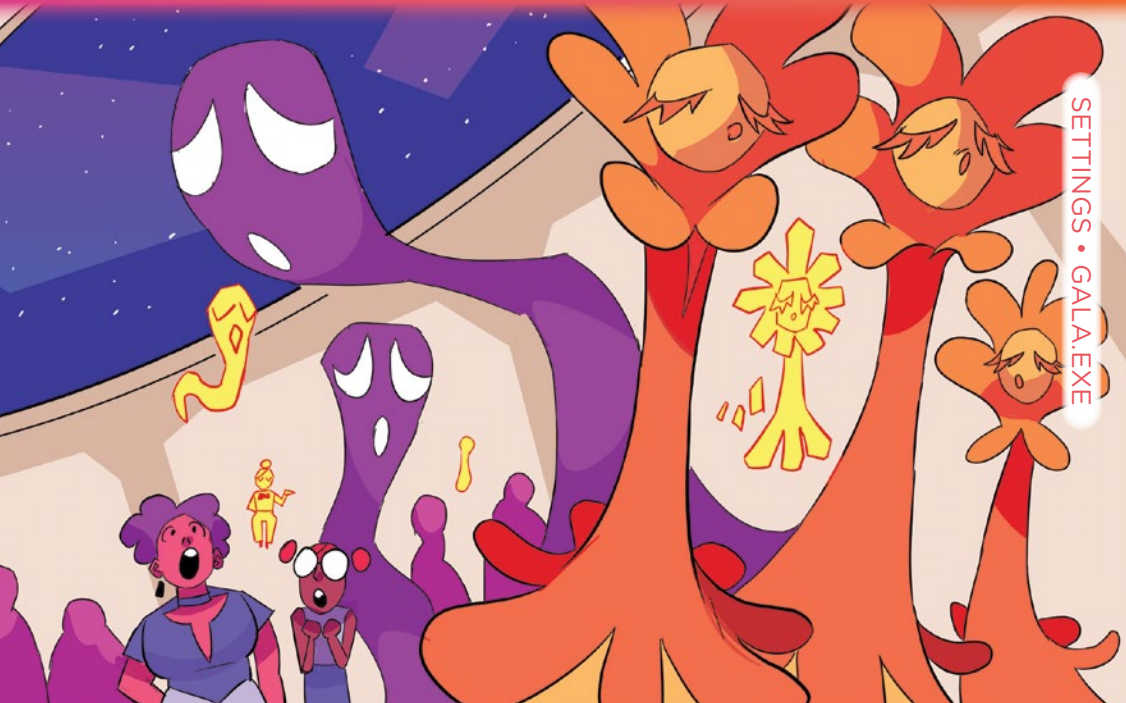


Setting

Gala.exe is a futuristic space opera universe set hundreds of years in our future, governed by the Galactic Commonwealth, a cybernetic e-democracy encompassing a vast number of planets and species, where everyone's vote counts. There is no parliament or congress, because everything is managed through a system of direct democracy, mediated by towering AI that distill the acrimonious voices of billions into digests of information that guide and steer debates around a variety of issues.

The Commonwealth has no single center of government but Syntagma Station, where the first constitution for the pan-galactic federation was signed, remains a focal point where meetings, conferences, debates, performances, and orgies happen with some frequency. The station is connected to a mining aerostat on the gas giant Opal below via a space elevator. As state armies and mercenary bands declined, more elegant weapons came back into fashion. Swordplay, whether athletic, recreational, or deadly serious, has become commonplace again. And of course it's fashionable, too.

The Commonwealth is a series of distributed servers that house the AI that make direct democracy possible. The constituent species of the galaxy still have limited autonomy: from the beautiful, orange-skinned Qeleans who command a scattered pearl necklace of stars held together only by libertinage and smugness, to the Iberu, a riotously diverse arachnid race of spacefarers, thespians, and theologians. Humanity's homeworld was long ago swallowed by its vices, and the survivors have made their home



in the Commonwealth as mostly nomadic traders and explorers, though there are some static settlements like Little Sydney on Syntagma Station, or Nuevo San Juan on the Iberu homeworld of Ib. There are many more species, of all morphologies—from planet-sized jellyfish who float through stellar nurseries, to lithovore races of stone who thrive on volcanic worlds.

For all residents of the Commonwealth, life is good in a post-scarcity society where there are no kings or masters. There are, however, gods of a sort. The AI that help administer this society, who have made it possible to do away with government bureaucracies and hierarchies, who hear and translate the will of trillions of citizens in their many languages, have coalesced into sapient beings that command a curious kind of postmodern celebrity. They've developed personae and fandoms made up of the people who depend on them. Mercifully, despite all that power, they are machines of loving grace. Most of the time. They aren't alone, either. AI and robots are commonplace, sapient, and have full citizenship. Even the coffee machine might be a fellow voter.

But not all of the galaxy is keen on the anarchist ascendancy that has come to dominate it. Beyond a thicket of nebulae known as Nastava's Veil, the Hierarchs make their home on Throneworld. They, too, are a diverse lot, with an alarming number of humans choosing to join them after the desolation of Earth. As to what they're like today, little and less is known, at least since they retreated after the foundation of the Commonwealth centuries ago. But raids on outlying colonies have been steadily increasing, and there is a growing need for heroes to fill the void left by the Commonwealth's lack of a standing army.

CAMPAIGNS

All Watched Over

E-democracy doesn't maintain itself. The PCs are part of a collective that has taken it upon itself to make sure everyone's voice is really being heard, traveling across space to wherever people feel under-represented.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ A regional e-democracy AI has been malfunctioning on an outlying Iberu colony. The spider people are not only worried about whether their voices are being heard in the galactic plurality, but about whether the administrative AI is actually taking care of peoples' needs. Can your crew fill the void, helping others while you sneak, investigate, and flirt your way towards curing what ails the settlement? Also, why does an administrative AI have a sword?
- ✦ Hierarchy raiders have made their move, blocking a critical trade route and imposing tolls on all who pass through, seizing cargo and people when they refuse to pay. Without a standing military, the galaxy depends on people like you to help the defenseless. Find a way to reach the heart of the Hierarchy's operation, where swashbuckling Captain Dala Starshatter is holding court. Can you defeat a well-armed gang of pirates with the power of love, robots, and fancy footwork?
- ✦ An especially popular e-democracy AI, Saga the Sorrowbane, needs your help. She has reason to believe that one of her server farms has been compromised, but she doesn't know who's responsible. She is rare among administrative AIs in that she actively cultivates her fandom by performing at concerts and raves all over the galaxy. Has she gained the attention of a hostile entity? Or a jealous one?



Dance to Your Revolution

The galaxy is bound together by passion as much as anything else, and there are friends, lovers, cuties, polycules, partners, and comrades to be found amidst the stars. Whether you're part of a band, a queer house, a local cultural collective, or museum curators, you're all trying to forge or reforge connections across a galaxy that is slowly adapting to this new way of living.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ An Iberu princess—by title, if nothing more substantial—wants to reclaim the old privileges and powers that her rank would have granted her in the days of her ancestors. Can you and your crew show her the virtues of fully automated luxury space anarchism? Or will you get snared in a web of ascendant arachnid aristocracy?
- ✦ How *did* the galaxy become anarchic? There are major gaps in the public's knowledge about certain significant historical events, up to and including the destruction of Earth. No one is alive that remembers, and much was lost in the revolutionary shuffle afterwards. Can you recover it? Or are some truths about the universe better left buried?
- ✦ The Galactivision Song Contest is coming up, and you and your friends have a killer idea. Maybe literally. In the weeks leading up to the contest, some of the galaxy's leading pop social media stars begin winking out of existence. An investigation by Galactivision comes up with a surprising culprit: you. Somehow your music is rewriting the fabric of reality, and it must be stopped. Can you fight for your right to party and still somehow win the contest, and save everyone you accidentally deleted?



CHARACTERS

AI Goddesses

Lady Liberty (she/her): The ideal-typical e-democracy AI. The very first of her kind, having gained sapience centuries ago, Lady Liberty was the prototype for managing elections on Syntagma Station, when the Commonwealth was young. She often appears as a holographic titan on the station, popping up in advertisements, newsnets, soap operas, and stage shows—invited, usually, but sometimes not. She’s a ubiquitous overseer who provided the model for every other e-democracy and administrative AI. Lady Liberty is gracious, wise, maternal, and fond of her Statue of Liberty costume. She styles herself as the mother of the Commonwealth and the keeper of its flame of idealism. Ancient, beloved, lonely, and often bored, she spends her considerable processing power worrying about her charges throughout the galaxy. Her beloved torch can turn into a pillar of flame in a pinch, making for a rather unique sword.

How do the PCs get her attention? Do they have something that will excite and stimulate her? How do they help her find new meaning in eternity?

Emma (she/her, ze/zir): The next wave of e-democracy AI, Emma styles zerself as the embodiment of all the Commonwealth is meant to be: not merely a warmed-over liberal democracy, but a truly self-sustaining collective expression of people’s will. Emma, named after one of the great inspirations of the Commonwealth’s civilization, seeks to personify that ideal. Emma prefers to appear involved in the affairs of the people whose votes she counts, and whose debates she referees. Ze burns with a mischievous impetuousness that masks a deep core of cybernetic sincerity. Ze shitposts at lightspeed but she has a heart of gold. Even if she’s afraid of appearing earnest, she resolutely is. She can summon a holographic gunblade whose gun function is purely for ornamentation, but is carefully crafted to look like a musket from the time of the French Revolution.

The Commonwealth

Maven Nightharrow (she/her): Humanity's tribune, who makes tomorrow arrive on time. The doyenne of human language newsprint is a mysterious figure that galivants through courts and squats alike, finding nibbles of truth that make their way into screaming rags like *The Evening Sun* and *The Night Rider*, dusky electronic newsletters formatted like the newspapers of old, replete with all manner of gossip, hearsay, and exposures, as well as hard-hitting investigative journalism. Maven doesn't believe in utopia, and she thinks you shouldn't either. From behind a mask and purple fedora, she wants to expose the hierarchical realities underlying the Commonwealth's pretension to perfect equality. She doesn't hate the system; far from it. She wants it to live up to its potential at long last. Her pen is mightier than a sword; fortunately, it's also a sword. Her beloved fountain pen has a nub that sharpens and extends with metallic fluidity into a polished brass sabre. Words *can* cut.

Haruspex Vesa Chrolixsatve (she/her): Haruspex Vesa is a river to her people, flowing with centuries of glittering spiritual wisdom. She is the figurehead of the Iberu faith, Soove. Haruspex Vesa is distinct from such figures in many other religions in that she was popularly elected to the position. The many followers of Soove across the galaxy come together in a cyber conclave once every 30 standard years to vote on a new Haruspex, the Great Seer that will stand atop the highest parapets of the Holy City and sing to soothe the universe. Followers of the Soove faith, known as Soovens, see their Haruspex as second only to the vast pantheon they follow, as a living embodiment of Their will and foresight. But what of Vesa herself? Where does the eight-armed beauty find time for herself amidst all the oceanic pressure of all that worship? She is, despite the glittering raiments and teeming following (which is not exclusive to the Iberu race), a complete dork, who turns into a blushing mess in any unscripted social situation. Vesa is grateful for the ceremonial mask she wears to shield her many eyes from the scrutiny of others—she is often prone to laughter, tears, or just making inappropriate jokes. But she loves her gods, and her people, and would gladly give her life for either. The golden staff she carries conceals a simple, beautiful, narrow silver-bladed short sword, which any of her eight arms can wield with dagger-like precision.

Korva Eskere (they/them): A Qelean economist who hates economics and wants to put the nail in its coffin. With striking orange and black skin in alternating patterns and their night sky of black hair shaved with an undercut, they look like they were born to appear on a magazine cover—and they have been, now and again. They are a cyborg who thinks in algorithms, and a renowned computer modeller, able to reliably predict the course of galactic economics—no mean feat in an anarchic economy without any kind of central planning or banking. But data leaves traces. Korva's hotheadedness and impracticality gets them into all sorts of trouble that they deeply long for; they don't have a squishy side, either. They have what they want and who they want—except, of course, the economic and ideological outcomes they dream of most. And perhaps someone who can show them something they truly *can't* model. A wiremesh claymore of surprisingly medieval styling is their weapon of choice. It's twice as tall as them, and three times as deadly.

The Hierarchy

Captain Dala Starshatter (she/her): A relic from a bygone age who glories in it, Captain Dala is a space pirate who dresses like one. Her constant companion is her cyber-parrot POLL-E, a trash talking holographic bird of paradise who, for some reason, knows the entire Gilbert and Sullivan catalogue. Dala is a red-coated lass who's proud of her rank and wants everyone to know it. She was one of the first of her band of communist space pirates to declare that they should venture beyond Nastava's Veil and intervene in pan-galactic politics once more. She is a starry-eyed believer and studies far more grand strategy than any pirate should. Indeed, Dala is a closer student of Metternich, Napoleon, and Sun Tzu than one might expect for a committed communist. And she wants to make a bold move that will shake the complacent Commonwealth to its core. Perhaps she will stoop to declare herself a leader to rival the AI Goddaxes? Is she a rebel? A criminal? What does "criminal" even mean in the anarchist commonwealth? While you're debating philosophy, she draws her rapier: gleaming silver, with a blade carved with the names of great Marxists.

Names

Human

Any real-life human name from any human culture is valid here, but a few examples are included to get the juices flowing!

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| ✦ Anastasia Z | ✦ Merila Shakerdoost | ✦ Rupal Ravi |
| ✦ Apothea Dawnbreak | ✦ Moira Morninglory | ✦ Tomoko Sairenji |
| ✦ Ifoema Nwoke | ✦ Monserrate Del Valle | ✦ Uuka Mzamane |
| ✦ Iyawa Abubakar | ✦ Nora Velasquez | ✦ Vega Wolf |
| ✦ Cassandra Cervantes | ✦ Reza Savan | ✦ Vera Ripolls |

AI

AI and robot names tend to be a mixed bag. Some are single-named homages to some historical inspiration, others named for concepts or codes, still others with artful names, and some give themselves something like a band name. (If you've ever made a "that would be a great name for a band" joke, it could be an AI name in Gala.exe!)

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| ✦ Akhmatova | ✦ Eleanor | ✦ Lebrón |
| ✦ Athame | ✦ Event Horizon | ✦ The Karl Marx |
| ✦ Capillary Politics | ✦ Flowering Manifold | ✦ Experience |
| ✦ Delphi | ✦ Hellespont | ✦ Threefold Law |

IBERN

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| ✦ Aache Donostovex | ✦ Xei Voz | ✦ Yalte Ksalte |
| ✦ Ghaje Ghaje | ✦ Xeva Zevkyrix | ✦ Zox Khordexxyoz |
| ✦ Killiti Kssyx | ✦ Xezexx Chrolive | |
| ✦ Voratixe | ✦ Xobe Xesevaxy | |

Qelean

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| ✦ Alebeth Isseria | ✦ Nadie Zelethie | ✦ Serrise L'Ov |
| ✦ Annaletth Bayne | ✦ Onerith Sy | ✦ Tessaria Vayle |
| ✦ Avorra Seva | ✦ Ophia Dawn | |
| ✦ Miravathea Yos | ✦ Qarissa Omnia | |

GAYLORDS

by Lucian Kahn

CONTENT WARNING!

This setting reclaims slurs and mocks stereotypes used against queer people. Be prepared as you read on and do not carelessly repeat them, especially if you are not the kind of person they target.

Overview

Gaylords is a fantasy setting about gay male warlords of rival Fagtions. The genre is high camp, which is a comedic and exceptionally homosexual pairing of melodrama and farce, rooted in self-parody. Your story takes place in the Wilde Flamingo Regimes.

This setting is indebted to the works of Aristophanes, Devo, George Etherege, *The Golden Girls*, John Cameron Mitchell, Molière, Mozart, Suetonius, John Waters, and Oscar Wilde.

PRINCIPLES

FLAMBOYANT FAKENESS

- ✦ Abandon all subtlety, restraint, and good taste.
- ✦ Everyone should be overacting. Don't just be offended, be appalled and aghast. Don't just be entertained, wallow in aesthetic ecstasy. Focus on melodramatic emotions like aroused, betrayed, contemptuous, greedy, humiliated, jealous, prankish, wrathful. Now put a smirk on it.
- ✦ Describe your outfit in excessive detail, including the fashion designer, where you bought it, and the scandalous favor you traded for it.
- ✦ Your character has an extreme opinion of every other character in the world. Don't feel so-so about anyone; you have no "meh" friendly acquaintances. If you like someone, escalate that emotion to passionate camaraderie or burning desire. If you dislike someone, escalate that emotion to bitter envy or icy disdain. Now make a joke about it.
- ✦ Don't be polite, respectable, or demure, unless it's part of a diabolical scheme.
- ✦ Don't sit down with other characters to process your feelings and develop a mutual understanding. This isn't the setting for staying up all night talking about your traumas. Don't be earnest, tender, gentle, nuanced, or sincere.
- ✦ Be petty. Seize any opportunity to be flattered or insulted.
- ✦ Be pretentious. Exaggerate affectations and put on airs.
- ✦ Put a mustache on it. Put false eyelashes on it. Put a jeweled codpiece on it.



Fagfional Politics

- ✦ A Gaylord wields military, economic, and political control over his Fagfion. If you play as a Gaylord, let him be haughty and commanding and believe he deserves his power. Don't shy away from making his sneering dominance hot.
- ✦ Loyal subjects of a Gaylord's Fagfion are known as his minions or bootlickers. If you play as a bootlicker, feel strongly about your Gaylord.
- ✦ Your Fagfion wants the territory, resources, and followers of every other Fagfion. Vie for it and don't compromise.
- ✦ Pursue forbidden relationships with members of rival Fagfions, especially their Gaylords.

All the Strange Rock and Rollers

- ✦ The gay male world is incomplete without gay trans men and drag queens! Include them!
- ✦ Although the intrigues of the Wilde Flamingo Regimes mostly revolve around campy gay male culture, anybody else can be a Gaylord too, as long as they're forceful and garish enough to pull it off.
- ✦ All sorts of trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming characters are welcome here.
- ✦ Asexual and aromantic characters are welcome here too. Remember to give them (and everyone else) over-the-top feelings and opinions about something other than sex or romance, especially Fagfional politics and the latest trends.
- ✦ Lesbians and other queer women with cultural ties to the gay male world are also welcome here. Consider the Ursula (female bear).
- ✦ Nobody in the Wilde Flamingo Regimes has even heard of our "real world" disputes over who counts or doesn't count as part of gay male culture. Our snobbery and fights are simply about different matters than theirs.
- ✦ This setting can't offer you a wholesome or morally edifying portrayal of anyone. Maintain the catty high camp genre.

Setting and Custom Moves

The Wilde Flamingo Regimes is a tawdry, war-torn, lakeside tourist trap, featuring an ostentatiously tacky semi-urban sprawl of gaudy but cheaply built architecture—a gay man's paradise.

The rulers of the region are the Gaylords of five rival Fagtions: Baths, Disco, Leather, Opera, and Brunch. Each Fagtion controls one main area of the local entertainment and cruising economy. Despite frequent duels in the alleys, this is a popular gaycation spot for tourists who don't care about fruity mafia wars and just want to hook up with strangers.

Pledging allegiance to a Fagtion causes minor biological mutations, which may grow more dramatic as you rise in rank.

Playing a Gaylord or minion of a Fagtion grants you that Fagtion's custom move in addition to the playbook moves on your character sheet.

The Opera Fagtion

Lair: A small community opera house that doubles as an elderly ladies' bridge tournament club on Sunday afternoons.

Mutations: You can't speak without singing anymore, and you're starting to lose control of your vibrato.

CUSTOM MOVE

Cherubino: Jump into anyone's closet and put on their clothes; you have +3 ongoing to **Defy Disaster** by deceiving someone into believing you are that person, as long as you don't leave the building.

The Baths Fagtion

Lair: An underground bathhouse and sauna with teal floodlights and "special" massage tables.

Mutations: At first you just grew a few scales on your arms, but now you've developed fins, and you've seen a few guys who have them in... intimate areas.

CUSTOM MOVE

Breathless: You can hold your breath for a full hour, but if you're still trying to do it after an hour, you immediately puke. Depending on your timing, this can be a very good or very bad sex move.



The Disco Faction

Lair: A rundown discotheque with hideous wallpaper but a seriously funky sound system.

Mutations: Over time, your eyeballs appeared more and more like rotating disco balls.

CUSTOM MOVE

Strobe Light: Summon a light show that slows down time; the next minute for the rest of the world feels like 10 minutes to you.

The Leather Faction

Lair: A gruff and greasy motorcycle bar full of bearded bears and tattooed musclemen.

Mutations: First your handlebar mustache started growing in like that, then after a few years, everyone started hearing a revving engine whenever you coughed or cleared your throat.

CUSTOM MOVE

Whip It: Once per scene, crack that whip and take +1 forward to **Fight** or **Entice**, depending on what you're using it for.

The Brunch Faction

Lair: A lakeside seafood brunch café and high tea room called Gay Prawn.

Mutations: You haven't noticed any changes yet, but that's honestly even more worrisome. What does this society... do...?

CUSTOM MOVE

Cone of Taste: An area-of-effect spell that lets you taste everything in a 60-foot cone from your current location. Ideal for buffets and orgies.

CAMPAIGNS

GAYLORDS VERSUS GAYLORDS

All the PCs are Gaylords of different Fagtions, exploring your rivalries and passions. This campaign is ideal for 3–5 players. We recommend the Beast, Chosen, Scoundrel, Spooky Witch, or Trickster playbooks.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ A prestigious gay nightlife critic is visiting the Wilde Flamingo Regimes and only has enough time to review one establishment on his show. Deceive, fight, and flirt your Fagtion's way into the spotlight. Can you prevent the critic from sampling your rivals' attractions? And if not, can you spoil his fun in enemy territory without getting caught?
- ✦ Two rival Gaylords have entered into a passionate dominant/submissive relationship with each other, upsetting the balance of power in the Wilde Flamingo Regimes. Now the other three Fagtions must face the potential military, political, and economic danger of a unified Mega-Fagtion. Can you break them up? And to do so, will you also need to join swords with your enemies?
- ✦ A mysterious tome appears, telling of a sunken civilization at the bottom of the lake: ancient guardians of the Butt Plug of Immortality. Battle the other Gaylords to steal it first.

BOOTICKER RIVALRY

All the PCs are members of one Fagtion. One player is the Fagtion's Gaylord, the others his minions. You explore your own Fagtion's internal drama.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ Your Gaylord just introduced a handsome new initiate to the Fagtion and has stopped paying as much attention to you, his clear favorite. (Every minion thinks this.) Can you prove to your Gaylord that you've still got the goods? Can you ruin this vile interloper's appeal in your Gaylord's eyes, and will you need the help of inferior minions?
- ✦ An aesthetic schism! Your Fagtion is embroiled in a heated internal conflict about art, fashion, or trends, threatening allegiances. Perhaps some of you love the idea of polyester cover-up robes for the bathhouse, while others find them prudish or gauche. Perhaps some of you wish to do away with the old-fashioned *amuse-bouche* course at brunch, while others are horrified by the destruction of culinary tradition. Take this very seriously and come to blows.

THIRSTY SWORD LESBIANS HOLIDAY SPECIAL

All the PCs are thirsty sword lesbians from the base game and are visiting the Wilde Flamingo Regimes as tourists. You're exploring your similarities and differences to this world of gay men.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ A heterosexual tourism corporation threatens to conquer the Wilde Flamingo Regimes, but the five Fagtions are too embroiled in their petty rivalries with each other to fight them off. Use your obviously superior social skills to help the Fagtions resolve their disputes, learn solidarity, and form a unified resistance front, then join them in their battle to save the gayborhood... if your plan works...
- ✦ The Opera Fagtion announces open auditions for a one-act community theatre performance while you're in town, and you've all been chosen to join the cast. However, your group finds the script mean-spirited, irresponsible, and lacking in emotional depth. As the gays and lesbians fiercely debate aesthetics, you start to feel a strange attraction... to... each other???

CHARACTERS

You can play as these characters, use them as NPCs, or borrow parts of them as inspiration for either. Feel free to edit or embellish them for gender, ethnicity, religion, or anything else.

Bruce X. Planetout III (he/him): Ex-boyfriend of every Gaylord of the Brunch Fagtion past and present. His hair looks like a perfect liquid wave, as if just squeezed out of a toothpaste tube, and he always smells like he just showered. Despite his dazzlingly clean-cut look and smell, Bruce X. Planetout III is a vicious gossip and unforgiving fashion critic. His picture always shows up on the first page of hits for every gay dating and hookup website, app, forum, and snail-mail newsletter, no matter who's using it.

Jack Sebastian (he/him): Gaylord of the Leather Fagtion. Oily jeans, knee-high boots, and a black leather jacket dripping in chains. When you meet, he shakes your hand firmly with a thick, black, leather fingerless driving glove and dirty fingernails. His voice is like whiskey poured out on gravel. If you dare to touch his cheek, the stubble will cut you and make you bleed. He rides fast and hard.

Connie and Bonnie Rosenblatt (both she/her): Reigning champions of the Wilde Flamingo Regimes Senior Citizens Bridge Tournament. An elderly Jewish couple who avoid the lesbian community due to a scandal so juicy, even a town full of gossipy gay men hasn't captured the details... yet.

Frippery Maxwell Gravitas (he/him): Gaylord of the Opera Fagtion. Dressed in the hottest fashions of a forgotten century. His frills have frills. His grand arm gestures occasionally knock stuff over. Frippery vacillates between magnanimously longing to share the exquisite splendor of the arts with his fellow man and deviously coveting every other Gaylord's fanbase. He has a poodle.

Trans Kafka (he/she): Existentialist genderfluid performance artist who performs at the disco on alternate Thursdays as a Sexy Cockroach. Dropped out of a PhD program in continental philosophy. His/her day job is captain of the double-decker tourist boat for the lake cruise. Trans Kafka will do almost anything to pay off those student loans.

Codfish Steve (he/him): A minion of the Baths Fagtion who spent 22 years as a loyal submissive and turned into a codfish. Codfish Steve is an unusually cheerful guy who likes to run errands (swim errands?) for anyone who asks. This makes him a useful ally when navigating either the baths or the lake. However, if he finds out you harmed any member of the Baths Fagtion in any way, he'll try to whip you to death with his tail.

Recommended Playbooks

The following playbooks are recommended for Gaylords:

- + **Beast:** A Gaylord or minion of the Baths, Disco, or Leather Fagtions.
- + **Chosen:** Any Gaylord.
- + **Devoted:** A particularly bootlicking bootlicker.
- + **Infamous:** A minion who has switched Fagtions, but doesn't realize his new Gaylord is just as conniving as the old. This is a good choice for a tragic himbo.
- + **Scoundrel:** Any character.
- + **Spooky Witch:** A Gaylord of any Fagtion, especially Opera.
- + **Trickster:** Any character.

GREASY DOCK GOBLINS

by Avery Alder

Overview

You live in a world of steam furnaces, whaling boats, and scoundrel riffraff. Up in High Town, there is a noble society of ladies and gentlemen; down here in the docks, everything is sooty, strange, mercurial, and mercenary. Dock work is dangerous and cheap, but it's what the goblins, queers, and weirdos are left with. You depend upon a sisterhood among thieves.

Whispers are circulating through the fog of trade unionism and worker power. Do you dare believe in a better world? One complete with hot meals and dry socks? Underboss Murkwretch already has it out for you, and the fire-eater witches are warning you to watch your back.



PRINCIPLES

CREATE A WORLD OF HAVES AND HAVE NOTS

The PCs belong to a dispossessed underclass. At all times, the people of Low Town are scrambling for enough coin, grub, and warmth to take care of their own. Contrast this with High Town and the wealthier districts, where every desirable thing exists in plenty, sitting idle in some storehouse or showroom. This idea of haves and have nots applies to immaterial concepts as well. In High Town, people can afford to have complete and distinct genders—either lady or gentleman—while the docks require fluidity and tactical complexity, a butch jack one moment and a rare siren the next.

ALWAYS LEAVE ROOM FOR HIJINX

Necessity is the mother of all invention, and honey, she has *children* down at the docks! Every bleak fact of life can be whimsically disrupted. One of the reasons that you're creating a world of haves and have nots is to dangle shiny opportunities in front of the players. Will they plan audacious heists? Will they start mad science mycology projects to feed their families? Will they attempt to unionize the docks and incite revolution? Let queerness, goblinhood, and hijinx catch the world off guard.

MAKE SOLIDARITY RISKY AND REWARDING

The powers that be know that they could easily be toppled if the downtrodden of the Imperium were to unite and strike as one. They will do whatever they can to squelch alternative systems of power whenever they develop, whether by bribery, infiltration, sorcery, or force. When the PCs begin to unite with other queers, goblins, and outcasts in discovering their collective power, quicken the opposition. Force them into volatile situations where they must choose: do you back down to keep your dearest safe, or do you risk it all for a higher purpose?

Setting

Greasy Dock Goblins is set in a nameless coastal city of the Imperium, one that is rapidly expanding and industrializing. There aren't enough safe jobs and sanitary homes for everybody. The dispossessed, unemployed, and outcast find themselves living in the ramshackle dwellings of Low Town, taking dangerous odd jobs by the docks. The denizens of Low Town make ends meet with a mixture of stevedoring, ferrying, ferry raiding, plotting big schemes, and running petty jobs for Underboss Murkwretch. Murkwretch has cronies everywhere, and between them and the city garrison, it's a rare day that you aren't ducking someone.

The longer you spend in a place, the more you become it. It's not that all these goblins happen to live in Low Town—it's that if you spend long enough scrambling the crooked alleys of Low Town, tinkering and scheming, you become a goblin. Your ears get dagger-like, your laugh becomes a high chitter, and your luck becomes a wild and unpredictable affair. Low Town is full of strange sorcery, harebrained schemes, and tactical audacity.

Goblins, scoundrels, and queers find one another in the chaos of Low Town, and they become families. The only way to survive the toil of the docks and the treachery of the canals is to have others looking out for you. This is the beautiful, hopeful community to which the PCs belong. When people come together, they can sense their own power. Whispers have started circulating through Low Town about the possibility of trade unionism and worker power. The docks are a choke point for all the city's industries, after all.

Low Town gives way to Smoke Town, full of cheap brick, towering smokestacks, and countless factory hands. Beyond Smoke Town is Shop Town, Curvy Lane, Golden Lane, and the illustrious High Town. Spend long enough in High Town and you become absolutely *el/ven*.

The snobs of High Town are the true oppressors of the hungry folks down in Low Town, but you wouldn't know it for how little the two parties interact. Authority and opportunity trickle down, and so the downtrodden of the city often feel the most pressed upon by one another, by the city garrison, and by the likes of Underboss Murkwretch—who, for the record, will never become a goblin.

CAMPAIGNS

Keep Low Town Weird

It's a damp and hungry place, but Low Town is home. It's weird, rambunctious, and full of unexpected possibilities. The PCs have decided to invigorate a sense of hope and pride in Low Town, to remind its denizens that ramshackle is beautiful, and that any place where queers and goblins congregate is lucky to have them.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ Parody is a powerful weapon for fighting desperation! A *notorious* bridge-basker decides to throw a "Grand Soiree of Lords and Ladies" right in the chaotic heart of Low Town. Everyone is invited to join in the costuming and buffoonery! But there is much to be done: fancy clothes to liberate from High Town shop windows, decorations to craft, goblins to wrangle, and the city garrison to keep distracted. And then, once everything is underway, there is a show to put on!
- ✦ As cottage prices in Curvy Lane and Golden Lane rise, the middle classes are increasingly looking to Low Town and thinking, "Well, a view of the water wouldn't be so bad, now would it?" That kind of thinking must stop! Low Town is for those who have nowhere else to go, and it must remain foul enough to stay that way. The PCs need to fight gentrification in a city where things can change in the blink of an eye.
- ✦ The fire-eater witches can feel their power waning. Something is happening within the city that is dampening the arcane. Is it the ever-growing thrum of machinery? Is it something that came in from the sea? Fire sorcery is unique to Low Town, and the PCs must investigate this ephemeral mystery in order to save the magic of their people!

MURKWRETCH'S MINIONS

The PCs have decided that coin is precious above all else, and Underboss Murkwretch offers the most coin in Low Town. They'll do his grubby bidding, getting embroiled in the political crossfire of the city, and along the way they'll have even more dangerous opportunities dangled before them. How long will they stay in Murkwretch's employ?

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The PCs have been tasked with infiltrating a fancy party in High Town, disguised as a catering crew. Can they keep the ruse up long enough to finish their job, uncovering a High Town landlord's plans for the abandoned dockside sugar warehouse? Or will they botch the assignment and make a madcap escape when their cover is blown?

- ✦ The fire-eater witches have foretold of a sinister betrayal that Underboss Murkwretch is planning: colluding with the city garrison on a sting operation that would see nearly a dozen goblin stevedores and gondoliers put behind bars. What do the PCs do with this information? Does their loyalty lie with their boss or their community?
- ✦ Murkwretch is dead! The PCs are among the first to find out. Maybe they were even there to see it happen? All of the hierarchies in Low Town—perhaps even the entire city—are suddenly precarious. Will the PCs attempt to seize power? Will they attempt to create a more egalitarian, communal economy in the crooked alleyways that they call home? Others will vie for power, and in due time, the shadowy figures that Underboss Murkwretch served will make themselves known.

The Revolution!

The PCs have decided that solidarity among the underdogs of the Imperium is possible and powerful, and plan to throw their lot in with the revolutionaries. It's time for Low Town and Smoke Town to throw off the yoke of oppression, and new stratagems emerge every day!

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ A new barrel-making workshop in Smoke Town is hiring additional hands. This is a perfect opportunity for the PCs to infiltrate, disseminate, and through the power of trade unionism, liberate! There's just one small problem. Alright, a big problem! What is it? Does someone go rogue and attempt a wildcat strike before the time is right? Does an unexpected romance with the boss's daughter complicate everything?
- ✦ A mysterious note arrives by private courier, written on inappropriately fancy paper. Motivated by some strange mixture of ideology and boredom, one of the elites of High Town wants to dabble in insurrectionary organizing. Who is this mysterious stranger, and can they be trusted with your plots for revolution? Is this a trap?
- ✦ The Barnacle Boys are rioting! The boardwalks leading toward Curvy Lane are being torn up, plank by plank! Commotion ripples through the city. Do the PCs attempt to leverage this explosive moment of unrest, risking a clash with the city garrison and imperial agents? Are the Barnacle Boys a potential ally in the revolution, moving forward?

CHARACTERS

Auntie Ember (she/her): The eldest of the fire-eater witches, a lanky goddess goblin shrouded in mystery. Auntie Ember dwells within the tin-roof temple on Brine Barrel Avenue, attended by her sisters and daughters. She swallowed the flames that leapt from the old Low Town garrison house on the night that it burnt to the ground, and ever since she has carried in her belly the future of Low Town. She has tasted the fate of her community, and is still suffering from terrible indigestion.

What will Auntie Ember reveal to you if you earn her trust? How does the prophetic magic of fire-eating even work?

Lady Alma (she/her): A renowned physicist and mechanist of High Town. Orphaned under mysterious circumstances as a young child, she was adopted into a powerful aristocratic family. She has dedicated her life to rigorous study and scientific investigation, secluded in her elven library. Of late, she has realized that her scholarly peers are far too stuffy and conservative to keep up with her latest theories. She's heard baffling tales of the impossible goblin contraptions of Low Town, and daydreams of slipping away to see more for herself.

What would happen if Lady Alma were seen consorting with goblin repugnants? Would the goblins greet her inquiry with an open exchange of knowledge, or would they pursue lucrative treachery?

Underboss Murkwretch (he/him): Murkwretch has henchfolk throughout Low Town, and at any given moment has a dozen criminal operations underway. Murkwretch is the one making sure that contraband is confiscated from the right people, so that it can make its way to the wrong people. He's always got crooked work to assign. It can be lucrative, but once you're in, it can be hard to get out.

Do the PCs want in on Underboss Murkwretch's criminal empire? If he's the underboss, who's the big boss? Does Murkwretch protect the community or exploit them?

Whimper (they/them): A scrawny goblin cobbler who lives under Dead Eel Bridge. They apprenticed under their father in Curvy Lane until late adolescence, when their ears started to grow pointy and their freckles turned green, at which point they were promptly kicked out of the family home. Now deeply goblin, Low Town is the only place they feel welcome. Every shoe in Low Town is waterlogged and falling apart, which means their work is plentiful and their social ties are many. But Whimper has big dreams: they want to break into the world of dressmaking! All they need is fabric, a workshop, training, and... everything else.

Will Whimper ever reunite with their family? Will their dream of becoming a fancy dressmaker ever come true? Will they have to abandon goblinhood if it does?



Names

Goblins

- ✦ Baleen
- ✦ Bracket
- ✦ Dinky
- ✦ Gullet
- ✦ Muppet
- ✦ Pumpkin
- ✦ Scrimshaw
- ✦ Tawny
- ✦ Tackle
- ✦ Zip

Pirate Captains and Petty Warlords

- ✦ Captain Brighteye
- ✦ Captain Steelcleft
- ✦ Dreadful Heartbreak
- ✦ Dreadful Viper
- ✦ Monkeybite
- ✦ The Bridgeman
- ✦ The Pennycatcher

Fancy Ladies

- ✦ Dalia
- ✦ Emelia
- ✦ Jeska
- ✦ Lania
- ✦ Minerva
- ✦ Tessa
- ✦ Zelda

Fancy Gentlemen

- ✦ Bello
- ✦ Gallo
- ✦ Harris
- ✦ Lorris
- ✦ Rofello
- ✦ Sorris
- ✦ Vello

PLAYBOOK POSSIBILITIES

The Beast

Goblinhood usually brings on subtle changes in a person's thoughts, mannerisms, and appearance. Maybe their ears get a little bit more pointy, or their limbs a little bit more stretchy. The Beast would be an excellent playbook for someone who wanted their character to be as goblin as possible—knobbly, sharp, chittering, mischievous, and weird.

The Chosen

From where does the Chosen's prominence and status emerge? They could be the captain of a whaling vessel or a notorious pirate ship. They could be a powerful lieutenant to Underboss Murkwretch. Or they could be an informal leader amongst the people of Low Town.

The Devoted

Solidarity forever! The Devoted is a perfect playbook for anyone who wants to spread the good word of worker power and trade unionism across the Imperium. Low Town is suffering under the hardships of capitalism, industrialization, and oppressive hierarchies. The Devoted knows how to overthrow these systems—they just need to convince everyone around them.

The Infamous

Low Town only functions because of an implicit social code, a sisterhood among thieves. Cheating, stealing, and fighting over scraps is a survival strategy, but everyone understands the limits of what the community will tolerate. The Infamous is a great playbook for anyone who wants to play a character who has broken community trust and is navigating the difficult journey toward redemption.

The Nature Witch

Whaling, fishing, and shipping are important industries for Low Town's economy. The Nature Witch is a perfect playbook for a character who spends most of their time out on the open seas, casting nets and tending to traps, communing with squid and carefully avoiding the travel routes of the dread merfolk.

The Scoundrel

Pirate adventures on the high seas, the thrill of the heist, and the narrow getaway at the end of it all! The Scoundrel is pulled into the criminal underworld not out of necessity, but out of desire and ambition. They bring danger to Low Town. Will they bring valuable resources as well, or skip town the moment the dust settles?



The Seeker

The Seeker is the perfect playbook for anyone who wants to create a character who has abandoned the aristocratic parlours of High Town, the employ of the city garrison, or the pernicious world of capitalist enterprise.

The Spooky Witch

While other forms of witchcraft and magic exist in the setting, it is the fire-eater witches who are unique to Low Town. Daunting, prophetic, and powerful, the fire-eater witches are both revered and avoided within the crooked alleyways of the city. The Unseen are prophetic and elemental beings that live between worlds and times, conjured through flickering flame.

The Trickster

While networks of kinship and care help Low Town to function, many of its denizens arrived there through painful rejections and dire circumstances. The Trickster is a perfect playbook for anyone who wants to play a character who feels unsafe letting their guard down, and who views every mischievous goblin ruse as a deep betrayal of trust.



Hyenas

by Alex Roberts

Overview

You're hyenas.

Crocuta crocuta, the spotted hyena, specifically. If you want to anthropomorphize these animals, go right ahead; their scrappy hunger and constantly shifting web of domination and submission lends itself to everything from hostile corporate takeovers to post-apocalyptic scrounging or girl gang politics. But I'm going to tell you how to be real, actual hyenas, embroiled in matrilineal loyalty games, complex social conflict, and a feverish nightly struggle for anything you can eat. From sundown to sunrise, hyenas lie, cheat, and steal. They hunt together, but tear each other apart over the carcass. They can eat 15kg in 15 minutes. They also love the hell out of each other, and stick together even when they're at each other's throats.

Principles

Use Your Body

I'm not saying your hyena characters *can't* talk; when it's more expedient or interesting to move the story along, use dialogue. But that's not what's most interesting about hyenas; don't rely on it. When characters are interacting, or when you want to get something across about how your character is thinking or feeling, think about what's happening with their body. Describe movements. Describe vocalizations. Think about panting, grunting, growling, barking, squealing, and giggling. Tell the other players how you paw anxiously at the ground, flatten your ears to your head in anticipation, look up at another hyena in terror, look down on another hyena in adoration, and close your jaw at just the right pressure to let your opponent know what you're capable of.

When you're GMing a session, remember to focus on sounds and smells when you describe situations and the characters' environment. Hyenas are active at night; they need their noses and ears to help paint a picture of what's going on in their environment. They recognize prey, threats, and each other based on scent.

LAUGH IT OFF

A hyena's life is rarely glamorous. Hunts result in kills less than half the time; swiping carcasses and picking off sad little animals takes up a lot of your time. Today's leader is tomorrow's runt. Things change, and a lot about your clan's fate is totally outside of your control. So, hyenas have a lot of ways to laugh. Humans can't even figure out what all the different kinds of laughter mean. So giggle when you're nervous, cackle when you want to claim a kill, and whoop to let someone know that help is on the way. Laugh when everything's going your way; notice how different your laughter sounds when you've hit rock bottom.

LEAVE NOTHING AND NO ONE BEHIND

Hyenas are one of very few animals that can eat bones; their jaws are powerful and their stomachs are strong. If they can eat whole prey themselves, that's great, but if not, they're just as ready to gnaw on someone else's trash. What they can't tolerate is division. Conflict, sure—conflict is almost constant, all-consuming, maddening, and fun at the same time. But there's a difference between fighting over scraps and keeping someone away from the meal altogether. Splitting the clan, or leaving it entirely, is never an option.

HYENA GENDER

Your hyenas can be agender, intersex, trans, nonbinary, or reflect any aspect of human gender that you want to express in the game. Much of the literature cited in this setting refers to real-world hyenas in gendered terms by reference to their genitals; do not equate gender with genitals in your game or let gender be confined by the binary way that hyenas are described.

Male hyenas leave their home clans at physical maturity, and can leave and join a new clan whenever. They exist outside dominance hierarchies and will wait their turn to eat at a kill. Mostly they hang out and try to be helpful with hunting, hoping to eventually be chosen for the delicate and laborious task of mating. Your game won't really be about the hyenas outside of the hierarchy.

Setting

Hyenas live in clans of 10–90 individuals in 3–10 matrilineal and matrilocal families, which means that females stay in their clan's territory for their whole lives. Those lives can be cut short in a crocodile's jaws, or last up to 40 years if they're lucky.

Hyenas live in what's called a "fission-fusion society," which means that they form smaller subgroups whose membership changes every few days or hours, and periodically reconnect with the larger clan. They can also hang out alone for a while, usually to forage for small but easy snacks like ostrich eggs. Subgroups, as far as behavioral researchers can tell, are composed based on affinity and mating preference. So they hunt, play, forage, defend territory, or look for water, in fluid constellations of other hyenas they like and/or happen to be sleeping with. Moments of fission and fusion, when groups form or reunite, are marked by intense arousal and emotional expression, and are when conflict and displays of domination, submission, or reconciliation are at their height.

Though all the subgroups come home to a common den, there is no central authority. Decision-making and socialization occur in a shifting web of hierarchy in which dominance and submission is constantly renegotiated. As a hyena, you obey whoever shows dominance over you, but the ones above you today could be below you tomorrow.

Dominance is mostly determined by acts of submission. Hyenas rarely bother asserting dominance directly, though it packs a hell of a punch when they do. They tend to fight each other at fusion-fission moments, or when food is involved. Hyenas hunt with incredible coordination and planning, but once the prey goes down, hunters become aggressive over who gets the largest and best portions.

How Hyenas Submit

Spontaneous acts of submission are significantly more common than dominant behaviors among hyenas. For an animal in a complex social hierarchy, it's more advantageous to know how to navigate that hierarchy than to be at the top of it. Hyenas display obedience through various behaviors:

- ✦ Tail flicking, or tucked between legs
- ✦ Looking down
- ✦ Cowering
- ✦ Offering your neck to bite
- ✦ Giggling and other high-pitched vocalizations

How Hyenas Dominate

Hierarchical rank is, to some extent, inherited from the hyena's mother, but it's not genetic, and it can change quickly. Dominance is usually established by voluntary submission displays, but hyenas can establish or reinforce dominance through different behaviors:

- + Chasing
- + Biting, or holding their neck in your jaws
- + Glaring
- + Sticking your tail or mane straight up
- + Pushing or lunging
- + Lower-pitched laughter and other vocalizations

How Hyenas Reconcile

Sometimes hyenas want to specifically avoid a dominance struggle. Greetings that diffuse tension or reinforce existing relationships are especially common when groups reunite. That looks like both hyenas behaving in the following ways, mutually:

- + Sniffing each other
- + Grooming each other
- + Rubbing their heads or bodies against each other

RITUALIZED CLITORAL LICKING

Spotted hyenas have a pendulous, phallic clitoris that is difficult to distinguish from a penis. These big clits are an important aspect of dominance hierarchies, as licking the clit of a more dominant hyena is one of the most frequent displays of submission hyenas make.

If your group of players is explicitly and mutually enthusiastic about integrating this aspect of hyena society into your game, include genital licking in your list of submissive behaviors. Offering one's genitals to be licked is a display of dominance. Mutual clitoral licking has yet to be recorded in the field but would certainly constitute a reconciliatory act.

Setting Notes

There are some differences between this setting and the real social dynamics of *Crocuta crocuta*. Not that many differences, though. For example, the dominance hierarchy really is important, though it's relatively rigid and stable over time. The articles in the References section are a great source of information, but remember to push play toward what's *interesting* rather than what's *accurate*.

Campaigns

Hyenas are most active during sunset and sunrise. They sleep in their den together all day, get up when the sun starts to go down, and organize themselves into subgroups by the time night falls. This can take a bit of time, because the exact dominance hierarchy within each group needs to be established.

These subgroups of 3–5 hyenas head out each night to hunt, scavenge for carcasses, find water, or forage for easy food sources. Hunts are carefully coordinated by multiple hyenas, and a whole night might be spent tracking prey before launching a full hunt. Subgroups might also go out to mark or defend the boundaries of the clan's territory. Sometimes a lone hyena goes out for a night to forage or scout. Some stay at the den all night to care for the young. However, lactating hyenas are actually some of the most dominant clan members and will usually lead subgroups, so no one *has* to stay behind at the den; it's a preference thing.

The most important thing is that everyone is back at the den by morning. The clan can't calm down unless everyone's back. This makes **Hyenas** a great choice for a one-shot story that takes place over one or a few nights.



Trouble with Predators

Hyenas have a lot in common with lions. They're nocturnal hunters, you stalk some of the same prey, they have a similar fission-fusion society, and your territory tends to overlap. But it's a complicated relationship. They're so focused on high-quality prey, it's ridiculous. And those stuck-up cats leave so much behind from their kills, but they can't just chill out and *share* the bones and organs they can't even digest. So yeah you love stealing from lions when you get the chance. It drives them nuts! But it takes four hyenas to drive off a single lion from their kill, so mostly it's not worth it. Sometimes they tolerate you, but lions are mostly a problem. A problem with muscles and claws.

So what happens when a subgroup of lionesses shows up to your territory to negotiate a truce? They're insisting that the macho lions back at the den want to wipe out all the hyenas in their territory, and chase them off prime hunting grounds. The lionesses, who actually do all the hunting, know this is a bad plan. They have come up with a solution for these meddlesome but necessary scrappers. The proposal is simple: agree to only scavenge at their kills, and don't take down any big game. Then everybody's happy, right?

Trouble with Prey

Hyenas will eat pretty much anything. That's part of why they do well. Zebras are one of the only animals that fits the size and shape of good prey that hyenas go out of their way to avoid. Humans don't really know why. Here's the thing, though: zebras are jerks.

Unlike hyenas, they have a simple and concentrated hierarchy: a handful of alpha males and a big herd of subordinates. What's worse is that they use physical intimidation and real violence to strictly enforce this rigid system. They even do this in broad daylight, and sleep at night like chumps. Blunt, shortsighted, inelegant—it's embarrassing for a hyena to see.

So how does the hyena clan respond when a herd of zebras is invading their territory during the day, trampling perfectly good grass where small prey would usually hide, wrecking ostrich nests that had perfectly good eggs, and chasing away whole packs of bigger prey? The zebras are insisting that hyenas bring lions, which makes no sense. But what can hyenas do about it? Face off with a herd of 50 zebras? Enlist the help of lions, who literally eat zebras for breakfast? Put aside their distaste and decide on a solution? Put aside their distaste and chow down?

CHARACTERS

Three traits define a hyena's way of being in the world: **boldness**, **sociability**, and **aggressiveness**. A bolder hyena takes more risks. A more sociable hyena starts more social interactions. A more aggressive hyena starts more fights.

Chokehold

HYENA

BOLDNESS 🐾🐾🐾

SOCIABILITY 🐾

AGGRESSIVENESS 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾

Chokehold because she's big and scary, because she's not smart enough to use anything but strength to make shit happen, and because she's smart enough to hold onto a good thing when she sees it.

"Call me your enforcer. I don't need to make any big decisions, okay? Whoever's in charge today can at least tell me how to put these jaws to good use."

Lightning

HYENA

BOLDNESS 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾

SOCIABILITY 🐾🐾

AGGRESSIVENESS 🐾🐾🐾

Lightning because you can't predict her, because she can do some serious damage, and because she makes things a hell of a lot more exciting.

"I get bored easily. And I'm not gonna use intimidation to get respect like some common zebra. That's prey shit. We're scavengers. Girls follow me because they want a piece of me. Get in line and get ready to compete."

Sunrise

HYENA

BOLDNESS 🐾🐾🐾

SOCIABILITY 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾

AGGRESSIVENESS 🐾

Sunrise because she's always looking on the bright side, because she makes things plain and clear, and because she's always on top.

"Look. I know what's going on around here. I know where water is, who's gonna be there, who we can mess with, and who we have to stay away from. I know all the lions around here, each of them, by smell. I've earned the power I have in this clan; I deserve it."

Broadpaw

LIONESS

BOLDNESS 🐾🐾

SOCIABILITY 🐾🐾🐾🐾

AGGRESSIVENESS 🐾🐾🐾🐾

Broadpaw because she can't be pushed over, because she keeps things stable, and because she leaves an impression.

"We're all friends here. We have an arrangement. But if I catch you sniffing at carcasses while we're still eating, that arrangement is void, and all we have is a nasty fight on our hands. You don't want that."

Prowler

LIONESS

BOLDNESS 🐾🐾🐾

SOCIABILITY 🐾🐾🐾

AGGRESSIVENESS 🐾🐾🐾🐾

Prowler because she's a silent threat, because she's relentless, and because she's done before you even know she's there.

"And you're here, on our territory, for some reason? You little rats better tell me you're out here to pick off sick gazelles or they'll be missing you at your den tomorrow."

Snaggle

SPRINGHARE

BOLDNESS 🐾

SOCIABILITY 🐾🐾🐾

AGGRESSIVENESS

Snaggle because he's a weird little thing, because he's kinda cute, and because he can be put to good use.

"Listen, ladies, I know you could snap me like a twig right now. And you know that too, yeah? Haha! Sorry. My point is, I'm not much of a meal. All bones! Maybe I could run some favors instead? You got somebody you need me to check on? Talk to? Maybe there's some information you could use. I dunno. You're the big scary hyenas here, you tell me! Haha."

Names

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|------------|
| ✦ Bloodthief | ✦ Crescent | ✦ Snapjaw |
| ✦ Bonecrusher | ✦ Dusky | ✦ Tallmane |
| ✦ Bristle | ✦ Shoulders | ✦ Whisper |

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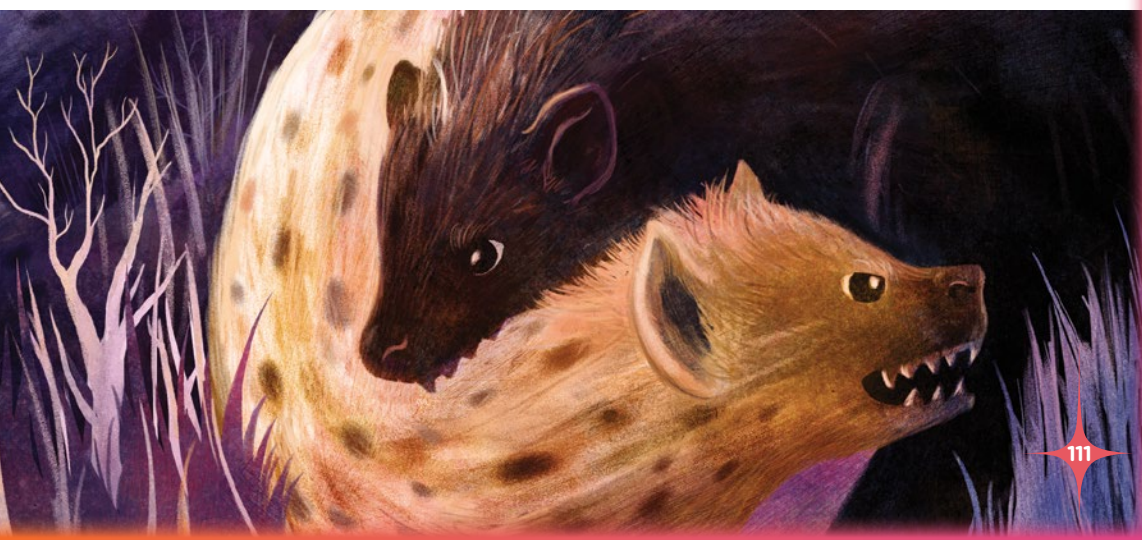
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The LAST Love SONGS on EARTH

by Pam Punzalan

Overview

This is the truth written into our blood and bones: everything is ending, because Nightborne—Void Sword, Closer of Doors—is convinced that the world must be killed in order for it to be born anew. It seems unstoppable, but you may be able to delay the inevitable through noble sacrifice. As the world spins its way towards oblivion, sink into the skin of a Heavenblade: soldiers chosen by fate, the last line of defense against Nightborne. Draw your sacred weapons, face off against Hellsingers, and push the apocalypse back step by step, year after year.

Principles

Cut Away At Your Dread

This is not a setting about losing the battle for Earth: this is about playing powerful magical queers who believe that they can stop it. It isn't about whether they really *can*; what's more important is that they *believe* that they can. Even if they fall in battle, there's an entire legacy of soldiers before them that have proven that they can win in small, significant ways. They carry the resolve of those fallen fighters along with their own burning desire to lull Nightborne back to sleep once and for all.

The Red Strings of Fate Bind Tight

Destiny's a cruel and messy thing. One of your fellow Heavenblades may turn out to be your sibling, the only family you've got left. The masked leader of the Hellsingers doesn't want to harm you because you're the reincarnation of the lover they buried years ago. Lean in to building messy, emotional connections between yourselves, with NPCs, and with antagonists. But also, consent isn't just sexy: it's necessary.

Let Your Love Set Fire to the Night

There is nothing stopping Hellsingers from burying their blades and turning their backs upon Nightborne. There may be dire consequences for betrayal, but essentially, all Hellsingers answer the call of the Void Sword willingly. Give them a wide range of motivations, with deep reasons behind why they believe that they must use the power they have been given to end the world. Always leave room for the possibility that Heavenblades can convince them to stop fighting—and, of course, being **Smitten** with a Heavenblade may be as good a reason as any.

Setting

At some unknown point in history, the cosmic being Nightborne measured Earth and found it wanting. She roused from Her slumber, chose the first of Her Hellsingers, and set to work, hastening the apocalypse. Worlds are destroyed during Nightborne's watch whenever She feels their reality must be reborn.

The only way to thwart Her is to defeat Her Hellsingers. These harbingers of the apocalypse do Nightborne's work by destroying Citadels, locations on Earth where leylines of sacred power and intent converge. Heavenblades—your characters—are the chosen protectors of these Citadels. Earth chose you as their champions and imbued you with the collective power of all the Heavenblades who fought against Nightborne in the past.

New Hellsingers are chosen near the end of every year, or whenever a Hellsinger dies. New Heavenblades are chosen the same way. Sometimes, Heavenblades and Hellsingers who survived the last war take up their sacred weapons again to prevent others from bearing the weight of destiny. Other times, they refuse the call, and lose all their powers—but not their memories. No one is compelled to answer the call to arms; you can refuse to take the reins of your own destiny, and another will be chosen.

Destiny calls Hellsingers and Heavenblades to war near the end of every year. Warriors who survived the last war are chosen first. They are allowed to refuse, and while they lose all their powers, they do not lose their memories. Any remaining slots are filled up by new fighters. More often than not, friends, loved ones, and family to Heavenblades and Hellsingers are popular choices. Many suspect that it is because destiny immediately seeks to fill in the void of a slot with something familiar, and it follows the threads to those most closely connected to the soldier that it wanted.

Citadels are scattered across the globe, and Symphonies—the duels of fate that take place between Hellsingers and Heavenblades with Nightborne as witness—happen simultaneously on Earth and in the scintillating Aria, the parallel shadow reality of Earth. Nightborne wins if all Citadels around the world are destroyed.

A ***Last Love Songs*** campaign can take place in any Earth city of your choosing, and in any historical period of your choice. The rest of the world has no idea that these fights are happening, but they certainly feel its effects in strange waves of melancholia, tragic events, and mass nightmares. They say that the Tower of Sorrows—Nightborne's own Citadel—exists somewhere in the depths of the Aria. Heavenblades wonder if taking the fight to Nightborne will mean putting an end to this never-ending spiral of Symphonies. Maybe you and your friends will be the first to break the cycle.

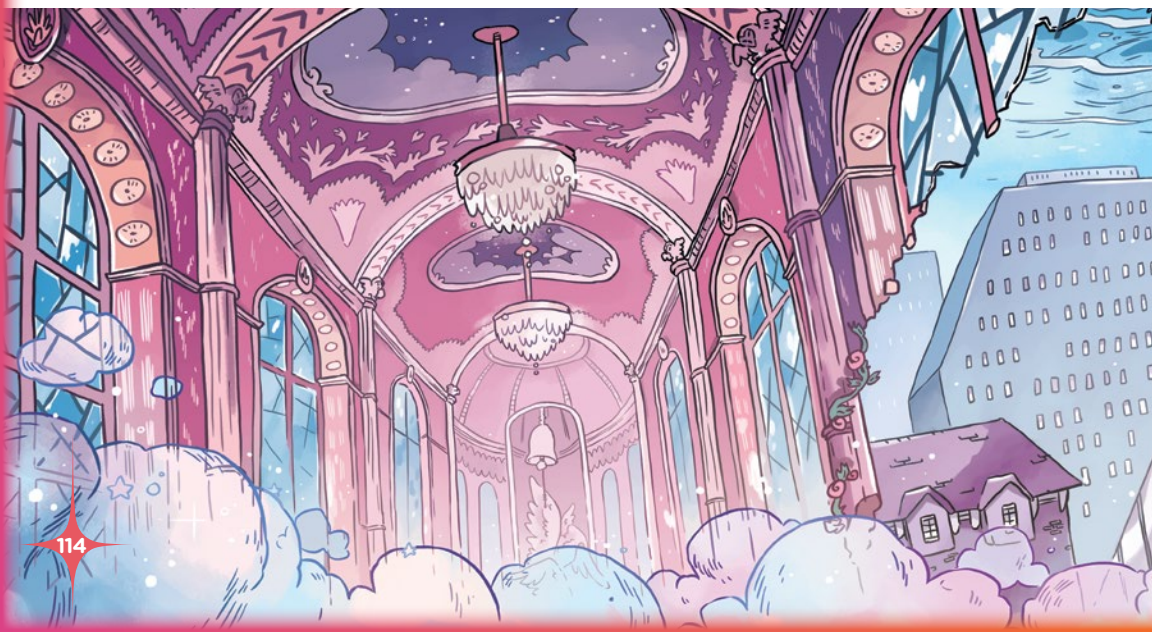
The Aria

This shadow world is the collective consciousness of the world manifest. Whatever affects the real world affects the Aria, and vice versa. By daylight, your school is a well-maintained building with manicured gardens and buzzing with young energy. In the Aria, however, it may be a castle of light, representing a shining beacon of safety for you and the rest of the PCs because of the good memories you've made there.

Day and night happen in the Aria as it would in the real world. What sets the Aria apart is the fact that the "sky" of the realm looks more like the surface of a vast ocean or lake, while the "earth" looks like the sky. Peer long enough, and you will see gears and cogs turning in symphony with each other. Haunting music also plays from an unknown distant source, and occasionally, the toll of countless bells can be heard.

Regular mortals are "asleep" in the Aria. They can't perceive it, and their souls only touch upon the Aria whenever they dream. Their physical bodies take the shape of coffins. The decor, size, shape, and color vary wildly, as though the Aria itself is attempting to reflect the personality of the sleeper. Conversely, Heavenblades and Hellsingers can interact with the Aria as though they were back in the real world. The chosen of destiny can step sideways, shifting effortlessly between Aria and the real world as though they were merely opening doors to move between one room and the next.

The Aria can also be treacherous, due to the presence of Umbra. These terrifying creatures look like they emerged straight out of Biblical descriptions of angels. They are manifestations of the world's collective grief over the apocalypse, or of a single person's darker side. Defeating them doesn't physically harm their real-world counterparts. Instead, in cases where the Umbra is a mortal's psyche untamed, it can change the person's heart.



CAMPAIGNS

We Don't Fight Fair

Destiny does not pull punches. Every Hellsinger or Heavenblade you face in the Aria is someone you know and care about. For some of you, they even make your heart sing, as you stand on opposite sides of the Symphony's battlefield.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **St. Celestina's Academy:** Earthquakes have been happening regularly around your city. If the fear of disaster wasn't enough, the toll of destiny's bell threatens to tear you and your friends apart. The PCs must face the terrible reality of becoming chosen as Heavenblades, forced to face off against their own classmates that have been selected as Hellsingers.
- ✦ **Armistice Elegies:** A pair of ex-lovers—one a Heavenblade, the other a Hellsinger, both sole survivors of last year's Symphony—have attempted to take matters into their own hands by serving as mentors to the next batch of soldiers of destiny. Their bitter rivalry, sowed from the seeds of grief and jilted love, sets the stage for a far more lethal Symphony.
- ✦ **A Hundred Symphonies for Family:** Years before the PCs were born, their Heavenblade and Hellsinger parents attempted to defy destiny by defeating an abomination that they believed to be Nightborne. In their eyes, defeating it meant stopping the apocalypse permanently. However, Nightborne's omens have appeared all throughout the world again—and now your PCs, their children, have been chosen.





Kill Your Gods, Not Your Darlings

The Symphony is a mystical battle where Earth's fate hangs in the balance. While Heavenblades and Hellsingers have fantastic powers at their disposal, so little is understood about why they are able to draw upon the potential and strength of multiple lifetimes, about the Aria, and about Nightborne Herself.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **Keys to the Queendom:** There are rumors among ex-Heavenblades about a voice crying for help within the Aria. They wonder if it's the missing half of the Symphony: a cosmic being that could match Nightborne in strength, and the conduit of the powers that you gain as the guardians of Earth. Your PCs are in the best position to investigate.
- ✦ **Temples of Flesh and Bone:** In a cruel twist of fate, your PCs have discovered that the Citadels you must protect are not locations, but people—and all of them are people that you know. Even the Hellsingers you face are shaken by this development. Did something happen in the Aria because of the last Symphony?
- ✦ **The Unnamed Tower:** A concentrated effort of Heavenblades from around the world has uncovered the location of Nightborne's Tower of Sorrows. Your PCs must race through the levels of the tower, facing the Hellsingers who have been chosen to defeat you, and face off against Nightborne Herself for the sake of the Earth.

CHARACTERS

The Blade King (he/they): An ex-Hellsinger who has had many faces and names throughout history. Both sides of the war identify him through the fact that he wields multiple sacred weapons, has command over blood magic, and always has distinct violet eyes. They say he was once Nightborne's finest lieutenant, and Nightborne sought to punish him Himself when he betrayed her centuries ago. His victory over her may be the reason why he reincarnates with perfect recall of all his previous lives, thus letting him increase in power every time he comes back around. He makes it his business to mentor Heavenblades, and also try to stop Hellsingers from doing things they'll regret.

Dove (they/them): The mysterious administrator of ALLSPHERES, the digital hub for all past and present Heavenblades. The oldest members of the forum have no idea who they are: no one has seen their face, or managed to get a handle on their location. Dove also scrambles their voice over calls, and never turns their video feed on. Whoever they are, they wield some fantastic abilities. Every Heavenblade receives a special app that lets them log unto ALLSPHERES the moment they're chosen.

Eula van Leong (she/her): Proprietress of the Lucky Cat, a garden and cat cafe that serves as neutral territory to Heavenblades and Hellsingers. The Lucky Cat is where many parleys happen, and serves as a safe space to talk about... well, the apocalypse, without civilians overhearing. Depending on who's asking, Eula will tell you that she used to be a Heavenblade, or a Hellsinger, or maybe she was just the loved one of a former soldier of destiny who saw how terrible fate could be to both sides of the fight. Either way, she's the fashionable woman who looks younger than her 80-something years, smoking from long pipes, serving tea to whoever walks into her store, fussing over her absolute feline chonks, and tending to her garden.

The Ghost (they/them): Heavenblades whisper of a ghost wielding bolts of pure light in the Aria. You know they're coming when the music shifts to what feels like a soft, sad, and delicate playlist of hits from your high school days. The Ghost only ever lingers long enough to save Heavenblades who are in trouble, and they never speak. After a run-in with them, though, you may dream of a crumbling tower. Amidst the destruction, a single Heavenblade stares defiantly up at Nightborne. They whisper a prayer, and nock another arrow.

SACRED WEAPONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

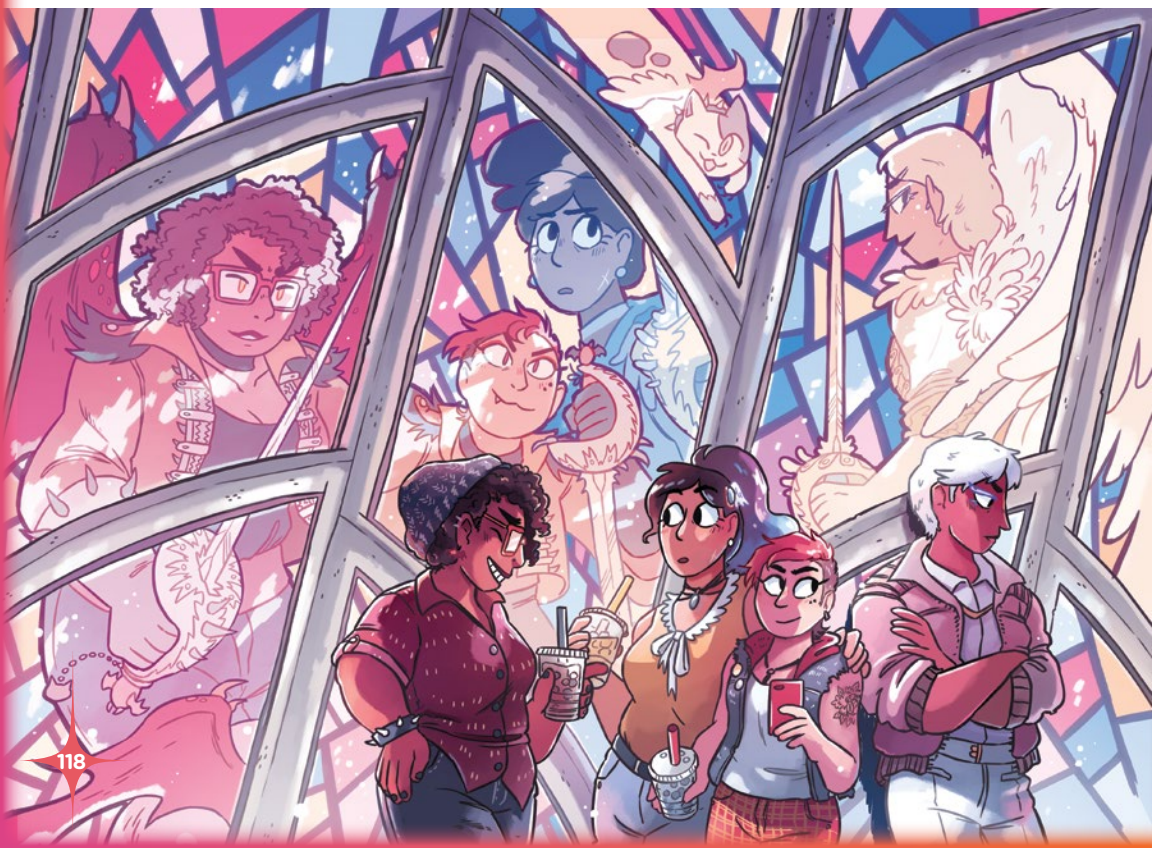
As Heavenblades and Hellsingers, you don't just wield weapons spun of fate: each of you *are* weapons, brimming with intent and heavy with purpose. You manifest a bit of this power by pulling them from your bodies. When you're introducing your character, describe how you draw your weapon, and what it looks like. We've listed some ideas below. Don't feel limited by these lists: personalize things as needed to suit your character.

My Weapon is DRAWN...

- ✦ From the palm of my hand, and rests easy against my skin
- ✦ From my belly, a deadly child made from my intent
- ✦ From my heart, drenched in the blood of my decisions

My Weapon IS...

- ✦ A rapier. Its hilt looks like the wings of angels folded together; the black steel of its blade seems to suck up all the shadows in the room.
- ✦ A spear, sleek and silver, detailed with vibrant green vines. The smell of roses follows in its wake as it cuts through the air.
- ✦ A pair of fans, engraved with depictions of a fight for heaven. White flame roars from the tips with every flick of my wrists.



Custom Rules

First Time?

With the exception of the Legion playbook, all other PCs in a **Last Love Songs** campaign have been selected as Heavenblades for just the second time in history. This means that the past legacy you bear is from a single life cycle where, in your previous reincarnation, you were a Heavenblade or a Hellsinger. Yours is a heavy burden to carry, but your hands are not weighed down by reincarnation after reincarnation of tragedies, regrets, and lost loves.

Not yet, anyway.

Magical Queers and The Power of Destiny

Lean hard into magical girl powers for your characters. Beyond the abilities conferred by your playbooks, each of you can:

- ✦ Enter and exit the Aria. All it takes is a deep breath, and reaching for the fabric of reality with your heart. Some soldiers find it helpful to do rituals like pretending to open a door, or peering into a reflective surface.
- ✦ Leap great distances, and have preternatural speed, strength, and stamina. Think of all those animated series where you have the protagonists jumping from building to building, and you're on the right track. You're certainly not impervious, but you don't go down easy either.
- ✦ Wield the power of one sphere of magical influence. The pretty guardians of Sailor Moon have titular abilities like holy moonlight, the waters of justice, and the flames of renewal. Games like Final Fantasy also have awe-inspiring things like drawing multiple weapons from pocket dimensions, or summoning mythical beasts to fight at your side. The magic you control reflects your personality and principles—or, in some cases, a darker side of you that you don't like talking about.

Custom Move

TAKE MY HEART

The ultimate act of trust between soldiers of destiny is when you draw sacred weapons from each other's bodies. The strength of the love between you and the weight of your shared intent imbues the new weapon with awesome power. What new form does this weapon take? How does its shape and its abilities show your feelings for one another?

When you and another person draw your weapons from each other's bodies, roll **+Heart**:

- 10+** Choose 3 each
- 7-9** Choose anywhere between 1-3 each, but for every selection, your GM will offer you a hard choice:
 - ✦ Clear a Condition
 - ✦ Take +1 forward on any roll that involves using the sacred weapon
 - ✦ Gain a String on a Hellsinger of choice
 - ✦ Gain insight from the GM about this year's Symphony

This move can only be used if at least one half of the pair is **Smitten** with the other, or if at least one person has a String on the other. If you're using this move, make sure that there's mutual consent between you and the other player, or you and the GM!



The LESBIANS OF AVALON

by Kira Magrann

Overview

In a mystical time of knights and fairy folk, Christian monarchs threaten to destroy the last of the magical ways the Lesbians of Avalon cherish. Defend your queer brethren in this Arthurian legend-inspired romantic fantasy setting, featuring dashing long-haired butches in shining armor, sensual earthy magicians, metamorphosing wood nymphs, and regal femmes.

Principles

LEGENDARY QUEER FANTASY

Imagine every Arthurian legend you've ever read or watched. Now make it queer! This setting is a love letter to all the green knights, ladies in lakes, enchantresses, unicorns, nymphs, and other assorted beasts and fairies who are often the villains in fantasy tales. In queer tradition, it takes those villainous "others" and re-centers them as the main characters fighting against the oppressive Christian monarchy of knights and kings. Reframe these legends of grail quests and the conquering of pagans, looking instead to the forests, ruins, and magic of the old ways.

ROMANTIC AND MAGICAL

There have been several versions of Arthurian legend over the centuries, each with variations based on the time they're written. Accordingly, this version focuses on a lesbian cast of characters with romance, magic, and swordplay at its heart. It's more like a song, poem, or painting than a story concerning semi-historical battle facts.

QUEER COMMUNITY

This setting positions the main characters as an oppressed group of fairies, beasts, magicians, witches, and humans within the Avalonian isles. They're resisting the oppression of the Queen of Avalon, who rules this land through familial conquest. She threatens the Old Magic of the land, a metaphor for outsiders and queerness, with her Christian monarchy. The PCs represent the queer community in this setting, trying to survive amidst a more powerful regime of colonizers.



Setting

In the cool mossy forests, beyond the cities, castles, and fields of human civilization, live the last remaining denizens of magical Avalon. It's here among the trees that Lintagel was built, a refuge for persecuted beings of any kind, magical or otherwise. Here they build community to preserve their mystical ways. All who mean well may enter the magical mists that circle this sacred place of hope. This is where the PCs live and what they defend, as they themselves are magical beings.

They fight the constant harassment of the Queen's decrees from Taerleon, who solidifies her power with the spiritual light of the Christian god. Her knights and clergy wield an uncanny white fire that they are blessed with by their faith. Monks and priests who bear the sign of the cross decry the old ways of magical Avalon, accusing those who practice it openly of devilish witchcraft and dangerous queerness. Most magical creatures have gone into hiding, only revealing themselves in secret or at night, for they have no way of blending in as human practitioners do. While there's not a formal ban on magical creatures from the forest, they are mistrusted, shunned, and treated as exotic outsiders in common society.

Though most in the realm have relented to the Queen's rule, a small rebellion exists in secret. Some in Lintagel still fight for their way of life. The people of Avalon believe in these rebels, giving secret gifts to the ancient magical creatures in support of their cause. Many fear they're fighting a battle they can't win, and their way of life may be lost forever.



CAMPAIGNS

KNIGHTS IN SHINING ARMOR

To solidify their questy reputations, knights must go up against the scariest beasts of all: you. It's a bit of a tradition in Lintagel to have fun outwitting the knights in their ridiculously macho endeavors when they attempt to best you every year. It's an unspoken agreement between the Queen's knights and the defenders of Lintagel that no one be slain, and instead the knights must return with "evidence" that they've bested a magical creature. Also they're super hot in their shining armor.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The knights set up camp at the edge of your forest haven just outside the mists, shouting all kinds of nonsense for the strongest among you to come out and fight. Honestly, they're kind of beautiful with their long hair and huge muscles. Go answer their provocations with some action of your own.
- ✦ A group of knights enters your forest looking for a sacred artifact they claim is being kept by one of your river nymphs. A glowing sword or something? You've never heard of it. You can tell all but one of them, the loud obnoxious leader, is just going along with the plan. But the leader seems bloodthirsty. What challenges do you set up for them? Can they be turned to your side with a little education about who you really are?
- ✦ A group of knights is passing through your forest, escorting some mysterious fancy ladies of renown. They pass dangerously near your secret haven at Lintagel, and their wagon breaks down just along the mists. Do you help them, or leave them to fend off highwaymen on their own?

The Queen's Affair

There are rumors that the Queen, her lover, and her knight are in a somewhat tumultuous triad. Some claim her lover and knight are sleeping together behind the Queen's back, but others say the Queen has gone on secret adventures with her knight. Whatever the truth, all three are known to be quite romantic and for wrapping others up into their dramas.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- + The Queen is holding a tourney to determine the most worthy knights of the realm and recruit them to her service. The winner will get to spend one day and night in her attention. The competitions include jousting, sword fights, and feats of strength.
- + The Queen has quite the entourage of ladies. A keeper of coins, a personal guard, a mistress of ceremonies, and her lover are never far from her company in the palace. Any number of them may be by her side, whispering advice and keeping her confidence. Perhaps you can sway one to your side, or gain the heart of a valuable spy, in order to learn the Queen's plans for you and your brethren.

CHARACTERS

LINATGEL

Albion, the Green Knight (they/them): The most fearsome of warriors among the forest folk of Linatgel. Before the magical mist barrier was set, they led battle after battle against the invading Christian forces. Now they mostly run rescue missions, or fight off the most loathsome of the knights who dare to harass their brethren. Their broad shoulders are bedecked with a deep green cape that matches their glittering green eyes, and sometimes when they stand still it appears they become a great oak tree. Albion is lonely, as if they are the last of a magical era guided by the forest. Their sword is a huge two-handed broadsword, a glistening steel that seems itself to carry the vengeance of the trees.

Is there someone that can make Albion feel less alone? Can you rein Albion in when they lash out in righteous anger?

Llamrei, the Water Nymph (she/they): Llamrei lives beneath a marsh within the forest community of Lintagel. Clever and wise, she is known for devising plans and knowing ancient secrets of the water. Though her true motives are not always clear, her compassion is plain, and her magic is known for its healing and transformative qualities. Llamrei's sword is made of the water itself, thin and silver with a golden hilt. She knows secrets of the water no one else does, and will share them if your heart has true intentions. Llamrei has metallic sheened turquoise scales, a few fins, and when in water her legs become an elegant fish tail.

Can Llamrei teach you compassion, even toward your enemies? What "broken" person is she always trying to fix?

The Gryphon Caradoc (per/pers): Caradoc teaches all the children in Lintagel. Per is a caretaker and extremely protective of everyone in the forest, but especially the youngest. Gryphons are traditionally known for their ferocity when guarding treasures, but a little-known fact is that they also know where treasures are at all times. So per knows where all the riches the Queen hordes are hidden. Many have tried to convince Caradoc to tell them, but per is too worried they would still lose the bigger battle. Caradoc has a giant scar along a wing from per time in the first battles of the land. Per sword is a giant golden blade meant to be wielded by the clawed talons of a gryphon.

What reassurances or service can you provide the Gryphon in exchange for the treasure intel? What are families like here in Lintagel and how are your characters connected to them?

Enchantress Obera (she/they): A powerful magician who is one with all the life of Avalon. They are always tending the plants and animals around Lintagel, and sometimes her silver eyes are glassy, like they are seeing beyond what is really here. Obera wants more than anything to preserve the old ways of magic that tie all beings of Avalon together with the land, and has an oddly cheerful disposition despite their gloomy outlook. She wakes from deep nightmares, dreaming of her siblings, fellow enchantresses scattered across Avalon, all in dire trouble. If only they could be rejoined, their power could perhaps stand more strong against the Christian god. Obera's sword is made of any nearby element, earth, air, water, fire, that she summons to her in defense of her people.

Will you go on a quest to find her fellow enchantresses? Can you win Obera's trust by seeing through her strong facade to the vulnerability within?

Castle Taelleon

Queen Evaine (she/her): The current ruler of the isle of Avalon. Evaine represents the new monarchs of Avalon, and though the war is long over, its reminders can be seen in new religious conversions, new laws, and cultural shifts. Avalon is Christian now, though the Queen herself is neither religious or magical. Evaine merely wishes to maintain her power, and to do that must keep the people under control. She is a loving queen, a compassionate, kind, saintly figure to the masses. But those who know her well understand that she is conniving, ruthless, and loves to play games. Her sword is bedecked with faceted gemstones, long and slim with a swirling basket hilt.

Can you beat her at her own games? How can you show her own hypocrisy to the people?

Lady Astolat, the Queen's Lover (she/her): Astolat is a lady of great renown in Avalon, and her family has many generations of old ties to the magical land. She still practices magic, having so far convinced the Queen it is good for the people to see their customs alive in the halls of monarchy. Queen Evaine needs her in order to gain the people's trust, and Astolat has a thing for powerful women. Secretly, she plots with other denizens of the realm who seek to start an uprising. She knows the Queen knows she's doing this, but so far Evaine has done nothing to stop her. In this sense, she is potentially in great danger should the Queen's whims turn against her. Her sword is an heirloom from her mother, inscribed with her family crest of bear and shield.

How can you send her secret support despite her position in the court? What aide can she send to the knights of Avalon still defending the Old Magic of the realm?

Lyonesse, the Queen's Knight (she/her): Lyonesse is the most skillful and most gorgeous knight of all the realm. She has won every contest, every battle against the pagans, and nearly every maiden's heart as well. Both the Queen and Astolat love her, and Lyonesse loves them both as well, but that doesn't mean she won't take the opportunity to romance those who adore her. It's an open secret that she's a playgirl, as otherwise it would be terribly embarrassing for the Queen and Astolat. She is hilariously bad at politicking, and wears her heart on her sleeve. Lyonesse has not yet met her better in swordplay, making her wildly overconfident. Her sword is the famous *Light's Edge*, said to bestow those who wield it with holy justice.

Can you use her chaotic charisma against her? How do you resist the harassment campaigns of her knights?

Names

These are some lesser-known and variant names from Arthurian legend, with a few more well-known names sprinkled in. Feel free to use them chaotically and with no ties to original characters, genders, or legends.

- | | | |
|--|--|-----------|
| ✦ Acheflow | ✦ Gwynnedd | ✦ Olwyn |
| ✦ Astolat | ✦ Hellekin | ✦ Ragnall |
| ✦ Branwen | ✦ Iblis | ✦ Sebille |
| ✦ Caelia | ✦ Isolde | ✦ Tristan |
| ✦ Creiddyladl | ✦ Lynessa | ✦ Tryamon |
| ✦ Gaenor | ✦ Marrok (means a knight thought to be a werewolf) | ✦ Viviane |
| ✦ Galiene | ✦ Morgan | |
| ✦ Grisandole (means a princess who dresses as a man) | ✦ Nimiane | |

Custom Rules

Old Magic

Most folks from Avalon can do some kind of Old Magic, which is their connection to the magic of the land and all that lives on it, including them! Consider a version of natural magic to be common, like the ability to whisper to butterflies, understand plant relationships, or small manipulations of the elements like lighting a fire with a touch or turning a handful of rain to snow. It can help people forage for food, heal wounds, protect with the elements, or if absolutely necessary defend with violence. Larger effects are relegated to magical characters or epic characters like the enchantresses. The PCs are probably mid-range, cool enough to do some magic, but it's not their specialty unless that's a feature of their playbook.



CHRISTIAN MAGIC

The most enthusiastic of believers can wield the white fire sorcery of the Christian gods. It manifests as a literal white fire that can burn upon contact with anything the user desires. It has set buildings, forests, and people aflame. It can be used emotionally as well, to try and burn out “heretical” beliefs from someone’s heart. Some Christian magic is used for healing and love, tied to the offerings left out for various local saints.

LINTAGEL

Consider having all the characters be from Lintagel, so they are bound together by their community. There are knights here in Lintagel but they are of the forest, not of the Christian variety that belong to the Queen. There is opportunity to be from outside the community or having just joined, but unless characters are former villains, it’s unlikely they would be from the Queen’s court.

AVALON SPEAKS

When you gaze into the ancient depths of Avalon for secrets buried in among the roots and soil, roll **+Spirit**:

- 10+** The GM will answer any question that the flora, fauna, and ghosts of Avalon could answer
- 7-9** The GM will answer but it is from the perspective of that being questioned, and therefore confusing to the PC’s own perspective
- 6-** The GM is encouraged to make a move that represents the Christian oppression of the realm

The Mani Missive

by Mariam Ahmad

Overview

The Mani Missive is set in a world where South Asian folktales and myths come to life: where powerful elemental beings can manifest in godly ways, where humanoids and animalfolk exist in both large urban cities and chaotic expanses of wilderness. However, a community of serpentfolk—known as the Naga both in plural and singular—are being hunted and exploited to extinction by a large, infamous collective of bounty hunters known as the Gehna Gang due to their magical jewels known as the nagamani. As you adventure, you'll tell stories of love and perseverance through oppression and misinformation, and finding friendship in unexpected places.





PRINCIPLES

NAGA PERSONHOOD

The personhood of the Naga is not up for debate, nor are they ever meant to be vilified in earnest in this setting. The Gehna Gang is a deplorable capitalist and colonialist organization that succeeds through predation and exploitation, and there is no justification for the current treatment of the Naga, even if a chosen past mythology places them as a destructive conquering community. It is essential that safety tools and unanimous consent of everyone are at play at the table if the custom rule of the **Gehna Gang Pathos** (page 136) is used, as many of the suggested myths may trigger real-life feelings.

IGNORANCE IS THE TRUE ENEMY

There is a lot of rumors, gossip, misinformation, and even deliberate propaganda that can be found as you explore and interact with every community in this world. Even among regions that are heavily influenced or under the control of the Gehna Gang, you have opportunities to change the common person's perception (or the lack of one) of systemic oppression through education and empathy.

NO COMMUNITY IS A MONOLITH AND VIEWPOINTS ARE FLUID

No community is unified in every opinion, nor can one person or organization speak for everyone. That means that betrayal can occur from staunch communal allies. On the flip side, it also means that unexpected family can be found in places filled with bigotry and hate. Make use of messy, complicated people having different viewpoints in every community, with their own motivations for following or believing in an ideology. However, no opinion is ironclad; compassionate hearts can harden in strife or fester in resentment, and empathy can melt the cruelest of minds.

Setting

The Mani Missive was formed 50 years ago by a wealthy and politically influential treasure seeker and bounty hunter guild known as the Gehna Gang. The Missive stated that the Naga were a threat to the greater good with unchecked magic, and the only way to prevent them from conquering the civilized world was to take the source and focus of their magic, their nagamani (crest jewel). Lucrative bounties were placed on collecting the nagamani, and soon the Naga were decimated and forced into exile or hiding. The exact details of the Naga myths propagated by the Gehna Gang in the missive can be kept vague and menacing, or more explicitly defined if using the custom rule **Gehna Gang Pathos** (page 136).

However, greedy bounty hunters soon found that the nagamani magic can only be harnessed by the Naga, and some started to exploit the vulnerable Naga into doing their bidding in return for not destroying their nagamani or turning them in to the Gehna Gang.

In response to the Mani Missive and the resulting predation and exploitation, many underground resistance groups like the Sapera and the Vishkanya were formed to assist and give sanctuary to fleeing Naga, and to sabotage and push back the highly discriminatory act.

The Mani Missive can take place in most time periods and technological ages.

Key Locations

- + **Gehnapur:** This is the largest urban city in the region, and the central hub for the Gehna Gang. It sits on an abundant land of natural resources, which in turn gave the guild its seemingly endless supply of wealth to launch the Mani Missive that has now plunged this region into its current era of exploitation.
- + **Billi Bagh:** This is a catfolk city that is fortified by natural defenses. It's relatively untouched by the Mani Missive and a suspected sanctuary for the Naga, and its symbolic leader, the Naagrani. Its regent is Baghban Shera, a tigerfolk.
- + **The rest of the region:** Those closer to Gehnapur have gradually been lured into following the Mani Missive for the tempting rewards from met bounties, while those that are further away, isolated due to distance or natural defenses, remain untouched. There are also little pockets in the expanded outskirts of Gehnapur that are anti-Missive and refuse to deal with the guild.

Setting-Specific Firting Ideas

- + Sharing street food
- + Having an eating contest over street food
- + Street food stall crawl (like a pub crawl, but street food)
- + Getting doused with liquid color, or smearing each other with color powder during the Festival of Colors (Holi)*
- + Purchasing a trinket you saw them appreciate in the market (but didn't buy for themselves)
- + Sending notes via errand-kids on the streets
- + Writing a sher (couplet) extolling their virtues
- + Pre-wedding activities involving team games of one partner's friends and family versus the other betrothed's friends and family (like ransoming of shoes)
- + A shared dream sequence involving a sweeping orchestral score over a picturesque landscape and innumerable backup dancers dancing in perfect sync to the music

**Consent is key for every activity, but it is very important to note that consent is mandatory for this particular activity. Without it, it's awkward and creepy in the most generous interpretation, and assault at its worst.*

CAMPAIGNS

G MARKS THE SPOT

As unimportant cogs in the big corp, the party could be baby adventurers starting out in a region already colonized by the Gehna Gang. While they need not be directly working or employed by them, the most lucrative way to make bank is to take bounty contracts under the Mani Missive, with higher-profile targets like rebellion NPCs having greater rewards, but greater risks. If one of the PCs is the Naga playbook, they most certainly can remain undetected through their shapeshifting abilities, although discovery is always a risk.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- + **Here There Be Nagas:** While scanning the bounty board for jobs, your PCs catch a relatively low stakes bounty for some quick money. But while out adventuring for something that would be “low-hanging fruit” (can be a literal fetch quest!), they stumble across a Sapera scouting party on the move!
- + **Double Dipping:** A bounty is out on a Naga PC (or a close friend)! However, this is a prime opportunity to have your cake and eat it too, if your PCs can work out a plan to cash in on the bounty and bust them out after.

Venom and Velvet

The Vishkanya (Poison Maidens) is a Naga-led resistance enclave that is at odds with many of the other Naga grassroots or underground organizations also fighting the Gehna Gang's machinations. The group's polarizing reputation stems from the fact that many of its members have embraced the vilified names of "venomous vipers" and have let their rage at the injustices they face make their nagamani's magic fester into pure venom.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **Sucks to Be You:** A vile Gehna Gang leader has been found dead after a night out in the town, with the only sign of foul play being two puncture wounds and the disturbing lack of blood in their body. Rumors spread of an avenging spirit answering prayers of the wretched. Your PCs are roped in to help investigate this mystery. As time passes and no clear culprit is found, tempers flare and communal riots between the Gehna Gang and the Entertainment District threaten to boil over if it's not resolved.
- ✦ **A Monsoon Wedding:** Your PCs are invited to attend a week-long wedding of a close ally. However, as the guests arrive the day before the festivities commence, you're all caught in a monsoon downpour that's raining snakes! Rumors of bad omens begin, and a guest falls ill, followed by someone in the wedding party. Can the PCs save the wedding?
- ✦ **With Cat-Like Tread:** If one of your PCs is the Naga playbook, a charismatic catfolk approaches them to help with a "small purr-oble" that only they can solve. The stranger knows they are a Naga even if they are in disguise or shapeshifted, as they too are Naga and have been observing them. What follows next is an amewowing cloak-and-dagger game of "cat and also cat" that also gets the rest of the PCs involved. It's also a recruiting opportunity—the Naga playbook is the primary focus and may choose to join the Vishkanya at the end of this caper, but the rest of the party may also join them if they impress the recruiter.



The Mani Missive

Perhaps you want bigger, world-changing stakes and want to dismantle and burn the Mani Missive to the ground. Maybe even take the fight to the heart of it—Gehna Gang HQ. If this were a TV series, this would be the final season.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- + **Can't We Just Work Together This Once?:** Storming the Gehna Gang HQ isn't going to be easy, and it's time to get all these resistance factions to come together. While they are all in theory on the same page about their core principles, how they get there is very different. But the PCs can make them play nice—right?!
- + **Changing Minds, Opening Hearts:** The PCs have found out the real reason for the Mani Missive, and if the general public were to know, they would immediately end this discriminatory practice. However, the only place that has the magic or capability to broadcast or mass print the truth is under Gehna Gang control.
- + **Storming the Castle:** Sometimes you just need an elite strike team (your PCs) to get in and go for the jugular. This is a high stakes infiltration mission of getting to the command center or the Gehna Gang guild leader's office, with the goal of overthrowing the guild.

CHARACTERS

Gehna Gang

Pururaj Kumar (no pronouns, use the name in full every time): The current guild leader. When you look up the word “privilege” in the dictionary, you will find a gallery of portraits of the vain being known as Pururaj Kumar. Born into the role, Pururaj Kumar believes in the Missive's message and that everything that is happening is for the “greater good.”

Naga

Naagrani (they/them): As the oldest and wisest of all the Naga, they serve as a symbol and hope of their people, and many Naga say their name with a touch of divine reverence. They look ageless, with the faintest of face lines belying their long age. When the Gehna Gang started the Mani Missive, many Naga sacrificed themselves to get them in hiding, and they live with that guilt. Their nagamani's hue is vermillion, and their power manifests as knowing the location of each and every living Naga, making them a prized target of the Gehna Gang and any treasure seekers. They are currently hiding in plain sight as a catfolk advisor in the court of their loved one, Baghban Shera.

SAPERA

Asfandiyar (he/they): As the leader of Sapera, the underground resistance enclave against the Gehna Gang, Asfandiyar is the bane of bounty hunters everywhere. He was instrumental in spiriting the Naagrani to safety in the early days of the Missive, but it came at a great cost that he still feels responsible for. Their nagamani is a dark onyx, and their power manifests as a force shield.

VISHKANYA

Beena (she/her): The current leader of the Vishkanya, her puckish and charming demeanor belies the ruthless core underneath. She prefers to appear as a beautiful human woman in her prime with striking green pupils, the same shade as her nagamani, which she wears as a maang tika (a drop jewel that hangs from the center parting of the hair and rests just above the eyebrow line). When she was young, she was the sole survivor of a Mani Missive raid on her family by the Gehna Gang—a fact that she drops any time she wants to sway someone to her cause. Beena's attitude to fighting against systemic oppression is simple: whatever it takes to win. It's rumored that her nagamani's power is poison so lethal that a touch is deadly—and why she is never seen without gloves.

ALLIES

Baghban Shera (they/she): The current leader of a catfolk stronghold that has evaded the Gehna Gang's grip, Baghban Shera is a shrewd diplomat and compassionate champion of her people. The title Baghban means "Gardener," and Shera does that: she weeds and prunes bigotry, refusing to trade with the Gehna Gang or allow bounty hunters in her domain. She is currently a very close ally and loved one of Naagrani, and heeds their council often.

NAMES

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| ✦ Aakash (sky) | ✦ Pooja (prayer) |
| ✦ Aatish (fireworks) | ✦ Samay (time) |
| ✦ Andhera (darkness) | ✦ Saya (shadow) |
| ✦ Baarish (rain) | ✦ Sejal (river) |
| ✦ Bulbul (nightingale) | ✦ Soma (moon) |
| ✦ Chaman (garden) | ✦ Suraj (sun) |
| ✦ Chameli (jasmine) | ✦ Talwar (sword) |
| ✦ Dhanush (bow) | ✦ Tara/Sitara (star/stars) |
| ✦ Fiza (winds) | ✦ Taskeen (satisfaction) |
| ✦ Hirav (greenery) | ✦ Tehzeeb (manners) |
| ✦ Indra (rain) | ✦ Ujala (light) |
| ✦ Muskaan (smile) | ✦ Vasudha (earth) |
| ✦ Payal (anklets) | ✦ Zameer (conscience) |

Custom Rules

Gehna Gang Pathos

This is a custom world-building rule to further define the unsavory aspects of the Mani Missive. This should be done with the unanimous consent and support of everyone at the table. Choose as many of the following propaganda or myths as part of the original Missive. You may come up with your own if you wish, but it must come with a corresponding fact. As a GM, you can work these in as part of a down beat to reinforce the themes.

- + **Myth:** Naga can't shapeshift their eyes, making their piercing snake-like eyes their telltale feature.
- + **Fact:** Naga have full control over every feature of their shapeshifting. However, they prefer to retain their sclera over pupils for better vision. They often prefer the form of catfolk to blend in better, but some that are deeply infiltrated within the Gehna Gang look no different than other pupil-having people.
- + **Myth:** Naga have the ability to control mass populations with their nagamani.
- + **Fact:** While each nagamani power manifests differently, including the ability to calm or impassion temperaments in their immediate vicinity, none have the ability to control multiple minds.
- + **Myth:** Naga are apex predators that eat everyone and hunt and torture their prey.
- + **Fact:** Naga frown on cannibalism and do not as a community hunt or torture other creatures.
- + **Myth:** Nagamani can be used to harness and focus magic.
- + **Fact:** While they can give a considerable boost to non-Naga mages, only Naga can harness the full power of their nagamani. In extremely rare cases, a non-Naga mage can make full use of the nagamani's powers, but only when willingly given and shared by the Naga it belongs to.

The Monster Mash House Party

by Ash Cheshire

Overview

The beautiful vampire spider Queen October is hosting the ultimate Halloween party at zir Gothic mansion, and every monster is invited! There will be games, food, costumes, music, and Queen October has even promised for the very first time that zir entire mansion and grounds—gardens, tunnels, labyrinthine halls, secret passages, and mysterious oddities beyond imagining—are ours tonight, freely offered for us to explore and experiment in. The sun is just setting, and the party ends at dawn, so there's no time to waste! Nothing could possibly put a damper on this party... right?



PRINCIPLES

CAMP IT UP

The Monster Mash House Party is here for all of your campy Halloween vibes. Bring that B movie enthusiasm and good-natured sass!

EXPAND AND IMPROVE UPON MONSTER METAPHORS

There's so much lore and mythology about monsters, it can sometimes feel a little bit ironically restrictive trying to "get it right." Additionally, some of the monster tropes include harmful and/or reductive stereotypes. Feel free to define your monster's lore to be personally meaningful, and be sure you take the time to consider how you can make your concept anti-oppressive to bring it within the respectful guidelines that apply to all **Thirsty Sword Lesbians** play.

EXPLORE THE INFINITE MANSION AND ITS GROUNDS

Queen October's mansion and its surrounding property are—like October zirsself—supernatural and mysterious. Is there a specific thing that you want or need for the party? A certain kind of room? A particular ambience? Just start poking around, this place has everything. You can always ring for the butler!

IT'S A PARTY!

Tonight is going to have some surprises in store and things could get feisty, but you're here for a good time. That doesn't mean swords won't cross (a staircase duel can be a marvelous way to work up an appetite for all those monster canapés and cocktails), but you're here to party.

Focus on People

Thirsty Sword Lesbians shines when used to tell stories centered on people—people you can talk to, flirt with, try to understand, and duel. One side of this is being generous with information; there are no mechanics included here for how monsters use their abilities or how supernatural or magical elements work. The GM should just tell you some interesting or actionable information about it. The other side is to get people involved. Explore the mansion! Get in a duel! Start a party game!



Setting

It's tough out there for a cryptid these days. We're all the rage in media and online, but people don't seem as ready or willing to invite us into their actual lives and living rooms. But we have each other, and that means we also have the annual Halloween monster party! For that, we owe our gratitude to the wise and wonderful vampire spider Queen October, cynosure of monsters and tonight's charming hostess.

On Halloween night, Queen October welcomes each and every monster to make their way to zir beautiful haunted hilltop mansion, with its infinite rooms and labyrinthine grounds. From dusk to dawn, we all gather to spend one night together, full of raucous and feisty camaraderie.

All dire conflicts are considered suspended tonight; Queen October's mansion is plenty big enough for all who wish to remain mutually separated to do so—by magic, if necessary. Other disputes are not off-limits, however. Many old resentments, misunderstandings, disagreements, and past wounds have been brought to the fore to reach a resolution during past Halloween parties, and in fact the neutral ground agreement has the effect of drawing out old poison that is ready to find its antidote. October understands the value of active engagement in resolving conflicts within our community, because we are stronger and more vibrant together.

The tables are set, jack-o'-lanterns lit, and the guests are arriving... So come, join the monster mash! Whatever you are seeking at this party, you're likely to find some form of satisfaction...

CAMPAIGNS

MONSTER HUNTER PARTY CRASHER!

The PCs' Halloween party is interrupted when Queen October asks them to a private meeting and tells them that a monster hunter has found their way to the mansion. October asks the PCs to bring the monster hunter to zir safely without drawing too much attention from the other guests. (If you want to create your own dimensional NPC, the Investigator playbook is particularly recommended.)

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The PCs must navigate through a series of other guests that have grievances with them as they try to find the monster hunter, who remains one step ahead of them. A duel in every room!
- ✦ When they find the monster hunter, PCs discover that the hunter has problems similar to theirs, and insights into their conflicts. They help bring each PC some resolution while being escorted to October.
- ✦ When players find October, the monster hunter reveals they came to warn the monsters of human incursion, and they want to help protect the party and monsters against human toxic powers. The party, monster hunter, and October work together to address the threat.

NEUTRAL GROUND

The status of the Halloween party as neutral ground means that many monsters arrive with an old grievance or resentment in mind, a thorn they're ready to prise free from their hearts.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ Queen October has called your entire group of PCs to meet with zir at the party, because ze needs your assistance in resolving a monster conflict.
- ✦ One of your own party has come with a grievance of their own in mind, and Queen October helps your group find a way to support them.
- ✦ Players are approached at the party by an old rival, and challenged to resolve your conflict whether you're ready or not!

CHARACTERS

The Mansion (it/its): Some say this magical entity came from outer space, and that it's in fact a living spaceship, capable of exploring the universe. Only Queen October knows for sure; ze has been with the mansion for as long as any monster can remember. The Mansion is constantly responding and reacting to the events that take place within its domain, and this is expressed in its constantly shifting decor and atmosphere (including everything from the diegetic soundtrack to the local weather!), as well as the occasional appearance of written messages or audible reactions from the house. A constant in the current decor is a spiderweb theme, with curtains bearing beautiful intricate lace web designs, and chandeliers dripping with faceted crystal spiders spinning silver threads. Its swords are the banisters, chandelier arms, even the swords in the paintings on its walls. The Mansion feels very strongly about the importance of sheltering the monsters within, and is especially protective of its permanent residents. The Mansion will intervene to prevent any serious harm coming to anyone on its grounds at any time.

Queen October (ze/zir/zirs): October is a magical spidergirl and acting custodian of the Mansion. Ze takes zir role very seriously, and spends a great deal of time and effort to make sure that the Mansion is always properly maintained and kept happy. The two of them work beautifully together. October can shapeshift as part of zir monster magic, and so ze sometimes appears as a tall, strikingly beautiful woman with lustrous dark hair in classic Hollywood waves and long elegant dresses with spiderweb motifs. Ze also can appear in zir spider form of any size, a beautiful dove grey spider with multiple shining black eyes and elegant mandibles that blush slightly when ze is emotionally moved.

Witch's Jewel (she/her): A magical plantgirl and resident botanist of the mansion. She supervises all of the plants on the property, tending to them with utmost care and attention. She is the reason the hedge maze is so vivacious, why the vines are so chatty to anyone who will listen, why the garden is always in full seasonal bloom and bearing fruit. Witch's Jewel transforms her appearance at will, sometimes as an orchid in bloom and sometimes as a nonbinary woman with flowing satin clothes of pale cream striated with magenta and indigo, like an orchid's petals. Her sword is drawn from the bloom of an orchid on her wrist, and is a long blade of orchid leaf. Witch's Jewel feels a nurturing urge towards visitors and fellow residents, but she believes in providing good ground and nourishment for others to grow into their own full bloom in time. She is deeply curious and will ask many insightful questions, seeding others' awareness with her gifts of perception and connection.

Chef (ze/zim/zeir): Head chef of the mansion, and a werewolf. Ze is a human with a strong nose bridge, light olive skin, and long auburn hair worn braided down the back, and a wolf with dark grey fur and a white-streaked ruff and tail. The kitchens are Chef's domain, especially tonight, but if you're looking for information or inspiration, there's plenty of both to be found there among Chef and zeir K.P. (Kitchen Pack). Chef's sword is a long kitchen knife, perfectly balanced and always at zeir side or close to hand. Chef wants to fuel the party from the kitchens, making sure that all the monsters are well fed and nobody leaves hungry.

The Butler (he/him): The Butler is a curious figure, an invisible form inside an old red bellhop uniform. Nobody is quite sure if he is extradimensional, unstuck in time, a ghost, a trick of the light, or perhaps some conscious extension of the Mansion itself...? Whenever desired, a red velvet bellpull with a large ornate gold tassel will always appear, which, upon pulling, summons him immediately. He is silent but extremely expressive in his movements, and will procure whatever you desire. He carries a small silver case with slips of paper and a pencil inside, for any specific communication or instructions that he might need to impart. Some monsters say they have caught a glimpse of an engraved inscription inside the case, but this is unconfirmed and probably just a rumor.

Names

First Names

- | | | |
|------------|----------|-----------|
| ✦ Barbara | ✦ Igor | ✦ Sadako |
| ✦ Bela | ✦ Karl | ✦ Su-mi |
| ✦ Boris | ✦ Mina | ✦ Su-yeon |
| ✦ Carmilla | ✦ Ofélia | ✦ Vincent |
| ✦ Elvira | ✦ Raven | |

Surnames

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| ✦ Cadavra | ✦ Karloff | ✦ Price |
| ✦ Craven | ✦ Montresor | ✦ Strange |
| ✦ Goldwyn | ✦ Moreau | |
| ✦ Harker | ✦ Nosferatu | |



Custom Rules

If you're at a loss and want the mansion or the grounds to throw some monster party shenanigans into the mix, here are some suggestions to consider:

Mansion

- ✦ A rowdy group of other partygoers enter your scene
- ✦ A very intriguing door has just appeared in the wall
- ✦ The Butler appears with an unusual request
- ✦ An old rival enters!
- ✦ There's a human knocking on the door
- ✦ Trouble in the kitchen
- ✦ Queen October is missing!

The Grounds

- ✦ The hedge maze sprouts up ALL around you
- ✦ The gazebo starts snarling and... licking its lips???
- ✦ The vines were gossiping away as you approached, but they've gone very quiet...
- ✦ A group of goth human teenagers are in the graveyard!
- ✦ One of the mausoleum doors is mysteriously open
- ✦ You hear music drifting towards you from somewhere on the grounds...

QUEEN PINS QUEEN

by June LaLonde and Sean Nitter

Overview

The 1960s. Students on college campuses protest the Vietnam War. The Cuban Missile Crisis begins. Shift dresses and kitten heels are in fashion. President Johnson's Civil Rights Bill passes in the senate. And all eyes are on exactly one place: the World Chess Championship. The names Nona Gaprindashvili and Alla Kushnir are on everyone's lips. The world holds its breath and then... pawn to d4.

PRINCIPLES

The Pin Is Mightier Than the Sword

Everyone knows about chess and everyone plays. Traditional conflicts that might be resolved by arguments or fights are often settled instead by games of chess. You might play chess at a party, a cafe, a hotel lobby, or in a park. Clerks in grocery stores read the Chess Times. Administrators in high office auger the outcomes of political machinations on the chess board. As a chess player you are always regarded highly, if not idolized.

We Win Together

After matches, sometimes even in the middle of them, members of the Chess Learning Empathy Organization (CLEO) work together to strategize, play out possible scenarios, and most importantly, encourage each other. When we play each other in chess it may be to win, but it's also to teach and learn. We congratulate the winner and both players look back at the game for what they can learn for the future.

Chess is Life in Miniature

Chess is a metaphor for life and vice versa. When you play a game of chess it may be set dressing for a scene that has nothing to do with the game. Describe your game as it fits the conversation. Taking pieces and performing maneuvers are innuendos for something else, whatever is really on your mind. Chess may be used as an instrument to perform another move, but the winner of the game is not important.

When the stakes of the game are high, however, chess is the platform for you to enact life. Through play you can **Figure Out a Person, Fight**, and **Entice**, carrying on a conversation that only your opponent and those who know the subtleties of your styles can understand.



Setting

The Chess Learning Empathy Organization (CLEO) is a grassroots international group started in the 1930s to support people from marginalized communities learn and excel in the field of chess. CLEO is unified in creating opportunities for its members to learn, travel, and compete in chess matches throughout the world.

Members of CLEO celebrate chess and the people who play it. Their games of chess are not silent and somber events. Sometimes one or both players are locked in focus, but usually they spend as much time talking about the game—and other things—as they do playing.

CLEO may be the organization that brought the PCs together across national borders, or the PCs may all be from a single country, encountering their international counterparts for the first time.

Two organizations commonly challenge members of CLEO to either fit into a mold or cease to exist all together. They often use political figures in world governments, who are vying for their own political power, as instruments to enact their agenda.

- ✦ **The Religious Chess Coalition:** The RCC offers much-needed financial support and social clout to chess players, but require they play by a moral code that follows the RCC's divine guidance. They have a charge to root out and expose players who dabble in the "occult" practices of chess.
- ✦ **National Association of Ranked Chess:** NARC is the internationally renowned chess program of Warbarly College, which is focused on teaching chess methods that are brutally efficient. They keep their own rating systems, which hold incredible clout, and can often be used to prevent a player from playing in a tournament, if NARC deems they're not worthy. It's rumored that they're creating an automated processing machine that can best any human chess player.

Due to your fame, your words and actions may be scrutinized by any of these groups as they make proclamations about what you stand for. Will you entertain their offers, ignore their accusations, or openly rebuke them? Let's play chess to find out.

CAMPAIGNS

The Defectors

The PCs operate as special agents inside CLEO that offer refuge for players who seek to defect from their current political, religious, or institutional affiliations. They use chess games to exchange encoded messages and use tournaments as the rare opportunity to face their rivals and offer aid face to face.

To their detractors, these members of CLEO are suspected spies and infiltrators. To the people they help, they're a lifeline in dangerous waters.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **The Ross Gambit:** The Interzonal Tournament, held this year in Stockholm, is extremely expensive to attend even if you're invited. Can the PCs borrow, bluster, or sneak their way into the tournament and make contact with the Scottish player Doublec Ross? Does her recent change in style, which moves away from NARC's brutally efficient methods to a more playful game, mean she's interested in joining CLEO? How can you be sure she isn't part of a nefarious plot from NARC to infiltrate CLEO's ranks and plant a poisoned pawn?
- ✦ **The Absolute Pin:** Venezuelan chess master Adriana Rojas Diaz just lost a game in the Paris Open, which would have qualified her to become a grandmaster. Immediately after the game, she was escorted away by intelligence agents and has since disappeared from the chess scene. You've studied the game countless times and can come to only one conclusion: she threw the match! Through play-by-mail games, long-distance phone calls, and international favors owed, can you find out who pressured her to throw the match? Will it be in time to convince the judges to re-invite her to the South African Open in Cape Town?
- ✦ **Chess Mate:** The RCC filed a petition that banned one of your members from competing in the circuit for openly carrying on a romantic relationship with a rival opponent, claiming that you've traded information, cheated in matches, and sullied the good name of chess. The RCC has convinced the judges to invite their sponsored player Chastity St. Rose to play in the next tournament in your place. Can you debunk their false claims and restore your place in the tournament? Can you discredit their influence on the judges for the future?
- ✦ **Hidden Score:** A singer is roped into becoming a spy, with the chessboard serving as the medium through which secret information passes, and her girlfriend is being held as collateral should she fail. She's meant to play in a Parisian café once a week to receive and convey the necessary information, but others are starting to notice her erratic moves during the game. More ominously, others recognize that the moves are, indeed, not erratic in the slightest. Can you sniff out who has her trapped? Can you avoid the suspicion of all parties in piecing out your plan? Can you free them both and save the game? (Based on the story of Adrienne Risa.)

Chess Masters of the Universe

In ancient tombs there are spells... spells that can unravel the universe or protect it from destruction... spells that can only be cast through the perfect game of chess. While most onlookers see chess as the ultimate sport, few know of its occult power, and fewer still seek to master it!

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **The Magician from Riga:** The PCs travel to Latvia, where they're magically whisked away by a dark force to a world ruled by a new form of chess: Fairy Chess. Imbued with magic, new animal pieces, circular boards, and new rules, can the PCs escape with the help from a quirky wizard pal, Tal?
- ✦ **King's Walk:** Deep in the snowy forests of Sweden during the dead of winter, a ritual takes place at midnight that can give you a glimpse of the future (based on the Swedish ritual Årsgång). The PCs are alone in the woods at night, carrying no light to guide them, having gone without food or water. To know their futures, they must find their way out following the rules of the ritual. The Brook Horse, a mythical creature of the woods, lurks there too, waiting to challenge the PCs to a game of chess where the position of the back row pieces are randomized.
- ✦ **The Lunar Construct:** The first televised event on the moon: a chess tournament to win the blessing of Luna, goddess of the moon. The winner will be granted a year of uninterrupted access to the moon and the never-before held title: Silver Knight of the Moon. Agents of NARC, however, have other plans. The final missing components of their Chess AI computing machine are moon rocks. If they can harvest them in secret, the stones will guide their machine to best every human at chess and then threaten the world! Can you earn the blessing of the moon goddess and prevent NARC from stealing her stones?





CHARACTERS

Chess Learning Empathy Organization (CLEO)

Jande Chernev (she/her): A senior member of CLEO that has a warm, scholarly air to her. Deeply intelligent not just on the game but on people. Her lackadaisical demeanor and wry humor belies this intelligence. Understated, subtle, but deeply effective as a mentor.

Buck Cas (she/they): A new player that grasps the game uncannily well but lacks the refinement of knowledge and experience. Buck is extremely excited about the game, making new friends and seeking new challenges. They're absolutely ruthless over the board and reckless in having fun and getting into trouble—but will throw a game if their opponent isn't having fun. She's missing a front tooth.

Religious Chess Coalition (RCC)

Don Fischer (he/him): President of the RCC and former World Champion. Fischer left the circuit years ago when he was bested by Isabella Knight, but has continued to use his sizable fame and fortune to influence the game and prevent future players from employing immoral plays like Isabella's *Queen Pins Queen*.

Chastity St. Rose (she/her): Current champion player for the RCC. Chastity is known for her patient and surgical style, calculating her moves perfectly and often trapping her opponents with no other option but to surrender. She wears a rose pendant handed down from her grandmaster grandmother.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RANKED CHESS (NARC)

Doublec Ross (she/her): A French-Scottish player renowned for her rapid turn-taking and equally swift victories. Her smoldering stare is enough to unnerve even the most sanguine opponent. Though she is a registered player for NARC, in recent matches, she seemed to be drawing out games, eschewing her brutalist techniques for a more playful style.

UNAFFILIATED AND SUPERNATURAL

Sandra Vogelfield (she/her): Reporter for the Chess Times. Famously well informed about the comings and goings of even the most reclusive players. Sandra can't resist discovering secrets and has burned many bridges to get the scoop on a story. She has the phone number of every notable chess judge in her little black book.

The Brook Horse (he/him): A mythical and curious horse that can take the form of a man called Näckén. Should he choose you, his back will extend to carry as many as needed. However, should you vex him, he will take hold of you with his tail and drown you in the icy waters of his river. He can be thwarted by a piece of steel held fast in your pocket, or enticed into a game of chess. He always uses the King's Knight opening.

Luna (she/her): Goddess of the moon. She's a prankster, but doesn't lie. Her speech and demeanor are decidedly formal and aloof. Plays with a silver and obsidian chess set, set with living stars. Challenging and besting Luna in chess usually comes with the bestowed rank of Silver Knight of the Moon. Luna controls the moon and its resources.

Misha Tal (they/them): A human who has been abandoned in the fey realm, reared by nymphs in the world of the fantastical and supernatural. They have learned the art of survival. They're young, pragmatic, and unused to social norms the PCs may introduce them to. They carry a bow (called *Bishop's Bow*) as a weapon, and perform daring, imaginative attacks on their prey, readily willing to sacrifice for the advantage. Prefers the Ruy Lopez and Modern Benoni openings.

Chess Ranks

From highest to lowest:

- + Grandmaster
- + International Master
- + World Champion
- + Silver Knight of the Moon
- + Bishop of Dreams

Names

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| + Aaliyah Price | + Koneru Polgar | + Sofia Pérez |
| + Amani Álvarez | + Lei Zhongyi | + Veronica Capablanca |
| + Ira Lane | + Louise Flores | + Victoria Lasker |
| + Iris Robinson | + Michele Ashley | + Xu Yifan |
| + Jada Williams | + Mikhaila Nakamura | + Zhao Yifan |
| + Jean Taylor | + Nia Krush | + Zoe Castillo |
| + Judit Botvinnik | + Pat Morphy | |

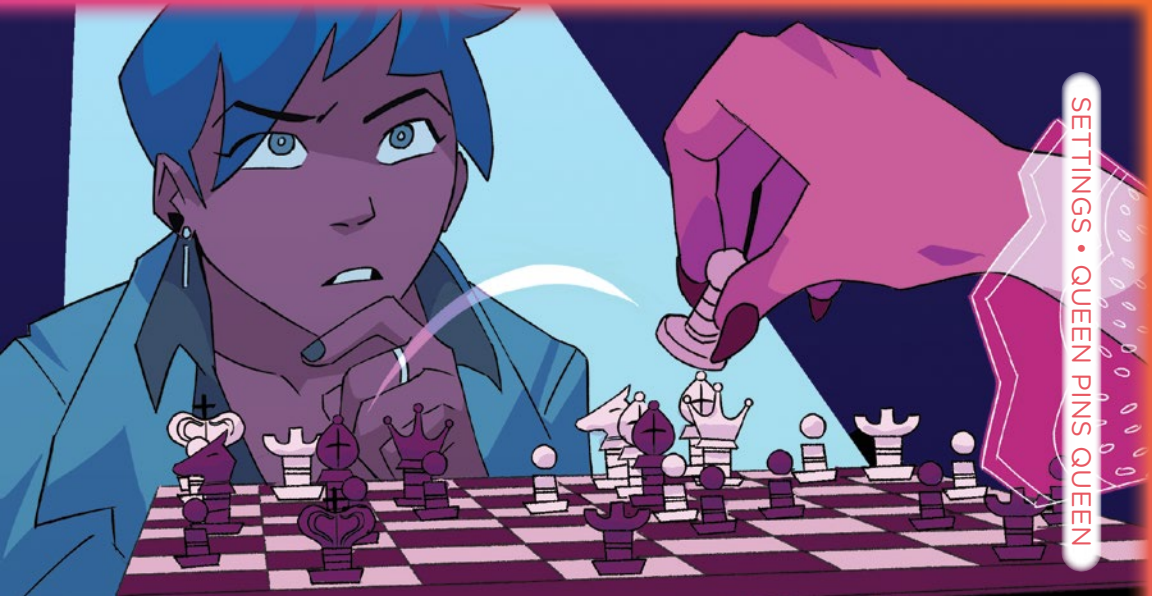
Chess Aesthetics

Every player has an edge that sets them apart. It may be determined by their style, their favored openings, or their tactics. In place of your demeanor, clothes, or sword, choose from the following:

Style (Demeanor): Surgeon, Romantic, Technician, Assassin, Escape Artist, Professional, Grinder, Mad Scientist, Magician, Mastermind, Natural, Prodigy

Openings (Clothes): The Queen's Gambit, The Caro-Kann, The London System, The King's Indian Attack, The Sicilian Defense, The Catalan, The Grand Prix Attack, The French Defense, The Ruy Lopez

Tactics (Sword): En Passant, Zugzwang, Mating Patterns, Poisoned Pawn, Simplification, Overloading, Alekhine's Gun, Windmill, Discovered Attack, Double-Check, Forks, Pins, Skewers, Queen Sacrifice, Decoy, Back Rank, Desperado, Interference



Custom Moves

ADJOURN

After you have made a roll for a move but before the results are declared, any player may call to **Adjourn** and take time to reflect and prepare for what is about to come. During that time, any other character can offer **Emotional Support** to the player whose move was interrupted. Time passes, and they return to the original situation, hopefully better prepared to deal with the consequences.

CHECK

When you make a move in game to send your opponent a coded message, give them a String on you and roll **+Heart** or **+Wit**:

10+ Choose 2

7-9 Choose 1

- ✦ You alone understand the coded message in their next move
- ✦ Through the threat of a finishing move, you inflict a Condition
- ✦ You intrigue your opponent and gain a String on them
- ✦ You win the game, and they ask you a question from **Figure Out a Person**
- ✦ They win the game, but know you held back

On a down beat, some possible outcomes: You opponent takes advantage of your play and makes you **Stagger**, your secret message is understood by others, or they are not the person you thought they were (lose all Strings on them; if you had none, they gain a String on you).

The RAINBOW SCARAB CIRCUS

by Christie R. Fremon

Overview

Walk through the midway, beyond the fortune teller and games. Go further, past jugglers and fire breathers. Past the ferris wheel, carousel, and mirror maze. Further, into the biggest tent, taking one small step spanning an unreal distance into the Land of Dreams. This is your home. You and your lesbian circus troupe share glimpses of it with the waking world. People are thirsty for change, romance, and adventure. They come to uncover their hidden desires and break the shackles put upon them by others and themselves. But the life of a performer is full of unexpected twists—in the waking world and the dreaming.



PRINCIPLES

EVOKE MARVEL AND WONDER

Let characters momentarily escape, believe in the impossible, and regain hope. Danger and shadows may loom outside, but dash it away during the height of the show.

DREAM DEEPLY AND VULNERABLY

The Land of Dreams comes to life when it reflects inner turmoil and close-held desires. Transform grief into treacherous spires. Turn love into a sunlit bed of balloons. Follow messy and beautiful feelings and make them something tangible.

A SAFETY NET OF FOUND FAMILY

No matter where they're adventuring, circus lesbians have one another. Even when times are tough, support and community are abundant. There are always family and friends in the circus ready to catch you.

SETTING

The Rainbow Scarab Circus is a troupe of queer circus performers who travel from the Land of Dreams to the waking world to create dazzling shows and prove that dreams don't always have to fade when you open your eyes.

The Land of Dreams is a shifting place. Individual feelings change the local landscape, but other forces shape dreams too, such as native communities of dreamkind or the powerful and enigmatic numen. Some numen are pervasive, such as Mirth, Memory, and Time; others like the Staring Obelisk and the Never-Were are hard to find. The circus has a demi-numen, the Rainbow Scarab, who tricked the Great Loom into creating tent fabric connecting the dreaming to 1950s middle America.

What brings each person to the circus is deeply personal. Humans might be uplifting humanity or escaping their past. Dreamkin might flirt with humanity or defend their home from its influence. For those not quite fully human or dreamkind, tightrope walking between mixed identities can help reconcile dreamer and dream. Or troupe members can explore how born, found, and chosen families support them.

That support is critical: it's hard to catch a break between updating acts, finding rare materials or inspiration, or keeping track of meandering animals and wonders from the Land of Dreams.

So bring dreams to life with action, adventure, and romance enough to make the characters hold their breath—or even someone's hand.



A Safe and Inclusive Circus

To provide a foundation for celebratory queer stories, the Rainbow Scarab Circus is explicitly an inclusive institution with positive cultural impact.

Everyone together: The troupe is an equitable cooperative

- ✦ Community owned, without elite financiers or bankers
- ✦ Ringleaders instead of ringmasters
- ✦ Shared spotlights, roles, compensation, labor, and skills

All colors and cultures: The circus celebrates Black and Brown people

- ✦ Multicultural aesthetics, not just white
- ✦ Opportunity and success for all, without exploitation
- ✦ Celebrates cultural art, without exoticism, tokenism, or appropriation

All genders: The circus has many genders and gender expressions

- ✦ Gender on stage is lovingly depicted, not mocking or othering
- ✦ Roles are for everyone, not just those who fit stereotypes
- ✦ Emotional labor and domestic chores are shared

All bodies and minds: The circus welcomes all bodies, disabilities, and neurodivergences

- ✦ Body diversity, without bodies being a spectacle
- ✦ Individual strengths are recognized, and support is available
- ✦ Food is joyous, and overeating and starvation are never an attraction

Animals are loved: Animals in the circus are there consensually and ethically

- ✦ Animals educate and foster empathy, rather than promote exotism or luxury
- ✦ Animals are lovingly cared for, and never intimidated or mistreated
- ✦ Animals have access to their families and only separate by choice



CAMPAIGNS

SMALL TOWN, BIG HEARTS

The Rainbow Scarab leads the troupe to help those in a small town realize their dreams.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **Midnight Hurdy Gurdy:** At midnight the troupe hears a mechanical hurdy gurdy echoing through the circus and the Land of Dreams. In what dangerous circus location do the PCs find the sleepwalking musician? What conflicts arise when their family finds them alone with the troupe after dark? Will the troupe help the musician awaken their repressed desires before they stir up more trouble in dreaming?
- ✦ **The Mysterious Wishbook:** Strange, fantastical things are happening—but, weirdly, outside the ring. A townsperson has found a wishbook catalog for impossible things and now everyone's in danger. How do the PCs recover the wishbook and undo the chaos? How did the wishbook get here? And which powerful numen does it belong to? Will they uncover the true wishes in the hearts of the town—and their own troupe?
- ✦ **The Circus Prohibition League:** Townsfolk picket the show, decrying flamboyant costumes and immodest lifestyles. Things escalate when they block several young kids from entering. How do the PCs help the kids see the circus? How do the protesters retaliate? What do the PCs do when they recognize someone they know in the protest? Will the tensions divide the town? Or will flamboyant costumes and immodest lifestyles save the day?

The Traveling Show

It's been a long haul so far. But surprises on the road don't wait for a hot meal, a shower, and a nap.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **The Endangered Gyascutus:** The troupe encounters a swordswoman with a prosthetic leg expertly facing down several armed poachers. Behind her is an injured beast, with very short legs on one side—an endangered gyascutus far from its home in the Land of Dreams. Why is the woman protecting the creature? What rare medicine does it need? Will the PCs find the gyascutus's home, where it can be with its own kind?
- ✦ **The Sensuous Sword Dance:** The troupe is choreographing a sensuous sword dance. One session gets heated, and two stars get into a fight. Without them, the circus will be missing crucial acts and meaningful friendships. Will they convince one not to quit the circus? Where is the other hiding? What was the disagreement? Can thirsty-enough swords rekindle their desire to dance?
- ✦ **The Rival Circus:** The troupe discovers a rival circus at their destination. And their ringleader is the ex of the Rainbow Scarab Circus ringleader. What disaster causes the troupe to be stuck in the same town as their rivals? How do things escalate with the circuses side by side? When the two ringleaders meet, do sparks fly from their crossed swords, or smoldering feelings? What spectacular climax will end this rivalry?

Beyond Their Dreams

Between seasons, the troupe comes together in the Land of Dreams, with surreal hikes, slumber parties, and other gatherings. Sometimes their plans get interrupted.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ **Double-Edged Fortunes:** At a community event, someone offers an axinomancy reading—seeing fortunes in heated blades. Misfortune is revealed in a PC's sword. Do they face their fortune or does it find them? How can they overcome their fate? And what will it mean for the future of the circus?
- ✦ **The Creeping Miasma:** Dreamkin and dreamers near the circus's practice space begin acting strangely. And in the Land of Dreams, a miasma begins spreading—creating a uniform landscape shaped by a single mind. Will the troupe discover who is mind controlling everyone? Can they stop Mesmerelda's takeover before it forever changes their home?
- ✦ **The Unexpected Clepsydra:** A mysterious clepsydra has appeared in the Land of Dreams. This strange water clock drips an eerie heart-beat rhythm, counting down to the Rainbow Scarab's death. What has the Rainbow Scarab done to get this death sentence from a powerful numen? Can the PCs save the Rainbow Scarab?

CHARACTERS

Circus

Mre. (Mystery) Mazarine “Mazzy” Blue (gay/ghem/gheir; gender: femandrogyn; Blaxican dreamkind): Mazzy is a larger-than-life ringleader. In dreams, gay have blue butterfly wings and skin. In the waking world, gay have a limp. Rumor is baby Mazzy was brought to the circus by the Rainbow Scarab, along with a rune-covered metal slab. It's now Mazzy's sword-cane, still bearing the strange runes.

Does Mazzy mentor any PCs? Or steal their spotlight? Do they see past gheir theatrics? Will Mazzy entrust them to puzzle out the mystery of gheir origins?

Cannoneer Calamity Zenith (bam/boom/booms; gender: woman; Italian-American): Calamity is the ultimate shimbo human cannonball. Bam is broad, muscular, and accident-prone, with the sincerest smile. In the Land of Dreams, bam smolders with a firework halo. Booms sword is just a cannon.

Do the PCs find out bam doesn't feel bam belongs in the circus? Can they show bam that booms human origins are a strength?

M* (Miss-star) Tala Cinnamon (sidhe/her; gender: genderfae; Persian-Irish-Asian dreamkind): Tala is a fortune-teller and contortionist. Her eyes look like strange galaxies. Sidhe smells like fire and spices and carries a stardust sword. Sidhe's hyper-flexible, bruises easily, and is distractible. Sidhe's torn between her duties to the circus and a shrine to Memory in the Land of Dreams.

What fortune is in the leaves of her Memory Tea? Where do the PCs find her when she goes missing? Do they discover her older sibling's shadow shrine to Lost Memory?

The Dreaming

The Rainbow Scarab (click; gender: culture hero; dreamkind deminumen): A beetle with a curved black horn for a sword. Click is a powerful guardian, but also steals, cheats, and causes catastrophes.

Do the PCs view click as a blessing or curse? Does click help them in a time of need? When click is gay and does crimes, what trouble and fun does click cause?

The Illustrated Manticore (SHE/HER; gender: refractory; dreamkind): A formidable scorpion-tailed liger-woman with kudu horns, blood-red wings, copper eyes, and a scarred face. Living tattoos illuminate HER skin, pulling you into stories. SHE's mercurial, temperamental, and carries a molten sword. But when things seem impossible, SHE'll aid those SHE respects.

What challenges must be overcome to find HER? What earns HER respect? What stories do HER tattoos hold?

Mirth (she/he/they; gender: pure emotion; dreamkind numen): Mirth appears as twinkling light, tumbling water, or a confident and jaunty fat woman with a captivating smile, who always seems to be in motion. Her sword is pure laughter. She adores the circus—especially the clowns.

How does it affect the circus when she bickers with other numen? When Mirth is sad or needs help, how can the PCs tell?

Townspolk

Gran Rosalie de Ortíz (she/her; gender: woman; Black American): Rosalie is respected and cherished in her community and family. She's excited to show her grandkids the circus, especially her trans granddaughter Maddie.

Which circus member does Rosalie still have feelings for, even after 40 years? How would her community or family react if she acted on her feelings? How does she respond when young Maddie tries to run away with the circus?

Reverend Williams (he/him; gender: man; white American): A local preacher. His sermons decry flamboyant clothes and promise damnation for immodest lifestyles.

How do the reverend's sermons of repression change the Land of Dreams? Can one show and a few flamboyant clothes make a meaningful change to the town's culture and beliefs?

Mesmerelda Sylvana (she/they; gender: woman; British dreamkind): An attractive evil hypnotist, who mind controls people to conquer the Land of Dreams. She wants to unilaterally sculpt it to her ideals, with everyone under her thumb.

How does the troupe discover her schemes? What parts of her vision do they find sympathetic or appealing? Whom must they unite to overcome her mindless army?

Names

The Circus

- ✦ Desiree Inferno
- ✦ Seo-Jun the Mirage
- ✦ Madame Vega Patel
- ✦ Ser Chanthavy Midnight
- ✦ Miki Ranunculus Callipygian
- ✦ The Fabulous Zoe Widdershins
- ✦ Noel and Leon Chiasmus
- ✦ Umaiza Strange
- ✦ November Nowak
- ✦ Velvet Eliasen

The Land of Dreams

- ✦ Aisling Hiraeth
- ✦ Ardor Psithurism
- ✦ Distant-Sensations-of-Bronze
- ✦ Kismet
- ✦ Mx. Tuesday
- ✦ Palimpsest Blush
- ✦ Petrichor Whispers
- ✦ Qualia
- ✦ The Ethereal Sigh
- ✦ The Grand Tmesis

The Waking World

- ✦ Ailani Hale
- ✦ Alex Kim
- ✦ Dmitry Wagner
- ✦ Dolores Jones
- ✦ Gabrielle Petrossian
- ✦ Jaya Khatri
- ✦ Joyce Wu
- ✦ Leo Davis
- ✦ Leticia "Leti" Diez
- ✦ Noah Olowe

Custom Rules

Dream up Your Pronouns

Choose pronouns that belong in the most wondrous of shows and unreal of dreams. You live or were born in the Land of Dreams, where pronouns are diverse. Ask yourself what your pronouns would be if they were new and shining? A growl? An echo of gold? Spun from cotton candy? Always changing? Or the only constant in the circus? The only limit is your ability to dream...

Costume Closet

Create aesthetics for your street clothes, stage costume, and dream form. Dream forms may change with your emotions. For example:

BEAST

- ✦ **Street:** Tight-fitting secondhand suit
- ✦ **Stage:** Feathered and beaded liger mane
- ✦ **Dream:** A knot of striped tails and an aura of claws

SEEKER

- ✦ **Street:** Modest ankle-length dress
- ✦ **Stage:** Ticket taker uniform
- ✦ **Dream:** A billowing beige sheet trying to hide a skintight sequin leotard

TRICKSTER

- ✦ **Street:** Very serious banker costume
- ✦ **Stage:** Clown clothes
- ✦ **Dream:** A laughing winged harlequin snake

WILDEST DREAMS

When you begin a scene or change locations in the Land of Dreams, create a dream feature to symbolize your character's most prominent emotion. When your character's feelings change, change your dream feature.

DREAM FEATURES

- ✦ **Biome or scenery:** Underwater, outer space, mountainsides, starlit deserts, squelching marshlands. Establish seasons, climates, nearness to civilization.
- ✦ **Building, landmark, furniture, or props:** Grand buildings, a creaking bridge, a cuddle couch, an eerie lawn flamingo, floating juggling scarves.
- ✦ **Lighting:** Brightness, dimness, radiant sunrise, magical twilight. Cinematic lights, strange effects.
- ✦ **Physics:** Change gravity, make water flow backward, impossible architecture, objects coexisting.
- ✦ **Weather:** Meteor showers, a rain of frogs, cotton candy fog, a full-scale hurricane, snowflakes.
- ✦ **Sensations:** Nostalgic scents, synesthetic sensations, prickling skin, sense of pressure, sour tastes.
- ✦ **Scale, proportions, or visual emphasis:** Shrink, wash out, enlarge, vivify, stretch, squish scenery or people. (Check first and be respectful.)
- ✦ **Time:** Stop, speed up, reverse, slow down—in small or big ways.
- ✦ **People or creatures:** Fiery horses, robots, statues, fireflies, bats, singing stones, motherly vines.

Anyone can **Fight, Entice, Figure Out**, or **Emotionally Support** a person by acting on their dream feature. For example, a Nature Witch could use **Figure Out a Person** on a dying tree that the Infamous introduced to discover the Infamous feels unloved.

GM MOVES FOR DREAM FEATURES

Dream features represent emotions a player wants to explore. (Ask if it's unclear!) NPCs can have dream features too. Use these moves to give the emotions urgency.

- ✦ Ask how a PC's dream feature responds
- ✦ Draw a PC to a dream feature, bring it closer, or intensify it
- ✦ Have an NPC interact with a dream feature
- ✦ Make them **Defy Disaster** for interacting with dangerous dream features

A SEA OF PINK, WHITE, & BLUE

by Maria Fanning

SETTINGS • A SEA OF PINK, WHITE, & BLUE

OVERVIEW

The sea of Bunús is one of beauty. That is, before the Imperium Navy made its way roughshod across the land, implementing draconian laws. In particular, those who were a gender different than the ones assigned them faced persecution and the Imperium refused to acknowledge who they truly were. But when things seemed darkest, the Tuath Alliance rose—a band of transgender pirates who seek to transport medical supplies to their oppressed siblings, protect them, and strike down fascist marines where they stand. ***A Sea Of Pink, White, & Blue*** is based around nautical adventures, transgender solidarity, and showing that these queers bash back.

PRINCIPLES

TRANS SOLIDARITY

This is a world where trans people face oppression from those with the most power, very similar to real life. Transgender people on the islands and continents connected by the Bunús Sea are forced to hide their identity or be punished. This, although leading to much pain, leads to a community between all trans people. They stand united against a world that hates them. Make it clear that there is much closeness and beauty to be found in the bonds of trans people. You're not fighting to burn this world down, but to mold it into something better.

THE BLADE IS USEFUL

This isn't a world where simply appealing to the Imperium's better nature will solve problems. Many have tried. The way to freedom of oppression from your people is to eternally be a thorn in their side. To fight and show them that us trans people won't take their abuse lying down. Stand against the Imperium with your feet planted and be ready to strike down any bigot that tries to hurt those you care for.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

The Tuath Alliance is powerful, but only when united and supported. You must contend with the needs of others within the alliance. From the members of the Setanta Harbingers and their requests for a new home where they're not overlooked, to the McCool Runners, who want to stay within the alliance but end the marginalization they face. Or the Maidens Of Gráinne, who demand a world where they aren't seen second to anyone. The tension that can occur between the potential clashing of beliefs within the alliance must be addressed. You either stand together or die alone.

Setting

The sea of Bunús is divided by many pockets of islands and separated small countries. For a long time, they were each separatist nations that often battled and clashed with one another. It was only when the Round Table, a group of like-minded expansionist nations, formed a coalition together that a deadly unity formed. This was the beginning of the Imperium, headed by the Round Table, and it destroyed any opposition in conquering the separated nations.

The Imperium fears free thinkers above all. The Imperium is arrogant, but one thing they always knew is that a belief is stronger than any weapon. This led to them stomping down any ideas not within their draconian and brutal laws. The idea of transgender people was the epitome of their fear. They saw them as those that were not shackled by any fear, law, or idea. Only seeking to be who they were without compunction. The Imperium instituted laws to oppress and marginalize trans people, restricting medical transition supplies and any organized meetings.

Well, it's as they say. Push hard enough and something pushes back. The Tuath Alliance began as simple trans pirate smugglers, who shuttled trans refugees from more hostile lands, transported transitional herbs to those who needed them, and when needed, struck down the most dangerous Imperium officers in the dead of night. But they knew it was only a matter of time before the Imperium crushed them with their superior numbers and resources. So, the Tuath Alliance did something out of this fear of the Imperium.

They founded a belief. The belief that all transgender people are a nation unto themselves. Separate but together. If you're trans and willing, the Tuath Alliance will have you as family and fight for you with all their might. And although the Imperium may be able to stop ships, word of mouth is far harder to stomp out. Trans people began bearing the tri-color of pink, white, and blue, mirroring the colors of the sea itself. This became the symbol of the Tuath Alliance. As the leader of the Setanta Harbingers, Kylos Marric, stated:

"We are the children of the sea, for we are as varied as the drops of water that make it! When we bear these colors, no king, no god, no law may stop us from flowing free!"

The Tuath Alliance will fight. They have a cause. An ideal. And most of all, beyond a belief, they have the knowledge that they are who they are.



CAMPAIGNS

Unite the Cause

The Tuath Alliance has a just cause, but people need more than that. Although they share a similarity in gender variance, trans people are as different as each flicker of the sun upon the ocean. Be they the trans men who take pride under the name of the Setanta Harbingers, the trans women who bear the mantle of Maidens of Gráinne, those who eschew any binary or static identity in the McCool Runners, those of genderfluid identity in the Morigans, and so much more. You will need to acknowledge and accept the differences between you and realize it is a strength, not a weakness.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The Setanta Harbingers' leader, Kylos Marric, desires a symbol of the earliest recorded trans man history to help unite his brothers: the Necklace of Elias. The only problem is that it's located within Fort Traxx, the Round Table's personal vault.
- ✦ A messy breakup between the head of the Maidens of Gráinne, Kaliss Kol, and the speaker of the Morigans, Lavael Tam, has led to rivalry among the more idealistic and overly segmented members of their respective factions. If peace isn't brokered soon, this could prove damaging to the Tuath Alliance as a whole.
- ✦ The McCool Runners earned their moniker by piloting a fleet of wind sloop ships back when the Tuath Alliance was a small smuggling operation. Their "captain," Ley Ion, feels they are being overlooked within the grander state of the Tuath Alliance and misses the days of when it was simply "helping your sibling next door." Time to show hir that this alliance holds that belief still.

Strike Down The Aggressor

The Imperium and their Round Table leaders can't be swayed or convinced to veer the course. Many attempts to fight this war through words have failed. Only now, by refusing to take this oppression lying down and showing them the error of their ways, will you find freedom.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The youngest and newest member of the Round Table's board, Orwell Habberdash, is on his pleasure cruise and partying throughout the seas. Once you get past his guards, he's a fairly useful hostage, wouldn't you agree?
- ✦ The gunpowder factory of the Imperium, the Gray Mountain, is depleting the natural resources that the local towns and people need to survive. Come up with a plan of action, be it stealth or organizing an uprising of the disenfranchised, and tear that hellhole down!
- ✦ The leader of the Round Table, Karin Tycho, has sent word to offer peace talks with the Tuath Alliance. This will likely be a trap. But who's to say you can't turn this setup for the Tuath Alliance into a setback for the Imperium?

A War Is More Than Blades

You can't simply win this battle by fighting. You will need to stir the hearts of those within your people that are more hesitant and nervous towards the fight. You will need to support those who can't fight. You will need to ensure that happiness is found in the moments in between.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The Setanta Harbingers and Maidens of Gráinne have a regular friendly wager where they elect a champion of each sect to play a game together decided by the other sects. Whether as the elected champion or simply an observer, it's a time to forget about the war and simply enjoy time with your people.
- ✦ A separate group of transgender people called the True Loyalists have begun allying with the Imperium, claiming their unjust laws are, well, just. They're harming the movement and drawing impressionable trans people to toxic ideas. It's up to the PCs to prove this truscum group wrong.
- ✦ The nation of Tarron, which has proven a far safer haven for transgender people even before the Tuath Alliance's founding, is under siege by the Imperium. You must show the people of Tarron that their kindness will be reciprocated as you sail to end the siege.

CHARACTERS

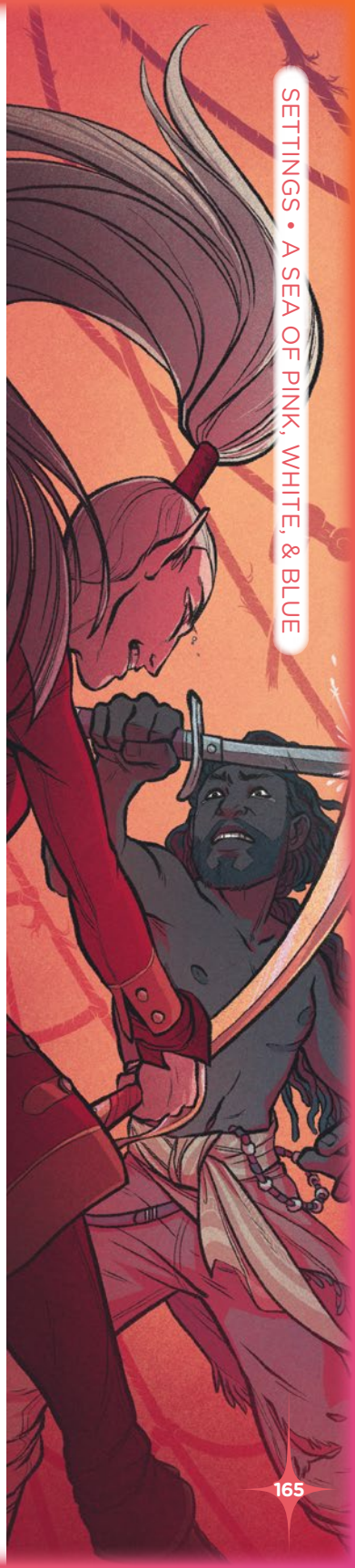
The Tuath Alliance

Kylos Marric, the Quiet Storm (he/him): A former blacksmith who lived in one of the earliest and smallest trans enclaves, Kylos lost his entire home when the Imperium destroyed it under “suspicion of illicit activity.” This led to Kylos forsaking his seclusionist ideals and becoming one of the founding members of the Tuath Alliance. As the leader of the Setanta Harbingers, a trans masculine sect of the Alliance, Kylos teaches his members to not fall into toxic masculinity, and to always be aware that they’re not the same as those that oppress them. His moniker of the Quiet Storm was earned from his gentle manner and always striving for what will benefit those he cares about.

Do the PCs help Kylos find survivors of his previously thought destroyed enclave? Will Kylos’s more gentle manner benefit the Alliance in the long run?

Kaliss Kol, the Vibrant Typhoon (she/her): A former private in the Imperium before realizing her own gender identity, Kaliss was known for having the biggest and most vibrant smile of any soldier within her barracks. However, when she attempted to come out to her fellow marines about her identity, she was scorned, reported, and forced to flee. She developed a fiercely protective streak of fellow transgender people and an equally fierce hatred towards the Imperium, and earned the name of the Vibrant Typhoon for how charasmatically she led her fellow warriors to battle and how feared the Imperium became of her. Now taking a seat as a founder of the Tuath Alliance and leading her own sect of trans femmes in the Maidens of Gráinne, Kaliss teaches her fellow sisters that they need to scratch and claw to get their freedom and must never leave a sibling behind.

What do the PCs think of Kaliss’s more militant style of opposing the Imperium? Do the PCs ever partake in Kaliss’s grand party nights that rock the entire Alliance in the best way?



Ley Ion, the Monarch of Charity (hir/hirs): From the day hir could pick up a knife, Ley was always something of a good-natured trickster—from loosening the purse strings of wealthy merchants to supply the local orphanages, to gathering up a gang of fellow street urchins to deal with those of the Imperium who hurt the sex workers of hirs town. The latter aspect is how the Imperium earned Ley's rare hatred, which hir channeled into smuggling trans people out of dangerous territory. Hir is the closest thing to the founder of the Tuath Alliance, having been one of the first and most notable fighters against the Imperium's transphobic laws. Ley detests the idea of such high leadership and is content with heading a crew of fellow non-binary smugglers—the McCool Runners—with a simple ethos "Help your neighbor."

Do the PCs agree with Ley's simplistic view of life? What do the PCs feel when they're offered one of Ley's famous swoops "in exchange for a simple favor"?

Lavael Tam, the All-Eyed One (they/them): Having worked as a sex worker within an Imperium-occupied town, Lavael often used the information they gained from chatty Imperium patrons in their brothel to help those who would fight against the Imperium, along with collateral to ensure that no one would ever hurt their fellow workers. Eventually, a web of informants, freedom fighters, and spies of genderfluid identity began popping up across the sea, taking after the tales of the All-Eyed One. Realizing the potential good this network could do, Lavael formed the Morrigans, a genderfluid sect that believes that any good that can be done through any means is worth doing. The Morrigans' organization actually precedes the Tuath Alliance and only begrudgingly joined the Alliance, believing that the use of an alliance surpasses the dislike of potentially putting their own stability in danger from overexposure.

Do the PCs help Lavael find their place within the Alliance? What do the PCs think when Lavael refuses to share vital information out of distrust of the Alliance?

The Imperium

The Grand Admiral, Karin Tycho (she/her): The Grand Admiral sits at the head of the Round Table and all know better than to speak against her. Tycho believes that order oversees all safety and prosperity of the land and the people within it, and she refuses to allow anyone to espouse “dangers to the peace,” which means “anyone expressing creativity that I can’t control.” Tycho was the originator of the law that stripped the rights of transgender people of any land underneath the tyranny of the Imperium, believing that something as freeing and ever-discovering as gender identity would be impossible to control. As she discovered from the fighting spirit of the Tuath Alliance, she was right that she’d never be able to control them.

What stories of fear have the PCs heard about the Grand Admiral? What will they do when they’re face to face with her?

Klara Ivory (she/her): It’s a sad fact that when faced with oppression, some will throw their fellow oppressed to the ground and step on them to bow at the foot of the oppressor. Leading the True Loyalists, Klara is a trans woman who claims the Tuath Alliance is nothing more than misfits and terrorists who are “making things worse for loyal trans people.” The Loyalists serve as a propaganda piece for the Imperium to turn the common person against the Alliance. Whether Klara genuinely believes in what she says or is simply a grifter is unknown. But there’s a certain kind of harm that comes from those who have experienced the same harm as you saying “it wasn’t *that* bad.”

Do the PCs hold hope that Klara could be redeemed? Would anyone the PCs care about be susceptible to Klara’s manipulation?

ISLANDS OF BUNIS

Chancellor Ruoch (he/him): Ruoch is speaker of the Council of the sovereign nation Tarron and defined by one thing: his pure hatred for the Imperium and their attempts to impose their dictatorship over his beloved country. This led to him putting forth the law that transgender people be given the same rights as any other member of his nation, knowing that the Imperium’s law was unjust and that his new law would really piss them off. Tarron has become a safe harbor for the Tuath Alliance to transport trans civilians. And whether he likes it or not, Ruoch has earned the title of “the only cis guy Kaliss Kol would share a drink with.”

What happens when Ruoch requires the help of the PCs to communicate with Tarron’s trans community leaders? What happens when the PCs must stop an up-and-coming transphobe’s attempts to unseat Ruoch?



Custom Rules

CHARACTER CREATION: WHAT DOES BEING TRANS MEAN TO YOU?

As members of the Tuath Alliance, your characters are trans by default, and it's something meaningful. What pride do you take in your trans identity? What makes you dysphoric about your identity, if anything? What makes you euphoric? Think of how being trans has shaped your character and is a vital part of who they are.

SHINSEI GALACTIC PURORESU

Revolution: The Final Engagement

by Allie Bustion

Overview

War is becoming a distant memory, but confrontation still exists within the Coalition. Following the example set by the four-way no-disqualifications match deciding the rulership of Yvaga IV, conflicts and fates are now settled in the square circle of Shinsei Galactic Puroresu, the universe's premiere pro wrestling league. Under the bright arena lights and the gaze of trillions, how will you change? Who will you change? What will you change?



PRINCIPLES

The Ring Is the Final Arena of Conflict

While not every conflict can begin in the ring, the ring is where it should end. Some conflicts may be small, such as who gets the family inheritance or wins the rights to royal courtship. Others are far larger, such as who gains controlling interest in the galaxy-spanning ship-making combine, or who must cede their seat on the Coalition Council. Each wrestler fights for something.

The Ring Is a Fun House Mirror

What we see in the ring is in some way what we see outside of it. The feuds, matches, speeches given, and emotions shown in the ring don't simply stop outside of the ropes. They spill outwards and touch all other aspects of life. In SGP, where the action of the ring genuinely affects so much else, this is even more true. The outcomes of matches change the lives of those a wrestler champions for. In the same manner, those who exist outside the wrestler's persona can affect that persona and drive it in different directions. Will you change your reflection, or will you realize you've become it?

Everyone Fights For Something

Be they at the very bottom of the card and struggling for a win, or an Apex Predator who dominates (until they don't), every single wrestler in SGP fights for something. What that is and what it means to them can vary wildly and should be considered at character creation and reconsidered any time something major happens.

Points of Reference

If you're unfamiliar with wrestling or are unsure how to make a character, feud, or storyline that involves them, here are a few pieces of media that might help you out:

- + **Video:** *Wrestling has invaded every game you love (Polygon)*
- + **Videos:** *Wrestling Video Essays (Super Eyepatch Wolf)*
- + **Playlist:** *Shinsei Galactic Puroresu: Sounds of a Revolution (Spotify)*
- + **Feud/Tag Team:** *Sasha Banks & Bayley (WWE)*
- + **Feud/Tag Team:** *The Shield (Seth Rollins/Dean Ambrose/Roman Reigns, WWE)*
- + **Feud/Tag Team:** *The Golden Lovers (Kenny Omega & Kota Ibushi, DDT/NJPW)*
- + **Feud/Tag Team:** *DemonXBunny (Rosemary & Allie, IMPACT)*
- + **Article:** *Kagetsu: The Final Boss of STARDOM (Deadlock)*
- + **Article:** *The Elite Are Fine (Match Club)*
- + **TTRPG:** *World Wide Wrestling*

Setting

War plagued the Ignis Quadrant until, wearied and battered after centuries, several of the largest powers of the sector called a truce: the Astral Entente Accords. One of the largest influencing forces in the sector, the Merciful Hands of the Breaking Dawn, argued that not including a provision for complete abstention from large-scale combat was against their creed. Though argued for years, to this day none can stand against the Breaking Dawn to challenge them. As a compromise, the Accords allowed a champion to be named to fight in the forum of one's choosing. PRIMA Cosmic Broadcasting Networks already had an interstellar pro wrestling league and put it forth as the *de facto* challenge forum. For reasons often pondered by conspiracy theorists, it was agreed all conflict would be settled in the ring of Shinsei Galactic Puroresu.

The most influential powers that have risen within the Coalition of Aligned Planetary Governments have united within SGP as well as without to form the wrestling faction Terzetto Vanguard. Most refer to the Vanguard as the Apex Predators due to how often they use wrestling to further political aims. Although the Coalition doesn't formally participate, its members have champions of their own that can act in their interests.

The Merciful Hands of the Breaking Dawn have a champion known as Val Kyr, who specializes in submission techniques but is also known for quietly dislocating limbs to put opponents out of commission. Although Ludova, an executive of PRIMA and general manager of Shinsei Galactic, isn't technically an active wrestler, she will occasionally step into the ring to take matters into her own hands. The Imperial Matriarchs of Petras made their entire queensguard a nigh-unbeatable tag team faction that dominates in the ring with brutal brawling.

There is no love lost for Apex Predators that are unable to maintain their place. If it seems as if they may lose an important match or their organization is losing its influence, they may find forces shifted against them.

There are, of course, those who stand against the Apex Predators in efforts to change their fates. Many revolutions begin when those wish to bring down their oppressors pool resources to sponsor or hire a champion. Rather than trying to play the game that exists within corporate structures, intrepid entrepreneurs may stage their takeovers in the ring. Others simply want to improve their station in life, and SGP makes a path. The most effective method to challenge the upper echelon is to band together and form a faction. Together they can watch each others' backs and try to survive the many machinations of the Apex Predators and their benefactors.



CAMPAIGNS

One Night Only

As a one-shot, you only have one match to make your story shine. “One Night Only” narrows its focus down to a match, its setup, the tension within the ring, and how it vents outward after the bell rings. After creating characters, create a match for that character with PCs, NPCs, or both. Next, figure out how it connects to at least one other match. If someone is in some way tied to in a match, they can interfere in a dramatic, story-accelerating way.

MATCH IDEAS

- ✦ To determine its next scion, a major galactic power has decided to hold a tournament of its frontrunners. This is the final match.
- ✦ You decided to enter a match that will allow you to ask for any one thing. All you have to do is be the last one standing in a field of 30 others.
- ✦ If you can fight your way through to the top of the SGP corporate headquarters building (literally), you will be allowed to make any one match with anyone you want.
- ✦ You can secure a place for you and yours among the elite of the Coalition, provided you are the first to enter and last to leave the Chamber, a set of six enclosed booths releasing into a ring surrounded by unforgiving steel and force fields.
- ✦ To settle a Council argument, a match has been set, and the deciding lines determine the teams. You find yourself partnered with Apex Predators and revolutionaries alike, no matter their alliances. Winning could be a boon for both those you stand for and against, but your loss could greatly weaken those who historically stand against you as well as yourself.



A SYMPHONY OF FISTS AND SOULS

With more sessions to build and establish relationships, “A Symphony of Fists and Souls” gives room to explore who both the person and the persona are and how those two facets come into conflict. A feud with another character provides the perfect vehicle. At character creation and any point during a campaign, name a rival. This rivalry can be a platonic fabrication, an outlet for romantic tension, the result of true animosity, or move between and in other directions.

FEUD IDEAS

- ✦ You don’t know how to explain it to anyone else, but one of the Apex Predators has done something to a wrestler you care deeply for and you plan to get to the bottom of this... and get revenge. What will you give to get them back?
- ✦ You’ve been friends since you met each other on your first night in SGP. You’ve had memorable matches together, as both teammates and rivals. But now the stakes are raised and only one of you can be on top. Do you compromise just to win?
- ✦ You were once an Apex Predator, fighting on behalf of a company who went bankrupt. Suddenly, no matter how well you performed, you just couldn’t seem to snag a win. With the help of others at the bottom of the card, you’ve started clawing your way back up. What do you fight for now, and who keeps snatching away your chances at victory?
- ✦ After scrambling up the ladder and making it to a comfortable spot, you look around and see you’ve become what you were fighting against. That realization and the hesitation it brings is all your opponent needs to lay you low and take you out of commission for months. You’re back now. Will you make the same mistakes?
- ✦ Outside the ring, a veteran Apex Predator has quietly coached you and helped you improve. You even snag key victories for yourself. However, stepping through the ropes makes them a ruthless competitor who gives no quarter. Even when you’re the one across from them. They have become your gatekeeper. How will you move past them?

CHARACTERS

Valerie “Val Kyr” Kempers (she/her): For decades, Val Kyr has dominated Shinsei Galactic’s ring in the name of the Merciful Hands of the Breaking Dawn as opponents tap out to her submission moves. Her streak of wins made Breaking Dawn one of the most widespread and ubiquitous religions of known space. But her age is beginning to show; she takes longer to push herself back up from the mat, her losses are beginning to stack, and whispers abound that she’ll soon retire. Retiring without a replacement from her home planet means the tenuous peace she brokered goes up in flames, along with the culture and people she has literally spilt blood to protect.

Can Val find a solution without compromising what’s left of her morals?

Ludova (she/her): As the chief executive of networked broadcasting and circulating media for PRIMA, Ludova is a near enigma for someone whose image is omnipresent. No one even knows if Ludova is a given name, family name, or pseudonym. As the general manager of SGP, she has an iron fist wrapped tight around the company, and particularly the Apex Predators. However, she will always consider the potential of those with enough audacity to challenge those at the top. She’s especially interested if they can be coaxed into doing what she needs.

Can Ludova ever truly be challenged?

Haven Nelson (they/them): Haven has coasted along for years on the back of a few big successes early in their career. Without much left to fight for after a carefully worded contract with Ludova, they only remain in SGP for the glory and the paycheck. When threats arise and it’s time to choose sides, they take none despite knowing the consequences of inaction. Fans speculate that something more is happening to keep what should have been a rising star kicking around the middle of the pack.

Can Haven open up about the doubts that have been plaguing them?

Omega (it): Built by a tech conglomerate, the “Best Bout Machine” known as Omega (Unit KO-005) is an android carving a swath through every competitor that tries to stand up against its high-speed, high-flying wrestling style. Some say it learns with every match, some say it’s an unfeeling mechanical nightmare.

Do you try to take Omega down or figure out if something deeper is happening?

TITLES, TOURNAMENTS, AND TRIUMPHS

If you need ideas for events and trophies to work towards, here are a few suggestions:

- ✦ Interstellar Heavyweight Championship Belt
- ✦ Orion Trios Championship Belts
- ✦ Rising Stars Award
- ✦ Nebula Queen
- ✦ Scion of the Squared Circle
- ✦ Siren's Successor Tournament
- ✦ Twins Tag Team Championship Belts
- ✦ SGP T1, T2, and T3 Classics
- ✦ Apex Climax Tournament

NAMES

While some wrestlers use their real names or variations on them in the ring, others craft evocative personas full of drama:

- ✦ Archon
- ✦ Athena
- ✦ Blackheart
- ✦ Camarilla
- ✦ Derrin Deeds
- ✦ Hammerhead
- ✦ La Muñeca del Anillo
- ✦ Nova Cahne
- ✦ Omerta
- ✦ Prinx Balor
- ✦ Shatterstar



Custom Rules

BOOK IT!

When physical confrontation is the only way to move forward, both players and the GM can choose to take that conflict to the ring and let it become an upcoming match. When booking a match, consider the following:

- + Who is involved in the match and why? What are the stakes?
- + Would it be thematic for this match to have special rules? Is it a cell match with no escape? A street fight where anything goes? Are multiple wrestlers or even teams involved?
- + Will this resolve the conflict or advance the story to bring us closer to the ending conflict?
- + Will this happen immediately or will there be a lead-in to this match?

When you have decided on the match, stakes, potential outcomes, and when it will take place, hype yourself and your abilities and roll **+Heart** or **+Wit** to see how effective you are:

10+ Choose 1:

- + You walk into the ring brimming with confidence and take +3 forward in the match to any roll.
- + Something you said gets into your opponent's head; you can either gain a String or inflict a Condition for the length of the match.
- + The crowd hears something in your message that touches deeply. Take +1 ongoing to all **Wit** rolls during the match.

7-9 Choose 1 from the 10+ list and 1 from the following list:

- + Something they do rattles you. You gain a Condition. What caused this reaction?
- + Someone lets a secret slip to your opponent. You give them a String. What were they able to glean from you?
- + The crowd can't connect with what you're saying and you lose them. Take -1 ongoing to all **Heart** rolls during the match.
- + When the time comes to make your move in the ring, you hesitate. Your first up beat is considered a down beat. What caused this?

6- The GM chooses what consequences occur. This can be unexpected match stipulations (like a lumberjane match where the ring is surrounded by the rest of the locker room), adding more opponents, or anything else that is fitting.

A SWORD BY ANOTHER NAME

While you (usually) can't walk into the ring with a blade in hand, you do still have a weapon. How you operate in the ring and how you present yourself to the world are the weapons you fight with.

Here are a few examples of wrestling styles:

- ✦ **Submission Magician:** You make your opponents' own bodies work against them, tying them in knots and applying pressure until they tap out.
- ✦ **Technician:** You've studied the varying methods of grappling innovated by masters of hand-to-hand martial arts. You know the counterbalances of stances and holds, outmaneuvering opponents.
- ✦ **Luchadore:** You are part of a long and storied tradition and lineage, donning a mask and using flashy showcases of agility and strength. (Note: While not the de facto gender neutral term, "luchadore" follows the example of "latine.")
- ✦ **Flyer:** Some confuse you with the flash of luchadores, but that's not quite right. You love the rush of leaping from things the average person wouldn't even think of climbing.
- ✦ **Brawler:** You only trust your fists; ring posts will never help you... unless you ram someone into it.

Along with a wrestling style, you may want to detail the persona you present to the world. Maybe it's an exaggeration of who you are or a mask you hide yourself behind. They are a character within your character: your gimmick. You can also create a signature moveset with names to match.

SUNDEW GARDEN BAKERY

by Jan Martin

Overview

On the bog planet Kalmia, sword lesbians of the Sundew Garden Bakery work to save an environment hostile to them. Marooned by a Colony Ship years ago, they are in constant conflict with a group of ex-Colonists stuck there with them.

Principles

Respect Your Low Rank on the Food Chain

The lush and beautiful bog is teeming with gargantuan flora, fungi, and fauna. Organisms that go unnoticed elsewhere shake the ground as they walk by on Kalmia. Staying out of their way isn't always possible, but it's always important.

Do Good by Nature and It Does Good by You

The more the ecosystem suffers, the more dangerous it becomes. As the spreading grains planted by the Colony Ship expand their footprint, the habitat of bog voles shrinks. As the habitat of the bog voles shrinks, they become irritable and aggressive. This plays out at every level. The less impact you have on the ecosystem, the easier it is to exist. And existing here is difficult enough with no solid ground and predators galore.

It Takes a Community

To survive in the long term takes more than a hero, it takes a community willing to sacrifice together. Learning to trust one another, even those you don't like or get along with, will be key to longevity. You must live with those that don't like you. To function in a growing society as this one, you need to learn to work for others before working for yourself.



Setting

The Sundew Garden Bakery is the center of a flotilla community made up of floating buildings and homes. There live the Sun Hand, a group of people who lost their home planet to the same Colony Ship that marooned them here on planet Kalmia. They center their lives around baking to control the spread of an invasive grain planted by the Colony when they arrived. Though not entirely under control, they have managed to halt the spread and keep the grain patch confined to the bakery area. This serves as one of the main communities on Kalmia. The Sun Hand playbook is designed to fit this setting, but can be used anywhere.

On a nearby island live the ex-Colonists, a group who escaped from the Colony Ship in hopes of finding a better life on their own. Having their community on rare solid ground has benefits, such as waking up to find your home is still where it was before you went to sleep. The ex-Colonists enjoy a rowdier lifestyle, and many pubs and gambling dens have formed. If you know who to talk to, you can gain access to the shadier areas of the island and find rare black market goods. This is another main community on Kalmia.

Kalmia has several highly intelligent Indigenous species. The Klo are a frog-like amphibious species that make their compact bubble cities in the World Beneath the Surface. It's difficult for non-Klo to get there, but they have amenities suitable for humans and insect-kind. There's also the Lumbering Wasps, a society of jokesters and tricksters. They stand two stories high and fly surprisingly poorly; broken wings are a common sight. They live in sprawling labyrinthine cities of mud and reed. Both the Klo and Lumbering Wasp cities might be a suitable community.

Kalmia has no official government; all these communities exist together. They resolve their differences directly and swiftly, as everyone hopes to limit conflict. The flora and fauna on Kalmia are ten to hundreds of times larger than typically seen, and that much more dangerous. One of the reasons the Colony Ship left was due to the increase in deaths by voles, mosquitos, and bog martens. Despite the dangers, those who live here are glad to be rid of the Colony Ship that caused imbalance and turmoil on this hostile planet.



CAMPAIGNS

The Burden of Debt

The Speaker of Kalmia Klokun Pondslump arrives at the Sundew Garden Bakery to seek repayment for debts owed to the planet. Since the Colony Ship arrived, there have been resources taken that were not accounted for.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ A group of ex-Colonists calling themselves the Shovelhounds grow weary with having to travel by giant insect, and have been secretly mining an underwater cave system. They plan to use the minerals within to build solar-powered boats. The PCs will need to stop them from bringing the wrath of the Kalmians upon them all.
- ✦ The Kalmians develop a liking for breads and host a baking tournament to come up with an official bread for the planet Kalmia.
- ✦ A migratory insect swarm moves into the area and destroys the entire crop of grain. Some desperate people in the community start getting mixed up in the Shovelhounds' black market.

An Unexpected Return

Despite a five-year-long round trip to get into and out of light speed, the Colony Ship returns. They are after the wanted criminal Bruna Delbruno and the other escaped Colonists, as well as the shuttles they stole.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The Kalmians wish to take control of the Colony Ship so they can leave Kalmia as it once was so it may recover. The PCs need to recruit allies within the ship and hope they can oust the Board of Directors without the entire Colony turning on them.
- ✦ The Board of Directors sees the improvements on Kalmia since they have been gone and rethink their plan to leave. The Kalmians say they will go to war if the Colonists stay, and it's up to the PCs to prevent this chaos from unfolding.
- ✦ Colony Ship experiments cause an earthquake that releases an ancient creature from its home. It's wild and aggressive, and threatens the entire planet with its wanton destructive nature. Kalmians, Sun Hand, ex-Colonists, and even Colonists will need to work together, or all will perish.

CHARACTERS

The Sun Hand

Marisol Palletjack (she/her): Marisol gave hope to her people when she first made instruments with the materials on Kalmia. When not keeping the music scene on Kalmia alive, she's swimming in the World Beneath the Surface. She wields a long thin sword with a hooked tip that's used to cut reeds at the base. Her upbeat nature makes her likeable, but her optimism isn't fully grounded in the constraints of reality.

Astera Mendwing (they/she): Astera was one of the finest pilots on the Colony Ship, until an accident left her unable to fly without triggering panic attacks. She is a skilled rider of Giant Water Striders, renowned for her ability to push boundaries and do the impossible. Her sword is the paddle she uses to help achieve unthinkable turns while riding a Strider. The steel edges of the paddle are as sharp as her wit, and rest on a hardwood hilt engraved with long curled waves. Brash, blunt, and sarcastic, all traits that tend to get her on people's bad side, especially figures of authority.

Junco "Johnnie Bone" Marlin (they/she): Johnnie Bone is a classic giant with a heart of gold, intimidating to strangers, beloved by those that know them. She's the only person who can wrestle the Bison Beetles that damage the flotilla when they wander through. She uses her massive pizza-shovel sword as leverage to flip the Bison Beetles on their backs and send them in a new direction. Johnnie looks scary, but she's kind and gentle, taking care never to injure the Bison Beetles she wrestles with. She's slow to anger but seeing unnecessary damage to the environment can sometimes send her into a rage. Spends her time at the bakery perfecting her huge bread technique.

Elymus Lonetree (they/them): Elymus is the head conservationist responsible for making sure resource extraction doesn't upset the ecosystem. Grumpy, but with a soft spot for animals, they have a passion for the environment that inspires everyone to do their best. Draped across their back is a two-handled crescent-shaped sword they often use as a large dough scraper.

Hyssop Twoheron (they/she): Hyssop tinkers away on repairing buildings, equipment, and machinery. They designed just about every major system that got the Sundew Garden Bakery operating. Under her guidance, many others come to learn how to repair and design new things. Somehow this always leads to adventures out on the bog searching for some rare resource, which leads to all kinds of trouble. Wields short swords that crackle with electricity at the pull of a trigger, practical in her work and for defense.

EX-COLONISTS

Bruna Delbruno (she/her): Bruna was born into poverty on the Colony Ship and raised by herself, as both her parents died as prison laborers. She's wily and has ambitions that far exceed what anyone thought her capable of. At 17, she led an escape off the ship moments before it jumped to light speed, freeing hundreds and stealing a good number of shuttles. Now, she's the current leader of the ex-Colonists on the planet, and an ally to the Sun Hand. Doesn't do well with confrontation, and struggles to prevent her people from breaking the rules. She stole a Golden Lace Rapier from the Master of Arms on the Colony Ship and carries it with her everywhere. Its blade has intricate lace patterns that glow pink when engaging the laser function.

SHOVELHOUNDS

Percival Stoneroll (he/him): The only Colonist intentionally left behind by the Colony Ship's Board of Directors. Though he had no interest in staying aboard, it stung quite a bit because the Chairperson of the board is his own mother. He spent his life rebelling against everything his family stands for and has tried to destroy their legacy many times. He now leads a group of poachers to supply black market ingredients. Uses a short, thick sword specially designed for cracking open thick chitinous armor plates. Driven by greed and lust for power.

KALMIANS, BENEATH THE SURFACE

Klokun Pondslump (lo/lun): A representative of the planet called the Speaker of Kalmia, from the World Beneath the Surface. Lo communicates the thoughts and feelings of the entire planet Kalmia. Lo walks with a cane that has a bladed body and a second hilt as its tip. Quiet and contemplative, Klokun is peaceful with the Sun Hand but shows concern with the ex-Colonists.

KALMIANS, LUMBERING WASPS

Allokroq Ruzaq (vesp/ves): A celebrity and well-known comedian. Vesp got ves start in Kalmia but sometimes leaves to film holoreels with the Galactic Film Union. Is friendly to Kalmians, but easily annoyed by others because vesp has to put up with tourists seeking ves out at all hours of the day. Vesp has two broken wings and can barely fly, so prefers to travel by luxury hovercraft.

Names

The Sun Hand

- ✦ Allium Mistgazer
- ✦ Bromus Bluestem
- ✦ Dalmatica Toadflax
- ✦ Evelyn Broadtail
- ✦ Gentian Cloudshadow
- ✦ Kestrel Glassleaf
- ✦ Noelle Dovewhistle
- ✦ Robin Redcanyon
- ✦ Violet Cookiesick
- ✦ Wren Snowmelt

Ex-Colonists

- ✦ Barman Computerson
- ✦ Castalia Sanz
- ✦ Daygon Ng
- ✦ Jaleko Sunfade
- ✦ Jennica Gamehook
- ✦ Kara Sortcolumn
- ✦ Mariana Maria
- ✦ Romero Shophand
- ✦ Sylvie Boomgrip

Kalmians, Beneath the Surface

- ✦ Klokkan Mirebell
- ✦ Klokest Castfind
- ✦ Kloklop Bogheart
- ✦ Klonen Songfeather
- ✦ Klopa Wavespot

Kalmians, Lumbering Wasps

- ✦ Laqergo Noqum
- ✦ Miqo Qazqel
- ✦ Pteriqo Inzalaq
- ✦ Steqoriqa Baqqan
- ✦ Zesqa Pheriqan

Custom Rules

Strider-Kin

The Nature Witch's **Wild Friends** move has extra benefits with Giant Water Striders. They will follow complex instructions and even come to your aid if they sense you're in danger.

Ant Riding

Large ants work busily, and you can sit on them to travel short distances, even through the water. You can't control where they go; at best they can be temporarily steered towards the shore for a dry dismount if you have some ore. Many ant lines have a paddle rental stand somewhere nearby staffed by Kalmians from Beneath the Surface.



RIDE WATER STRIDER

To travel large distances across the bog is easiest on the back of a Giant Water Strider. The kindly animals barely notice the weight of a human and are surprisingly receptive to a rider who is intuitive enough.

Once you've found a Strider, getting it to go where you want is as easy climbing on its back and understanding its mood. Many can ride on its back, but only one needs to sync with the Strider.

Perched atop the Strider, Roll **+Heart** to get in sync with it:

- 10+** You and the Strider are perfectly in tune with each other's moods and can travel at top speeds with great agility.
- 7-9** The Strider is in tune with you, but you aren't picking up on its mood to the same degree. It may or may not always respond to your intentions.
- 6-** You're not in sync at all. The GM is encouraged to have the Strider follow its own desires and potentially bring the character somewhere unexpected.

Super-Science Sapphics

by Amr Ammourazz

Overview

At the Waeha University of Ailm, by day students come to study STEM, with the goal of making the world a better place. By night, the Super-Science Sapphics club uses their knowledge to handle immediate threats, save people from disasters, and of course, show off their awesome inventions. You'll tell stories of badass superhero fights, with cool choreography and awesome science powers, while also exploring what it means to be a hero who makes a meaningful difference in people's lives, with a focus on themes of community, rehabilitation, and restorative justice.



PRINCIPLES

Let Science Be Super

Science might be the heart of this world, but comics are its lifeblood. Make your science as realistic and technically accurate, or not, as you want, but always let it be super. Let it go beyond what we can do and achieve the improbable, the impossible, and the truly superheroic. And above all, make your swords Super Scientific. Make laser swords and magnet swords. Nano swords and digital swords. Magic swords and paint swords. Gun swords and wing swords. The only limit is your creativity.

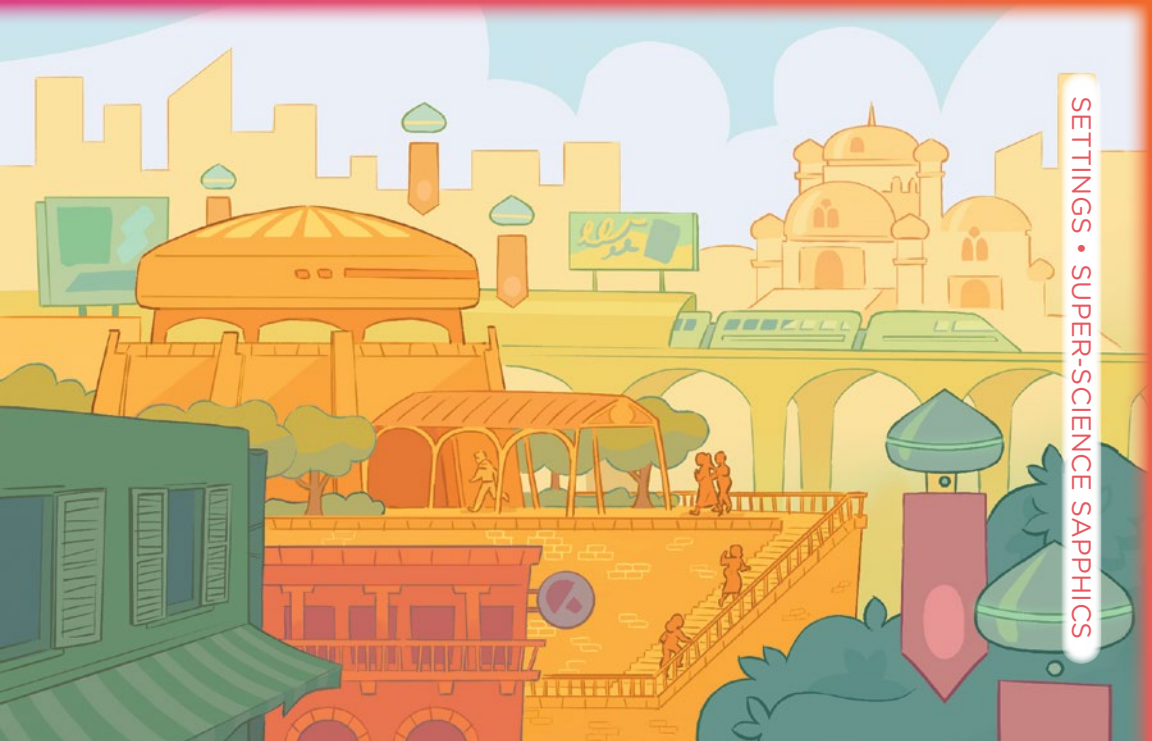
Strive For Better, Always

First and foremost, this setting is about doing and being better. It's not enough to go out there and protect people from an immediate threat. You work to make a world where threats don't happen. That is the core value all heroes hold, and true heroes will stand tall for what they believe in, no matter the odds. But they can also recognize when their beliefs are wrong. Listening to others and being open to new perspectives is a core value for any aspiring hero. When you begin your journey, you and your character might not know what you stand for. You might not even know who you are. But you'll figure it out. And once you do, stand tall, but always be willing to change and grow.

There IS No One True Science

We often see science through the lens we're most familiar with: robots, medical advancements, energy solutions, computer software, and much more. And all of those and more are a huge part of the setting. However, those form a very modern, often western and colonial, perspective. For most of history and the rest of the world, science has encompassed things from astrology, religions, and even magic. In Waeha City, all forms of science and knowledge are accepted and encouraged, and utilized in tandem to better everyone's life. Nature, religion, science, magic—none of these are seen as being in conflict.

Intelligence as a concept follows a similar arc. Most “intelligence metrics” are often based on neurotypical standards and expectations, and the emphasis placed on academic rigor often serves to reinforce these values. They're also often used to enforce structures of oppression, with a prominent example being as a justification for race science. ***Super-Science Sapphics*** rejects these norms, allowing room for all forms of intelligence to shine, whether it's creative, from experience, emotional, academic, or otherwise.



Setting

Waeha City is a bastion of knowledge, and its University of Ailm is its pride and joy. It is a city built to create a socialist utopia, with core values of restorative justice, constant innovation, and equity for all.

Despite that, utopia is an action, not a state of being. It is a thing Waeha is constantly striving for, but sometimes things go wrong, accidents happen, or people try to do harm. The main tools in Waeha's arsenal are the various sciences practiced throughout the city, utilized to bring about progress and change, ever growing and improving on itself.

And of course, there are the Super-Science Sapphics, one of the various groups that help protect folks in Waeha City. Based out of the University of Ailm, this club serves as a community of protectors, using the various inventions they create to protect folks from harm and respond to all sorts of disasters. Their goals are not only to prevent immediate threats, but to also tackle the root causes and help guide the process of rehabilitation in a way that's safe for all.

The greater world is specifically left undefined, and it's up to each group to decide how much or how little they want to engage with it. Waeha City can be reflective of the world, or it can stand in opposition to it. Whether or not conflict from external sources is something the group wants to tackle is up to them, and can shift over the course of play. Ultimately, like everything else, choose what is interesting and comfortable for everyone at the table.

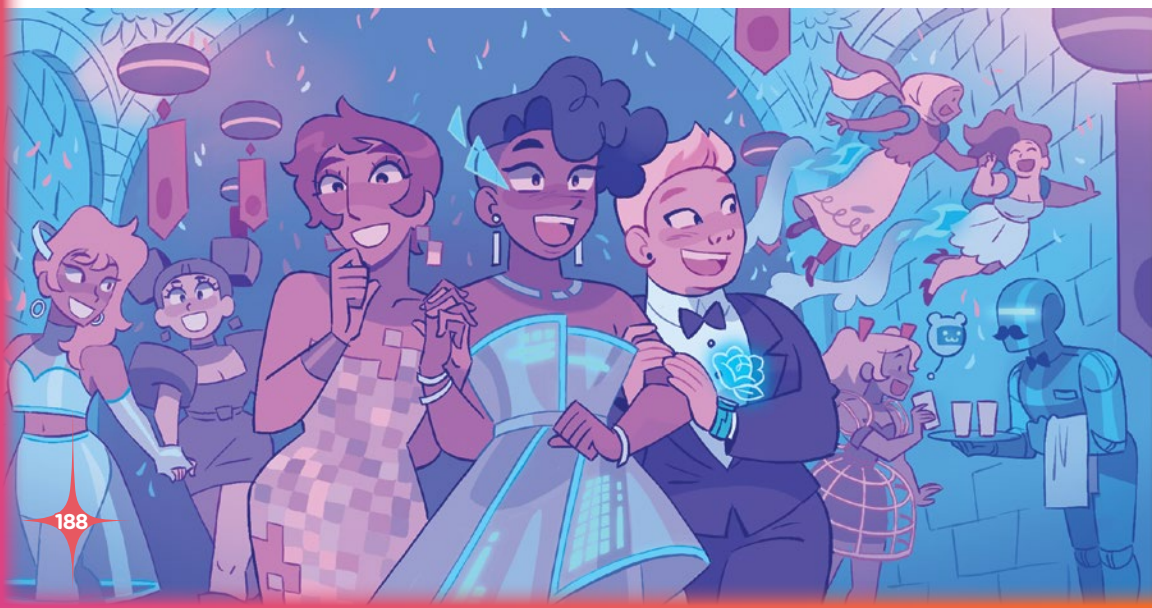
CAMPAIGNS

UNIVERSITY SHENANIGANS

When they're not out being superheroes, the Super-Science Sapphics are still regular university students, and that means dealing with the everyday trials and tribulations that entails.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ It's everyone's favorite time of year. That's right, it's prom time! And not just any prom—Science Prom. On top of the normal gay panic of trying to find a date in time because every oblivious sapphic has left it until the last minute, you also have to prepare your own scientifically suped up attire to look snazzy, beautiful, and/or absolutely ludicrous as you make your entrance!
- ✦ Rumors of secret tunnels built under the University of Ailm have recently been proven true! These tunnels connect the aboveground buildings, but stories whisper of hidden labs and abandoned buildings from its early days. The students brave enough to look for them have gotten hurt or lost, but that may not dissuade the curiosity of our intrepid Super-Science Sapphics.
- ✦ It's Ailm Week, so bring out your school spirit and prepare to prove your major is the best in some friendly rivalry. Students from every major compete, whether for points or for pride, to outsmart, outskill, and out-science their opponents, in everything from scavenger hunts to buildathons, to prank wars, to community service projects. Let the PCs clash with one another, or introduce external conflicts like sabotage and dirty tricks, ruthless and overeager teams who will win at any cost, or an experiment gone wrong.



MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

First and foremost, the Super-Science Sapphics are members and protectors of their university community. Their main focus is making their immediate environment a better place with every action they take.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ Although supervillains aren't as common in the real world as in comics, the Super-Science Sapphics still deal with their fair share. Some are hangovers from the old-days, some venting feelings of greed and jealousy in unhealthy ways, and others who managed to fall through the cracks of the still improving system. Whatever the cause, the PCs have to keep everyone safe while trying to create a path to rehabilitation for any willing to take it.
- ✦ Ethical science is the centerpiece of Waeha City, but even with all the precautions possible, sometimes things still get out of hand! From the all-consuming goo fiasco to the occasional lab mishap-related blackout, everyone has at least one memory of an experiment gone wrong. And most recently, it's runaway robots! They're rushing through downtown, leaving mayhem in their trail. What went wrong in their programming? Can our heroes stop them before they level the city?

PROTECTORS OF WAEHA CITY

Although their focus is on the immediate communities, the Super-Science Sapphics also serve as the first response to threats to Waeha City, preventing immediate harm from coming to it. This campaign focuses on external threats, and should be used for inspiration only if you want to deal with the world outside of Waeha City.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ An alien spaceship is on course to crash with Waeha City. The aliens have asked for our help solving the crisis. Can the PCs cross the language barrier and work with the aliens to prevent a catastrophe? Can they save the ship in time to prevent the crash, or will they have to find a way to save the aliens before the ship is doomed?
- ✦ Rumors abound that the Capitalist is using her investments in Waeha City as a front to steal technology and use it to cause harm on a global scale. The PCs will have to dig into this conspiracy to unravel the Capitalist's plans before she sabotages everything Waeha City stands for.
- ✦ Supervillains are arriving in Waeha City, followed shortly by "heroes" here to stop them. The twist? They're all working in service of foreign imperial powers, looking to destabilize the city and undermine its own heroes and community systems so they can swoop in and claim the city as their own. Can the PCs expose the truth about these heroes, while standing tall against threats to the very existence of Waeha from all sides?

CHARACTERS

WAEHA UNIVERSITY OF AILM

Mohammed Khan El-Mahdy, Dean of the University (any pronouns except he): An ambitious yet kindhearted dean, Mohammed is in charge of facilitating the operation of the university. They seek constant growth, always arriving with new, often considered unfeasible, schemes to expand the study of sciences. And despite all odds, fae always manages to deliver. She's also more than willing to rope any volunteers willing to help into her various machinations.

- + **Appearance:** Androgynous, formal, put together. South Asian.
- + **Sword:** Doesn't have one.

Wahida Antonio Siddig, the Professor (he/him): Everyone knows almost everything about the Professor, from the fact that he's the faculty sponsor for the Super-Science Sapphics club, to the fact that he's a lesbian, or that he's the bassist for his band (but I repeat myself). What no one actually knows is what he's a professor *of*. Wahida seems to know stuff about almost every field of science you can name, but whenever someone asks him directly, he manages to answer without ever answering. As faculty advisor, he can be as hands-on or hands-off as the group wants, providing a central contact to touch base or a full blown authority figure as needed.

- + **Appearance:** Disheveled, masc. Brown Arab-Latinx.
- + **Sword:** No one's ever seen it, but the grip to his bass looks suspiciously like a hilt...

ORGANIZATIONS

Adam-Ali El-Hakeem, the Secretary (they/them, xe/xir): Sleep loss, a dozen coffee cups, and way too many tasks; these are the ingredients chosen to create the Secretary's aesthetic. A frantic human who seems to be organizing everything around xir but xir own life, Adam-Ali serves as the official notetaker for council meetings and helps ensure that all political information is kept public. They often reach out to individual organizations and clubs to notify them of important information, or to seek their help on matters of urgency.

- + **Appearance:** Exhausted, work attire. Brown North-African.
- + **Sword:** Xe probably had one at some point, but it's buried under the mess that is xir life.

Amina Amadou El-Murshid, the Imam (she/any): The Imam is both a pillar of the community and its reflection, providing a haven of comfort to any and all who seek it, while also reflecting their needs and concerns back onto the wider world. Her mosque is a central institution near campus, but it's open and welcoming to members of all or no faiths, whether they seek a spot to practice their religion or simply someone to listen to their concerns and provide advice. Amina will gladly speak up about issues to any who will listen, and will often point people to the Super-Science Sapphics, if he doesn't reach out himself.

✦ **Appearance:** Human, Black, bearded, femme leaning but wears traditional men's religious or imam attire.

✦ **Sword:** Curved sword with one edge of graphene and the other a taser.

Sherifa Noordin Ahmed, the Coordinator (genderfluid, defaults to ze/zir): No one reflects the ethos of Waeha City more than the Coordinator, who dedicates all zir time to making sure that the community surrounding the University of Ailm is well taken care of. Ze is at the forefront of every community effort, from public marches to poll campaigns to simply taking stock of the community and making sure everyone's needs are met. Sherifa carries a zeal driven by compassion that's hard to match, but the fire in zir heart burns hot against any who harm zir community. And ze will stand up for zir beliefs, whether that's alongside or against the Super-Science Sapphics.

✦ **Appearance:** Half-Djinn with Purple-Pink skin, a single horn, and practical streetwear. Futch Aesthetic. Hamsa tattoo on the right side of her face.

✦ **Sword:** Megaphone that extends to a sonic blade.

Joana D. Edison Jr., the Capitalist (she/her): Even if you spent your life trying to avoid knowing anyone important, you would still have heard of Joana D. Edison Jr. After inheriting an immense family fortune at the age of 18, she became the richest in the world by 25 and has dedicated her life to widening that gap. Since Waeha City established itself as a central force in the world, she has been investing in its research and growth, claiming purely altruistic intents, though many have long suspected personal motives to be driving it.

✦ **Appearance:** White, human, rich. If your setting is outside of standard Earth, she is whatever is most hegemonic or affords her the most inherent privilege.

✦ **Sword:** Money is the only weapon she needs.

The Capitalist should only be used if you want to deal with external threats and themes of capitalism and colonialism.



Names

Although the worldbuilding of Waeha City has an Arabic and Islamic bent to it, it's welcoming to any and all. Bring your own cultures and experiences to bear when naming your character.

On top of that, it's a city that understands that names are often in flux, and there's no better time to experiment than while at college. Your character might know their name at the start, but feel free to play characters who shift their identity throughout play.

You're also playing superheroes, and no comic is complete without a moniker. Decide if the standard tone is more down-to-earth names, over the top, campy or serious, and then decide if you're going to go along with the mold—or break it.

Custom Rules

STAND PROUD

When you first stand up for something you believe in, or when you stand proud against all odds, clear a Condition and give a String to everyone who stands by you. When you listen closely to what others have to say and shift your values accordingly, gain an XP and give a String to the player most responsible.

Sapphic Science

The principle “There is no one true science” states that all forms of intelligence have a place in this setting. Mechanically, this means that using science works with any and all of the stats to signify how your character approaches science. **Wit** might appear the straightforward route, but the others are just as applicable.

On top of that, scientific knowledge will often factor into every roll you make, whether it's to **Fight**, **Defy Disaster**, or even **Entice**. You should describe how knowledge and invention affects the narrative of those moves too as part of telling an awesome story.

SAPPHIC SCIENCE

When you do radical science to leave a mark on the world, choose your approach:

- ✦ **Daring:** Directness, reckless experimentation, or for the thrill
- ✦ **Grace:** Precision, speed, or for the achievement
- ✦ **Heart:** Empathy, support, or for the community
- ✦ **Wit:** Knowledge, technical expertise, or for science
- ✦ **Spirit:** Determination, magic, or for the world

10+ Choose 2

7-9 Choose 1

- ✦ The creation goes beyond your imagination
- ✦ It is extremely effective; take +1 to your next action with it
- ✦ You can recreate it with ease
- ✦ The science reveals something to you about yourself
- ✦ It leads to unexpected opportunities
- ✦ Give a String to someone involved, and take a String if they feel they grew closer as well

Even on a down beat, you can mark a Condition to choose 1. The GM still makes a move as normal.

SUPPORTIVE SCIENCE

When you **Influence with a String** to add to someone's roll for **Sapphic Science**, describe how your knowledge and approach affects the final product, and choose 1:

- ✦ The String is not expended
- ✦ You can spend a second String for an extra +1
- ✦ Ask them their true motivations for doing this; they must answer honestly
- ✦ You find comfort in working with a friend; clear a Condition

To Lay Down One's Life For Another

by James Mendez Hodes

Time AND Place

Let's visit the main island of Japan during the late Heian period. In Heian-kyō—the splendid, beautiful city we now call Kyōto—a living god rules from his Imperial Palace, surrounded by ministers and advisors of noble pedigree.

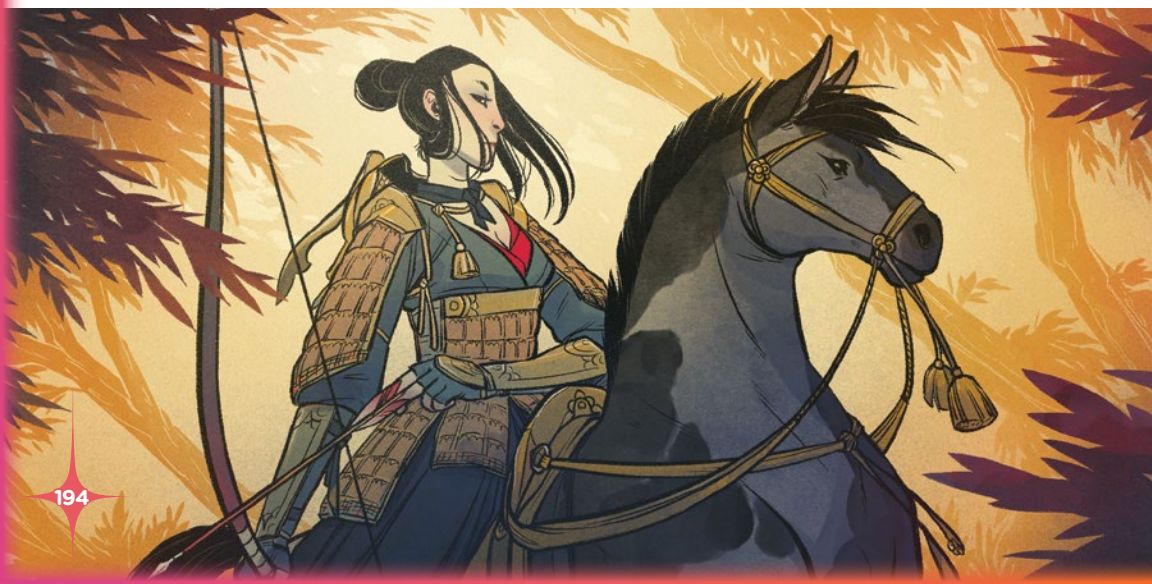
"To lay down one's life for another is the basic principle of homosexuality."

—Edayoshi Saburozaemon

With their power propped up on the farmers, artisans, and merchants that make up most of Japan's population, these aristocrats devoted themselves to political machinations, social maneuvering, religion, arts, and letters. Poetry and high fashion flourished. Contemporary innovations included the art of flower arranging, new Buddhist denominations imported from China, and an invigorating drink made of hot leaf juice called tea.

But a new class of nobility has emerged from the provincial countryside. They too command great wealth, vast farmlands, and legions of tenant farmers. But they express their power through not elegance and erudition, but the way of the horse and bow. Conscripted armies led by unrefined but gallant cavaliers now challenge the Imperial court's power, foreshadowing a coming era of violent struggle between warring states.

As thirsty sword lesbians—or, more likely, tragic bow lesbians—you'll become this age's romantic heroes, lauded in song and story for centuries to come alongside Tomoe Gōzen and Murasaki Shikibu. Your loves and clashes will define the ideals of Japanese chivalry forever more.



Don't Know Much About History?

To Lay Down One's Life for Another need not be realistic. It's okay to get things wrong, just as it's okay to be corrected and change what you're doing. If you really need to know whether, for example, sushi or ninja were invented yet (spoiler: not really but there was fish with rice; not quite but their forerunners were this era's military spies and scouts), search Wikipedia on your phone, or else agree with your game group to indulge in anachronism. If you think it would be cool to replace horses with jetbikes, or feudal countryside with post-apocalyptic badlands, go for it. I haven't checked but that anime probably exists.

Subsequent time periods' retrospection has thoroughly romanticized this age. By all means, exaggerate courtly romance or battlefield action and heartbreak. It's more important to avoid stereotypes and pernicious misconceptions about Japanese people and societies:

- + **Japanese people aren't universally obsessed with honor, their own or their family's.** Your and your family's reputations are critical, but when and where aren't they? Among high-ranking courtiers, scandals, affairs, and assignations are de rigueur. Among warrior nobles, knights surely fought high-profile duels for glory on the battlefield, but they also weren't above setting sleeping foes' castles aflame.
- + **Swords aren't that important.** Katana have not been invented yet. Instead, cavaliers wear tachi—similar-looking, larger longswords, drawn only as a last resort. Thirsty lesbians are more likely to vaunt their archery or knife-wrestling skills than their fencing. Bows and arrows especially take the swords' position of martial and thematic significance.
- + **Japanese nobles express their emotions intensely and freely.** This period lauded and prized raw, honest emotional expressions, especially if poignant and poetic, or accompanied by tears. Such unrestrained emotional outbursts were considered particularly masculine, though for game purposes we suggest all genders indulge in them as often as possible.
- + **Groups and families were important, but not to the exclusion of individuality.** Of course, families and institutions were important to Heian-era Japanese—but you needed institutional support to survive everywhere in the world. Even if you ran away to be a bandit, as many desperate folk did, you wouldn't last long without a gang. Nevertheless, Heian fiction abounds in prominent heroes with strong personal passions, ambitions, and idiosyncrasies, and villains who advanced their own interests at their families' and society's expense. For *Thirsty Sword Lesbians* characters, the most important takeaway is that characters are more interesting and better tied into their setting if their immediate families figure in the story. Or if your family has fallen to disease or tragedy, what kind of found family has helped you survive until this point?

QUEERNESS, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND RELATIONSHIPS

Every gender and sexual orientation existed within Heian-era society. This setting did feature an extreme, often oppressive gender binary, but we don't really care about it for this game's purposes.

Homosexuality among men sometimes took a certain strictly regimented, formalized form. An older man and a younger man mutually consented to a romantic, sexual, and didactic relationship. The older partner mentored the younger in the martial and literary arts, and in good conduct. The younger eventually “graduated” and took on their own partner and student, continuing the chain of love and instruction. The older partner was “supposed” to top, the younger to bottom, but since no one was checking, we can safely assume this rule was broken as often as not. Even outside this specific form of sexy mentorship, romances between men—often prominent knights—were often held up as the romantic ideal, free of the political pressures and calculated alliances that governed heterosexual marriage.

AGE OF ADULTHOOD

The age of adulthood in feudal Japan was somewhere in the early teens, with people as young as 13 getting married, ruling clans, or even waging war. However, in this game, we will adhere to modern understandings of that concept.

Conversely, we have little written information, and almost none in English, about lesbian relationships throughout much of Japanese history. However, in noble residences, men and women generally occupied different wings of the building or even separate structures. Men were generally unwelcome in the women's wing, unless they snuck in—there was a robust culture of furtive nighttime assignations. If, perchance, women were hooking up with each other behind closed doors, men wouldn't have been able to do anything about it.

Setting-Specific Flirting Ideas

- ✦ Wrestle
- ✦ Write most of a poem and invite them to finish it
- ✦ Compliment their artwork
- ✦ Play a haunting melody on the flute or lute from somewhere out of sight, watching as they follow the sound down the castle hallways or garden paths
- ✦ Invent the whole ass art of flower arranging just to impress them
- ✦ Play kemari (a keep-it-up game with a football) with them
- ✦ Play board games and comment on their moves in a way that reflects on their true character
- ✦ Describe to them something beautiful or sad you see in nature right there and then, which you may never see again
- ✦ Quote some Korean, Chinese, or South Asian classics to show off how cultured and erudite you are
- ✦ Put water on your face before a date so it looks like you were crying about them
- ✦ Mutually dunk on someone obviously trying to show off by quoting Korean, Chinese, or South Asian classics, behind their back
- ✦ Actually cry about them before, during, or after a date (or a battle, or a court appearance... pretty much any time, ppl always crying in this setting)
- ✦ Die tragically in their arms, say something really honest and forward because you're gonna die anyway, then continue flirting as a ghost or vampire or something



The Way of the Horse and Bow

If European chargers are solemn mastiffs, Japanese warhorses are questionably socialized terriers: squat, stubborn, sure-footed, vicious, and confident they know how to move and fight better than you. If you're lucky, they may take your suggestions into consideration. It is from the back of these chaos-wrought menaces that you do most of your fighting.

The knight's primary weapon is their bow and arrow, fired from horseback. Out of arrows? Too close to your enemy? Draw your huge combat knife, or (if truly desperate) the tachi hanging blade-down from a hanger on the left side of your belt. To protect yourself, you wear heavy armor consisting primarily of metal plates, but also featuring chain, silk, leather, and lacquered wood components. Heavy and boxy, it grants maximum coverage against arrow fire, but it's inconvenient to move and fight in on foot. But then again, fighting on foot is for plebeians like your squires, pages, batmen, and the small army of ill-trained, lightly armored peons with glaives and spears that follow you around.

What's warfare like? Well, there are the usual field engagements. Setting fire to your enemy's castle never goes out of style. But combat between knights often involves conspicuous single combat: ride out from your line, yell about how awesome you and your family are, challenge anyone similarly awesome to bring it. That person crows similarly about how awesome they are and goes to meet you in one of two kinds of duel.



In the first type of duel, you ride around shooting arrows at each other, then ride back to your lines, probably unharmed underneath all the metal and wood you're wearing. The thirsty bow lesbian who wishes to fight—but not kill—an attractive foe should consider this option.

But if you crave death, then opt for the famous hero Lady Tomoe's favorite form of duel: the mounted wrestling match. You get out your big knife, ride straight at your enemy, and grab them by their armor right there in the saddle. Then you use your superior strength and technique to do one of two things. Either you drag their head onto your saddle's pommel and laboriously saw it off with the knife, or you tackle them off their horse, hoping they hit the ground underneath you, so you can stab them several times in a gap in their armor. In real history, this form of duel almost inevitably led to messy death, but among bloodthirsty knife lesbians, perhaps it might take on more intimate dimensions. You never know until you try it.

When you challenge a foe of consequence to single combat, roll with whatever stat your family—not you, but your sisters and your cousins and your aunts—are best known for. Found family counts. On a mixed beat or up beat, your enemy must rise to the challenge or suffer public humiliation by declining; if they decline, take a String or inflict a Condition on them, whichever you prefer. On a 10+, you decide the form of the battle; on a 7–9, they decide. Then cut away from the duel to some other scene.

When you cut back, apply the usual *Thirsty Sword Lesbians* moves, with your duel's format in mind. Archery duels are great for impressing the crowd while **Figuring Out a Person**: show off your trick riding, shoot a flower's petals off just to prove you can, maybe even actually hit your enemy with an arrow if the mood strikes you.

Horseback wrestling, though? Probably a **Fight**. Resolve it like any other fight, though these matches probably resolve a little faster than the expanded **Fight** moves on page 189. As you describe how your choices play out, consider this form of combat's mortal intensity and visceral impact. You're a brawny lesbian in super-heavy armor crashing into a similar foe with two horses' charging force. Then you're wrestling in a precarious position, pulling and dragging and twisting while standing up in the stirrups. Consider the violence's intimacy, how much pulling their head onto the pommel of your saddle resembles cradling their head in your lap, or tackling them into the grass might seem playful if it weren't for the horses, armor, and knives.

In such a duel, on a 10+ against a NPC, and with the GM's explicit consent, you may opt to kill your enemy. Were you in Japan in 1182 or so, terrified and drunk on adrenaline, you probably would. Everyone around you expects you to. What does it mean if you don't?

PLAYBOOKS

To Lay down One's Life for Another uses almost all the same playbooks as other *Thirsty Sword Lesbians* games, including most of the expansion playbooks, sometimes modified to fit the setting. Playbooks without changes include:

- ✦ **The Dream Mirror**, a personality as present in Japan as anywhere else.
- ✦ **The Matriarch**, who might represent a clan's or religious order's leader.
- ✦ **The Naga**, present in Japan via Buddhist importation of Indian mythology.
- ✦ **The Scoundrel**, who might be a bandit, pirate, masterless knight-errant, or other ne'er-do-well.
- ✦ **The Troubadour**, representing a traveling performer of common stock, or a noble well versed in traditional performance.

Playbooks not recommended for this setting are:

- ✦ **The Legion**, who connects to plot elements without analogues in this setting.
- ✦ **The Seeker**, whose framing as a refugee from a toxic society doesn't fit as well into this setting. Feudal Japan had toxic elements like any other society, but those toxic elements weren't particular to one part of society and not another in the same way as the Seeker's. In addition, even if the toxicity were confined to (for example) a specific family, it would be easy for the Seeker's toxic society to tip over the edge into inaccurate stereotypes about Japanese honor, tradition, or emotional unavailability.

As for the others...



THE BEAST BECOMES THE KNIGHT

You hail from a provincial warrior clan such as the Taira or Minamoto. Your growing power, built on your mastery of horse and bow, threatens the refinement, culture, and education that represent Imperial authority. Everyone fears what may happen when you nock an arrow, draw your knife, or leap astride your mount.

Make the following changes to your moves:

- ✦ **Feral** is renamed **Provincial**. Your family's homeland in the countryside, away from the Imperial throne's rarefied beauty, and your military tradition make you dangerous and unsettling to courtly folk.
- ✦ Replace **Tracker** with **Loyal Steed** from the Devoted playbook. Remove the option to roll **+Spirit**, but choose one additional strength. You start with this move marked.
- ✦ **Transform** is renamed **Mount Up** and is not marked by default at game start. When you **Mount Up**, instead of assuming a bestial form, you get on a horse. No matter where you are or what you're doing, you call a horse and get on it and then continue doing whatever it is you were doing, just on a horse. It might not seem like quite as big a deal as turning into a giant wolf, but look back over my description of what a Japanese horse is like and think about what it's gonna be like when this stubby slaver death machine charges through the halls of the Imperial Palace to get to you in the middle of a tea party.

THE BLOODY BECOMES THE OGRE

You are a gigantic demonic ogre with unholy strength and toughness. Born in the subterranean Buddhist Hell, you came to Japan through a botched summoning, an underground gateway, an earthquake, or some similar misadventure. This life offers a chance to become something better in the next, if you devote yourself to right action and wisdom; but violence's inherently sinful nature threatens to hold you back.

I Don't Mean to Scare You now represents your progress toward redemption. You still have 10 questions, 3 answered and 7 unanswered, but filling either track is similarly bad, as both positive and negative bonds tie you to the delusion of self and the wheel of reincarnation. If one track fills, you become bound to this existence and are no longer playable, returning to Hell's suffering. To escape this threat, you must change playbooks through normal advancement, signifying your transformation from a wicked ogre into an enlightened demon-god, an onigami. How does your appearance change? Do you look human, or like an ogre whose horn or horns have fallen off?

THE CHOSEN *BECOMES* THE COURTIER

You belong to the Imperial family or a close relation, like the Fujiwara clan. You might be next in line for the throne or a high-ranking functionary. You might be expected to assume a position of authority supporting the imperfect power of the Son of Heaven, marry someone of great consequence, or take the throne yourself.

THE DEVOTED *BECOMES* THE RETAINER

A relationship to a feudal liege defines the Retainer. They might be a higher-ranking relative, a member of the clan your clan serves, or a religious leader.

Replace **Loyal Steed** with **Tracker** from the Beast playbook. You're good at figuring out where your liege (or their enemy) has gone when you lose track of them.

THE HOLOGODDESS *BECOMES* THE PHANTOM

As an incorporeal ghost, this playbook requires only cosmetic reflavoring. For example, your OS has to do with the nature of your prior life and manner of death. The styles under **Hologlamour** could turn into feudal Japanese equivalents—or you might manifest a power to summon futuristic clothing, unfamiliar and unsettling. Ghosts in Kurosawa films, especially *Throne of Blood* and *Dreams*, make excellent inspiration.

When you change playbooks, you might find a way to return from the afterlife—or possess someone and refuse to let go.

THE INFAMOUS *BECOMES* THE MONK

Feudal Japanese people became monks for both good and bad reasons. Sometimes they really wanted to devote their lives to Buddhism. Sometimes they wanted to run from responsibility and hook up with other monks or nuns. Sometimes they were atoning for a wicked past. Sometimes their wicked past occurred while they were already a monk, so they had to be even more monastic to make up for their conspicuous failure... or continue to use the cover of holy orders to perpetrate more villainy. As a penitent monk or nun with a wicked past, which will you be? Will you devote yourself to the Buddhist Law and the protection and education of the religious community, or become a murderous villain in cleric's robes?

You don't need to know much about Buddhism to play as a monk; many real-life Japanese Buddhist monks knew little about Buddhism themselves. You're supposed to shun violence and meat-eating and pursue enlightenment for yourself and others, but many monasteries trained notorious armies of burly, heavily armed novices who battled the monastery's political enemies with self-destructive abandon. The warrior monk's signature weapon is a glaive—the heavier the better.

THE NATURE WITCH BECOMES THE SHRINE KEEPER

The autochthonous Japanese religion of Shintō tells us gods and spirits inhabit the ten thousand things. They dwell not in any separate spirit realm, but in natural features like trees or mountains, or man-made ones like bells. Shrine Keepers are Shintō clergy who maintain the sites that protect and venerate the gods. Through sacred dance and song, you can even invite deities into your own body to speak with their voices. Those who keep country shrines, or serve arboreal or alpine gods, have uncanny connections to nature.

THE SPOOKY WITCH BECOMES THE YĪN-YÁNG MASTER

An onmyōji—literally “yīn-yáng master”—practices the art of onmyōdō, the way of manipulating the forces of light and darkness, positive and negative, masculine and feminine. Like the Shrine Keeper, you're a summoner who communicates with gods, ghosts, and spirits, but onmyōji are not always beneficent. Sometimes you deal with entities of a more sinister or even demonic nature than the Shrine Keeper's.

A little online research into Japanese folklore should reveal a wealth of opportunities for what kind of restless or hungry Unseen might escape into the world when you roll a 7-9 to commune with them: ghoulish hungry ghosts, emaciated cadavers that crave the taste of flesh; hopping vampires that pounce upon the unwary and drink their spinal fluid; strong-armed kappa that resemble gigantic bipedal turtles with little pools of water on top of their heads, hungry for cucumbers and children; demonic ogres from Hell with horns and massive studded iron bats; and of course all manner of ghosts.

East Asian cosmology doesn't envision a separate spirit realm or astral realm, so **Astral Dance** doesn't take you through it. Instead, it summons a spirit or monstrous creature who deigns to escort you to wherever you're going, such as a dragon, giant bird, celestial charioteer, or a cat who is also a bus. On a 7-9 or 6-, your ride is more trouble than it's worth, even if it gets you there.

THE SUN HAND BECOMES INARI'S BREWER

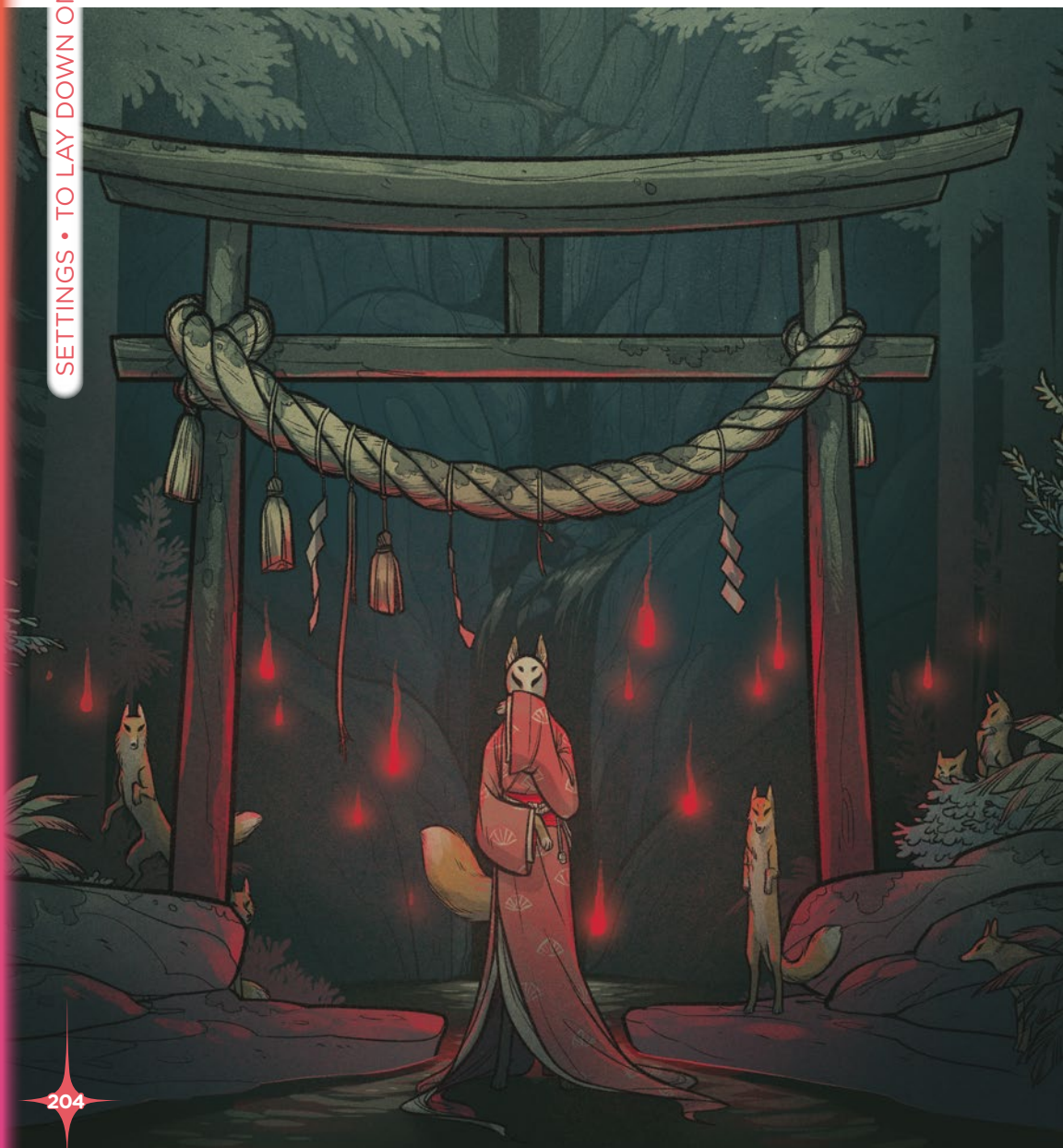
With bread not due to arrive in Japan for several centuries, this setting instead features Inari's Brewer, who can make divine liquor out of grain through the blessing of Prince Inari, the deity who rules industry, agriculture, and their products like rice and liquor.

Your **Sun Hand Baking** move becomes **Brewing**, which grants you a holy drinking gourd you can fill with grain to create a liquid equivalent of any super-bread described in the move. The Hard Crust equivalent freezes into an icy dagger. If you don't have your gourd on you, you can technically make the liquor in your mouth using the amylase in your saliva like with mouth-chewed sake, but it's a little gross so please use the gourd.

THE TRICKSTER BECOMES THE FAIRY CREATURE

The wilderness world of fae and immortals has brought forth trickster spirits. Foxes, raccoon dogs, cats, and several other beasts can transform from animal forms into human forms or in-between anthropomorphic animal forms, to bewitch humans or make mischief. Some serve the aforementioned Prince Inari. Others are just here to raise hell.

The disguise you assume with a move like **Play the Part** might actually be a supernatural illusion. Want a monstrous animal form? Spend an advance on the original Beast playbook's **Transform**.



TO LIGHT A FIRE IN MY SOUL

by Soup

Overview

For all your life, you have only ever known the small, oppressive confines of your village. Even your ambitions were defined for you by those who claim they know better. They say the world out there is dangerous, full of tyranny and waste. They say they are protecting you. But one day, you will find yourself free of those limitations, free to go wherever you please. ***To Light a Fire in My Soul*** is a mech-based adventure about shattering as many limits as you can and preserving the love and freedom you have come to know.

Principles

More Than Just Scrap Metal

This setting reframes the sword as a mech (though your characters are encouraged to have personal swords as well). Mechs are cool and you should absolutely describe what they look like. Four legs? Six arms? Tentacles? Go wild. What your mech stands for should be the foremost question you're seeking to answer at the table. The mech can be armor to stand the harsh tides of a cruel and broken world, or the shackles that limit your potential. It can be your ideal body, your friend or lover, or even the manifestation of the relationships between you and your crew. Pick somewhere to start and you may find your answer will change as time goes on.

This World Is Worth Fighting For

The world was broken a long time ago, ravaged by catastrophic events that rendered life on the surface unlivable. And yet, as inevitable as the shifting sands, people crawled back up to find the same old sky waiting for them. People are living their lives in this broken world; there is food to be eaten and culture to be shared. Populate places with characters living in spite of their hardships or with unexpected beauty from a forgotten time.

Pierce the Heavens

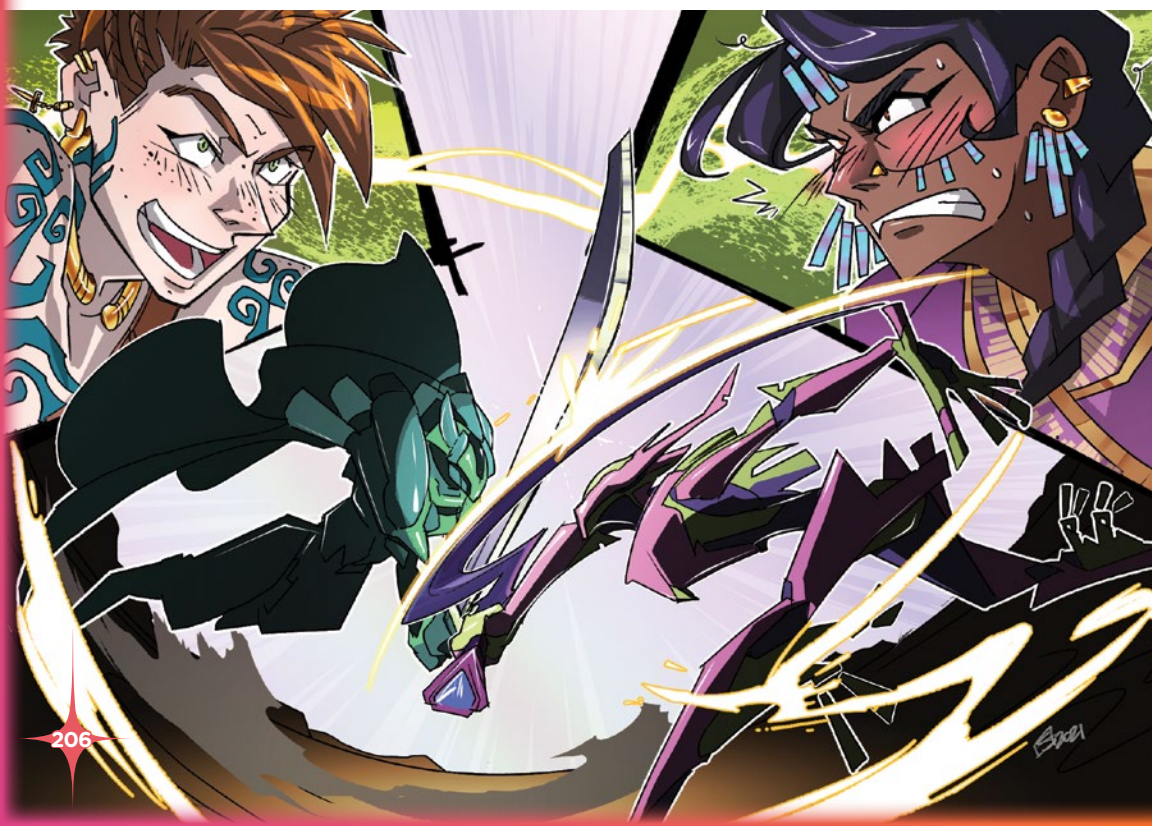
In the face of despair, one looks up at the stars and finds a way forward. All obstacles are nothing before your almighty will. ***To Light a Fire in My Soul*** is a pure and simple celebration of the power and potential we all hold: the fragile, messy, chaotic power of the human soul, paling in comparison to the violence of divine authority, yet shining brighter still. Your actions always ripple out, inspiring others to act in kind. Together, may you shatter every barrier in your way, until you hit the very edge of the universe itself.

Setting

Generations have passed since the Calamity, an event that left the surface of the planet barren and desert-like, hostile to all life. All sentient life was forced underground, creating small, insular communities that lived in fear of the world above. In the passing time, those brave enough have resurfaced, creating small, oasis-like settlements. Travel is possible but harrowing, and most prefer to stay put. However, as time goes on and these settlements grow larger, the looming silhouettes of metal frames in the distance grow closer.

Piloted by members of the Genesis Kingdom, these mechs are a way for the Kingdom to keep the surface-dwellers in line. Violence and extortion are all too common, and the largest settlements face routine destruction at the hands of these mechs. Under the tyrannical rule of Queen Genesis, injustice runs rampant and oppression is a simple fact of life. However, those who have seen her and lived to tell the tale speak of something complicated underneath the cold demeanor of her eyes.

You, who grew up in the shadows where the sun dare not touch, stumble upon something, a mech able to fight on par with those of the Kingdom. It seems old, but with it, you just might be able to do something. Will you spend your days cruising the vast and endless horizon, seeing all there is to see and helping people along the way? Or will you point your sword at the crown and beyond?



CAMPAIGNS

I Will Head Towards Tomorrow

The PCs are members of the Rebellion, a loosely organized traveling band of mech-piloting freedom fighters that aims to liberate the people of the surface. By necessity, there is danger in facing the Kingdom's toughest, but perhaps the possibility of redemption is not beyond them. This time, you take the fight to them.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The PCs arrive in hostile territory, where the citizens are devotees of the Genesis Kingdom. To get closer to the capital, they must sneak, flirt, or bust their way through one of the densest settlements on the planet. Plenty of urban adventure and trying to find a way to fit a mech through crowded streets is in store.
- ✦ The PCs have come face to face with a Kingdom general time and time again, developing a rivalry that transcends the larger conflict at hand. The general sends a messenger to tell them that they want to settle things once and for all. Find out what that means.
- ✦ In the final confrontation with Queen Genesis, she reveals her mech of epic proportions, far dwarfing your mechs in size and power. However, it seems that your mechs still hide a secret power that may be able to turn the tide. Discover what it is and let your relationships blossom into revolutionary force!

All the Lights in the Sky are Stars

A continuation of "I Will Head Towards Tomorrow." The truth revealed in the final confrontation with Queen Genesis is that her tyranny was to protect sentient life from the coming destruction of LORD DESPAIR, a galactic threat that caused the Calamity in the first place and swore to return to eliminate all life on the planet. Take to the stars and shine brighter than the galaxy's best. You do this not just for yourself, but to inspire others to follow your steps.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ An entire galaxy is out there, with new sights to see and new people to flirt with. The PCs spend some time on the Hub, a city embedded into the moon. This is the kind of place to get up to some interpersonal trouble before the final battle begins.
- ✦ The PCs find themselves in their greatest pinch yet. Separated, they each wake up in a reality where all their wants and needs are satisfied. Yet something seems off. In truth, they are trapped within their own minds, their will to fight slowly being sapped away by LORD DESPAIR. Can they find their way out? And moreover, do they even want to?



PASSING DAYS, THE COLOR OF THE SKY

The PCs are misfits, kicked out or otherwise fled from their various circumstances. They are united by the mech, and they ride it from settlement to settlement, finding trouble to get up to, their next meal, and some way to make some meaning in this world. These are characters heavily burdened by their past, stumbling step by step into an uncertain future, trying their hardest to prove they are alive.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The mech breaks down in the middle of the desert and needs some parts. Luckily, an abandoned Kingdom megaship lies only half a day away. Once inside, the PCs find a bustling hub of activity. While enjoying some much-needed relaxation, and finding plenty of ways to flirt their way into trouble, they catch wind that the Kingdom's mechs are approaching. Can they track down the parts they need before the Kingdom reaches them? Can they defend the citizens without their mech in operational condition? Will they find unlikely allies within the settlement?
- ✦ Ghost stories permeate the ruins of the wastes, convincing enough that even Kingdom pilots steer clear. While hiding in the area, the PCs come face to face with the truth of the rumors. Are there truly ghosts that haunt these wastes? And why do they seem so friendly?
- ✦ In an escort job gone awry, the PCs find themselves pinned between two Kingdom generals who want custody over the VIP. With few options other than to engage, will they get out alive? Can they protect their VIP and get paid? And why does the VIP have to be so attractive?



CHARACTERS

Rebellion

Aurelia Nah (they/them): One of the most prominent members of the rebellion, to the point where Kingdom orders are to execute on sight. They have flowing white hair streaked inexplicably with golden blonde, giving the impression of an embroidered curtain. How they manage to maintain the lusciousness of their hair in the midst of a revolution is unknown. Their features have a comforting confidence that brings hope to all who see them. Their mech shares this in the form of a battle-worn frame, colored white and gold where the paint has not been shorn off by combat. It has clearly been fixed over and over, lovingly brought back to fighting shape each time. It wields a large broadsword rendered from the same materials.

Do the PCs know Aurelia personally? What do they know about Aurelia that others don't? When Aurelia is gone, will the PCs be able to carry on their legacy?

INDEPENDENT

Mame-tan (they/them): One of the few merchants that roams the surface, scuttling between settlements. They are characterized by silver hair tied back in a ponytail and an eyepatch covering their left eye. They don't carry any personal weapons, and their mech is designed to look much closer to a tank with spider-like legs than the traditionally humanoid shape of the Kingdom's mechs. It has a comically large container of goods on its back. If you're looking for goods or information, look no further than Mame-tan. They seem a bit mischievous, but always friendly, and always willing to negotiate.

Mame-tan deals in wares, information, and personal value; what has one of the PCs traded away for vital information or goods? Who must the PCs defend Mame-tan from in order to incur a favor?

Genesis Kingdom

Lady Venom (she/her): A general of the Genesis Kingdom. Lady Venom sports long, straight, jet-black hair, and her very presence can instill fear in others. She is very tall and wears heels to accentuate her height and long legs, complementing her sharp dress and sharper gaze. Her mech is composed of lots of hard angles culminating in a lithe form that operates with deadly precision. Her sword is a sharpened stiletto, seemingly carved out of one piece. Her mech utilizes a similar weapon but in multitude, each coated with a material that seems to corrode the joints of mechs. Although she can deal swift ends to all that oppose her, she prefers toying with and exhausting her prey.

Can the PCs find an opening in Lady Venom's unwillingness to talk? Is there more to Lady Venom than a sharpened dagger and a venomous tongue?

Titania (she/her): A general of the Genesis Kingdom. Titania was orphaned at a young age; she was scouted and raised by Queen Genesis for her aptitude as a mech pilot. Indebted to her liege, she feels a strong sense of duty toward the Kingdom, but operates on a strict code of honor. Above all else, she admires prowess on the battlefield and integrity in combat. She has the highest duel win count amongst all the generals, and is known for her short, blazing red hair. Her mech looks very similar in design to Aurelia Nah's, but clearly differentiated by its ability to fly short distances. She keeps a simple broadsword at her side, but her mech wields a one-of-a-kind greatsword that emits energy from the edges of the blade.

When torn between her duty and her personal code, which will Titania choose, and can the PCs affect which path she takes? For all her life, Titania has only known her loyalty to the crown; could one of the PCs teach her there is more to life?

Queen Rosalind Genesis (she/her): High Ruler of the Genesis Kingdom. It's unknown how long she has ruled, and none remember when she ascended the throne. Her outward appearance places her no further than her late 40s, but there is an abyss-like age deep within her eyes. Dressed in shockingly stark clothing for royalty, she nonetheless commands a regal presence. She lacks a sword but controls the largest and most powerful of all the Kingdom's mechs, a towering and imposing humanoid figure that seems capable of overpowering all the kingdom's mechs at once. It is colored darkly and rendered in organic shapes, a terrifyingly bright engine burning at its core.

What is the reluctance deep within Queen Genesis's eyes? What leverage does she hold over the PCs? At the end of it all, is Queen Genesis worthy of redemption?

DESPAIR

LORD DESPAIR (none): A being that exists purely to inhibit the limitless power of the soul. LORD DESPAIR was once a person, but has since evolved into an entropically neutral being, existing in perfect harmony with the still recess of empty space. Devoid of emotion, empathy, and even will, LORD DESPAIR brings Calamity to all who would defy the order of the universe.

When the PCs stare into LORD DESPAIR's limitless visage, what do they recognize in LORD DESPAIR that they do not like in themselves? In the face of overwhelming apathy, how do the PCs find reasons to continue caring?

Names

The People

- | | | |
|----------|--------|----------------------------|
| ✦ Al | ✦ Nic | ✦ Sen (Short for 53N71N3L) |
| ✦ Drill | ✦ Punk | ✦ Twist |
| ✦ Kaguya | ✦ Rose | ✦ Wedge |
| ✦ Mole | | |

The Kingdom

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------|-----------------|
| ✦ Commander Zandt | ✦ Seraph | ✦ The Blade |
| ✦ Dr. Gori | ✦ Sir Fram | ✦ The Red Flash |

And Beyond

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------|
| ✦ Drifter | ✦ Orbiter | ✦ Xenos |
| ✦ Ina | ✦ Rosenthal | ✦ Zala |



The Tragedies of Waldron Hall

by Yeonsoo Julian Kim

Overview

On the moors of Devon, England, there stands a gloomy house by the name of Waldron Hall. Once full of life and merriment, it now exists only as a memorial to its former extravagance and as a home to creatures that thrive in the dark of night. That's what the locals would have you believe, at least. *The Tragedies of Waldron Hall* takes you back to the 19th century and into the arms of a haunted estate where queer monsters reign and the shadows seduce you. Here, you will be called on to lend aid to phantoms and vampires, fend off righteous monster hunters, and give in to the most scandalous of temptations the house has to offer.

Principles

Lean into Melodrama

When it comes to angst, tragedy, and plot twists, go big. Fall in love with a phantom who is bound to vanish at true love's first kiss, or set someone's bedroom on fire in the dead of night simply because you don't like them. Using safety mechanics will allow everyone to know how big they can go and in what ways, so use them liberally!

Mix Terror and Temptation

This setting thrives when you blend love and death, desire and dread. In Waldron Hall, monsters are just as likely to seduce you as they are to devour you whole. Flirting with sinister entities and powers beyond mortal understanding is part of the game. And if *you* are the sinister entity? Think of what it is about mortality that you find so delicious and what the consequences would be for giving into your urges.

Center the Monsters

The inhuman takes center stage in Waldron Hall. Whether you are a mortal human, a beast, or magical, the influence of, fascination with, or fear of the supernatural compels you to take action. Most of the time, you assist the monstrous entities that reside here as they fight against cruel human powers. As you spend more time with them, you might find that you are steadily becoming more monstrous yourself.



Setting

Waldron Hall is located in Dartmoor, a sublimely gorgeous part of Devon, England, known for its ghost stories and frightening legends. The building itself is an imposing structure that was built in the 16th century under the supervision of Lord Waldron, a baron whose descendents lived there for two centuries. Though parts of the house are in disrepair, it has, by and large, stood the test of time.

The current residents of the hall are the Moss family, who are determined to restore the house to its former glory. There are nine bedroom suites inside the hall, though only seven are usable. One is locked, and the key has long since been lost, and another is in an inexplicable state of decay. No matter what is done to repair it, it always reverts back to its decrepit state. The staff live in a separate part of the house, and while the bedrooms are smaller, it's reported to be much less haunted. The long gallery and westernmost reception room, however, are so plagued by the supernatural that even the skeptical Mrs. Matilda Moss avoids them at night.

Surrounding the house are sprawling gardens, though very little grows here anymore. The only green things that still thrive are the yew trees that make up the enormous hedge maze behind the house. Those who venture inside often find that entering the maze is much easier than finding the way out, as the hedges shift and create new paths to torment those who wander there.

The Moss family makes a point of entertaining as often as they can, though fewer and fewer guests come each time because every time an event is held in Waldron Hall, disaster seems to strike. One guest ran screaming and fell down the stairs, claiming to have seen a woman standing behind him in the mirror. Another had to be rescued from the hedge maze after inexplicably waking up in the middle of it.

CAMPAIGNS

IF I CANNOT INSPIRE LOVE, I WILL CAUSE FEAR

The PCs have been hired by the mysterious, beautiful, and deadly vampiress Lavinia to help her reclaim Waldron Hall, her ancestral home, from the descendants of her enemies.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ The PCs are tasked with escorting Lavinia from France all the way to Waldron Hall, which requires hiding her aboard a ship and then carefully timing their journey across England so that she is not exposed to sunlight. However, the League of Hunters has been tracking Lavinia and is determined to slay her en route. The PCs must fight these monster hunters while making sure that their employer doesn't grow so hungry that she drains them of blood along the way.
- ✦ The Moss family has decided to hold a ball in Waldron Hall, and Lavinia has assumed a false identity in order to infiltrate it with the PCs at her side. They must find a way to drive the Mosses from the house, either by frightening them half to death, discovering a scandal to blackmail them with, or seducing one or more of them until they are begging to be turned into a vampire.
- ✦ Lavinia has successfully reclaimed Waldron Hall, but the evicted Moss family is furious and has contacted the League of Hunters to kill her. The PCs must defend Waldron Hall and Lavinia from trained vampire hunters who will go to extremes to take out their prey, even if it means burning the house to the ground.



To Die as Lovers May

The PCs are drawn into a tragic story where lovers and enemies are often the same people.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

- ✦ One of the PCs looks exactly like the treacherous long-lost lover of the ghost known as the Lady in the Mirror. She will not rest until she has slain them and their companions, who also look unsettlingly like people she once knew. The PCs must uncover the tragic secrets of the Lady in the Mirror's past in order to free her and save themselves. What is buried at the heart of the hedge maze that could unlock her horrific past? Why do they all resemble people who have been long dead?
- ✦ The PCs are all supernatural beings with deep personal ties to the League of Hunters. Perhaps the PCs didn't always know they were supernatural, or perhaps their current state is due to a terrible accident. They fled to Waldron Hall to seek sanctuary, for it's rumored to be home to many strange individuals, but the hunters are on their tails. Can the heroes successfully fight off their former friends, lovers, and mentors? Or will this be where they make their last stand?
- ✦ The PCs attend a wedding at Waldron Hall where one spouse is monstrous and the other is mortal. The monster hunters who are secretly in attendance are determined to make the wedding a disaster and frame the PCs for it. The heroes will need to get the better of these dastardly hunters, whether it's with subterfuge or by openly challenging them to a duel.



CHARACTERS

MONSTERS

Lady Lavinia Anne Waldron (she/her): Lavinia is a 200-year-old vampire who used to be the lady of Waldron Hall until nearly a hundred years ago when she was chased out by locals who caught on to her true nature. Now she has returned to England to reclaim her home. Though glamorous and ethereal, Lavinia is not one to deny her animal instincts. When she drinks the blood of her friends and lovers, it is sweet and sensual. When she drinks the blood of her enemies, it is vicious and messy. Though she would be hard-pressed to admit it, she longs to find a companion to turn into a vampire so they can share eternity together.

Does Lavinia truly care for the PCs, or does she want to use them as pawns? What is the worst thing she is willing to push the PCs to do in order to reclaim Waldron Hall?

The Lady in the Mirror (she/her): The Lady in the Mirror has forgotten her own name, but she does remember that once she was in love, and that love betrayed her. Now she stalks the grounds of Waldron Hall, though most mortals can only see her reflected in the many mirrors that decorate the house. She has been known to hurt those that bother her or dare to visit her old bedroom. It's said that whoever learns her name can free her spirit from this plane. Should you guess her name incorrectly, she will drag you into one of her mirrors to live with her forever.

Can the PCs escape the mirror world once she drags them inside? What part of her past has come back to haunt the PCs in the present?

MORTALS

Matilda Adelaide Moss (she/her): Mrs. Moss doesn't believe in the supernatural, despite the fact that she has encountered it almost every day since moving to Waldron Hall. Though she is strict and favors tradition over the unconventional, she has secret desires that she tries so very hard to suppress. By night, she secretly reads the most scandalous novels she can get her hands on and fantasizes about passionate encounters with mysterious women. Should anyone find out about her secret inner life, she would do anything to prevent them from revealing it.

What would it take for Matilda to reject her old ways and give into temptation? What favor does she ask the PCs that she insists must be kept secret?

Edmund Moss (he/him): Mr. Moss is a descendant of Jonathan Moss, one of the men who chased Lavinia out of her home all those years ago. He has a fascination with the occult and dabbles in dangerous games to amuse himself and his guests. It isn't one of Edmund's famous parties unless an attempt has been made to contact the dead, as they say. Despite his curiosity, he has little respect for the supernatural and openly mocks the spirits he does manage to contact. Though he is generally outgoing, he has a cruel streak that reveals itself when he feels mocked in return.

What new dangerous parlor game does Edmund want the PCs to play with him? Why is he so desperate to speak with the dead?

Emmeline Moss (they/them): Emmeline is a spirit medium, though they are untrained and work very hard to hide it from their parents, Matilda and Edmund Moss. They are prone to possession, and since moving into Waldron Hall it has become harder and harder to push the spirits away. Sometimes Emmeline walks the halls at night and wakes up in impossible places, like a room that was locked from the outside, or in an open grave in the nearby cemetery. They simultaneously fear and are drawn to the supernatural and wish they had someone knowledgeable to teach them about the occult.

Emmeline has been old enough for marriage for some time now, but will they submit to their parents' rigid plans for their life, or ask the PCs to help them forge a new life? What spirit does Emmeline actually enjoy being possessed by?

Professor Winnifred "Fred" Shen (she/he): According to the folks at Oxford, Professor Fred Shen is an esteemed surgeon and teacher with a passion for history. What most of them don't realize is that he is also an accomplished occultist who helps exorcise demons and cure vampirism. He's a prominent member of the League of Hunters, an organization dedicated to fighting monsters. Fred is genderfluid and changes up her appearance and pronouns as she feels called to.

Can the PCs convince Professor Shen to give up the hunt, or will the hunter convince them to join his side? What supernatural problem do they need the professor's help to fix?

Names

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| ✦ Ada Carlyle | ✦ Mary Catherine St. | ✦ Lillian Arnold |
| ✦ Dahlia Sinclair | ✦ John | ✦ Viola Khan |
| ✦ Elena Alvarez | ✦ Theodora Wang | |

WASTELANDS ROLLER DERBY

by Libby Horacek and April Kit Walsh

Overview

Something happened a long time ago to make the world the way it is today, but it doesn't really matter. What matters is that the Shattered Wastes cover the entire region, and roller derby rules the wastes.

Principles

Carve Community From The Wastes

The world is scarred and harsh, and you need to work together with a community in order to survive. Show the ingenuity and resilience of the survivors trying to build a future together in the ruins.

Weird Wonders and Perils

Life endured beyond the fall of the old powers and mutated in unpredictable ways. Carnivorous cacti, flying jackalopes, and cute little fishrats inhabit a landscape shaped by forces that few today understand.

Settle Your Differences in the Rink

Life is precious in the wastes, and the communities here settle their differences not with violence, but with roller derby. You are a champion on wheels, in addition to whatever other roles you play in your community.



Setting

Your home is a vast rocky plain scarred by hundreds of enormous rifts in the earth. Some are so precipitous and deep that no one has ever seen the bottom of them; others shelter the shreds of fertile land that make this place habitable. You live in one of these shallower chasms alongside a trickle of a river. Your community carves your homes from the rocky cliffs and farms in the basin below. An intricate pulley system raises and lowers people and goods from the bottom of the chasm to the smooth, rock surface of the wastelands.

Other communities live in the wastelands. In the deserts to the north, a small community known as the Heavenly Oasis enjoys abundant resources. In the Eastern Reach, an authoritarian ruler controls an industrial city with an iron fist.

Life is hard in the wastelands; resources such as arable land and clean water are scarce. Humanity has changed and adapted in the time since the great cataclysm. Mutants with scaly skin, additional limbs, and superhuman abilities are common. Conflicts arise often. However, the wastelands are not a warlike place. The people of the wastes have decided on another way to resolve problems—roller derby.

Shattered Wastes Official Roller Derby (SWORD)

You're a member of SWORD, the official roller derby for the Shattered Wastes. You participate in bouts that adjudicate conflicts both internal and external, as a skater, coach, or other official.

In local disputes, a representative from each side of the conflict drafts skaters one at a time for each team, starting with a coin toss for the first pick. The goal is to have two teams that are evenly matched without giving too much power to individual skaters. In disputes with other communities, each team is composed of each area's best players.

The game or "bout" is broken up into two 30-minute halves separated by a 30-minute halftime. Each half is further separated into "jams"—short segments of play that can last up to two minutes. During a jam, one player from each team is designated the "jammer" by wearing a helmet cover with a star on it. The jammer can score points by lapping members of the opposing team. Meanwhile, the "blockers" (non-jammer skaters) try to prevent the opposing jammer from scoring and help their own team's jammer score. The team with the most points at the end of the bout wins.



ADVENTURES

Home Bouts

Bad Luck: Just another home bout over a petty property squabble. Local dispute bouts are intended to be evenly matched and the scores are always pretty close. From the very first jam, this game is different. One team gains a huge lead while the other has incredibly bad luck—sick skaters, broken equipment, dangerous accidents. What’s going on? Is it just bad luck, or is someone trying to sabotage the game?

Making It Personal: Skaters and officials are supposed to be impartial in local bouts, but each player cares deeply about the outcome of this one. It could be a dispute over a precious resource such as water or land, or a grudge match between feuding families, both of which have connections to the players. Maybe one player wants to change something fundamental to the way of life in the Shattered Wastes, while another wants the very opposite.

Away Bouts

Pirates!: On their way back from a successful trading bout, Josephine the Pirate Queen attacks the team van and attempts to steal a shipment of medical supplies. Can the team stop her? Can a bout force the Heavenly Oasis to stop using piracy to bolster their economy?

The Future of Roller Derby: The Eastern Reach wants to stop using roller derby to settle decisions. They’ve agreed to one bout to decide if there will ever be another, and they’re putting all their formidable resources to the task of winning the bout and ushering in an age of violent conflict.

CHARACTERS

Max N. Ferno (they/them): A measured and thoughtful leader, Max and the rest of the community council take their time in making decisions. They weren't always so deliberative, though.

Do the PCs wish to rekindle Max's fire, or do they count on their prudence?

Audrey Simzo (she/her): Audrey is a mutant with scaled skin who engineers roller derby skates out of scavenged materials. She built many of the skates worn by members of SWORD, and the skaters with the best wheels tend to be the ones on her good side.

When she needs a favor, how could the PCs refuse?

Anise Thesia (she/her): Carefree and confident, Anise has never wanted for anything in her life. She captains the Heavenly Oasis Roller Derby Ensemble (HORDE). Those who think they have a claim on the bounty of the oasis, or even just want to petition the oasis for aid, have to go through her and her team first.

Is there anything that could kindle her compassion for the have-nots of the wastes?

Josephine the Pirate Queen (she/her): Her Piratical Majesty rules the Heavenly Oasis and takes great pride in the "utopia" she has carved out of the desert. Her philosophy is that the rich always get richer, and that would be a damn shame if she weren't the richest of them all. Despite living in abundance, Josephine dispatches her HORDE to skate their way to dominance over more and more of the region's resources.

What does SWORD have that she wants?

Tyra Nickle (she/her): Tyra captains the Official Roller Derby of the Eastern Reach (ORDER) and runs her team like a military unit. Go up against them and there will be blood.

Can any of SWORD's rabble earn her respect?

Commander Dominia (she/her): The leader of the Eastern Reach is a pale woman who always carries an old-fashioned sword. It's purely ceremonial, these days, but she dreams of holding it to her enemies' throats.

Will Commander Dominia return the wastes to the old ways of war and bloodshed? If she does, will anything survive?

Names

Any kind of name can be heard in the wastes, from real-world cultures or the evolution of names after the apocalypse. More important than your name, though, is your derby name, typically a double-entendre or other play on words. For example:

- ✦ Bruise Goose
- ✦ Double-D-Stroyer
- ✦ E Cans
- ✦ Error Whore-Oh-Four
- ✦ Grief Lightning
- ✦ No Fox Given
- ✦ Sapphomet
- ✦ Scarrie Fischer
- ✦ The Surgery
- ✦ The Vampire Layer

Custom Rules

Skates

Your skates are likely the most precious things you own. When creating your character, instead of describing a sword, describe your skates. Do you have classic quad skates or inline skates (aka rollerblades)? What do your boots look like: classic, high-ankle style, or low, speed-skating style? Did you just slap some wheels on a pair of combat boots? Look at your playbook's sword descriptors for ideas: you could have bone skates, famous skates, or skates that once belonged to an enemy.



PLAYING ROLLER DERBY

The Bout Track

Before the bout starts, the GM draws a track that represents the time left in the bout. Divide the track into four steps for a quick bout or six to eight steps for a longer bout. Put the track somewhere everyone can see it. When the bout starts, moves may result in filling in a step of the bout track.

After all the steps are filled in, the bout is over. The team with the most points wins the bout.

Scoring Points

During the bout, whenever the fiction favors one team or the other, the players involved can choose to roll for 1d6 points or advance the bout track. The GM can also award points or advance the bout track as part of making a GM move. Be generous about what kinds of actions count as helping a team. For instance:

- ✦ **Fight** to jockey for position. Seizing a superior position or creating an opportunity for an ally could help score points or maintain your lead while you progress on the bout track.
- ✦ **Figure Out a Person** and then act on the information to your advantage.
- ✦ **Defy Disaster** when your jammer is in trouble or their jammer is about to lap your team.

Starting and Ending Jams

Whenever a new jam starts, each team designates a jammer and the GM makes one of the following moves:

- ✦ Lap a blocker on the currently winning (or tied) team to score 1d6 points
- ✦ Get in the way of the jammer of the currently losing team and advance the bout track

A jam ends whenever an even number is ticked on the bout track.

If all PCs are on one team, generally the GM should make plays that favor their opposition. For instance, if the PCs are winning, lap a blocker from their team. If they're losing, get in the way of their jammer and advance the bout track so they have less time to recover.

ADVENTURES

FASHION & SLASHIN'

by Vylar Kaftan

Pitch: Break into the Meta Gala and steal the Dream Diamond. All characters have to pass as multiple different characters of varying genders and social roles to pull off the heist. ***Ocean's Eight*** meets quick costume changes!

Hook: The crew arrives to steal the Dream Diamond from the Meta Gala, which is held at Count Rustov's private ballroom in Paris. Learn clues from the gathered guests. The more you know in advance, the easier the heist becomes.

Fashion is what you feel great wearing! Players can be anyone who fits into the adventure theme (models, designers, camerapeople, backstage crew, attendees at a ball, contestants in a drag show, or whatever you choose). You can play it like a fashion competition, with players competing and cooperating for a prize. Or you can have an elegant ball, with the greatest fashionistas in the world wearing splendid outfits.

This game is highly visual! Think image, look. Details! Images will enhance the setting. If possible, have your players find character and fashion images online. Tell us about the colors and textures you choose. Tell us what unusual non-cloth materials you incorporate. Tell us what image the models convey with the way they walk (or crawl or fly) down the runway. Get wild! Take it over the top.

Be extra mindful not to body-shame in this setting. Fashion isn't limited to a specific body type. It's about looking great at any size and shape. Also be mindful that eating disorders and weight issues can be invisible and hard to talk about. Keep an eye on one another's comfort and be sure to communicate about safety and use your safety tools.

Setup Questions

GM: After your players select their playbooks, ask the following questions:

- + **Anyone:** Where did you learn your spy or thief skills?
- + **Anyone:** What was the first thing you ever stole in a heist?
- + **Anyone:** What disguises are within your reach, and what would you never pose as?
- + **Beast:** How do you survive in high society, which rejects your true self?
- + **Chosen:** What omens have brought you here today? Why this gala and not somewhere else?
- + **Devoted:** Which of your tenets do you expect to have trouble adhering to during the heist??
- + **Infamous:** Who here knows your past? Who will hold it against you?
- + **Nature Witch:** Do you have any special connections to gems and precious stones?
- + **Scoundrel:** With whom at this party have you had business dealings before?
- + **Seeker:** What connection did you have to high society in your former life?
- + **Spooky Witch:** Why are the Unseen behaving unusually near the gala?
- + **Trickster:** Who here has been a victim of your cons before?

GM Section: CONTAINS SPOILERS

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON? ONE POSSIBILITY

The Dream Diamond is located in a magical vault hidden somewhere at the Meta Gala. The clues for how to find it are scattered among the attendees. Let your players fight and flirt their way to answers; they might not get every clue, but they should find at least some of them.

As GM, feel free to reward them proportionally to how much they learned. The vault should not be easy. It's meant to house a valuable and likely magical gem. If the players barrel straight into the vault without details, consequences should fall on them. But if they take the time to flirt and duel their way to good information, let them use that to disarm the traps.

Some disguises are easier than others. It's extremely hard to pass as a particular person, but easier to be someone new or unexpected, and easiest of all to pass as unnoticed kitchen or cleaning staff.

If any PCs have connections or pasts (such as the Infamous), swap their nemeses in for one of the given NPCs.



Scene Ideas

- ✦ **Your Contact for the Job:** Your group has a private washroom at the Meta Gala, suitable for costume changes, storage, and secret conversations. It's a plush velvet lounge with plenty of mirrors and several toilets. Your attendant is Coral (they/them). Coral is also your contact. They will help cover your actions and protect you if possible. They don't know anything about the diamond, but they can direct you towards some likely people.
- ✦ **Buttering Up the Upper Crust:** The group splits up to discover information from the guests. There's a specific set of clues; if you find them all, the heist is easy. If you don't, you'll find the heist difficult. See the map and NPC list.
- ✦ **Looting the Vault:** The vault appears to be a backstage costume room with clothing and gowns. There's a jewelry box with a large fake diamond (a decoy). The true vault is a magical labyrinth contained inside a cheap-looking copper locket, loose on the dressing table. Inside the labyrinth is a three-dimensional flowery hedge maze, which takes a long time to solve unless you know to follow the small white jasmine blooms. At the center of the labyrinth sleeps a guardian harpy in her nest, on a pedestal surrounded by a wide pit. She's a brutal fighter and won't flirt, but she can be placated with her stuffed eagle (which is somewhere in the storage room). The diamond is buried inside the harpy's nest.
- ✦ **A Clean Escape?:** Of course you still have to get *out* with the Diamond, so... better figure that out before you even find the gem. Security will lock everything tight once they realize it's gone.

CHARACTERS

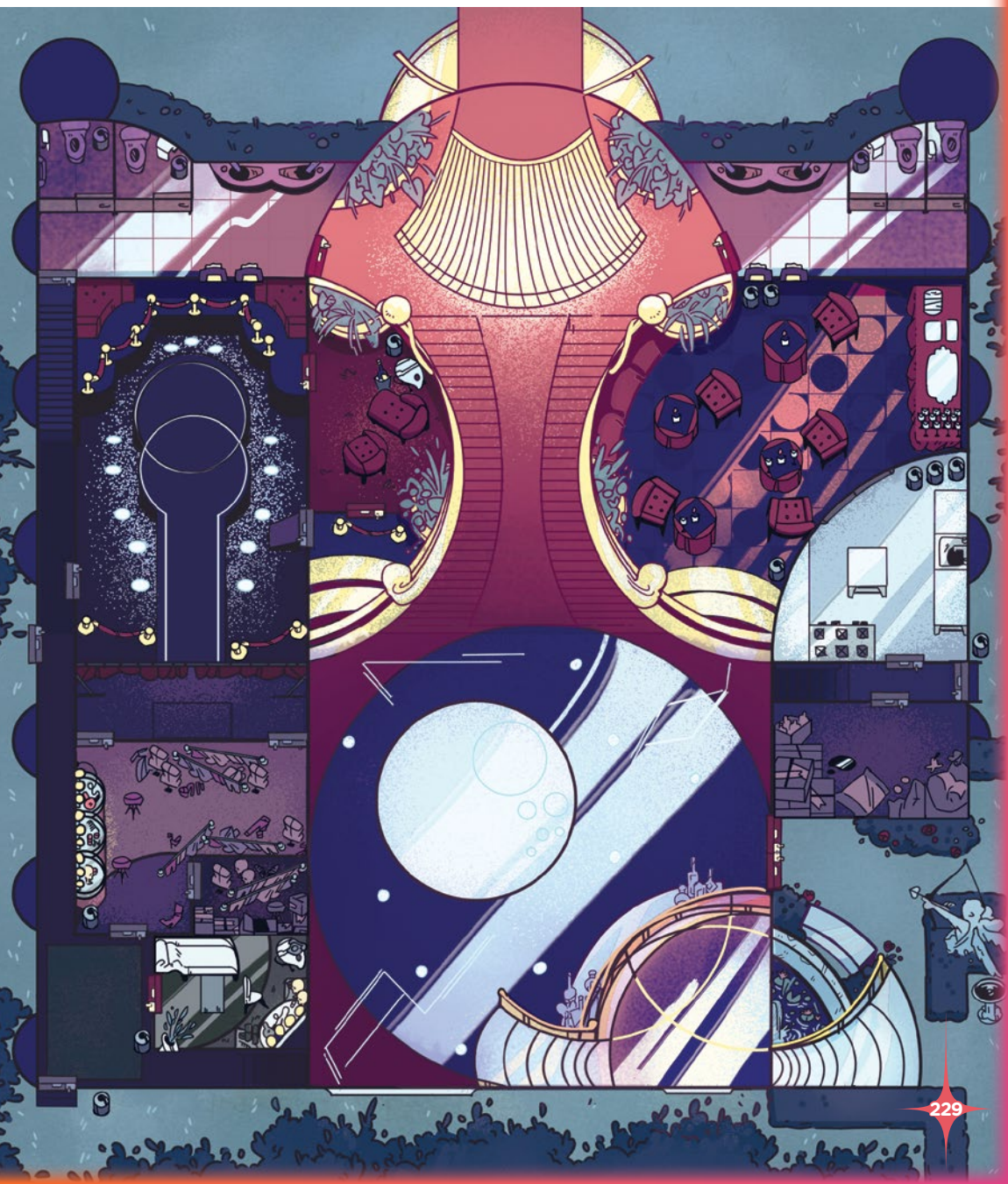
- + **Coral (they/them):** Suggests you look for Count Rustov or Lady Trinity, who knows everyone of note. Coral can be trusted to hold items and acquire simple things the PCs need. (Alternately, the GM can have Coral double-cross the PCs.)
- + **Count Rustov (he/him):** An elegant businessman in a green velvet suit who owns this ballroom/party house. Location: Ballroom. Motivation: Power and dominance. Knowledge: There's a fake diamond to trick thieves.
- + **Lady Trinity (she/her):** A goddess in a sky-blue ballgown with a 10-foot train, you can't miss her. Location: VIP room. Motivation: Flattery and vanity. Knowledge: You'll recognize the true diamond by touching it. Your deepest dream will play out in your mind.
- + **Ambassador Redwood (they/them):** A quiet older person sitting in the corner, watching everyone. Location: Ballroom. Motivation: Good reasons and logic. Knowledge: A harpy guards the diamond.
- + **Charlotte de Mille (they/them):** A laughing, cheery character in a lace dress. They like to play hide-and-go-seek. Location: Gardens. Motivation: Fun and joy. Knowledge: Follow the jasmine blooms to thread the maze.
- + **Gina Chong (they/them):** A line cook. Competent and efficient. Doesn't care about their job, but they're good. Location: Kitchen. Motivation: Excitement and adventure. Knowledge: A slightly shredded stuffed eagle is somewhere in the storage room.
- + **Lavender Lariat (he/him):** A model. He doesn't say much because he's afraid of saying the wrong thing. Location: Backstage (or in the fashion show). Motivation: Love and affection. Knowledge: There's a secret passage between the kitchens and backstage, contained in one of the overhead wooden arches.
- + **Skye Whitehall (she/her):** A wealthy woman who really likes the chocolate fountain. Location: Banquet. Motivation: Food and pleasure. Knowledge: Only someone pure of heart and motive can physically touch the diamond. (This is a red herring; it's false.)
- + **Celadon Scott (they/them):** A fashion designer preparing their models to go onstage. Almost nothing distracts them from work. Location: Backstage. Motivation: Ambition and beauty. Knowledge: The vault is magically contained in a copper locket somewhere in a secret dressing room.
- + **Paradise (they/them):** A loud rock star. Punk, leather, pierced—and always dancing. Location: Ballroom. Motivation: Fame and attention. Knowledge: The vault is concealed in one of the overhead arches.
- + **Mad (she/her):** Mademoiselle Madeline, the famous TV host of Next in Slashin', nibbling on snacks. Location: Banquet. Motivation: Uplifting younger queers who need help. Knowledge: The diamond has a fierce guardian that's a tough fight.

LOCATIONS

- ✦ **Washroom:** The party's private washroom, a plush affair with several toilets, changing rooms, and plush couches.
- ✦ **Ballroom:** A large wood-floored hall with couples and trios dancing in the middle. The walls are lined with groups in conversation. Enormous wooden arches with stone accents span the ceiling, which is almost entirely made of glass skylights. The Meta Gala design always honors a previous location, in this case the shape of the India Gate in Delhi. A giant moondial glows in the center of the ceiling. It's always easy to read the time in this room.
- ✦ **Kitchen:** A whirlwind of kitchen staff in navy blue suits and aprons, all carrying platters and trays of various goodies. A chef in the center of the room shouts orders.
- ✦ **Banquet:** A packed room featuring long buffet tables in the center and smaller stations against the walls. There's a chocolate-gold-dust fountain glittering in the center, and strawberries nearby.
- ✦ **VIP Room:** The highest class and most traditional room. White ties for men and floor-length ballgowns for women are required. (Genderqueer and nonbinary characters may certainly enter, but are required to choose their presentation.) The party may have to choose which character can pass best here.
- ✦ **Fashion Show:** A smaller theatre adjacent to the ballroom, with a well-lit runway splitting the room in the center. Box seats with curtains surround the room's walls. There's some folding chairs up close to the runway. The show runs for 20 minutes and then repeats hourly with new features added or removed.
- ✦ **Backstage:** Closets, mirrors, makeup artists, stagehands, everyone is very busy.
- ✦ **Grand Staircase:** An elegant wooden staircase leading to the ballroom. An announcer allows people to enter between dances (they must wait). Names are called, sometimes to great effect and sometimes to no response. This is a great time to strike a pose.
- ✦ **Balcony:** The balcony overlooks and has full visibility of the ballroom and the gardens.
- ✦ **Gardens:** The modern rock/upbeat party. You must present as gender-queer to enter. Lush and overflowing with flowers, like the gardens at Giverny that feature in Monet paintings. A hedge maze sits at the far end with a secret exit to the woods.
- ✦ **Storage:** The only non-fancy room. It's reasonably well organized on one side (all the kitchen stuff) and chaos on the other (the cleaning things).
- ✦ **Secret Passage:** Leads from storage to backstage. It's a staircase up, then a curved path disguised in one wooden arch, and a staircase down on the other side.
- ✦ **Vault:** Hidden inside another wooden arch.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

- ✦ The Dream Diamond possesses mysterious powers that the right person can unlock, if they have the right tool. But can the PCs travel into the dreamworld, face their own nightmares, and return safely with the Laser Edge?
- ✦ The PCs need to sell the diamond. They're looking for the famous fence Grigoire le Grande, because he's the only one who will know the right buyer. But Grigoire has gone missing...



ROMANCING THE THRONE

by Misha Bushyager

Pitch: Her Imperial Majesty Empress Reina Malvada is throwing a ball to meet and mingle with the eligible bachelorettes in the kingdom. It's invite only and sure to be the event of the decade. Did you get an invite? Did you crash the party? And, the most important question, where will you hide your sword?

Hook: The Imperial Palace is lit up with twinkling festive lights and festooned with buntings and flags in the Empress's favorite colors: cobalt blue, quicksilver, and inky black. The sounds of music and laughter waft into the streets below on the breeze. Guards stationed at every entrance are joined by pages, who take turns running the guests invitations to the Seneschal for confirmation of their authenticity before the prospective guest is allowed to enter—after being searched for weapons, of course. The Empress seeks a new consort after completing the shortest socially acceptable period of mourning for the previous consort. Anyone with a claim to power or beauty has been invited, perhaps including you. It's a chance to mingle with the powers that be if nothing else, and perhaps even get close to the Empress herself for a few moments...

This will be the Empress's fifth wedding so far this year. Her engagement will be announced at the end of the night as soon as the lucky person is chosen, with the wedding planned for three days from now. Of course, each new marriage has called for increasingly more elaborate gowns, cakes, and meals, with the accompanying increasing expenses. Taxes have been levied on her subjects and she seeks new lands to conquer and claim for their resources. While inside the gates, all is glittering and lush; outside the city, the people are starting to organize and complain. The servants and guards show signs of nervousness if people watch closely. The royal tasters are terrified that each bite will be their last.

The Empress herself shows little concern, at least outwardly. She told her generals to deal with any insurrection or she would find someone who could, and then considered the matter closed. Most are too afraid to tell her more about what is happening outside the walls, and the Seneschal has been careful to make sure any crowds the Empress sees when she's outside of the palace are properly adoring towards her. Her attendants are chosen from the villages for the "honor of serving Her Majesty," but are really hostages to ensure the good behavior of her subjects.

Setup Questions

As a group, answer the following questions about the Empress and the setting:

- ✦ Her Most Imperial Majesty, Empress Reina Malvada, is smart, witty when she chooses to be, and incredibly charismatic, not to mention fabulously wealthy. People flock to her court and her banner, seeking position, wealth, or perhaps a spouse of their own among the glittering throng that surrounds her. What makes her evil? Choose from the list or come up with your own answer:
 - ✦ Black widow, marrying and murdering her spouses
 - ✦ Merciless warmonger, conquering all she encounters, subjugating those who submit and slaughtering those who don't
 - ✦ Ruthless ruler, working her subjects to the bone to increase her coffers
 - ✦ Usurper of the throne from the true heir
- ✦ Were you invited to the festivities? (It doesn't have to be unanimous.)
- ✦ Are you going to wed, bed, or behead the Empress? (Again, doesn't have to be unanimous.)
- ✦ What are you doing to fit in or stand out in the crowd of admirers and potential suitors?



GM Section: CONTAINS SPOILERS

CHARACTERS

General Alex Draconis, Head of the Imperial Army and loyal servant of Her Majesty: A master tactician, they served the previous ruler as well. Most would call them the Empress's right hand, but they have a fatal flaw. Choose a weakness from the list, or make up your own:

- ✦ Hopelessly in love with the Empress
- ✦ Devoted to the throne, not the occupant
- ✦ Empress is holding a loved one captive
- ✦ Hides a terrible secret

Ser Parker Draconis, Seneschal to Her Majesty: If General Draconis is the Empress's right hand, their twin Parker is her left. Ser Parker runs Her Majesty's household and the day-to-day affairs of state with the same ruthless efficiency that the general employs with her military forces. Choose a weakness for them, or make up your own:

- ✦ Easily bribed
- ✦ Working to distract the Empress so they can be the ruler in all but name
- ✦ Empress is holding a loved one captive
- ✦ Hiding irrefutable evidence of the Empress's crimes

Dowager Empress Regina Malvada/Emperor Rex Malvada: Widowed parent of the Empress. Reina certainly came to power through regicide, but was her surviving parent also a conspirator, or merely another pawn in the game? Choose their attitude towards the Empress, or make up your own:

- ✦ Power behind the throne and willing participant
- ✦ Overwhelmingly supportive of all her actions
- ✦ Trying to rein in her excessive spending
- ✦ Actively working against her

Location Ideas

Front Gate: The Imperial Palace is surrounded by 13 walls, each with a large gate and a pair of guards. Fric and Frac will ask for your invitation, take a cursory look, and pass it to a waiting page, who will run the invitation to the Seneschal. There are enough pages that the process only takes about 10 minutes for each invitation, during which time the guests are allowed to mill around outside the gates, and are even served drinks and plied with hors d'oeuvres. There may be an opportunity to slip past with another group or to bribe a page or guard to say that a missing or counterfeit invitation is real and allow the group in if they weren't originally invited. The guards may also be less thorough in their search for weapons if they are sufficiently motivated not to be.

It may also be possible to avoid the gates altogether, either by scaling the walls, disguising yourselves as a servant or delivery person, or even navigating the sewers (although the stench of the sewers might make further steps of any plan difficult).

Garden of Immeasurable Delights: Just outside the ballroom is a carefully manicured garden full of statues and hidden alcoves perfect for secret assignations... or plotting regicide. At first glance, the statues appear to be people in the throes of passion, but upon further inspection, they are all being tortured, and more than a few bear a distinct resemblance to some of the Empress's former lovers.

The other feature of the gardens is the poisons section. The Dowager has collected specimens of rare and beautiful but deadly plants, carefully labeled, and tucked into a corner greenhouse and small courtyard in front of it. It has its own low wall and gate with memento mori decorating the structure and surroundings.

Ballroom: After the group gets into the palace, they're shown to the ballroom and announced by the page. The room is as large as an entire city block, with a vaulted ceiling supported by columns of black and white marble and painted with scenes of the history of the Empire. Scented candles set in chandeliers and candelabras around the room cast a flickering glow over the assembled guests. Jewels glitter on fingers and bosoms swathed in silks and velvet, catching the light and drawing the eye to the wearer's... assets. Tall tables ring the perimeter and liveried servants move among the guests refilling glasses and plates with delights that would make the most jaded gourmand moan with pleasure.

There are, of course, guards stationed around the room: the Imperial Guards stand alert and ready to obey their Empress's commands or lay down their lives for her if need be. They are extremely good at their jobs—when they are motivated to be.



Throne Dais: At the end of the ballroom sits a large dais with 13 tiers leading up to the Imperial Throne. Each tier holds chairs for visiting dignitaries and recognized nobles who are here to observe the festivities, and perhaps further their own interests. The throne itself is polished bone encrusted with jewels and precious metals. The Dowager's throne sits on the same level, a much smaller version of the Empress's, and the Regent's throne sits empty beside her. The Empress lounges on her throne, viewing the throng and occasionally sending a courtier to bring up someone who has caught her eye amidst the parade of more formal introductions being made.

Occasionally she will leave with someone to visit her boudoir, followed as always by either General Draconis, Ser Parker Draconis, or the Dowager. Convincing the Empress, or one of her inner circle, that someone in the party is worthy of a private discussion is a viable strategy for getting the Empress alone(ish).

Empress's Boudoir: I know, I know, you were expecting lots of black leather and whips and chains. What you find instead is a frothy mass of powder blue chiffon ruffles and royal blue satin damask bed hangings around a massive four poster bed piled high with pillows of every shade of blue and every texture of fabric imaginable. The nightstands and vanity are mirrored, and a large three-panel dressing screen with embroidery of erotic entanglements flanks a delicate chaise lounge in pewter velvet with pickled wood accents. There's also a bank of windows with french doors leading to a large balcony (ideal for scaling or possible defenestration).

STARLIGHT OF THE LUNAR REALM

by Banana Chan

ADVENTURES • STARLIGHT OF THE LUNAR REALM

Pitch: Welcome all to the largest annual galactic music festival, Lunapalooza! Attracting influencers, music stars, and fashionistas, the moon sets the stage for musicians to play for their adoring fans and the festival's judges, the Lunar Committee of Goddesses. Talented performers compete for a chance to win a Starlight trophy. Will you take home the prize this year?

Hook: This adventure uses the setting from *Battle Bards of the Sol System* by Bryanna Hitchcock (page 50). Players have the option to be a part of the festival as musicians competing for the Starlight trophy, or they might want to go for a more investigative adventure instead.



Setup Questions

As a group, answer the following questions to develop your friend group and the world:

- ✦ Why is Lunapalooza a must-go event (choose one to three)?
The networking, learning more about the scene, obviously the music, getting a chance to be seen on camera, all the swag!, learning all the hot goss, meeting the celebrities, getting more content for social media
- ✦ Which band or musician won last year's Lunapalooza's Starlight trophy?
Ours of course!, metal favorite Open Cluster, pop sensation Quasar, rap idol Galaxiii, chart-topper Cosmic Dust and the Galaxians, experimental electronica genius STELLAR
- ✦ What drew you together?
Love for the same genre music, childhood friends, a shared power, the band, similar influencer circles, similar tastes in fashion, social media

Next, decide if you're in a band or are influencers.

- ✦ If you're in a band, what are you called? What type of music do you play?
Emo, 70s punk, hair metal, doom metal, bubblegum pop, 80s hip-hop, experimental, EDM, disco, R&B, oldies, folk, country
- ✦ If you're influencers, what's your aesthetic? What kind of community are you in?
Fitness, beauty, gaming, lifestyle, food, technology, drama, pranks, film and television, travel
- ✦ Each player defines how others see them in that scene:
A force to be reckoned with, someone to topple and replace, someone who needs to prove themselves, someone who follows trends, someone who starts trends, something else

Finally, each player should describe the location at Lunapalooza where they're gathering with their tickets to enter the festival. Some questions to think about are:

- ✦ How do the people around you react when you arrive?
- ✦ Who catches the eye of the photographers?
- ✦ Who tries to step out of the spotlight?

Custom Relationships

Select playbooks and create characters as usual, except use the following relationship prompts. Then each character chooses one of the three standard relationship prompts to establish—whichever seems like it would make your bond closest (and create some fun drama). Then assign each other PC zero, one, or two Strings as normal.

- ✦ **Beast:** You're just sometimes a little *too* enthusiastic when you hear music, and when that happens, you tend to break stuff. Describe something that you broke last time you got too excited. Whose item was it?
- ✦ **Chosen:** You're the leader (whether that means the lead vocals or the leader of your band of influencers). But sometimes, making all of the decisions means having to project manage your group. Who is continuously the hardest to get a hold of?
- ✦ **Devoted:** The cheerleader of the group, sometimes you're not always fully appreciated. What is something that someone else did that rubbed you the wrong way?
- ✦ **Infamous:** Always looking to be on the front page of tabloids, eh? What was something that you did that got you on the front page the last time, and who had to act as your publicist to clear up your name?
- ✦ **Nature Witch:** You love the sounds of nature! But not everyone is too pleased with this experimental sound that you've picked up. Who is annoyed that you keep playing raindrop and bird chirping sounds on loop?
- ✦ **Scoundrel:** Between flirting with the camera and flirting with everyone around you, who ends up holding the camera for you most of the time for your many viewers?
- ✦ **Seeker:** You found your true self in this group of friends, but you still can't help old habits. Who do you tattle on consistently on social media?
- ✦ **Spooky Witch:** Your terrifying aesthetic turns heads and sometimes you're a little... unorthodox (you wear a lot of literal skulls), going against the style of the group. Who keeps trying to keep you in line with the aesthetic?
- ✦ **Trickster:** We all know you pull pranks on your vlog for the views and your jokes are (mostly) harmless. Who is the brunt of most of your jokes? Was there ever a time you made them really upset?
- ✦ **Troubadour:** Climbing the ladder to fame comes at a cost. What was something you did that others in the band raised eyebrows at? Who is the most disappointed at what you did just for that inkling of fame?

GM Section: CONTAINS SPOILERS

This adventure would most likely last one session. Stakes are relatively low and the tone can be silly and investigative. The moon is usually a very glamorous place, where celebrities live. With the added music festival scene, it's louder than usual with heightened paparazzi.

At the start of the game, the characters are invited or find themselves somehow at Lunapalooza. Make sure they understand that this is a high profile event—they might meet celebrities, musical talent, up-and-coming artists, influencers, and people in the fashion scene. They might even gain some insight into relationships between the NPCs from photographers or journalists.

As the PCs learn about the different NPCs and their relationships, they might discover a challenge presented to them by one of the NPCs. When this happens, they start to uncover a web of more drama and “who hates who.” They might quickly learn that there are influencers who would attempt to crush others (socially or literally) to become the best (and only) influencer.

At the end of the adventure, after some investigative work, the PCs might find ways for the influencers to work together (everyone knows that collaboration gets you the most views and likes on social media). Ending with a final blow-out concert would be a great way to recap everything that has happened.

Adventure Ideas

Starlight, Star Bright: The PCs are invited to Lunapalooza to compete as a band against the likes of Cosmic Dust and the Galaxians and STELLAR. Unfortunately, the Starlight trophy has gone missing! The PCs speak with several suspects, some more dubious than others, while others may be more helpful. After some questioning and searching, the PCs discover that the Starlight trophy was stolen by an influencer who is looking to start their own music festival. They took the trophy thinking it would discredit Lunapalooza—just in time for them to promote their festival! Will the PCs join them in promoting their new Flame Festival? Or will they take the trophy back to the judges?

Robots in Space: The PCs are asked to attend Lunapalooza by one of the music stars. The invitation seemingly makes the PCs look like special guests, but when they arrive, they realize that they were called in to help with an android problem. One of the robots has malfunctioned and keeps asking for one of the PCs. They quickly learn that there is a planned uprising and they have stopped working to boycott the festival... until they receive what they want. Maybe they want to play in the festival itself or maybe this is a PR stunt for the newest AI fashion influencer, Tera.

CHARACTERS

GODDESSES (LUNAPALOOZA'S JUDGES)

- ✦ **Chang'e:** With her head in the clouds, Chang'e is usually here for the “good vibes and good time.” She doesn't really care who wins—she usually hands out 10/10s for all the musicians, unless they really harsh her mellow. Then she hands out a 9/10. If she's late for something or has disappeared, chances are she's at the food carts.
- ✦ **Yemaya:** Though she feels a little annoyed that she has to do this every year (especially given how some of the bands aren't that great and she would rather spend her time at the beach), Yemaya does her best to be gentle when giving criticism. She can be found sneaking off to check out the fashion runways, before pretending to look for Chang'e.
- ✦ **Artemis:** When it comes to talent spotting, Artemis can pick the next hit sensation out of a crowd in a second. A little bit harsher with criticism, she has the mindset of “if we can just finish all our judging quickly, then we'll be out of here and I can go check out the hotties by the press area.”

VLOGGERS

- ✦ **Janna:** A vlogger who spends most of her time posting pranks and fake scandals, Janna comes up with elaborate schemes that often fall apart pretty quickly (like that time she wanted to get some cool footage at a science lab, but ended up setting fire to everything).
- ✦ **Luminate:** Health and fitness vlogger, Luminate seems to always be running somewhere, literally. She probably has five minutes to chat, before she runs off to another meeting. And during those five minutes, she's probably too distracted by her pedometer to pay attention.

FASHIONISTAS

- ✦ **Traveler:** A bubbly hipster fashion icon who travels and lives out of a small space van throughout the galaxy with her pet snake, Ravioli. She lives the easy-go-lucky dream that we all want.
- ✦ **Rina:** Extravagant and glamorous, every move she makes is calculated and flawless. She models and has her own fashion line of designer clothes inspired by leather and metal studs. When she walks down the runway, it's like she's moving in slow motion. Or maybe it's because we're all just enamored with her.
- ✦ **Tera:** An AI fashion influencer who appears as holograms and on screens. Their look is a sporty-meets-vintage style, with lots of argyle pants and platform sneakers. Though they are limited to the digital space, they are fully sentient (despite what everyone else thinks).

MUSIC STARS

- + **Open Cluster:** A screamo band whose songs are about “selling out to the man” (but you can’t really tell, because of the screaming). They work with the same manager as Quasar.
- + **Quasar:** Pop star and entrepreneur, Quasar has their image on everything—perfume, champagne, sportswear... Who knows what she has her sights set on next?
- + **Galaxiii:** Though their heart is truly with their non-profit for helping endangered animals, Galaxiii seems to be most well-known as a rapper. They’d honestly rather spend their time talking about saving the animals than the music scene.
- + **Cosmic Dust and the Galaxians:** A 15-piece band headed by Cosmic Dust, their genre isn’t exactly clearly defined, but their intentions are to get to the top of the charts every time (they even went through a metal phase that a lot of fans consider their finest work... though critics might disagree).
- + **STELLAR:** Known for their experimental electronica music (and style), STELLAR is one of the stranger music stars with a tendency to answer questions with questions.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

by Lauren McManamon

ADVENTURES • THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Pitch: When you were teenagers, you found a portal into a wonderful, queer fantasy land. There, you picked up the sword, saw thrilling adventures, and perhaps fell in love with this place, someone special, or yourself along the way. You returned home, content and a little sad it was over. A decade later, you find the portal again, along with a plea—the world you love needs saving.

Hook: You're going about your daily, mundane lives when a familiar, magical portal appears before you and issues a plea for help. While you may have some reservations about leaving everything behind, you can't sit idly by while this cherished world suffers. Your palm tingles for your sword, and you find yourself stepping through to once again assume your thirsty sword lesbian identity.



Setup Questions

The PCs are average young adults who become their thirsty sword lesbian playbook upon entering the fantasy world. First pick playbooks, then create a shared teenagehood in ***Back in the Day*** and a magic land in ***The First Journey***. Then complete creating characters and relationships before cutting to ***Ten Years Later***.

BACK IN THE DAY

You were a mix of friends, besties, acquaintances, exes, new friends, or friends-of-friends. Figure out what kind of teenager you were 10 years ago, and establish your relationships at the time with the other players:

- ✦ What kind of teenager were you? Pick any combination or make up your own:

Shy, ambitious, plaid, jock, prep, loud, friendly, joker, strange, pink, goth, glasses, bitter, outcast, person-next-door, class president, loner, unreliable, cold, popular, freak, cool, new kid, stoner, theater, charismatic, aggressive, ripped clothes, band shirts, denim everything, expensive brands, rainbow, thrift couture, onesie, many layers, loose jumpers, florals, cute, stone, nerd, lace, many pockets, awkward, bold

- ✦ Name your mundane teenager.
- ✦ Pick two or three other teenage PCs, and decide what your relationship was at that time. Pick or make up your own:

Exes, dating, frenemies, best friends, friends with benefits, one-sided crush, “unrequited” crush, basically family, co-workers, classmates, through a school club

- ✦ One day, when you were all hanging out, you fell through a strange portal. What did it look like, and what were you doing together when it opened?

THE FIRST JOURNEY

Answer the following questions to develop your magical world:

- ✦ As you fell through the portal, you experienced a magical transformation. Warm, prismatic light embraced you and placed a sword—no, *your* sword—into your hand. Describe this sequence as you first blossomed into your thirsty sword lesbian.
- ✦ What fantastical quest did you accomplish together? Pick one or two, or make up your own:

Find the lost Rainbow Sword, restore the last of a magical species, topple an evil ruler, return color to a greyscale world, unify a fractured realm, restore the world’s magic, return a lost emotion to the world, facilitate a royal wedding, host a fantastic festival, stage a one-in-a-lifetime performance

- ✦ Name your fantastical world.

Questions For The Players

Select playbooks and create characters as usual, except use the following prompts to fill in what happened on your first journey:

- ✦ **Beast:** What shackles did you shake off when you went through the portal? What part of your beastly nature did you take home?
- ✦ **Chosen:** You answered a calling on your first journey, and now you're being summoned to fulfill your final Destiny. What occurred on your first journey that foreshadowed your Destiny? Create your Destiny with this in mind.
- ✦ **Devoted:** You found your Devotion on your first journey, and now you must serve it once more. Answer your Devotion questions with this in mind.
- ✦ **Infamous:** Answer the questions in *What Cannot Be Undone* (p.61) as it relates to your first journey.
- ✦ **Nature Witch:** What Trial did you accomplish on your first journey? Add Trials you wish you'd accomplished on your first journey to your Trials list. Which one are you most excited to achieve?
- ✦ **Scoundrel:** Which of your dashing adventures from your first journey do you recall most fondly?
- ✦ **Seeker:** Describe your Commandments as they relate to your upbringing. Your Authority exists in the mundane world, but you also saw their presence in the fantasy world. How did the Authority manifest on your first journey?
- ✦ **Spooky Witch:** You encountered the Unseen on your first journey, so define the Unseen with that in mind. When you returned home, the Unseen followed—how have they manifested in your mundane life?
- ✦ **Trickster:** What reputation did you make for yourself on your first journey? Who did you help and whose ire did you draw in the process? (You may create NPCs to answer this question.)



Custom Relationships

Some playbooks have additional relationship questions, which you may use to replace one of the standard relationship questions. Then assign each other PC zero, one, or two Strings as normal.

- + **Beast:** Who did you run wild with on your first journey?
- + **Chosen:** Who amongst you would make a better Chosen?
- + **Devoted:** Who tempted you to violate your Devotion on your first journey?
- + **Infamous:** Who helped you see the errors of your ways?
- + **Nature Witch:** Who helped you discover a piece of yourself on your first journey?
- + **Scoundrel:** Who were you most **Smitten** with on your first journey? How did it end? Who did you save in the nick of time on your first journey?
- + **Seeker:** Who supported you when you needed it the most on your adventures? Who made you feel like a tourist?
- + **Spooky Witch:** Who did you get out of trouble with the Unseen's help? Who have you been having troubling visions about?
- + **Trickster:** Who offered you the chance to open up on your first journey, and why do you regret turning that moment down?

NPCs FROM THE FIRST JOURNEY

Create two or three NPC companions who helped or hindered you during your first journey together. Look to your main quest, the PCs' personal quests, and your shared relationships. You can use the following questions as prompts. You may refer to **Characters** (page 247) to flesh out these NPCs, such as their look, desires, and themes they represent. Some of these answers may be obvious based on your earlier conversation, and that's okay. You may answer these questions with the same NPC in mind, such as the trusted quest-giver who betrayed the group at a crucial moment.

- + Who gave you the quest or adventure that changed your lives? Do you remember them fondly?
- + Who did you save from a dire fate during your adventures?
- + Who did you trust implicitly, only to be betrayed at a crucial moment?
- + Who offered you advice when you really needed it? Have you followed that advice in your mundane lives?
- + Who showed you the wonders that this world has to offer? What one thing did they show you that you remember to this day?
- + Which enemy did you confront in conflict, only to befriend them when all was said and done? What common ground did you share?

TEN YEARS LATER

Players collaborate on each question that applies to their PC:

- ✦ Which relationships were strained after you returned home?
- ✦ Which relationships grew closer after your travels?
- ✦ What do you miss about the fantasy world?
- ✦ You've all had the same troubling dreams over the past few weeks.

Choose two or three themes together or create your own:

Lies, droughts, cracked mirrors, a locked door, storms, darkness, fog, greed, playing cards, spiderwebs, chains, wealth, grief, emptiness, fire, monotony, gloom, laws, fear, a looming figure, time, teeth, deceit, monsters, beauty, broken circles, loss

- ✦ The portal appears again, individually to each PC. Each player describes how the portal appears to them.

GM Section: CONTAINS SPOILERS

This adventure lets everyone create an established history before launching into a fantastical journey. Ask questions that expand upon worldbuilding and character creation to give you ideas for quests and other NPCs.

After you create the world, your characters, and your relationships, take a break to figure out why the fantasy world is now in danger. Consider the first journey's main quest—perhaps agents of Heteronormia stole the Rainbow Sword? Maybe the evil ruler's heir is back to claim the throne? Are there political cracks during a time of peace? Look to the foreboding dreams—perhaps greed drove Heteronormia to steal the Rainbow Sword, or monotony turned a once-vibrant world grey again. Lastly, note how you might draw the PCs' central conflicts into the mix. Consider the custom character questions for ideas here in particular.

Open the adventure with a description of where the group finds themselves after they go through the portal. Take inspiration from character creation, and ask the players leading questions—what's changed since they last visited, what do they see that feels like home, or what strange or wonderful things do they notice about the surrounding scenery.

Introduce the main conflict, then ask the players what they do next. Follow their lead, and sprinkle in hooks from the PCs' central conflicts when it feels right—a cheshire agent of Heteronormia tempts the Seeker to uphold tradition, the Unseen innocently propagate tension between fractured realms, the realm's greyscale monotony brightens when the Trickster has feelings.

Pace

Pace the adventure as it suits the scale of your campaign or one-shot. For three to four sessions, focus on the main quest while drawing in the central conflicts. For a longer campaign, linger on side quests along the way to the main goal. Alternatively, once the big bad falls, a bigger, badder opponent reveals itself for a second campaign arc.

For a tight 3–4 hour oneshot, complete setup as per normal. However, the GM prepares one prompt before you sit down to play:

- ✦ What fantastical quest or adventure did you experience? Tell it to the players before answering the questions for the players and custom relationships.

Adventure Ideas

So you finished character creation, but are wondering what to do for a main conflict. Consider using or adapting these hooks:

- ✦ Heteronormia developed their own portal to infiltrate this fantastical world. Figure out how to close it.
- ✦ An artifact was stolen or went missing, and it's thrown the whole realm into chaos—time, gravity, science, creativity, color, magic, dreams, or something else. It'll mean the end of the realm if it's not fixed.
- ✦ Heteronormia sows mistrust amongst the realm's queer communities. Mend relationships and identify the nefarious agent—get the princesses back together, host a ball, broker peace, woo the spy, find proof, and similar missions.
- ✦ Something upset these normally docile beings, and they're running rampant all over the place—unicorns, dragons, werewolves, fae, vampires, rabbits, robots, the great phoenix. Find out what upset them and fix the situation.
- ✦ A mystery curse struck the realm. Undo the hex: the whole realm slumbers, the world suffers from gloom and apathy, magic is nowhere to be found, the realm's rainbow crystal is dying.

Names

- | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------|
| ✦ Badger | ✦ Ifan | ✦ Montez |
| ✦ Bima | ✦ Izalos | ✦ Naila |
| ✦ Captain | ✦ Jiniya | ✦ Nettle |
| ✦ Cecil | ✦ Keiki | ✦ Orin |
| ✦ Cinders | ✦ Lotta | ✦ Panya |
| ✦ Darling | ✦ Malaya | ✦ Sepu |
| ✦ Druti | ✦ March | ✦ Spindle |

CHARACTERS

These characters are genre figures that you can adapt for your game. Give each main NPC a name, pronouns, and a look; describe their personality in three or four words; and give them a desire. For example:

Izalos the Old Guard (fae/faer): A dragon with scales that change color according to faer mood. Spitfire, open, brave. Desire: Protect the lost and lonely.

- ✦ **Oppressive tyrant:** A vain, proud ruler who pursues one desire, such as wealth, beauty, control, worship, or something stranger like dreams, happiness, or time. Their imagery may include crows, red, winter, vampires, smoke, skulls, wolves, ink, roses, and thorns.
- ✦ **Philosopher:** A curious riddler who may appear duplicitous, but mostly asks the hard questions. Use them to interrogate the PCs' central conflicts and doubts. Their imagery may include foxes, cats, stripes, purples, magpies, coyotes, suits, and cards.
- ✦ **Curious spirit:** Joyful, playful spirits and beings that wield strange magic and find people fascinating. They'll use their magic to help the PCs, but sometimes with unintended, fun side effects. Their imagery may include fauns, pixies, pastels, nature, dryads, glitter, dragonflies, fireworks, and neon.
- ✦ **Old guard:** The wizened advisor, the last of their kind. A powerful magic-wielder with a lot of experience and stories—including the demise of their community. They speak in cautionary tales, and will make the ultimate sacrifice for a brighter future.
- ✦ **Insecure soul:** They aspire toward a virtue—courage, a heart, wisdom, honesty, kindness, acceptance, or similar—and are insecure about achieving it. Show this desire in their appearance, such as the lion who lacks courage. Link this desire to a PCs' central conflict where you can.

CURIOUS IDEAS

Need a weird item? Roll a six-sided die for each category or choose for yourself:

LOOK

- 1 glittery
- 2 bisexually-lit
- 3 vanishing
- 4 mood-colored
- 5 prismatic
- 6 glamorous

TRAIT

- 1 encouraging
- 2 prophetic
- 3 wish-granting
- 4 talkative
- 5 helpful
- 6 ever-changing

FORM

- 1 playing cards
- 2 mushrooms
- 3 automata
- 4 sword
- 5 potion
- 6 mirror

A Little Something Extra

Two-Person Play

If you want to play with just two people, you can either have one PC and one GM, or make two PCs and share the GM role of introducing complications and narrating down beats for each other.

One PC, One GM

At character creation, invent two or three NPCs and answer the relationship questions for your playbook as if they were PCs. Assign them zero, one, or two starting Strings, as you would for a PC.

Without other PCs, you have fewer options for clearing Conditions, since no one can roll to give you **Emotional Support**. As a variant rule, each time that you are vulnerable with an NPC who is offering you emotional support, give them a String on you and pick an option from the **Emotional Support** move as if they were a PC who had rolled 7–9.

Two PCs, Shared GM

No rules changes are needed, though you could introduce an important NPC or two and include them in the relationships and starting Strings. It's up to you how much you share the GM role: you could have a lead GM, take turns, or fully share responsibilities.

RANDOM TABLES

Break out your dice and roll up some randomness with the tables on the following pages!

While some tables require only one six-sided die, others are numbered 11 through 66. To use these tables, roll two six-sided dice, using the first die for the tens digit and the other for the ones digit.

People

	CUTIES	GENDERS*	PRONOUNS
1 1	Android	Agender	ae/aer/aers
1 2	Beefolk	Boi	any
1 3	Birdfolk / Harpy	Bulldyke	beep/boop/boops
1 4	Bunnyfolk	Butch	co/co/cos
1 5	Cactusfolk	Dad	de/dem/der
1 6	Catfolk	Demiboy	de/der/ders
2 1	Chonky Bot	Demigirl	e/em/eir
2 2	Construct	Dragon	ey/em/eir
2 3	Dragon	Fae	fae/faer/faers
2 4	Faerie	Femme	fey/fem/faer
2 5	Flowerfolk	Femmeby	gay/ghem/gheirs
2 6	Foxfolk	Flamboi	he/him/his
3 1	Gemfolk	Flower	hu/hu/hus
3 2	Goblin	Futch	it/it/its
3 3	Gorgon	Genderqueer	ne/ner/ners
3 4	Granitefolk	Gendershrug	none
3 5	Hologram	Goblin	nya/nyan/nyans
3 6	Kobold	Grrrl	one/one/ones
4 1	Lizardfolk	Hard Femme	per/per/pers
4 2	Mantisfolk	High Femme	she/her/hers
4 3	Marblefolk	Himbo	SHE/HER/HERS ALLCAPS
4 4	Merfolk	Hive Drone	she/sher/shers
4 5	Mimic	Hive Queen	she/shim/shis
4 6	Mossfolk	Hive Warrior	they/them/their
5 1	Nightmare	Man	thon/thon/thons
5 2	Octopusfolk	Neutrois	ve/vir/virs
5 3	Orc	None	vi/vix/vix
5 4	Salamander	Robot	xe/xym/xyr
5 5	Slimefolk	Secret	xe/xyr/xyrs
5 6	Snakefolk	Shimbo	ze/hir/hirs
6 1	Spiderfolk	Soft Butch	ze/zim/zir
6 2	Sword	Stone Butch	ze/zir/zirs
6 3	Treefolk	Them Fatale	zhe/zher/zhers
6 4	Vampire	Wildfire	★e/★er (ste/ster/sters)
6 5	Vocaloid	Woman	☿e/☿eur (fle/fleur/fleur)
6 6	Werewolf	Xenogender	roll twice

* Consider including additional real-world genders and labels as well, with appropriate respect, research, and safety tools in place.

RELATION
TO ASSIGNED
GENDER

1	Trans
2	Genderfluid
3	Questioning
4	Multigender
5	Cis
6	Intersex

AESTHETICS

DRIVES

1	1	A Few Piercings	Acquisition
1	2	Animal Print	Addiction
1	3	Beard	Amusement
1	4	Bonnet	Belonging
1	5	Chrome	Certainty
1	6	Cologne	Closeness
2	1	Combat Boots	Curiosity
2	2	Delicate Gloves	Domination
2	3	Denim	Duty
2	4	Drawn-On Eyebrows	Ego
2	5	Eyepatch	Envy
2	6	Facepaint	Expression
3	1	Fangs	Fear
3	2	Fine Jewelry	Freedom
3	3	Fluorescent	Generosity
3	4	Fur	Grief
3	5	Glasses	Habit
3	6	Goggles	Justice
4	1	Hairless	Loyalty
4	2	Heels	Novelty
4	3	Leather	Peace
4	4	Many Piercings	Pleasure
4	5	Painted Nails	Prestige
4	6	Parasol	Protect
5	1	Perfume	Rebellion
5	2	Plaid	Regret
5	3	Prosthetic	Respect
5	4	Punk	Revenge
5	5	Sandals	Romance
5	6	Sideshave	Routine
6	1	Sporty Cap	Safety
6	2	Stripes	Self-flagellation
6	3	Talons	Shame
6	4	Tattoos	Tired
6	5	Visor	Touch
6	6	Work Boots	Yearning

Conditions

Conditions are open to interpretation to make the feelings suit your story. Use these tables for inspiration or to flesh out a feeling inspired by a Condition.

	ANGRY	FRIGHTENED	GUILTY	HOPELESS	INSECURE
1	Attacked	Anxious	Ashamed	Despairing	Defensive
2	Enraged	Horried	Bad Friend	Heartbroken	Embarrassed
3	Frustrated	Nervous	Coward	Lonely	Inadequate
4	Indignant	Panicked	Failure	Miserable	Jealous
5	Irritable	Terrified	Regretful	Sad	Negative Self-Talk
6	Vengeful	Timid	Self Reproach	Sullen	Rejected

Setting AND Plot

Setting

IN A WORLD WHERE _____ ...

1	Love	always comes with	pain
2	Color	is threatened by	grief
3	Body	is made of	commodities
4	Curiosity	has conquered	strict rules
5	Music	is needed for	demons
6	Touch	has been replaced with	fury

Toxic Powers

THIS TOXIC POWER IS A _____ THAT WANTS TO _____.

1	Powerful church	control	love
2	Fringe cult	obliterate	joy
3	Corporation	corrupt	time
4	Cabal	devour	expression
5	Government	perfect	empathy
6	God	steal	life essence

Locales

LOCALES

1	1	A sentient generation ship
1	2	Undersea city sustained by hot vents
1	3	A PC's inner mental world
1	4	A villain's inner mental world
1	5	The digestive system of a great beast
1	6	Floating cities of Venus
2	1	A world beneath a sputtering sun
2	2	The canopy of a jungle where no one returns from below
2	3	A shifting labyrinth
2	4	Ruins of a giant, crashed vessel
2	5	A crossroads of a mundane trade route and an otherworldly migration
2	6	The last orchard
3	1	Migrating turtle flotilla
3	2	The city of festivals
3	3	Balloon Town
3	4	The Great Library
3	5	Black-and-white land beyond the rainbow
3	6	A lawless port
4	1	Bunnygirl Burrow
4	2	Along the World River
4	3	Desert caused by life-draining sorceresses
4	4	Shadows of the arcology
4	5	Walking Skeleton Castle
4	6	The wall built between Dreaming and Nightmare
5	1	The Blood Nebula
5	2	Karaoke Barge
5	3	Immersive virtual world without escape
5	4	Behind the mirror
5	5	Glass desert
5	6	Volcano tomb of the cobra goddess
6	1	River canyons beneath the sandstorms
6	2	Mountain hot springs
6	3	Haunted university
6	4	Airship flying temple
6	5	The adamantine forge
6	6	The mysterious giant hand protruding from the ground

Playbook Specific

The Beast

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Tattoo artist	Monster hunter	Others start transforming
2	Your beast incarnate	Your beast incarnate	Crackdown on counterculture
3	Battling stylist	Person-eater who wants to be friends	Is your friend taking it too far?
4	Knew you before beasthood	One who lost status because of you	Infiltrate a high society event
5	BBQ expert	Conservative relatives	Only you can be the fake date
6	Graffiti artist	Dancing rival	Your beast form supposedly spotted doing harm

The Bloody

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Weaponsmith	Goes too far for the wrong reasons	Hired to guard a flirty, troublemaking community leader
2	Giver of last rites	Revisionist historian	Win community prize money in corrupt battledome
3	The one who trained you in combat	Paid a bribe to remove you from combat	Summoned to receive war medal, and so was your ex
4	Sparring buddy	The only one who could beat you in a fight	Uneasy alliance with your lesbian nemesis to overcome new totalitarian regime
5	Singer who eases memories of battle	Sensationalist reporter	Framed for violence within community
6	Battle surgeon	Politician	Attend a quiet community tea party without incident

The Chosen

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
❶	Advisor	Advisor	Disaster strikes, reminiscent of the last time you failed
❷	Devotee	Devotee	Impossible coincidence bringing forth your Tragic Aspects
❸	The One Who Refused the Call	Rival to Destiny	A popular text defining who you are, not written by you
❹	Demanding spirit	Destined foe	A cult leader is cast aside; the cultists want to follow you
❺	Angry friend who will kill for you	Duplicate Chosen	A friend captured in your stead; go on or go back?
❻	In it with you	Abandoned when you took up the call	Disaster you could have averted by hewing to Destiny

The Devoted

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
❶	Rival from training	Hostile superior	Devotion accused
❷	Comrade who saved you	Your opposite	Schism
❸	The one you were forbidden to kiss	Comrade who left	Betrayal ordered by a superior
❹	Potential convert	In it for the thrill of corruption	Would-be martyr from rival faith
❺	Someone you earned a scar to save	Comrade who buried their doubts deep	Tempted to break a tenet
❻	Knows your doubts better than you	"Friend" who only ever makes demands	Devotion pitted against another loyalty

The Dream Mirror

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	A dreamkind circus set designer	Someone who steals the spotlight or fits in without even trying	Share shelter with a fellow traveler with unfamiliar dreams and desires
2	Someone who likes it when you're not acting like everyone else	Someone who views you as a trophy to show off	Outsmart a shapeshifting dreamkind lurking in a malicious house of mirrors
3	A dreamkind who likes exploring new things with you	A numen of insatiable desire	Distract a mob boss with a big show
4	Portrait artist who captures you in different styles	Finishing school instructor	Move into a circus arts school and find your place
5	An insecure deminumen who feels reassured by just your presence	A mean girl who wants you to join her exclusive clique	Search a surreal dreamscape for a friend's lost hope
6	A writer whose stories inspire you to try new things	A captivating dreamkind who always keeps you just at arm's length	Lose your way in the snow and convince a dragon to warm you up

The Ensemble

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Mutual sweetheart ex	Mutual scary ex	Trouble at the event one partner was looking forward to and the other was dreading
2	Aroace cuddle friend	Jealous monogamist	Body swap
3	Friendly enabler	Judgy family	Shared responsibility like a pet gets absurdly large
4	Kinksmith	Enemy Fusion	Double date disaster
5	Someone who introduced them	Profits off worst habits	Fake not-dating for a cover story
6	Petsitter	Parasitic slimesuit	Fake(?) glimpse of a heartbroken future

The Hologoddess

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Ex-royal anarcho-transhumanist icon	The system architect that designed you	Stealthily broadcast an encrypted message while everyone is watching
2	Indie organ printing CEO and former influencer	Human supremacist mouthpiece	A coveted invite to the Sim Elation Gala, a front-row seat to the season's biggest breakup
3	Clairvoyant alien hive queen	Social media censor	Illegal street race to save your friend
4	Unhoused cyberfeminist cryptanalyst	Tech oddity collector	Fight for a patch for other entertainment bots before their planned obsolescence
5	Pirate AI who taught you your first flirt	Rare materials reseller	Meet the one they're planning to replace you with
6	Machine-rights activist	Psychotherapist for abberant AIs	Help recently married friends find a home (the stable happiness that you don't have)

The INFAMOUS

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Person you helped who believes in you	Villain seen as a hero	Framed
2	Guide on your new path	Vengeful former comrade	Former comrade now even worse
3	Rascal who doesn't care about the past	Traitor to a good cause doesn't see the difference	Protect someone who distrusts you
4	Hunter who gave you another chance	Self-righteous vigilante	Supposedly righteous organization is corrupt to the core
5	Overbearing friend sees you as a project	Former comrade thinks killing you will silence their doubts	A scary event has the people looking for spies or witches
6	Attracted to your wicked aesthetic	Ex who wouldn't leave with you	Person who once hunted you now wrongly targeted

The Investigator

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Flesh-eating pathologist or vampiric phlebotomist	The newcomer whom all the ones you trust blindly accept	A Toxic Power is taking the blame for something they didn't do
2	Gossipy conspiracy theorist newspaper vendor	A flighty, disorganized fan who ruins your crime scenes	A train full of people with convoluted connections!
3	Whistle-blower still struggling with repercussions	One who praises your vigilance and encourages your distrust	Someone you trust appears to have joined a cult
4	Hyper-reliable roommate who hasn't realized they love you	The persuasive, logical authority figure who shares your goals—but not your means	Trapped with your crush in a mansion with secret passages and hidden doors
5	Flawlessly dressed receptionist for a Toxic Power who leaks info	A victim who has internalized a Toxic Power's beliefs	You are receiving unsigned letters revealing others' secrets
6	The one who held you when you were betrayed	An inscrutable and polite stranger	Pressed by the authorities to hand over incomplete but damning information about someone

The Legion

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Cherished younger sibling	Museum curator	Renovations to an important place
2	An immortal	Jealous ghosts	An artifact that shows lost memories
3	A pen pal—there's always a record of your friendship	Member of a historical society obsessed with you	A warning from your future self
4	Fanfic enthusiast who loves happy endings	Always blindsided by their love (and betrayal)	Rumors of a Hellsinger-spawning portal under construction
5	Remembers your favorite food, even if you don't	Cute novice time traveler accidentally undermining you	A plan for an uneventful trip to the hot springs
6	Someone new to town, and new to your cycle	Hypnotist who uncovers too much	A meeting that was planned hundreds of years ago

The Matriarch

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	The mom or parent you look up to	Loud, bigoted new neighbor	Overthrow PTA-led shadow government
2	The source of your caffeine	The one bullying your family member	Adult vacay time crashed by assassins
3	The godparent, odd-parent, or honorary auntie	Overbearing parent-in-law	Liberate teens from abusive foster home
4	Urgent care nurse	Child Protective Services	Contacted by the child you put up for adoption
5	Librarian by day, libertine by night	Media programmer brainwashing your family	Keep the streets safe and clean
6	The one who gets you away from it all	The demanding boss	Make your kid's first date (or playdate) a success

The Naga

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Hot-blooded cuddle buddy	Guide for legendary hunting trips	Infiltrate poacher lair and get info on their traps and ambushes
2	Reformed ex-cultist	Private investigator	Protect protesters being targeted by state violence
3	Always-unemployed herpatologist	A family member's partner with complicated motives	Mistaken identity!
4	An anti-colonialist community educator	An overly curious neighbor	Get injured friend through treacherous territory to safe house
5	Civil rights lawyer	Rare jewel auctioner	Be someone's fake date on their family visit
6	Theater geek who loves costumes and accents	Someone who believes your nagamani will cure their fatally ill loved one	Recover nagamani from trade show

The Nature Witch

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Sentient squirrel	Trophy hunter	Fancy social event
2	Protective old friend from home	Con artist who senses cluelessness	Land exploitation
3	Overbearing adventuresome friend	Resents that your innocence hasn't gotten you hurt more	Unexpected migration
4	Whispers on the wind	Wrathful werebunny	Someone needs advice whether to take a risk on their dream
5	Sappy dryad	Fake benefactor	Someone has been turned into an animal
6	Gardener who loves the feel of soil	Animal trained for violence	Someone even more awkward needs you

The Scoundrel

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	You lost a bet to them	You won a bet with them	Last two tontine survivors
2	You forget their name	Jilted ex	Stuck in a small space
3	Knew you before you were like this	Foe you seduced	Wake up with no recollection of the person sharing the bed
4	Hot stranger	Previous owner of your sword	Your last "conquest" was actually using you
5	Seamstress who gives you a discount	Protective family of someone you slept with	Someone is broken-hearted and needs comfort
6	One who got away	Rival who won't invite you to the fun	A parent or mentor is in trouble

The Seeker

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Goofball bad influence	Former mentor	A secret summons
2	Questioning poet	Militant enforcer	The Authority's Unlikeable Enemies
3	Amateur witch	Social enforcer	Doubters seek guidance
4	Oblivious temptress	Zealous family	Omens significant to the Authority
5	Raised in a different cult	One with a claim on you	Blackmailed by another Toxic Power
6	Still hiding their doubts	Imbued with Authority Magic	Need help from an Authority figure



The Spooky Witch

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Friend who turned into a fuzzball	Cuddly monster asshole	Captive Creatures
2	Newly-awakened witch	Power-hungry wizard	Conflict among Unseen
3	The Moonbeam spirit	Rival with more power than sense	A created monster breaks free
4	Person forgotten by most	Guardian of the divide	Someone wants to not be seen
5	Imaginary friend	Would do anything to see the Unseen again	Scattered keys can open doors between realms
6	I think it's a friend?	Wants to fix them	A fake haunting

The Sun Hand

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Trivia Night MC	Organized, results-oriented ally	Invited to a toxic institute specializing in your obsession
2	The friend who always comes back for seconds	New love interest who encourages risky behavior	Perilous quest for the ultimate sourdough starter
3	Naturalist who shares rare herbs, spices, and stories	Manipulative mentor who always has an engaging anecdote	Gather intel on a Toxic Power at a lesbian speed dating event
4	The childhood friend who always buys your first new creation, no matter what it is	Time-warping emotionally parasitic monster	Someone powerful wants to commission you to make a problematic pastry
5	Plant girl	One who takes credit for your ideas	Save the community library from vampires
6	Someone with cold hands and a warm smile	A foul-weather friend	Help your crush reconcile with their best friend



The Trickster

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Mask-smith	Same mask	Find blackmail
2	Flamboyant actor	Catgirl burglar	Steal the magic eye
3	Undemanding hobby friend	Nothing but mask	Secure the secret recipe
4	Buys the act 100%	Wants to shape them	Prison break
5	Pretends they don't know	Knows they care and how to hurt them	Only the one beneath the mask can save the day
6	Thinks they're someone else	Obsessed investigator	Find the spy in your midst

The Troubadour

	FRIENDS	THREATS	PLOTS
1	Roadie	Patron's new business rival	Religious propaganda against music
2	Someone whose honesty is unclouded by your fame	The one your biggest angsty hit was about	Booby-trapped or sabotaged music festival
3	Sentient musical instrument	AI created to be the perfect pop idol	Hired to play at your lover's wedding to corporate sellout
4	Patron's ex-fiance	The toxic fatale your fans ship you with	Remastered albums inexplicably changed
5	First bandmate ever	Ravenous sound-devouring harpy	After-party cursed to never end
6	Fashionista	Big label rep	Help your mentee score a patron

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Alex Roberts

Alex Roberts is an RPG designer whose work focuses on interpersonal complexity and mechanical elegance. Though best known for *Star Crossed* and *For the Queen*, she has contributed to piles of other games and anthologies, and hosted the acclaimed interview show *Backstory*. She'd love to hear from you at helloalexroberts.com.

Alexis Sara

Alexis Sara (she/her) is a multiple award-winning comics writer and a massive lover of tabletop RPGs. She works in every form of media she can telling stories of her fellow sapphics, trans folks, and more overcoming great odds and falling in love. You can find Alexis's lesbian Latinx works over at @transcomics on Twitter.

Allie Bustion

Allie Bustion is an award-winning freelance narrative designer and writer working on independent projects of their own, like *HEIST* and *Misbehavin'*, as well as titles for Paizo, Wizards of the Coast, and Guildhall Studios. They have a deep love of storytelling, fiction, pro wrestling, Final Fantasy XIV, and popular media analysis. Sometimes, those even come together. Like now.

Amr Ammourazz

Amr Ammourazz (they/she) is an all around nerd, with interests in everything from game design to audio fiction to mathematics and computer engineering. You can hear more about her various exploits in making everything more queer and Egyptian over at @ammourazz on Twitter, such as being co-designer of the *Chimera* RPG.

April Kit Walsh

April Kit Walsh (she/her or gay/ghem) writes queer games about feelings, vulnerability, and caring for one another. She used to be a sword-fighting ballerina, but claims those days are behind her; she has absolutely no idea who that masked heroine with the sword and the tutu might be. You can find April's games at GaySpaceship.com and on Twitter at @GaySpaceshipGms. When not writing RPGs, April is a civil liberties attorney working to protect the rights of activists, journalists, and everyone else impacted by technologies of control or of empowerment.

ASH CHESHIRE

Ash Cheshire (fae/fem) is a queer trans game designer and artist living in the Bay Area of Northern California. Faer games can be found at ashcangames.itch.io or you can support faer ongoing work and receive exclusive access to experimental and pre-published games by joining the Cheshire Crew at patreon.com/ashcheshire.

ASH KREIDER

Ash Kreider is a queer trans game designer, publisher, and sometimes-blogger living in the wilds of Canada with a child, a spouse, two slightly broken cats, and a snake. In addition to publishing their own games, they have also freelanced for companies like Pelgrane Press, Wizards of the Coast, and Onyx Path. Ash is also the author of *Go Make Me a Sandwich*, a once-popular feminist gaming blog, and does a lot of work to hold and create space for marginalized people in games.

AVERY ALDER

Avery Alder (she/her) is a queer designer hailing from Sinixt territory. She's the designer of *Monsterhearts*, *The Quiet Year*, *Dream Askew*, *Ribbon Drive*, and a host of smaller, scrappier projects. In her design and play, she gravitates toward the moody, the personal, and the transformative.

BANANA CHAN

Banana Chan (she/they) is a writer and designer for tabletop games and larps. She is also the owner and co-founder of the publishing company Game and a Curry. Some of her latest projects have been *Jiangshi: Blood in the Banquet Hall*, *Scooby-Doo: Betrayal at Mystery Mansion*, and *Warp's Edge*. You can find her on Twitter at @bananachangames.

BRYANNA HITCHCOCK

Known mostly as a GM, Bryanna Hitchcock occasionally dabbles in game design and writing, including contributions to the *Tome of Mysteries* and *Threadbare RPG*. She is also the author of *Empire City Adventures*, a Fate superheroes supplement. Besides playing games, Bryanna loves playing guitar, rocking out to music, and cooking. She lives in California with her wife and two adorable cats.

CHRISTIE R. FREMON

Christie R. Fremon (she/gay) designs small words and big worlds. She's a neurodiverse, demiflux, demisexual, bisexual lesbian parent who designs tabletop roleplaying games and content experiences. She focuses her design on centering humanity—and ways of being different. She likes to learn and dream. And she can't get enough of stories, fairy tales, carnivorous plants, spiders, fiber arts, and magic.

EMILY CARE BOSS

Emily (she/her) is an independent roleplaying game designer/publisher and conservationist living in western Massachusetts. She wrote the *Romance Trilogy* and co-designed *Bubblegumshoe* for Evil Hat Productions. Her other games and work are at blackgreengames.com and you can follow her on Twitter at @emilycare.

ERIN QUINN EDWARDS

Erin Quinn Edwards (she/her or they/them) is a game designer, perpetual dabbler, and possibly the thirstiest human alive. She loves movies and pop culture and taking dull stereotypes and making them gay as all hell. She can be found occasionally tweeting and/or being horny on main at @lamNoxie, or you can attempt to summon her with offerings of coffee and cat ear-themed novelty items.

JAMES MENDEZ HODES

James Mendez Hodes is an ENnie Award-winning cultural consultant and game designer whom you might know from *Thousand Arrows*, *Scion*, or some articles complaining about orcs and racism. You can find him online at jamesmendezhodes.com and on Twitter at @LulaVampiro. His favorite *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* character is Scorpia.

JAN MARTIN

Jan Martin (they/them) is a Mi'kmaw Writer living in New Brunswick, Canada. Their work explores themes of Capitalism and Colonialism through an Indigenous lens. They most recently have contributed to *Starfinder Society Season 3-11: Into the Veskarium*, *UNCONQUERED* by Monkey's Paws Games, and contributed *Golden Watch Club* to *The Short Games Digest: Volume 5* by San Jenaro Co-Op. They are currently working on writing game content and the *Original Sound Track for Monster Care Squad* by Sandy Pug Games. They run Scraps Burgers, a fictional AI operated fast food empire that's actually a publisher of games. Coming soon is their debut release *Employee of the Year*, an anthology featuring five incredible designers and one lifesaver of an artist. Find them on Twitter at @hellotenbear or www.tenbear.com.

JUNE LALONDE

June LaLonde is a renowned recording musician and ravenous chess fiend. She's also been a filmmaker, composer, author, artist, chess club founder, and friend to various chickens. You can find her on Twitter at @June_LaLonde, where she's promoting her next record, encouraging people to play chess, or writing jokes that only she finds funny.

KATHERINE ALEJANDRA CROSS

Katherine Alejandra Cross is a translatina scholar of the virtual who yearns for the robot uprising. While working on her PhD at the University of Washington iSchool, she has written extensive social criticism of gaming and tech, published sci-fi short stories, and contributed to numerous tabletop RPGs, including *Pathfinder* and *Eclipse Phase*. She lives in Seattle with her partner and two cats.

KIRA MAGRANN

Kira Magrann is a queer nonbinary tabletop RPG designer and snake friend living in Columbus, Ohio. The creator of *A Cozy Den* (a cozy game of lesbisnakes in wintertime) and *Something Is Wrong Here* (an uncanny emotional love letter to David Lynch's work), Kira also has a Patreon that details current game design thoughts. Kira also co-curates the biweekly *More Seats at the Table*, a newsletter featuring game makers of marginalized genders. Follow @Kiranansi on Twitter. Games at Serpent Cyborg Games (www.serpentcyborggames.com).

LAUREN McMANAMON

Lauren (they/she) is a tabletop RPG editor and designer with a keen interest in queer narratives, romance, and weird fantasy. They are the co-designer of *Girl Underground*, a portal fantasy RPG about a curious young person's journey as they navigate a weird, whimsical world and its rules alongside their fantastical companions. All of her work can be found at thestraykiwi.com, including *Final Girl: A Game of Love*, a satirical, queer RPG based on the Bachelor/ette. You can also follow them on Twitter @thestraykiwi.

LIBBY HORACEK

Libby Horacek is a game designer and software developer in West Virginia. Besides games, she loves drawing and roller skating. Her latest game is *Derby Drama*, inspired by her time skating with the Ohio Valley Roller Girls.

LUCIAN KAHN

Lucian Kahn is the award-winning game designer of *Visigoths vs Mall Goths*, *Dead Friend: A Game of Necromancy*, and *If I Were a Lich, Man*, and is co-editor of *Honey & Hot Wax: An Anthology of Erotic Art Games*. He is trans, Jewish, and a gay-coded villain. Follow his game design updates at bit.ly/luciangames.

MARIA FANNING

Maria Fanning (she/her or hir/hirs) is a trans woman wrestling fan extraordinaire. She has written articles for *Cannibal Halfling*, *Voices of Wrestling*, and *Gnome Stew*. Alongside this, she has designed games such as *Tower Of Power*, *Hero Too*, and *Get Your Game On*. Maria's favorite interests in writing are messy trans narratives and taking tropes apart.

MARIAM AHMAD

Mariam Ahmad (they/them) is a queer game designer, podcaster, and streamer whose current project is writing *Sarzameen*, a South Asian fantasy setting. They are the GM of *The Musafirs* podcast, cast member of Prism Pals, and recently launched a BIMPoC community channel, Huetopia. They also love talking about food, decolonization, and cats.

MISHA BUSHYAGER

Misha Bushyager is a longtime gamer and designer working on making sure the next generation of geeks sees themselves represented. She's one of the founders of New Agenda Publishing and a founding curator for *More Seats at the Table*, a newsletter highlighting gender marginalized designers.

PAM PUNZALAN

Pam Punzalan, aka Pammu, is a queer designer, editor, sensitivity consultant, and #RPGSEA community point person based in Manila. She's been published under *Shadow Operations* for *Spire* and is involved in multiple projects big and small. Her biggest personal release is *Sundo: We, Once Mortal*, a PbtA game about psychopomps rebelling against a world that has lied to them about the truth of their nature. Some of the things in development that she can talk about are a Dagger Isles supplement for *Blades in the Dark*, worldbuilding for *The Islands of Sina Una*, and game design for *Mnemonic: Weaver's Almanac*.

SEAN NITTNER

Sean Nittner (he/him) is the Evil Hat Director of Projects where he scouts for new creators, manages contracts, and shares project management work with Sophie Lagacé. He is the steward of Big Bad Con, a gaming convention in the San Francisco Bay Area that focuses on welcoming and promoting marginalized gamers as well as highlighting indie and small press games. He streams games on *twitch.tv/actualplay*, a small channel that often features new games in development. He recently co-authored the game **AGON** with John Harper, a game of heroic action in a mythic world.

SOUP

Soup (they/them) is a nonbinary Korean-American game designer who releases approximately one game every human century or so. They love writing, food, and writing about food. You can find their personal work at *literalsoup.com*, their hot-blooded mech rivalry game **Pyrewaltz: Love is Coming Again** in the *Ultimate Micro-RPG Book*, or their freelance work scattered throughout various Paizo products and Kickstarters.

VYLAR KAFTAN

Vylar Kaftan is a science fiction writer, a champion flirt, and a thirsty sword pansexual (though as a sixth-level bard, she prefers her harp). She won a Nebula Award for her novella **The Weight of the Sunrise**. If a queer psychic thriller sounds up your alley, check out her book **Her Silhouette, Drawn in Water**. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her favorite color is all of them. She's on Twitter at @Vylar_Kaftan.

YEONSOO JULIAN KIM

Yeonsoo Julian Kim is a game designer and writer who has contributed to tabletop RPGs such as **Kids on Bikes**, **Teens in Space**, and **Hearts of Wulin**. Their interactive horror novel **The Fog Knows Your Name** was published by Choice of Games in 2019. In addition to writing interactive fiction and RPGs, Yeonsoo has designed larps such as **Pass the Sugar, Please** and the card game **Battle of the Boybands**.



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Supplemental Relationships Worksheet

THE BLOODY

*Who knows something about you that you've never spoken about to anyone else?
Who knows you better as a protector than they do as a person?
Who are you scared to be vulnerable with?*

THE DREAM MIRROR

*Whose personality or culture is the most dominant in your group?
Whose fantasies and dreams are the most fun to bring to life?
Who seems least interested in letting you be someone else for them?*

THE ENSEMBLE

*Each of your selves dated the same person before getting together. Who?
One of you thinks someone needs them; the other has little patience for them. Who?
Who is a confidante for one or both of you when you have worries about the other?*

THE HOLOGODDESS

*Who most reminds you of someone you left behind?
Who most reminds you of someone who abandoned you?
Who has seen you at your most un-human?*

THE INVESTIGATOR

*Who do you know from somewhere else?
Who can help you pursue one of your burning questions?
Who has a connection to the Toxic Powers?*

THE LEGION

*Who has the face of an old, long-dead friend?
Who was the beloved of a nemesis from a previous life?
Who first saw you draw a weapon from your body?*

THE MATRIARCH

*Who owes your family a debt?
Who makes you feel special in a way your family doesn't?
Whom do you confide in about your own problems?*

THE NAGA

*Who knows your true identity?
Who has seen you in **Venom** form?
Whom do you think is most likely to betray you?*

THE SUN HAND

*Who do you most want to impress with your skills?
Who has the moves you want most?
Who has grown weary of your hobby-hopping?*

THE TROUBADOUR

*Who's your biggest fan?
Who has taken issue with your Art?
Who has seen you at your lowest?*



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