



Morra Universal Cinematic Game System

Alpha Slice, April 2019

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Morra Universal Game System: Developer Notes

It's not often that you know the exact date and place a dream is born.

The date: April 24th, 2016.

The place: Under the waterfall bar at the guest swimming pool, under the stone pyramid at the Cancun. Las Vegas.

It was the last day of a writing retreat where friends and colleagues gathered together to finish a game (Mind's Eye Theatre: Werewolf the Apocalypse) for an amazing company (By Night Studios).

We were hungry to do more. We planned for the last day of this retreat to be one of personal reflection and public debate. What would our design team do next? The time felt right to build our own house rather than paint and decorate rooms in other people's houses. It wasn't that we didn't love the work for other people. It was a big part of our identity. We came into fandom on these properties where we were inspired to put words to page. Between all of us, we freelanced for a lot of great companies; Onyx Path, Catalyst Game Labs, Chaosium, White Wolf, and others.

We talked, we laughed, we debated. In the end, we boiled down everything we learned into a couple of simple mission statements.

- Design a streamlined universal game system that supports multiple styles of play and be relatively the same through different manifestations: table top, parlor live-action roleplaying (LARP), free-form LARP, board games, or even card games.
- Build tools and techniques for players to easily create their own game universes while taking whatever might work from published universes within the same system.
- All rules would be setting agnostic. If a character had super strength, it didn't matter if it was because she was a cyborg, a mutant, super-science experiment, robot, monster, or blessed by the gods.

Morra Universal Game System

Everything in Morra is expressed through the modern universal language of cinema and television. Carl Jung wrote about the monomyth, elements and troupes of the same stories that appear in every culture and their mythology. Movies tap into this subconscious understanding of the stories that shape our thoughts and ideas. Its power extends beyond ideological, religious, or philosophical ideas and constructs.

What is an Alpha Slice?

This **Morra Universal Game System** Alpha Slice contains the foundation of a game still in development. Future releases will include new qualities, new Genres, the Director's primer, Expanded LARP Resolution Systems, and Safety and Consent Calibration techniques.

This document represents a vertical slice of **Morra Universal Game System**. This material is a small percentage of what will be included in the final product; it will certainly change and evolve over many rounds of playtesting and player feedback. These rules and setting pieces are still in development, and this document is intended to highlight features, showcase design philosophy, and provide only a microcosm of the final product. Please note that any cross references that direct readers to "page XX" are left in deliberately – the referred content will be available in future releases.

To that end, we invite you to read through this preview and offer feedback. We consider this presentation to be proof-of-concept, and your compliments and criticisms are important to the continued development of **Morra Universal Game System** and other future games. At the end of this document, you will find a brief questionnaire about the Alpha Slice packet. Please answer these questions out and send us your responses. You can also add any notes or commentary you like about the rules, setting, or other materials in the vertical slice.

Key Features

Key features of this Alpha Slice include:

- **Chapter Two: Genre Creation**
A step-by-step introduction to creating a Genre (a Morra game universe) through the Hollywood Writer's Workshop Technique and defining important elements of the universe such as concept pitch, target audience, rating, and budget.
- **Chapter Three: Character Creation**
Create a character for any Genre (including one you've created) via the Hollywood Writer's Workshop Technique and a step-by-step process that adjusts to your specific Genre (such as with budget).

- **Chapter Four: Core Rules**
All of the basic rules for creating stock and secondary characters, running dramatic moments, cast complications, consequences, One Act / Three Scene structure, Equipment / MacGuffins, and Experience.
- **Chapter Five: Qualities:** A *Cinematic Quality* is what makes a character special or unique when appearing on screen. *The Morra Cinematic Universal Game System* measures these theoretical traits, then weighs them against each other, transforming every element into game statistics. The end result is a simulation of what might be seen on-screen through special effects and camera tricks. This section covers some of the General Qualities and how to use the Magical Qualities. In the Beta, we will have more Qualities to test and the Tech Level system.

The Morra Alpha comes with two in-progress Genres:

- **Mystical Rome:** *Beware the Ides of March!* We remember a world where mighty Caesar ignored this warning and paid the ultimate price. But what if the Three Soothsayers were wizards of unimaginable power and could foresee not only one future, but all possible futures? In the world of *Mystical Rome*, Julius Caesar still failed to take heed, but faithful Marc Antony did not, and paid the ultimate price for his loyalty, forever altering the destiny of the Eternal City.

Twenty years after the Soothsayers whispered their dire warning, Caesar still reigns over the unified Roman Empire. The oracles who saved him now operate a notorious academy, where they instruct the sons and daughters of elite families in the eldritch arts. The only obstacles preventing Rome's domination of the entire world are the barbarous Caledonians and the seemingly invincible Parthian Empire.

- **Punching Nazis:** War movies are a staple of American cinema, with World War II being a favorite topic. It's easy to understand why: the lines between bad and good were sharply drawn; between fascism and genocide and those who opposed it. Directors have taken a variety of approaches to the topic, from serious to more fantastic. Even the same director can have wildly different takes: Steven Spielberg made both the dramatic epic *Schindler's List* and the more fantastic adventure *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Punching Nazis takes a more *Raiders of the Lost Ark* perspective. The Genre has room for magic, super-science, and alternate history. The themes inherent in a story about World War II are dark and expose the worst about human nature. While players shouldn't shy away from confronting these themes, injecting a little levity into the Genre means players can enjoy punching Nazis. What's more, loosening the demands for strict historical accuracy allows for wish fulfillment by the players: they can imagine themselves as a crack squad of commandos able to end the war early by killing Hitler (*Inglourious Basterds*, dir. Quentin Tarantino), super-soldiers who can singlehandedly

bring an end to the fighting (*Captain America: The First Avenger*, dir. Joe Johnston), or witches-in-training using their powers to send Nazis packing (*Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, dir. Robert Stevenson).

Thank you!

Mighty Narwhal sincerely appreciates everyone that read this far and will be taking a chance on a game that's near and dear to our hearts. We love the games we make, and we work hard to create balanced rules and compelling settings. By taking the time to read through this material, you've become an important part of the Mighty Narwhal Productions development process.

Chapter Two: Defining a Genre

“I would travel down to Hell and wrestle a film away from the devil if it was necessary.”

— Werner Herzog

Our imagination is as limitless as our stories, and both span a spectrum as vast as the universe. From the mundane to the fantastic, from the intensely personal to universal Jungian experiences, people have always used stories to understand what it means to be human. Over the last one hundred years, movies and television have attempted to capture this unique and sacred experience by translating it to the screen, both silver and small.

Genre is a word used to classify a style or brand of entertainment that comes with an expected set of tropes, conceits, and stylistic choices. Great films and television use viewer expectations to create twists and turn in old stories, surprising and delighting their audiences.

Umbrella genres have a wide tent that includes a smorgasbord of stories united by a common set of themes and aesthetics. Take the Western genre as an example. We expect certain tropes to appear in a Western film, such as a 19th century frontier setting, desolate and remote locales, and cowboys on horses. Yet many radically different films can be classified as Westerns, such as the comedy *Blazing Saddles* (dir. Mel Brooks), the grim and gritty *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (dir. Sergio Leone), or even the earnest singing cowboy movie *The Old Barn Dance* (dir. Joseph Kane). As different as they are, all these films are undisputedly Westerns, and considered classics of their umbrella genre.

The *Morra Cinematic Universal Game System* compiles the language, techniques, experiences, and even limitations of film and television into a creative toolbox, designed to help you build a universe and run a game that can simulate any story from any genre.

Morra defines the term *Genre* as a creative cookbook targeted to a specific audience with an approved list of ingredients (archetypes, tropes, and concepts) appropriate to the story. Genre defines the story mythology and internal logic that gives meaning to the mechanics. It also serves as the mythic background that gives context to the rules (including any special Genre-specific rules), and places the Director and players on the same page about creating a fun and unique shared experience.

For example: At character creation, Joshua wants to purchase the Quality: Enhanced (see **Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 60) to increase his character, Ezekiel Sharp’s, Attribute to become a better gunslinger. He reviews his Genre: Weird Western Tales and notes the Budget is Major Motion Picture / Prime Time (see page 13). He is not at the maximum number of qualities for that budget, so if he has the experience points to purchase the quality, he can. Next, he notes this Quality, which breaks human limitations, is listed as heroic and legendary in Genre: Weird Western Tales. He confers with his Director regarding the Quality, who confirms it is appropriate and can be purchased.

For other Genres with a lower budget or a different flavor, such a Quality might not be allowed. For Weird Western Tales, the source of such a Quality might indicate that Ezekiel Sharp was an alien, mutant, blessed by the gods, or cursed by Hell.

While this book comes with several Genres ready to be modified or played straight from the box, this chapter is a roadmap for players and Directors to build their own Genre together.

The Writer's Room

The Writer's Room is a meta-technique designed to help Directors and players create a Genre suited to their shared vision. Imagine for a moment that you are writers working together to create a pitch for movie or television show good enough to be put into production. The Director assumes the role of producer. Her function is to moderate the conversation, guide everyone through the process, and then later calibrate the Genre to suit the changing needs of the story and the enjoyment of the players. Players become the writers of the project. Their job is to help define the Genre via a series of brainstorming and discussions outlined in this chapter. The end goal is to express their needs as individual players, while also building a cohesive and inclusive whole before the first scene is shot. Before each session, the cast and Director can calibrate expectations and needs each game session while further mapping out the world, creating new plots, and anything else that might be required for generating serialized content.

Later, writers will pitch their characters in the Writer's Room (see **Chapter Three: Character Creation: The Writer's Room**, page 19) and the producer will adjust the series as needed by returning to this method to modify the Genre (see **Chapter Six: Director's Primer: Writer's Room**, page xx).

Genre Roadmap

Building a *Morra* Genre, or even a *Morra* Umbrella Genre, requires the participants to answer a series of questions and make a number of choices to describe the fictional setting the Director and players are creating. Each step helps the Writer's Room set expectations and build a common language to talk about the project. While building a Genre, it is recommended that everyone attempt to use the language of cinema as much as possible, in order to capture the complete experience.

Step One: Define the Target Audience

The *target audience* technique defines the exact experience the Directors and players want from playing. Hollywood studios have spent decades and millions of dollars studying audiences and dividing them into market segments. This research is used to predict which groups of people will enjoy certain elements in their entertainment.

Writers should imagine what the audience of their Genre will look like, as it will help them make appropriate choices later. This technique is a good way for writers to express their creative desires and negotiate limits. A Genre catering to a family-friendly audience will want to ensure that the Rating and Content Descriptors (see page 11) are age-appropriate to avoid uncomfortable situations. The writers might define the Archetypes in such a way that characters will be younger, or in ways that otherwise fit the needs of their audience. For example, it would be inappropriate to play a brutal serial killer Archetype (see page 14) in a family-friendly audience, but would be spot on for an audience of horror movie fans.

Step Two: Define the Rating and Content Descriptors of the Series

Now that you have an idea of your audience, it's time to define your show's rating. Review and consider what rating makes the most sense for your audience and the stories you are interested in telling.

Morra recommends the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) film rating system as detailed below:

- **Rated G: General Audiences.** The movie or television show is appropriate for all viewers. Some examples of this rating are *WALL-E* (dir. Andrew Stanton), *Mary Poppins* (dir. Robert Stevenson), and *The Emperor's New Groove* (dir. Mark Dindal).
- **Rated PG: Parental guidance is suggested for children in the audience.** Some examples of this rating are *Frozen* (dirs. Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee), *Night at the Museum* (dir. Shawn Levy), and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (dir. Steven Spielberg).
- **Rated PG-13: Parents are strongly cautioned regarding this movie or television show.** The material shown may be inappropriate for children under the age of 13. Some examples of this rating are *Black Panther* (dir. Ryan Coogler), *Hunger Games* (dir. Gary Ross), and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (dir. Gareth Edwards).
- **Rated R: The audience for this movie is restricted.** No one under the age of 17 can be admitted without a parent or guardian. Some examples of this rating are *300* (dir. Zack Snyder), *Get Out* (dir. Jordan Peele), and *Mad Max: Fury Road* (dir. George Miller).
- **Rated NC-17: Due to strong violence or sexual content, no one under the age of 17 is permitted to view this movie in the theater.** Some examples of this rating are *Blue is the Warmest Color* (dir. Abdellatif Kechiche), *The Dreamers* (dir. Bernardo Bertolucci), and *Showgirls* (dir. Paul Verhoeven).

Content descriptors indicate which story elements triggered a particular rating, which may be of interest or concern to some participants. You will still need to detail content descriptors, even if you already have a rating in place, as this will help calibrate the experience to everyone's comfort level.

For example, Nordic LARP designer Karin Edman created a technique for designers called the Ingredients List, where she creates a list of the expected experiences a player might have in her game. Much the same way restaurant menus list common allergens for the safety and comfort of their patrons, *Morra's* rating system functions to identify potentially upsetting material.

Content descriptors should explain exactly why a Genre received its rating, and call out anything potentially problematic or dangerous. Someone expecting to experience *Lassie Come Home* (dir. Fred M. Wilcox) might be quite horrified to discover they are playing *Cujo* (dir. Lewis Teague) and feel disappointed or even betrayed. Some players actively seek out games with mature themes; while others prefer to avoid them. Accurately defining your game's content descriptors ensures you'll be found by the people who want to find you.

Review the MPAA rating card for films in the same genre you're creating to get ideas of content descriptors. Here are some common content descriptors:

- Rated G: No content that would offend a parent or child.
- Rated PG: This may contain comedic action or mild action which parents should review to determine if it is appropriate for a child.
- Rated PG-13: This may contain material which is not appropriate for a child under the age of 13. This includes, but is not limited to: war violence, some images of carnage, brief strong language, some sexual content, brief drug material, drinking, and blood and gore
- Rated R: This contains content that needs strong parental guidance. This includes, but is not limited to: graphic violence, brief nudity, strong sexual content, and strong language throughout (including nudity in your content descriptor is not necessarily an indication that players may be expected to disrobe, but rather that narrative nudity may be present at this level).
- Rated NC-17: This contains content appropriate only for adults. This includes, but is not limited: to sexual situations, violence, drug use, and other elements inappropriate for minors.

Step Three: Determine the Media Length

The next decision determines a good deal about your characters, story beats, and the style of play for your game. Determine the media length of your specific Genre:

- Movie: Single session, one-shot game.
- Mini-Series: 3 to 6 games, with a definite arc and ending.
- Serial: a potentially endless series, possibly divided by seasons.

Step Four: Write a Movie Trailer/ Elevator Pitch for the Series

The next step in creating a Genre is to write a movie trailer or elevator pitch for your project. Pretend you're creating a sizzle reel or trailer that will be shown to distribution executives and audiences to get them excited about your project. The premise doesn't have to be long (500 words or less), but imagine yourself speaking in the bombastic Mr. Voice style when you sum the story up with a tagline, "In a world..."

The premise needs to be the hook for your game. It shouldn't give out too many details, just enough to attract your audience. A good movie trailer should showcase the sorts of characters folks might play, and what sort of adventures they might have. This section should be exciting and reveal what your project brings to the genre.

Step Five: Budget

The Budget describes your project's starting character points and the maximum level of Qualities allowed. Your Budget defines the power scale of your Genre. If you change your Budget during game play — after all, your show might be a sleeper hit — players should be refunded any difference between the original starting Attributes and new starting Attributes.

The standard *Morra* Budgets for starting characters are:

Independent Movie / Web Series

Whether a passion project or your first foray into introducing your artistic vision to the world, this budget applies to films made outside the reach of the big studios. While your funds may be small, your imagination has the freedom (and lack of executive influence) to run wild.

Lead characters are presumed to be at the beginning of their careers. Their starting points are distributed as follows:

- Attributes: 6 points (to spread across all four Attributes).
- Skills: 8 points (to spread across all your Skills).
- Qualities: 5 points to spend on any Quality, up to the Budget's ceiling.

Movie of the Week / Syndication

You've made it past the days where you had to fund everything yourself, and you've seen modest ratings success. The bigwigs have yet to come knocking on your door, but you're pretty sure they've at least noticed you.

Lead characters are presumed to be up-and-comers, with a bit of experience under their belts. Their starting points are as follows:

- Attributes: 8 points (to spread across all four Attributes).
- Skills: 10 points (to spread across all your Skills).
- Qualities: 8 points to spend on any Quality, up to the Budget's ceiling.

Major Motion Picture / Prime Time

People are watching you and throwing tons of cash your way. You might once have been the little guy trying to make your way in the world, but now you're reaping the benefits of prime-time popularity.

Lead characters are presumed to be well-known in their genres, with years of experience and a modest fan following. Their starting points are as follows:

- Attributes: 10 points (to spread across all four Attributes).
- Skills: 12 points (to spread across all your Skills).
- Qualities: 10 points to spend on any Quality, up to the Budget's ceiling.

Blockbuster / Major Cable Qualities

You're at the top. You have the budget to make nearly any dream a reality, and a horde of adoring fans (and more than a few critics).

Lead characters are presumed to be movie stars and household names. Their starting points are as follows:

- Attributes: 12 points (to spread across all four Attributes).
- Skills: 15 points (to spread across all your Skills).

- Qualities: 13 points to spend on any Quality, up to the Budget's ceiling.

Step Six: Create the Genre Archetypes

Archetypes are the high-level tropes we see in almost every story. Over time, we have come up with various ways to describe these tropes, and can find them appearing in television and movie characters. These archetypes resonate with us because we understand their innate desires and goals. We value these archetypes for their insight into our own minds and hearts.

In *Morra*, Archetypes are essentially the classes of characters that may be played within a given Genre. Archetypes can be generated from ideas in the Character Creation chapter (see **Chapter Three: Character Creation**, page 19); Directors and players can also come up with their own Archetypes suitable for the Genre. Directors and players are encouraged to brainstorm the common character tropes and conceits found in the umbrella genre.

There are several ways to create an Archetype in *Morra*. This list is not all-inclusive. If your group finds another way to define Archetypes, document that in your Genre sheet. Your group should choose or create at least five Archetypes appropriate for your Genre.

Archetype Template

Develop your Archetypes with the following process:

Name

Name the Archetype. It should be something symbolic, that best sums up its unique facets. For example, someone who constantly strives for the perfect romantic relationship, whether by focusing on one person or constantly changing partners, might be called "The Lover."

Motto

Give your Archetype a motto. This motto should be a short sentence that best describes its focus. For example, with The Lover, you could write, "Always moving on, afraid if they stop they might miss out on a better relationship."

Symbol

Give your Archetype a visual representation, such as a scepter for royalty or a rose for The Lover. This helps create a visual impression of the trope (useful when building props and costumes).

Description

Write around 250 words describing the Archetype, breaking down what it symbolizes and how the Archetype interacts with your Genre. Even non-players should read the Archetype description and understand its narrative function.

Attribute Bonus

All Archetype gains a 2-point bonus to their Attributes (on top of the points gained from the Genre's Budget) that must be spent a certain way. You should assign these bonuses to Body, Heart, Mind, or Soul. For example, you might assign The Lover a +1 bonus to Body to represent physical prowess and a +1 Bonus to Heart to represent advanced social skills. You can give the entire bonus to one Attribute, but it cannot exceed 2-points.

Special Qualities

Directors may approve Qualities given for this Archetype as a special bonus. These Qualities are limited by the Director, but if approved can come from higher Budgets and/or cost fewer points. Your Director determines the number of additional special Qualities available for each Archetype. Alternatively, Directors can help you can create your own custom Qualities (**Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities: Create Your Own**, page 81).

Jungian Archetypes

Carl Jung defined the twelve most common archetypes found in stories. Jungian archetypes work best when the Director and players are looking for a broad archetype system for a Genre.

Example: A fairy-tale genre about adventure and redemption can use the Sage for an all-knowing mystical healer, the Hero for an all brawn and no brains fighter, the Rebel for a sullen and sneaky rogue, and the Lover for a Bard who sings her way into everyone's heart.

Social Archetypes

This archetype system works best when everyone is in the same group, such as high school students, doctors, or police officers; or they operate in the same area, such as rival space mining companies.

Example: A teenage comedy can modify Jungian archetypes into Nerd, Athlete, Basket Case, Princess, and Criminal (we've all seen John Hughes' *Breakfast Club* by now, right?).

Story Archetypes

Story archetypes are based on the role each character takes in the story. This is often best when the mythology of the story is vital to the genre.

Example: In a supernatural thriller genre, archetypes can be modified to reflect that the characters are Vampires, Werewolves, Faeries, or Ghosts.

Professional Archetypes

You are what you do, and what you do has meaning to the story. This works when the story elements rely upon what someone does.

Example In a police procedural genre, you might adapt the Archetypes to be Detective, Coroner, Psychologist, and Forensic Expert.

Step Seven: Skill Adjustments

At this step of Genre creation, the Director and players add details about important skills. Some skills may be limited, with a description as to how those limitations work. Everyone in the Writer's Room can list skills and specializations which will be helpful to the actors.

Some skills are more or less useful depending on the Genre. A player is still free to choose less useful skills — such as Japanese Bladesmithing in a Procedural Drama Genre — to help round

out her character. However, having a list of pertinent skills helps further define Genre expectations, and determines if the Wildcard Skill needs to be used.

Step Eight: New Genre and Archetypes Qualities

Every Genre should outline the following regarding Qualities:

- Explain how in the Genre, if at all, a Quality may enhance a character beyond human limits. In “Punching Nazis” (**Chapter Seven: Punching Nazis**, page 92), the Genre explains that the characters are humans seeking adventure and fighting injustice. These enhancements become the characters’ Qualities. In another Genre, exceptional Qualities may be derived from super science, mutations, genetic enhancements, powerful rituals, supernatural bargains, or anything your Writer’s Room can devise.
- Define new Genre Qualities and Archetype Qualities you wish to include in this Genre. The rules for creating custom Qualities may be found in **Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities: New Qualities**, page 81.

Step Nine: The Story Bible

Once the other steps are complete, you now create a Story Bible. A Story Bible has several components which flesh out the internal logic of your setting. Keep a written record of your Story Bible somewhere all players can read it and adjust it as your *Morra* production evolves.

Elements

- **Outline of major events**
 - Notate the world-shaping events which players are aware of, and determine who (if anyone) knows the whole story (and relevant rumors).
 - Notate which of these events characters were a part of.
 - Notate the greater historical context of the Genre.
- **Culture**
 - Notate prevalent religions, including schisms or heresies.
 - Notate prevalent cultural traditions.
 - Notate common norms and values.
 - Notate languages spoken.
 - Notate type(s) of government, and the general impression of current leaders.
- **People**
 - Notate powerful and important people, and indicate which ones players may know personally.
 - Notate styles of dress, or etiquette expectations based on social/political rank.
- **Places**
 - Notate places of importance.

- Notate places that have a reputation, either good or bad.
- Notate places that have a history.
- **Premise**
 - Notate the commonly believed creation myth(s) or if your Genre believes in particular scientific theories.
 - Notate stories about the world before the start of the production.
 - Notate the premise of the characters coming together.

The Story Bible should be between five to ten thousand words, and should detail the important world and story aspects you will be using in play.

Some Genres may require longer Story Bibles, or additional information from other *Morra* source books. In addition, the list above is not all-inclusive. Describe additional elements as needed, such as how magic works or how technology integrates into your world.

Step Ten: Crossovers

Do you like elements of other Genres? Do you want to take any Quality or Archetype? You should always feel free to utilize Attributes, Skills, Qualities, or Consequences from other Genres.

You can do this in two ways. Either define that you are using those items in the appropriate Genre section. Alternatively, you can create a new Genre Sheet that defines the crossover between two separate Genres.

Step Eleven: Reference Material

Method actors gather reference material to help them understand how their characters relate to their world. This section is a way for the Director and players in the Writer's Room to gather and share this sort of information about the world, which may only be tangentially related to the story. It may also help players put together information for their characters.

The first place to check for useful reference material is a *Morra* source book. These source books are written to provide guides and references related to a specific Genre. Apart from source books, check your local library, book store, or online distributor for specific historical or cultural information related to your Genre.

The following Reference Materials guidelines should be referenced, edited, and modified as needed:

- Theory and Practice of Magic (see the template in **Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities: Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Magic**, page 82).
- Theory and Practice of Technology (see the template in **Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities: Theory and Practice of Technology**, page 91).
- Genre Bestiary (see the template in Chapter Four: Core Rules, page 40).

Step Twelve: Plot Threads

A great Genre should have a series of obvious plot threads that touch upon the main conflicts of the story to chase when the game begins. Players should have a chance to review these threads before making characters, so they can better prepare for the upcoming experience and calibrate expectations. It is recommended that this list is maintained as the story progresses so that everyone can keep track. (For information on creating and outlining long-term narrative block, see **Chapter Six: Director's Primer: Tips and Tricks for Outlining Seasons, page xx.**)

Here are some examples of plot threads that might be suitable for a plot threads list:

- Fight the Enemy
 - Describe the fight
 - Break it down into offenses and types of missions
 - What does it mean to win?
- Get Rich or Die Trying
 - What does get rich mean?
 - What does social success mean?
- The Quest
 - What knowledge is there to learn?
 - What mysteries are there to solve?
 - What knowledge is forbidden?
 - What change can your characters bring society?
- Exploration
 - What is there to discover?
 - What new technology or innovation has changed society?
 - What does the world lack or need?

Chapter Three: Character Creation

“Matching character and actor is what a good director does.”

— Bruno Dumont

Terror. Exultation. Desire. Anguish. Fury. Do you remember the first time you watched a movie and felt deep empathy with the characters, letting all their emotions overwhelm you, as you lived through their tragedies, laughed along beside them, and screamed for them to run the other way? How did you feel when you saw your favorite movie for the first time? How many people did you tell about the best scene, the intricate character development, or the little moments others might have missed? When did you know this film would stick with you for the rest of your life?

The silver screen captures our attention as children, and never releases its grip on our imaginations. In our youth, we pretend to be a brave warrior or the frightening velociraptor we saw in a movie. Even as we grow into adults, those movies still capture our imaginations, and we wonder how it might feel to be the powerful femme fatale who takes no prisoners, or what we'd do as the hard-boiled detective resisting her charms. Movies and television inspire and shape us for the entirety of our lives.

The Morra Cinematic Universal Game System is a dramatic gaming system lets you, as the player, act out the stories of characters like the ones you see on television and movies. In order to do this, you must first create a character. Creating a character for *Morra* is a simple process; however, it does require a certain amount of working together with your fellow players and your Director. Just like in films or television, every moment captured on celluloid is result of collaboration between writers, actors, editors, producers, and other crew members behind the scenes.

Step One: The Writers' Room

The first step in any character creation process is the Writers' Room. In the Writers' Room, players and Directors pitch characters for the upcoming movie or series. Directors can start this process by presenting a pre-built Genre from a *Morra* supplement, or creating a new Genre using the rules found in **Chapter Two: Defining a Genre**, page 9. Others will want to world-build with the players from the beginning, to ensure everyone has an investment in the story and the chance to be part of the creative process.

Once the Director presents a proposed Genre, each player creates the motivation, background, and abilities for her character in tandem with the other players. This is a good way to ensure that all characters are enjoyable, have time in the story spotlight, and fit within the tone of the Genre.

For example, if Lisa presents a comedic side-kick character for an upcoming game using the Genre: **Punching Nazis** (see page 92), then the players and the Director know the sorts of stories and plots she is interested in exploring. Conversely, Jeff might want to play the murderous, backstabbing villain, and that too signals his intentions and preferred style of play. The Director can approve or deny either concept, pulling the players in a specific direction without locking them down into an uncomfortable role. Often the best approach is from the **Yes and...** school of

improv, where each actor suggests alternative add-ons to the pitches, feeding off each other's ideas until everyone is generally happy, even if the end result is not exactly what they imagined.

The Writers' Room is a good time for serious discussions about the concepts and artistic direction everyone wants to explore. Some Genres may need more discussion in order to ensure everyone agrees. Some mash-ups, like a Space Cowboy Genre, might need further discussion about which aspect is more important, the space or the cowboy.

Remember that Genre defines the following aspects of character creation:

- Available Archetypes
- Budget, which determines:
 - The starting points for your character's Attributes, Skills, and Qualities
 - The ceiling for the highest level of Qualities (sorted according to Budget levels) that your character may purchase.

Sample Genre: Punching Nazis

This is the example Genre used for this chapter, but players should look to the exact Genre they will be playing. Punching Nazis is a mash-up of noir adventure and war movies.

Target Audience: Really, anyone who wants to punch a Nazi. The Genre's narrow focus on World War II allows the Director to be quite flexible in building a game which appeals to her individual troupe. That being said, the emphasis in Punching Nazis is on heroic adventure: this Genre is meant to appeal to those who enjoy stories full of action and high-stakes missions rather than personal, parlor-style stories.

Rating and Descriptors: PG-13, R

Elevator Pitch: War movies are a staple of American cinema, with World War II being a favorite topic. It's easy to understand why: the lines between bad and good were sharply drawn; between fascism, genocide, and those who opposed it. Directors have taken a variety of approaches to the topic, from serious to more fantastic. Even the same director can have wildly different takes: Steven Spielberg made both the dramatic epic *Schindler's List* and the more fantastic adventure *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Punching Nazis takes a more *Raiders of the Lost Ark* perspective. The Genre has room for magic, super-science, and alternate history. The themes inherent in a story about World War II are dark and expose the worst about human nature. While players shouldn't shy away from confronting these themes, injecting a little levity into the Genre means players can enjoy punching Nazis. What's more, loosening the demands for strict historical accuracy allows for wish fulfillment by the players: they can imagine themselves as a crack squad of commandos able to end the war early by killing Hitler (*Inglourious Basterds*, dir. Quentin Tarantino), super-soldiers who can singlehandedly bring an end to the fighting (*Captain America: The First Avenger*, dir. Joe Johnston), or witches-in-

training using their powers to send Nazis packing (Bedknobs and Broomsticks, dir. Robert Stevenson).

Budget: Syndication (see Step Five: Budget, page 13)

Characters have a modest start with character creation, and a good power level for Qualities.

- Starting Attributes points: 12
- Starting Skills points: 15
- Starting Quality points: 13
- Quality Ceiling: Syndication

Step Two: Selecting the Archetype

Carl Jung speculated that there were 12 basic character archetypes for every story ever told. Every Genre has a set of specific Archetypes unique to it. What would the Western Genre be without the shifty gambler or the tough-as-nails gunslinger? In *Morra*, every Genre has at least five special Archetypes available to players. A character's Archetype defines her starting Attribute bonuses, available Archetype Qualities, and general flavor of what players might experience during play.

Selecting an Archetype is the first step in character creation. If a player wants to try something outside of the box, but that still fits the Genre, she should speak with her Director about creating a wholly new Archetype (using the rules in **Chapter Two: Defining a Genre: Archetype Template**, page 14) or using an appropriate Archetype from another Genre.

Sample Genre: Punching Nazis: Archetypes

The Archetypes for the **Punching Nazis** (see **Chapter Seven: Punching Nazis**, page 92) are:

- Commanding Officer
- Intelligence Agent
- Medic
- Pilot
- Resistance Fighter
- Soldier
- Well-placed Civilian

Example: Charlie is excited to play Punching Nazis, and it's time to choose an archetype for his character. He considers Commanding Officer, and knows he could do the role justice. However, he'd rather allow one of the newer players to take on the challenge. avoid the responsibly of herding the other characters, and spend more time punching the actual Nazis. While he loves the spymaster troupe, Charlie feels like he wants to be brassy and bold, and that just doesn't match his view of what an intelligence officer should be. That sparks an

image of a character wearing a leather bomber jacket and a scarf. He then decides on the Pilot Archetype.

Step Three: What's Your Motivation?

Players should select their characters' motivations and backgrounds before building the mechanical details of the sheet, as this helps ensure character sheet choices are founded on concepts central to the character. *Morra* takes inspiration in this section from a series of acting techniques known as Method Acting. Marlon Brando's memorable performance in *The Godfather* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola) popularized this performance style. Brando's work elevated acting as a whole, as his critical and technical successes encouraged many other actors to push their own performances to the edge.

In *Morra*, the player is part of creating the overall world, both as a co-writer and the actor of a specific character within it. A character without motivation is limp and lifeless, with a game session's plot being something that happens to the character rather than a natural progression of the story.

Every player should answer three important questions before creating her character sheet:

- How would your character fit into another work of the same genre?
- What makes your character unique and fun to play?
- How does your character both support and subvert the stereotypes of the genre?

This section has a number of techniques designed to help players discover their characters' motivations, how to imagine the characters as a three-dimensional beings, and finally how to play their characters' choices as a natural outcome of who the characters are. Some of the options listed here might not work within a given Genre, while new Genres might use unique techniques to make the setting exciting and fresh. In addition, sometimes combining motivation techniques can provide the player with a fresh take on otherwise old tropes.

As always, the Director is the final arbiter of what will work for the Genre.

1. Call to Adventure

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell posited the concept of the monomyth, a subconscious mythology template which defined all heroic stories. The Call to Adventure is the primary motivation that sets the hero on her journey. Some of these options might seem similar to the player's Archetype, so players should take care their character motivations add depth and richness to the story.

Choose a motivation from the list below, or create your own with Director approval:

- **Ambition:** Something burns inside of you, driving you to achieve something great and lasting, to be remembered by future generations, to see your name in lights, and to prove Monica Jones from 8th grade gym class totally, totally wrong about you.
- **The Big Payback:** You've been done wrong and suffered for it. You might have been framed for a crime you didn't commit, snitched on for one you did, or you're just plain ticked about being conned out of your money. You know who did you wrong, or at least you think you do, and now it's time for the Big Payback.

- **Chosen:** You alone have been chosen to fight the oncoming storm. This threat might be mystical, prophetic, or detected by some social-scientific logarithm. You might face a horde of vampires, a galactic empire, or the power of robot funded by Huey Lewis. Now, you must master the knowledge and skills required to defeat your enemy before all is lost.
- **Defender:** You have a strong moral or religious code that requires you to place your life on the line. You believe in protecting others – be it from oppression, crime, or horrific poverty – and you’ll do whatever it takes to make sure everyone stays safe.
- **Deception:** Everything about you is a lie. You are caught between a rock and a hard place, and if anyone discovers the truth, you risk losing everything you love. With your stolen identity and fabricated credentials, you have to do your job while also keeping anyone from discovering the truth about you.
- **Escapism:** Your life sucks. Anything that lets you escape from your dreary existence, for even an instant, is to be chased and cherished. You’ll do whatever you can to forget your daily life and replace it with something better, even temporarily.
- **Escape the Labyrinth:** You are trapped in a strange and unfamiliar situation — a prison, an alternate dimension, or a strange fairy hill. You must puzzle/fight/talk your way back to your normal life.
- **Envy:** Someone near you has everything that you’ve ever wanted, deservedly or not, and it kills you. Everyone else got theirs, why can’t it be your turn? They got to ride to the top in the elevator, and not a damn one of them sent it back down.
- **Explore the Unknown:** There’s so much out there to see and do. You want to go beyond, to explore and find adventure in ways no one else has ever done. Whether it’s being the first to see alien worlds, fly across the ocean, or discover a lost continent, you’ll risk life, limb, and even your sanity to discover it.
- **Fear:** Everything you do is motivated by a deep-seated fear. Your fear might take the form of the loss of your loved ones, financial failure, or knowledge of eldritch horrors. You’ll do anything to avoid your fear, including lying, cheating, or going against your friends and family.
- **Happily, Ever After:** You have one last job, a final case, or lasting mystery before you retire for good. You can’t have your happy ending until this final deed is done and you can quit looking over your shoulder.
- **Love:** C.S. Lewis posited in his novel *Till We Have Faces* that there are four types of love: *Storge* (general empathy and kindness towards others), *Philia* (platonic love), *Eros* (erotic or romantic love) and *Agape* (unconditional spiritual love). Some might call you a hopeless romantic or a true friend, but none can say you won’t give every relationship, or every form of love, your all.
- **Overcome Chains of the Past:** You might be from the wrong side of town or maybe your family has a bad reputation. You’ll show everyone that you are just as good as anyone else, if not better. You’ll surpass that which your parents failed to achieve.

- **Race Against the Clock:** You must achieve a specific goal under a harsh deadline, or all you hold dear will perish.
- **Redemption:** You did wrong and now it's time to make things right.
- **Revenge:** You killed my < Relative, Friend, or Mentor >, prepare to die!
- **Save the < Name, Role, or Title >, Save the World:** You've been chosen, selected, or decided to go on a quest to save one person against impossible odds.
- **Win the Object of Your Affection:** Be it a boy, girl, non-binary person, or even a special machine, you're willing to play any part to gain their attention or be the person of their dreams.
- **Wrath:** You are driven by a seething fury that's impossible for you to contain, but sometimes, just sometimes, you can direct it towards your enemies.

2. Quirks

A character's quirks are what makes her unique, even among similar types of characters. For example, a plethora of detective characters loom large in crime fiction, comic books, and countless other stories. The best of these characters have unique personalities which set them apart, creating types which include everyone from Sam Spade to Hercule Poirot to Shaft to Sherlock Homes.

Choose a quirk from the list below, or create your own with Director approval:

- **Big Talker:** You like to dream and talk big, but can you deliver on all your huge promises? Or are you just full of hot air?
- **By the Book:** Rules are rules for a reason. You always follow the letter of the law, even if it hurts you or yours.
- **Collector:** You like having things or people or a certain type, whether it's a set of the coolest friends or every music box with a monkey on it. Sometimes, your desires can take a darker bent...
- **Cocky:** You're more than a little arrogant and reckless, and thus more willing to take chances others shy away from.
- **Compliant:** You're not a leader. In fact, you almost always give into others. Perhaps it's the way you like it, or maybe you are working to overcome something from your past.
- **Crude:** There are times and places for finesse, but you're not sure you've ever encountered either. You may have never learned social niceties, or maybe you did and no longer care, which is why you're always making polite society clutch their pearls.
- **God Complex:** You cannot compare yourself to other humans, because there is no comparison of a god to riffraff. You know you are a superior being, and care little for the conventions holding humans in place.

- **Free Spirit:** You don't have a care in the world, and nothing ties you down. You live a free-wheeling lifestyle full of parties, people, and places, and none of them stay in your life long enough to bring you pain.
- **Heart of Gold:** You have a soft spot and a good intention for everyone. There isn't a mean bone in your body, and while some people try to take advantage of that, you can't help but find a way to show them how to be better people themselves.
- **Hedonist:** Your life is dedicated to exploring and giving in to all the pleasures the world has to offer. There is no pain, no pleasure, and no level of intoxication too intense for you, and you seek to experience it all.
- **Enfant Terrible:** Some say you have no respect for the skills that go into your art, but you know that you are a genius. You find convention tedious, and you're always willing to go out of your way to shock others in order to expand their consciousness.
- **Know-It-All:** You know everything about anything, and you aren't afraid to inform everyone else. Others sometimes tell you that you're overbearing, but you think their judgment is the price to pay for being so damned knowledgeable about the world.
- **Live by a Code:** You have a personal code that drives you. Whether you refuse to take assignments dealing with women or children, or you won't kill in order to get your way, an internal moral logic drives your every action.
- **Loser:** You never seem to win. Everyone else is smarter, cooler, or more attractive than you, and you always seem to sink to the bottom of the heap. You'd say it makes you scrappy, but then you'd have to admit you might have a positive attribute.
- **Obsessive:** You are extreme in a belief, desire, or quest in some way others find disturbing. You have a singular focus, and nothing can stand in your way.
- **Polite:** You are unerringly appropriate with people, even when they go out of their way to offend you. You think the world could stand to learn a few manners.
- **Silent as the Grave:** Your reticence to speak is more than a little unnerving to others, but it's easier for you than blabbing on all the time. Still waters run deep, or at least that's what you believe, and you see little reason to change now.
- **Smooth:** Even when you screw up, you find a way to make it look good. Others may find this attractive, or they may let some small slights go, as you give everything you do a certain style.
- **Steady:** You have nerves of steel and can remain calm no matter the chaos. You almost always have a solution, even when everything is falling apart around you.
- **Spoiled:** You've never really known what it's like to not get what you want, and you are more than a little temperamental when you don't get your way.
- **Tough:** You can survive anything. You know this because you come out the other side of situations others find impossible to bear.

3. Background Tropes

When a player knows the background of her character, that knowledge helps her form a foundation for who her character is. The character's past is the springboard to her present, and can be used to determine the choices she'll make going forward. Was she born to wealth and privilege, or on the wrong side of the tracks? Whatever the answer, it will shape her interactions and priorities as the story unfolds.

If using Background Tropes, the player should choose a history from the list below, or create her own with Director approval.

- **Big City, Bright Lights:** You were born for the city — for the excitement and hubbub of a million people crashing in around you. You know your way around the city and feel at home when navigating the masses.
- **Born for Greatness:** You've been told all your life there was something different about you, that you are better than others. You might have alien DNA, or you might have been lied to, but you've been raised to change the world.
- **Child Prodigy:** From your earliest memory, you've always shocked or impressed the adults around you. You've always excelled — whether through great intelligence, musical talent, or physical prowess — and don't know what failure feels like. Yet.
- **Company Man:** You've spent most of your life working for one place, and it's seeded a deep feeling of loyalty to the company. You may have covered up a few secrets along the way, but nothing can impugn the reputation of a place you love so much.
- **Corn Fed, Small Town:** You're from a small town where everyone knew everyone else's business. You spent your childhood going to church picnics, riding around with your friends, and having Sunday dinners. City folk might think you uncultured, but you understand your past gave you a set of unshakable values.
- **Criminal Past:** You've done something wrong and it follows you. If you were caught, you may be trying to make amends with friends, family, or even the world. If you weren't, you may be on the run or trying to cover up what happened. No matter what though: your crime has screwed up your life.
- **Difficult Childhood:** You don't like remembering your childhood. Maybe your parents had problems they took out on you, or you had a personal bully who made your life a living hell. Your past left wounds and scars you're still trying to deal with today.
- **Family Secret:** Your family has a secret. It might be about a strange uncle who disappeared into the night, or the mysterious fire that killed your mother. You could be complicit in covering it up, making sure no one finds out, or maybe you're trying a little too hard to figure out what happened.
- **Given a Purpose:** Your entire life has a meaning. You've been raised from an early age to complete a goal that can change the lives of others forever. Whether you were raised to be a sleeper assassin or given a secret key to another world, you're destined to fulfill a greater goal.

- **Hidden Gifts:** You know you've got a spark of something within you, but for reasons known only to you, you've always kept it hidden away from others. You may be afraid of your power. You may have a parent who thought you would be taken away if others knew. Maybe you didn't realize it was within you. Now, though, is the time to shine.
- **Haunted:** Something sticks with you, causing you a mental, spiritual, or physical anguish that cannot be helped. It may be a past mistake that follows you, or perhaps an entity you crossed paths with a long time ago that hunts you even now. You just know even if you're not moving, you're always on the run.
- **Huge Disappointment:** Everyone expected you do something incredible with your life. Maybe you were going to go pro with basketball or create the next cure for cancer, but something got in your way and now you're dealing with the fallout of being unable to fulfill others' expectations.
- **Lifer:** You're following in the family tradition. You come from a long line of people who have all done the same thing, and you grew up knowing it would be your life too. Maybe you like what you're doing, or maybe it's time to break free.
- **Middle Class Suburban Mediocrity:** Everything around you is banal. You grew up in a neighborhood just far enough from the city to be safe, but not far enough out for you to run wild. You've only known a life in cookie cutter houses where all the people looked the same. Something more may be in your cards, if you can get over your fear of change.
- **Out of the Military:** You joined the military as soon as you could and made a life out of it. You've only known combat. But now you've either been kicked out or left, and you need to adjust to a life outside of the only place that ever felt like home.
- **Rags to Riches:** You were born dirt poor. Your early years were marked by the struggle to survive and fighting for every little thing you had. Now, you have an abundance of things you once begged for, and it's changing you little-by-little into someone you don't quite recognize.
- **Rebel, Rebel:** Everyone around you had a plan for your life, and you've decided to give them all a giant middle finger. You're breaking free from the expectations others had for you, and plan on shocking them even more with your decisions. It's time to live life on your terms.
- **Riches to Rags:** You had a lot of money as a child, but something changed. Whether it resulted from something out of your control — like Grandmother leaving the family fortune to charity — or as a result of your own actions, you're now learning about the struggle of the common people, and you're not sure how much you like it.
- **Silver Spoon:** You were born into the lap of luxury. You've always had the best things in life and don't know what it's like to live in financial hardship. You expect that with enough money, getting what you want will always be easy.

- **Social Mountaineer:** You've seen how the other side lives, and it's more than just money. You've spent your entire life climbing from a position you consider humble into the glittering social circles you envied as a child.
- **Wrong Side of the Tracks:** You've never been on the right side of popularity. You are part of the wrong neighborhood, the wrong family, or the wrong social class, and people look down on you for it.
- **Ugly Duckling:** When you were younger, people shunned you. They might not have thought you were pretty or smart enough for them to pay attention to you. Now, however, you've come into your own and you're the talk of the town.

4. Whose Side Are You On?

All Genres will have different takes on the story's central conflict, and characters can fall along disparate lines of thought, and end up in many different types of conflict. In any group, there are numerous ways to develop these conflicts, and it's always important for the writers to know where their characters stand.

Some examples of conflicts are listed below. This list is not all-inclusive. Genres will each have their own set of conflicts specific to the themes of that story. Players and Directors should work together to determine the dramatic conflicts they want to explore.

- Reason vs Emotion
- Family vs Family
- Good vs Evil
- Heroes vs Villains
- The Youth vs the Establishment
- Criminals vs the Law
- Nature vs Machine

Sample Genre: Punching Nazis: Factions

The Templates for the **Punching Nazis** (see **Chapter Seven: Punching Nazis**, page 92) are:

- American Armed Forces
- English Armed Forces
- Russian Armed Forces
- French Resistance
- Polish Resistance
- Jewish Resistance
- Civilians, Spies, and Saboteurs

Example: Charlie has a vague sketch for his pilot named Jack Carver, but he needs to shade in a few details to give the concept depth. He runs through the What's My Motivation series of questions:

- **Call to Adventure: Ambition: To Best the Best.** Charlie decides that Jack Carver is the son of a WWI Ace.
- **Quirk: Big Talker.** Jack likes to brag about his skills, and likely got into the habit from listening to his father. He writes very expensive checks that his hands and skills need to pay off.
- **Background Troupe: Corn Fed, Small Town.** Jack grew up in Nebraska, running through the corn fields, and imagining shooting down Fokker M-5s.
- **Whose Side Are You On?** It makes the most sense for Jack to be part of the American Armed Forces. Jack wants to stop fascism in Europe and to protect America.

Step Four: Assign Points to Attributes

Attributes define a character's quantifiable natural talents, and are divided into four categories: Body, Heart, Mind, and Soul.

Attribute Ratings

A typical human character has 2-points in each Attribute. The usual maximum for a human character is 5, depending upon the nature and internal reality of the Genre. All characters start with 1-point in all Attribute categories. If a character ever permanently acquires a score of 0 or below in an Attribute, that character is considered Knocked Out of the story (For more information, see **Chapter Four: Core Rules: Knocked Out of the Story**, page 55.)

Some Genres may change this overall baseline and ceiling due to supernatural or superhuman elements of the Genre's setting: be it magic, super-science, or anything else the Writers' Room devises.

Cinematic Qualities may increase a character's natural Attribute beyond a normal limit. The Budget of the Genre scales the power levels, simulating street-level characters (like a certain dark, caped vigilante known for his gadgets) and cosmic-level characters (like a certain pseudo-sun god character inspired by Moses, immigrant stories, and the American Dream) while still keeping what's unique and special about each character without ruining the other.

Attribute Specializations

For every two points of a specific Attribute a character possesses, she gains an Attribute Specialization. Attribute Specializations may be expended during a game to remove a single level of Consequence for any failed resolution, if the Director and players agree such an action is dramatically appropriate for the story and Genre. Once expended, Attribute Specializations are spent for the remainder of the game session. For more information on this process, see **Chapter Four: Core Rules**, page 40.

Players may select specializations from those listed, or create new ones with Director approval.

Assigning Starting Attribute Points

Every Attribute starts with one point already, and players then spend points as they wish to increase each one. The number of points to assign is determined by the Genre's Budget. These points are not spent like Experience Points (as in **Chapter Four: Core Rules: Experience**, page 58.), but are assigned one-for-one.

Genre Example from *Punching Nazis*

Budget Level: Syndication

The players get 8-points to distribute among the four attributes.

Example: Charlie wants his pilot to be the best of the best, a dashing and legendary hero with nerves of steel. He initially decides to evenly spread the 8-points amongst the four Attributes, and then decides to lower his Mind to 1 and then raise Body to 3 to show that Jack is not so smart guy with amazing skills. Afterwards, he selects Attribute Specializations that meet the needs of the character's archetype.

- **Body: 3**
 - **Attribute Specializations:** Quick, Steady
- **Heart: 2**
 - **Attribute Specializations:** Charming
- **Mind: 1**
 - **Attribute Specializations:** Witty
- **Soul: 2**
 - **Attribute Specializations:** Cool

Attribute Descriptions

Body

Body describes a character's pure, on-screen physicality: her hand-eye coordination, agility, speed, raw strength, and stamina. Mechanically, this Attribute determines how well she is likely to perform physical tasks and stunts, while specializations represent the manner in which she accomplishes these feats. For example, a character with a high Body and the specializations of Agile, Nimble, and Quick might be a runner, a dancer, or a quick-draw gunslinger. Characters with a high Body tend to work with their hands and enjoy physical exertion, such as athletes, manual laborers, or soldiers.

Specializations: Agile, Beefy, Graceful, Hearty, Lifting, Nimble, Precise, Quick, Supple, Tough

Here's a few varied examples of famous actors known for roles that demonstrate a high Body:

- Jackie Chan: The raw energy of his physicality is like a poem. Some of his best performances are *Legend of the Drunken Master* (dir. Yuen Woo-Ping), *Heart of the Dragon* (dir. Sammo Hung), and *Rush Hour* (dir. Brett Ratner).
- Michelle Rodriguez: The dynamic athleticism she brings to every role invites the audience to experience the story through her eyes. Some of her best movies are *The Fast*

and *The Furious* (dir. Rob Cohen), *Blue Crush* (dir. John Stockwell), and *Machete* (dir. Robert Rodriguez).

- Arnold Schwarzenegger: The sheer colossal physique he carefully sculpted is worth millions of dollars in special effects. Some of his best performances are *Conan the Barbarian* (dir. John Milius), *The Terminator* (dir. James Cameron), and *Predator* (dir. John McTiernan).
- Michelle Yeoh: The speed, agility, and grace inherent in her scenes are almost so unbelievably impossible that her movements trigger the audience's uncanny valley response. Some of her best performances are *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (dir. Ang Lee), *Magnificent Warriors* (dir. David Chung), and *True Legend* (dir. Yuen Woo-Ping).

Heart

Heart reflects a character's screen presence: her suave demeanor, a dramatic speaking voice, or even the glamorous beauty of a true movie star. Mechanically, this Attribute determines how well a character can emote, manipulate and inspire others, and how society responds to her actions; specializations represent the exact flavors of how Heart manifests. For example, a character with a high Heart and specializations in Amiable, Empathetic, and Relatable might be involved in the arts, politics, counseling, or any field requiring intense interaction with others. Characters with a high Heart tend to be extroverts who work well with others. They frequently can be found as diplomats, salespeople, or as the emotional core of an ensemble cast.

Specializations: Alluring, Amiable, Attractive, Charismatic, Earnest, Empathetic, Exuberant, Intimidating, Relatable, Sincere

Here's a few examples of various actors who excel in roles which possess a high Heart:

- Angela Bassett: Powerful, unrelenting, and impossible to look away from. Some of her best performances are in *Strange Days* (dir. Kathryn Bigelow), *What's Love Got to Do With It* (dir. Brian Gibson), and *The Score* (dir. Frank Oz).
- Jennifer Connelly: Like a dream, she morphs into whatever role the script demands, and magnetically draws the attention of the audience. Some of her best performances are in *Labyrinth* (dir. Jim Henson), *Requiem for a Dream* (dir. Darren Aronofsky), and *Waking the Dead* (dir. Keith Gordon).
- Idris Elba: The commanding presence of his sonorous voice, calm demeanor, and sheer charisma makes any character he plays compelling. Some of his best performances are in *Luther* (created by Neil Cross), *The Dark Tower* (dir. Nikolaj Arcel) and *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (dir. Justin Chadwick).
- Jack Nicholson: The lothario charm, insane rants, and manic shit-eating-grin of his loveable loser roles forces the audience to empathize with bad or troubled characters. Some of his best performances are in *The Shining* (dir. Stanley Kubrick), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (dir. Miloš Forman), and *Easy Rider* (dir. Dennis Hopper).

Mind

The Mind Attribute defines a character's intellectual capabilities; it describes her ability to learn new information, correlate different points of data, and use reason and logic to arrive at a correct

conclusion. Mechanically, Mind determines how quickly a character thinks and the strength of her focus and concentration, while the specializations represent the exact flavors of Mind. For example, a character with a high Mind and the following Specializations: Calculating, Disciplined, and Intelligent might be involved in with computers, science, or academia. Characters with a high Mind attribute tend to be introverts, working better with abstract concepts than other people, appearing as scientists, technicians, or mechanics.

Specializations: Astute, Calculating, Canny, Disciplined, Experienced, Intelligent, Perceptive, Total Memory, Visionary, Wise

Here's a few examples of famous actors known for roles demonstrating a high Mind:

- Benedict Cumberbatch: His sonorous verbal intonations and piercing eyes reflect an arrogant brilliance that broadcasts a vast, believable intellect. Some of his best performances are in *Doctor Strange* (dir. Scott Derrickson), *The Imitation Game* (dir. Morten Tyldum), and *Sherlock* (created by Mark Gatiss & Steven Moffat).
- Viola Davis: Her watchful expression, calculating eyes which measure everything, and stoic demeanor frequently are put to use showcasing characters who are three steps ahead of everyone else. Some of her best performances are in *Suicide Squad* (dir. David Ayer), *How to Get Away with Murder* (created by Peter Nowalk), and *Widows* (dir. Steve McQueen).
- Jodie Foster: The sharp intensity of how she experiences a scene and listens to other actors immerses the audience into the film, helping them follow otherwise unfilmable inner thought processes. Some of her best performances are in *The Hotel New Hampshire* (dir. Tony Richardson), *Silence of the Lambs* (dir. Jonathan Demme), *Contact* (dir. Robert Zemeckis), and *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane* (dir. Nicolas Gessner)
- Jeff Goldblum: His reflective mannerisms and vast range of verbosity makes his characters' genius seem both possible and yet relatable. Some of his best performances are in *Independence Day* (dir. Roland Emmerich), *Jurassic Park* (dir. Steven Spielberg), and *The Fly* (dir. David Cronenberg).

Soul

The Soul attribute is a character's *je ne sais quoi*: a unique zen coolness that elevates her beyond an ordinary person. Bushido refers to this attribute as a battle aura, a halo of calm and mastery that empowers its wielder to remove fear and doubt from her heart. Mechanically, Soul determines how calmly a character reacts in a crisis, resists fear and mental attacks, and wields the power of the cosmos. The specializations represent the many ways in which Soul can manifest in a character. For example, a character with a high Soul and the following Specializations: Cool, Control, and Zen might be religious, magically intuitive, lucky, or empowered with mystical insight. Characters with a high Soul tend to be philosophers and preachers, content to work alone or with others, appearing as prophets, magicians, or even that really cool guy who always seems in tune with the universe.

Specializations: Beacon, Control, Cool, Disciplined, Insightful, Lucky, Magic, Medium, Supernatural, Zen

Here's a few examples of famous actors known for roles that demonstrate a high Soul:

- Catherine Deneuve: Eternally a lost soul, forever haunted by that which she can't have, her performances exemplify this pain: the existential weight of existence and the strength of resolve to fight both it and madness within. Some of her best performances are in *Belle de Jour* (dir. Luis Buñuel), *The Hunger* (dir. Tony Scott), and *Repulsion* (dir. Roman Polanski).
- Chow Yun Fat: Wisdom hard earned from a rough life is etched in every line on his face; by expressing this wisdom through humor, he invites the audience to share in his connection to the universe. Some of his best performances are in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (dir. Ang Lee), *God of Gamblers* (dir. Wong Jing), and *Bulletproof Monk* (dir. Paul Hunter).
- Keanu Reeves: His eternal, unflappable demeanor reveals a rich inner life, and becomes a calmness which spills over into his performances. Some of his best performances are in *The Matrix* (dirs. the Wachowski sisters), *John Wick* (dirs. Chad Stahelski and David Leitch) and *Constantine* (dir. Francis Lawrence).
- Tilda Swinton: Her eyes are portals to another world, forever distant and impossible for a human to fully comprehend. Some of her best performances are in *Orlando* (dir. Sally Potter), *Only Lovers Left Alive* (dir. Jim Jarmusch), and *Broken Flowers* (dir. Jim Jarmusch).

Step Five: Assign Points to Skills

Skills are a character's quantifiable, learned abilities reflected on the screen.

The following Skills are the baseline skills, available to every Genre. Some Genres may have Genre-Specialized skills that are thematically different. For example, in a Fighting Mecha Genre, the Director might decide that Mecha Piloting is going to be separate from the Transport Skill, because maneuvering a giant combat robot takes highly specialized training. Therefore, she creates the Genre-Specialized Skill – Fighting Mecha.

Skill Ratings

A typical human character has 2 dots in a Skill, unless she is a talented professional or exceptionally trained. The typical maximum for a human character is 5, depending upon the nature and reality of the Genre. Some Genres may change this overall baseline and maximum due to the Genre's setting, be it magic, super-science, or anything else the Writer's Room devises.

Cinematic Qualities may increase a character's natural Skill beyond this limit. The Budget of the Genre scales the power levels, simulating street-level characters (like a certain dark, caped vigilante known for gadgets) and cosmic-level characters (like a certain pseudo sun god character inspired by Moses, immigrant stories, and the American Dream) and keep what's unique and special about each of them without ruining the other.

Equipment bonuses also give Wildcard bonuses to Skills.

Genre Skill Adjustments

Some skills may appear differently in various Genres, either due to a disparity in technology or a scarcity of resources. Any deviation from the standard Skills should be found in the Skill

Adjustments section for the Genre (see **Chapter Two: Defining a Genre: Skill Adjustments**, page 15).

Skill Competency

If your character has 2 or more points in a Skill, it is presumed that the character has both the tools required to use the Skill, and also knows how to perform basic maintenance relevant to the Skill. For example, a character who has Firearms at 2-points is presumed to have a few basic weapons, and to know how to clean and maintain her guns in typical circumstances.

Professional Specializations

Your character gains a Professional Specialization when purchasing the third point in a Skill, and for every point thereafter. If your character has Knowledge 5, she may have 3 Professional Specializations. Professional Specializations may be expended, if the Director thinks it is dramatically appropriate, during a game to remove a single level of Consequence for any failed resolution. Once expended, Professional Specializations are spent for the remainder of the game session (for more information, see **Chapter Four: Core Rules**, page 40). The Specializations listed in each section are suggestions. Directors and players should always feel free to choose new ones if appropriate.

Untrained Skill Penalty

Your character can attempt to do anything within the boundaries of the Genre, but if she has no idea what she's doing, such as having no points in an appropriate Skill, she has a -5 untrained penalty to any resolution technique.

Assigning Starting Skill Points

The number of points to assign to Skills is determined by the Genre's Budget. These points are not spent like Experience Points (as in **Chapter Four: Core Rules: Experience**, page 58), but are assigned to the skills as desired. Unlike Attributes, Skills start with no points pre-assigned at character creation.

Genre Example from Punching Nazis

Budget Level: Blockbuster

The players get 15-points to distribute among their skills.

Example: Charlie reads through the Skills list and selects the ones that most represent the Archetype. He then distributes the starting points. Afterward, he selects Attribute Specializations that meet the needs of the character's archetype.

- **Transport: 4**
 - **Professional Specializations:** North American -51D-20-NA Mustang, Douglas C-47 Skytrain
- **Technology: 3**
 - **Professional Specializations:** Radios
- **Fix: 3**
 - **Professional Specializations:** Planes

- **Notice:** 1
- **Fighting:** 1
- **Firearms:** 2
- **Convince:** 1

Skill Descriptions

Art

The expression or application of talent and imagination to produce something, such as a statue, a painting, a poem, or a song, that stimulates an emotional and intellectual response. You have been blessed by the Muses, or are otherwise gifted to have some form of artistic ability. This Skill covers fine arts (such as painting, music or sculpture), performing arts (singing, dancing or acting) and even more technical arts (such as writing, architecture or design). Directors should always use the Attribute best suited for the application of the Skill during resolutions.

Professional Specializations: Dancing, Drawing, Origami, Painting, Performing, Photography, Playing an Instrument, Sculpture, Singing, Writing

Bushcraft

Major Leslie James Hiddins coined the term ‘bushcraft’ to describe those with the ability to tame the wilderness and live by Mother Nature’s laws. It’s an art often lost to those born in the city, and a valuable Skill to have when lost and alone with only your wits. The Great Outdoors is your domain. No matter the terrain, you’re a master at surviving and even thriving in the wild. If given the time and resources, you can even build a new home and start cultivating crops and raising livestock.

Professional Specializations: Cowboy, Farming, Fishing, Green Thumb, Guide, Hunter, Ranger, Rural, Survivalist

Convince

The Irish might say that you’ve the gift of gab, as though you’ve kissed the blessed Blarney Stone itself. You can convince others to do what you want, whether through lying, threats, or simple charm. While your talent might be brilliant, you can’t convince someone to do something completely against her nature, or which seems blatantly suicidal, no matter how charming you are.

Professional Specializations: Charm, Flattery, Hypnosis, Leadership, Negotiation, Oration, Sales Pitch, Silver Tongue, Threats

Crime

If folks knew how well Crime really pays, there’d be riots and all the police would be ridden out of town on a rail. You’ve been to the school of hard knocks and learned to pick pockets, rob, steal, forge documents, and break into a building and escape with everything not nailed down. Anything you imagine organized crime does, or how a con artist might make a shady living, is covered by this Skill. Crime doesn’t cover conning others or hacking computers, as those are Convince and Technology respectively.

Professional Specializations: Arson, Blackmail, Burglary, Car Theft, Forgery, Hired Muscle, Identity Theft, Petty Crime, Robbery, White Collar

Fighting

You know various methods of inflicting grievous bodily harm to your enemies, whether with a knife, a sword, or even your bare hands. You know how to fight both brutally and tactically. You can plan ambushes, violently escape sticky situations, and fight against multiple opponents by using their numbers against them.

Professional Specializations: Boxing, Brawling, Fencing, Improvised Weapons, Kickboxing, Knife Fighting, Kung Fu, Maces, Sword Fighting, Wrestling

Firearms

With the right firearm in your hand, you are deadly to anyone or anything within line of sight. You've received training and are practiced with the common ranged weapons of your Genre, be it the Colt .45, the M-15 rifle, the Plasma BFG, or even crossbows and long bows. If you are confused, look to the Skill Adjustments for your Genre.

Professional Specializations: Crossbows, Laser Weapons, Long Bows, Machine Guns, Mortars, Pistols, Plasma Weapons, Rifles, Sniper, Thrown

Fix

Fixing broken things just comes natural to you. If given enough time and resources, you have a shot at repairing just about anything. This Skill represents mastery of technical and mechanical repair, carpentry, and anything else that helps you make it work again. Genres with a vastly different technology level should have a section explaining the details of Fix within said Genre. A Genre with the technology level of ancient Rome isn't going to have computers or guns, but a blacksmith with Fix knows how to repair a busted wagon or damaged grain mill.

Professional Specializations: Carpentry, Electrician, Goldsmith, Gunsmith, Handy Person, Jeweler, Locksmith, Mechanic, Smith, Tinkerer

Knowledge

Some might say that the difference between intelligence and wisdom is education and experience. All non-scientific fields of study are covered by this Skill, from history to the occult. This skill represents your character's ability to know obscure facts, research clues and hidden information, or translate languages. At four points, you are considered highly educated, but that doesn't necessarily mean you have a post as a teacher or professor.

Professional Specializations: Anthropology, History, Languages, Literature, Local Lore, Mathematics, Occult, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion

Notice

You've got the knack for noticing clues, uncovering secrets, or just picking up on weird things that others ignore. You're the character who can locate a secret door, notice when someone seems to be lying, catch someone ambushing you before she attacks, or even find spent shell casings in tall grass. Some cultures might believe that you have your third eye open. If supernatural or paranormal elements are present in your Genre, you somehow sense when magic is being used around you, or when you come into contact with supernatural creatures.

Professional Specializations: Awareness, Examine, Explore, Interrogate, Investigate, Notice, Question, Scout, Search, Sense

Medicine

You have the healing touch, the ability to leverage your Genre's accepted medical practices to heal wounds, mend bones, and cure diseases. At four points, you are acknowledged as a doctor, physician or surgeon in your society, but that doesn't necessarily mean you have a good bedside manner. Genres with a vastly different technology level should have a section detailing what's possible with Medicine within said Genre.

Professional Specializations: Dentist, Emergency Medicine, General Practitioner, Nurse, Pharmacist, Psychiatrist, Specialist, Surgeon, Therapist, Veterinarian

Subterfuge

You are quite the slippery devil; deceit, lies, and trickery are your weapons to subtly wield. You've mastered the art of silence, knowing when to blend in and trick others into ignoring your presence. Or you can attempt to befuddle, confuse, and misdirect others. Some might find you a shady character for using such trickery, but the wise say that bullshit makes the world go around, so why not make it spin a little faster?

Professional Specializations: Ambush, Bluff, Camouflage, Cheating, Crocodile Tears, Deception, Excuses, Fraud, Hiding, Tall Tales, Traps

Science

You believe in the scientific method; learning about the universe via observation, measurement, and experimentation. Little makes you happier than modifying an old hypothesis because of new data. Science is theoretical, while Fix and Technology are about applying knowledge in practical ways. While the umbrella of Science covers a vast host of different subjects, individual topics of study can be selected through the Professional Specializations. At four points in Science, you are considered knowledgeable enough to teach at a university, even if you lack a formal degree. Genres with a vastly different technology level should have a section detailing what's possible with Science within said Genre.

Professional Specializations: Astronomy, Biology, Botany, Ecology, Chemistry, Genetics, Geology, Meteorology, Paleontology, Physics

Stunts

The perfect movie stunt can elevate a common movie to a classic. Some things simply can't be faked with special effects and computer-generated imagery, and that's where you come in. In the end, the believability of a shot requires an actor achieving the near impossible. You've trained your body to push beyond its natural limitations and fears to achieve spectacular athletic feats. A Stunt might be scaling the side of an airplane as it's taking off, jumping from roof to roof to chase the robber, or skateboarding against traffic to escape angry drug dealers.

Professional Specializations: Acrobatics, Climbing, Contortion, Evasion, Grapple, Gymnastics, Parkour, Running, Swimming, Throwing

Technology

Science covers the theoretical knowledge about how things work in the universe, but Technology is the application of that knowledge, such as building a robot, writing a computer program, or

designing a bridge. While the umbrella of Technology covers many different pursuits, individual subjects can be selected through Professional Specializations. At four points in Technology, you are considered knowledgeable enough to teach at a university, even if you lack a degree. Genres with a vastly different technology level should have a section detailing what's possible with Technology within said Genre.

Professional Specializations: Alternative Energy, Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science, Engineering, Genetic Engineering, Hacking, Nanotechnology, Particle Science, Programming, Robotics

Transport

The history of the world has often been shaped by how populations transport people and goods from one place to another. This Skill covers the common ways and means of transport for your Genre, be it airplanes that buzz through the skies, hovercrafts that jet over the oceans, or fast cars that roam the desert wastelands. You know how to push your transports to their limit and perform feats and stunts other would blanch to contemplate. Some vehicles or transports might require special training or strange circumstances. For example, in a Genre with giant fighting robots, a Director might require a Transport: Mecha Skill, and allow the standard Skill cover motorcycles, hovercrafts, and starships.

Professional Specializations: Airplanes, Big Rigs, Boats, Cars, Fighter Pilots, Helicopters, Horses, Motorcycles, Ships, Spacecraft

Wildcard

You have specialized expertise in an area of knowledge not covered by the core *Morra* Skills — the ultimate iron chef, a long-term financial planner in the banking industry, or a custom-built cyborg. Some Genres have specialized Skills which require special circumstances—such as purchasing a Quality-- or are common for that universe, but different enough from the core skills that it needs special definition, such as Magic, Transport-Mecha, or Astral Navigation. Each Wildcard Skill presented in a Genre will have a corresponding set of Professional Specializations.

Step Six: Assign Points to Qualities

A cinematic *Quality* is a special trait that makes a character stand out in the story. The character can have magical powers, cool biomechanical toys, or just plain luck. Available Qualities are outlined in the Genre, Genre Umbrella, Genre Factions, Archetype, or Budget. The Director is always the final arbiter of what Quality may be purchased.

Qualities for Punching Nazis may be found in **Chapter Seven: Punching Nazis: Genre Qualities**, page 104.

General Qualities may be found in **Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 60.

Assigning Starting Quality Points

The number of points to assign to this category is determined by the Genre's Budget, which also determines the Quality ceiling. Qualities are purchased at a one-to-one ratio at character creation. For example, if a player wanted to purchase Cantrips (4-point Quality), she would need to spend 4 of her starting points, and her Genre's Budget must at least be Syndication.

Genre Example from Punching Nazis

Budget Level: Syndication

The players get 8-points to distribute among Qualities:

Example: Charlie reads through the Qualities list and realizes that many of the higher cost qualities wouldn't fit with the average man on the ground / God of the Skies concept. He decides to pick up his Archetype Qualities and then pick a sprinkle of others that will help solidify his concept as the guy that gets his team in and out of trouble.

- **Pet Bird (1-point Quality)**
- **Brave (2-point Quality)**
- **Internal Radar (3-point Quality)**
- **Calling Card: (2-point Quality)**

Chapter Four: Core Rules

“There are no rules in filmmaking. Only sins. And the cardinal sin is dullness.”

— *Frank Capra*

The best cinematic experiences are a form of hypnosis: they seduce the audience into loving the lead characters, believing in their story, and embracing the emotional catharsis at the end. During this magical time, audiences don't care about the movie's budget, the special effects, or how the director managed to capture that perfect shot. The only things that matter are their faith in the story and how it makes them feel.

The Morra Cinematic Universal Roleplaying Game System is designed to mimic this experience with quick rules resolution centered around exciting story beats and dramatic moments. Who could forget the thrilling sword duels in the incomparable *Captain Blood*, directed by Michael Curtiz? Only the most pedantic of viewers count the number of sword thrusts, parries, and faceless villains Errol Flynn slaughters, but everyone remembers his panache and the action of the moment.

Rather than existing as a complex simulationist exercise, detailing the blow-by-blow of a scene and weighing the results, *Morra* distills the statistics of your character sheet, and, more importantly, your character choices into a simple equation. This formula then judges the difficulty of the action, and determines the risks and potential consequences. You either succeed in climbing the mountain, speaking before the jury, or fighting the endless horde of zombies, then move onto the next story beat; or you fail and deal with the consequences.

The rules are simple by design. The best story choice is almost always the best mechanical choice. A player can enjoy this game without needing a deep mastery of the rules.

Cast of Characters

In *Morra*, the cast is a collection of characters important to the story. Here are the types of characters you might find in a cast:

- **Stock Characters** — Background characters who are important for a specific scenario within an Act, but are not important to the overall story. These characters lack the Cinematic Qualities necessary to distinguish themselves from anyone else on screen, but still have a name, some sort of relationship to the lead characters, and a simple personality. An example of a Stock Character might be a beat cop closing off a crime scene, a random zombie prowling a post-apocalyptic landscape, an innocent bystander, a beloved pet, or any character who briefly appears onscreen to further the scenario without a long-term dramatic purpose to the overall story. These characters don't have a character sheet, but may increase the Difficulty Rating for a Dramatic Moment.
- **Supporting Characters** — Characters created and played by the Director, who serve a purpose in the larger narrative, sometimes as antagonists across one or more Acts. These characters are most often foils of the Lead Characters in some fashion. Examples of a supporting character are a troubled sidekick to the hero, a rival ship captain seeking the

same treasure, a lawyer trying the other side of the case, or a land developer wanting to scare folks away from the museum. Supporting Characters are created just like Lead Characters, using the same rules as found in **Chapter Three: Character Creation**, page 19, and then given bonus XP as needed. Below is a set of guidelines for creating challenging Support Characters.

Challenge Level of Support Character	Bonus XP	Example
Easy	Character Creation + 25 XP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random Encounter • Trivial Antagonist
Standard	Character Creation + 50 XP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor Antagonist • Monster of the Week
Challenging to Heroic	Character Creation + 100 to 150 XP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Monster or Creature • Mini-boss Antagonist
Epic	Character Creation + 200 XP or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monster of Myth • Boss Legend • Series Antagonist

- **Lead Characters** — Archetypal characters of the Genre, created and portrayed by players using the process as outlined in **Chapter Three: Character Creation**, page 19.

Dramatic Moment

A Dramatic Moment is any action a character takes which allows her to step into the narrative spotlight, be it with an impressive stunt, expressive monologue, or just a cool character moment. The mechanical foundation of *Morra* lies in the following ancient dramatic conceits:

- Conflict reveals character. There exists a vast spectrum of methods for applying conflict to a character, each of them with distinct advantages and disadvantages. For more information, see **Chapter Six: Director's Primer**, page xx.
- For a dramatic moment to be real, there must exist some element of risk. For there to be a triumph, there must always be the potential for a fall, known in *Morra*, as a Consequence).

A Dramatic Moment breaks down into four steps, but experienced Directors can be creative in the exact manner of their execution.

Step One: Detail the Dramatic Moment

The player describes the Dramatic Moment in detail to the Director.

Directors should listen carefully to players as they describe exactly what they want their characters to accomplish. Try to consider everything that a cinematographer might prepare for when framing a shot: the position of the characters and their enemies, environmental factors (like innocents in the line of fire, vehicles or buildings blocking the characters' paths, or even the weather), and the physics of the stunt (is such a thing even possible in this genre? How can it look cooler?).

Don't be afraid of brainstorming the sequence. This isn't an adversarial situation, but rather a collaborative effort between the Director and the players to create the coolest possible outcome. It's akin to a film director, the actors, and the stunt coordinators all working together to show brilliance on the screen.

Step Two: Identify the Action Pool

All Action Pools are determined by the following simple formula:

$$\text{Attribute} + \text{Skill} + \text{Wild Card} + 2d6 = \text{Action Pool}$$

Step Three: Determine the Difficulty Rating

The Director consults the Difficulty Rating chart below, and then chooses the Difficulty Rating which seems appropriate for this Dramatic Moment.

Director's Note: Doing Too Much in a Single Moment

If a character is attempting to do multiple things in a single Dramatic Moment, the Director should require the player to use the Attribute and Skill most important for their part in the shot. For example, if Vinnie the Mooch wants to shoot the tires out of a rival car while driving in heavy traffic during a blizzard, the Director should select the Firearms Skill and increase the Difficulty Rating of the shot.

Difficulty Level	Difficulty Rating	Example
Easy	6-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parallel parking a car • Playing a familiar piece of music • Performing routine repairs on a piece of gear • Climbing a ladder
Standard	10-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sinking a free throw in basketball • Getting to work on time during rush hour • Applying basic First Aid • Climbing a rope
Challenging	15-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translating an unfamiliar language

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking your way out of a speeding ticket • Sinking a 3-point shot in basketball • Performing CPR
Heroic	20-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evading a police chase • Deciphering a lost language • Talking your way out of a misdemeanor charge • Making a half-court shot in basketball
Epic	26-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking your way out of a felony • Performing complex surgery • Flying an unfamiliar aircraft
Impossible	31+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking your way out of a felony with witnesses • Winning a dogfight in an unfamiliar aircraft • Performing complex surgery with improper tools

Step Four: Rolling the Bones!

The player rolls two six-sided dice and adds the result to her Attribute, Skill, and any relevant Wild Card to determine her Action Pool.

- If her total Action Pool is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Rating, she succeeds in her character's Dramatic Moment.
- If her total Action Pool is lower than the Difficulty Rating, she fails and earns one point of Consequence, applied in the category the Director feels most dramatically appropriate.
- If she rolls snake-eyes (double ones), she spectacularly fails adding additional complications to the scenario and earning 2-points of Consequences, applied in the category the Director feels is most dramatically appropriate.

- If she rolls boxcars (double sixes), she may roll again, adding the sum of the additional roll to her Action Pool. If she rolls boxcars in successive rolls, she continues to add to her Action Pool.

Dramatic Moment – Cast Complications

The Dramatic Moment is the foundation of *Morra*. This section details variant mechanics that arise when the cast are competing for the spotlight.

Call Sheet: Order of Initiative

A call sheet is the schedule written by a film director, informing the cast and crew of the day's shooting schedule. If *Morra* cast members (including Supporting Characters) are working at cross-purposes during a scene, then Directors are encouraged to leverage the Call Sheet rule when timing is important.

Before anyone rolls dice, the Director outlines a Call Sheet, featuring every member of the cast ranked by her pending Action Pool. The character with the highest Action Pool resolves her Dramatic Moment first, and then the spotlight moves to each member of the cast in sequence, until everyone has resolved their Dramatic Moment.

The sequence then begins anew so long as members of the cast can and wish to continue the scene. Cast members have the option to go later in the order, if it suits their needs, but once they have lowered their Call Sheet order in the initiative, it is frozen there for the remainder of the scene.

Note: Stock characters do not appear on call sheets as their interaction within *Morra* is factored into the Difficulty Rating.

A Friend in Need

Sometimes, it's in the best interest of cast members to cooperate to achieve a specific goal rather than take separate Dramatic Moments. If the Director agrees that this is possible, then the supported character may add +1 to her Action Pool for every 5-points the lender has in their Action Pool.

Shotgun Sally plans to pop a cap in the ass of her no-good brother Kyle. Her Action Pool for the Dramatic Moment is Attribute (Body 4) + Skill (Firearm x 3) + Wildcard (Shotgun: Firearms +2) for a total of 9. This tickles Jeff's fancy, so he decides to aid Shotgun Sally by laying down suppression fire to help. His Action Pool for the Dramatic Moment is Attribute (Body 3) + Skill (Firearm x 3) + Wildcard (Green Glock: Firearms +2) for a total of 8, which means that he can lend Sally +1 to her Action Pool.

Script Armor

A Stock Character or simple environmental scenario, in most cases, can be overcome in a single Dramatic Moment. The cast, both Lead and Support Characters, have thicker script armor because they are special, as they are the center of this cinematic universe.

The Difficulty Rating of any Dramatic Moment against a Cast Member is her Attribute x3 + Attribute Specializations. This Attribute is always the same as the Attribute in the Action Pool of the Dramatic Moment.

Shotgun Sally plans to pop a cap in the ass of her no-good brother, Kyle. Her Action Pool for the Dramatic Moment is Attribute (Body 4) + Skill (Firearm x 3) + Wildcard (Shotgun: Firearms +2), for a total of 9. The difficulty rating is Kyle's Attribute (Body 3) x 3 plus his two Attribute Specializations: Agile and Tough, to equal 11.

Taking Hits and Receiving Complications

Cast members are resilient, but can take hits during dramatic moments.

Should a Dramatic Moment target and then successfully strike a cast member, she takes two points of Consequences to her relevant Attribute. For every five points above the Difficulty Rating scored on the Action Pool, the target gains an additional point of Consequence.

Shotgun Sally plans to pop a cap in the ass of her no-good brother, Kyle. Her Action Pool for the Dramatic Moment is Attribute (Body 4) + Skill (Firearm x 3) + Wildcard (Shotgun: Firearms +2), for a total of 9. The difficulty rating is Kyle's Attribute (Body 3) x 3 plus his two attribute specializations: Agile and Tough, to equal 11. Sally rolls a 12, making her total Action Pool 20. The 9-point difference between Kyle's Difficulty Rating and Sally's Action Pool creates an additional point of Consequence, and the Dramatic Moment causes Kyle 3-points of Body Consequences. If Sally somehow gained just one more point on her Action Pool, she would have inflicted a total of 4-points of Body Consequences.

Reducing Incoming Complications

Each character who receives points of Consequences from a Dramatic Moment can expend one or more of her Attribute or Skill (from the used Action Pool) specializations to lower the level of Consequences applied to the character for any reason. Remember that specializations refresh at the beginning of every game session. Once expended, you lose access to them.

Kyle takes 4-points of Body Consequences because Shotgun Sally shot him. He has 2 Body specializations. If he takes more than 3-points of Body Consequences, he will be Knocked Out of the Story (page 55), so he decides to expend his Body Specialization: Tough to lower that to 3-points of Body Consequences.

If a character receives more Consequences than she has slots available in that Attribute, then one or more of several things can happen:

- The character is Knocked Out of the story for a time, but may re-enter later by transforming a Consequence into a Flaw (see **Consequences: Knocked Out of the Story**, page 55).
- Another Lead Character could agree to take the excess Consequences (see **Consequences: Collateral Damage**, page 56).
- If this end scenario works for as a death scene for the character, and the player decides it's time for a change, then the Director should work with the player to complete the character's arc (see **Consequences: Final Death**, page 56.).

Dramatic Moment – Director's Flare

The greatest cinema directors possess a unique style that frames the narrative and showcases the story in just the right way to enthrall the audience and achieve maximum catharsis. The Director's Flare is a narrative technique leveraging cinematic style with the mechanics of the

Dramatic Moment to generate an experience that best serves the needs of the story, pacing of the Act, and enjoyment of the players.

Note: Some Genres can have a unique Director's Flare designed specifically for the needs of that story.

Montage

The Montage is a narrative technique which strings together a series of seemingly unrelated activities while the cast works together towards a clearly defined goal. Directors use this technique when they want players to revel in events that aren't interesting alone, but build excitement and tension when strung together.

Montages can be divided into three types:

- Training Montage, such as the training sequence in *Rocky III* (dir. Sylvester Stallone), featuring Rocky and Apollo Creed running the most bromantic race on the beach, complete with epic soundtrack.
- Gestalt Montage, also known as the investigation montage, best epitomized in the television series *Law and Order* (created by Dick Wolf), where a team of detectives, lawyers, and crime scene technicians work together to solve a crime and see justice done.
- Mosaic Montage, wherein a number of images and statements are strung together to form a narrative on a theme, such as ending chase sequence in *The Cannonball Run* (dir. Hal Needham).

Montage: Victory Points

When framing a Montage, the Director declares it takes a set number of Victory Points to succeed, and then assigns a Difficulty Rating. Every point a character scores above the Difficulty Rating when rolling dice in a Dramatic Moment is a Victory Point. Each character attempts her Dramatic Moment on her Call Sheet order, and the scene concludes when someone earns the group enough Victory Points.

This technique may be used in a variety of different scenarios:

- In a Training Montage, both pupil and student must collectively score a set amount of Victory Points to highlight earning a Quality or overcoming Consequences.
- In a Gestalt Montage, all of the Lead Characters must collectively score a set amount of Victory Points in their murder investigation before discovering whodunit.
- In a Mosaic Montage, the winner of a race between the cast (Lead and Support Characters both) must achieve a set number of Victory Points to come in first place.

One Story/Many Acts

A single session of a game is called a *story*, and is modeled after a movie or a television series. Published materials used during a story are called *scripts*. Each new story refreshes expended (Attribute or Professional) Specializations, and potentially removes any outstanding Consequences if enough in-universe time has passed. Flaws, of course, follow characters from story to story.

Each story is made up of story beats, called *acts*, where characters engage with and resolve scenarios. Skillful Directors map out their stories by planning out their acts to reach a meaningful climax.

One Act/Three Scene Structure

Movies and television screenplays evolved from the literary traditions of a stage play, dividing beats of a longer narrative into acts and scenes. *Morra* mimics this structure to provide shape and form to its resolution system. This method begins the story *en media res* (in the middle), utilizing the resolution structure of setting up the scenario; introducing the conflict, its stakes, and consequences; and then resolving the conflict.

Here's how to arrange a scenario in the One Act/Three Scene Structure method.

Scene I: The Setup

To capture the audience's attention, the Director must first set the stage. They describe the location by defining the background, and then establish the status of the main characters.

Space is cold, but there are always stars to light your way. Hyperspace is just black, nothing. An old merchant cargo vessel named The Phoenix, surplus from the Sundering Wars, silently runs her plotted hyperspatial trajectory while her crew sleeps... until gravity suddenly, and violently, swirls in an eddy, pulling the ship into real space and sounding the klaxon alarm.

If this were a television series, the Setup might be referred to as the establishing shot. The screenplay would read something like this:

EXTERIOR: The Phoenix

INTERIOR: Crew quarters, low lights set towards a rest period.

The crew of The Phoenix sleeps in their bunks. Only the pilot Wang is missing, having drawn the short straw and been tasked with the night watch. Everyone is suddenly roused from their slumber by shaking and a loud alarm.

Scene II: Reveal the Conflict

Once the shot is properly established and the players are familiar enough to comfortably interact with the environment, the Director should set the conflict. Directors should set the stage by describing the background, the general situation of the scenario, and the status of the main characters. This is a chance for the characters to banter, bond, and assess the situation.

The crew wakes, frantic. Naturally, the pilot Wang turns to his instruments. Wells, the captain, and her mechanic, Mouse, check the ship for any damage. The Director reveals the ship has no visible damage and everything seems to be in working order. Sensors show some sort of artificial gravity is sucking the ship into normal space, which means a gravity well projector. Only planetary navies or really powerful pirates have that sort of equipment. Stars fade into view as the Phoenix enters real space just outside of firing range of a frigate marked with the skull-and-crossbones. Pirates!

The Director can opt to make any of these characters perform a Dramatic Moment (page 41) to learn the vital information, but it fails to meet the basic requirements of the One Act / Three

Scenes structure. The crew is trained and good at their jobs. Simple tasks that the cast are able to do in their sleep without some sort of external pressure should simply be handwaved. The cast might be worried, and justifiably so as will be revealed in scene three, but until the proper stakes are known and understood, the Director simply progresses through the scene. When the moment is ripe, begin **Scene III: Resolution**.

Director's Tip: Dramatic Moments

A Dramatic Moment is when a character attempts an action outside of a resolution phase, often for roleplaying purposes or to prepare for a resolution. Don't panic! Select the resolution technique that best resolves the Dramatic Moment, and press onward. If the character wants to transform the moment into an entire resolution scene, the transition will be seamless to the audience. This structure is designed to help Directors organize their stories. To paraphrase the great Bruce Lee, keep what's useful and discard the rest.

Scene III: Resolution

Once tension is built, it's time for the conclusion. Directors can utilize any rule from the following sections to create dazzling resolutions:

- Dramatic Moment (page 41)
- Dramatic Moment – Cast Complications (page 44)
- Dramatic Moment – Director's Flare (page 45)

The follow resolution is an example of how a Director might design a resolution.

Step One: Dramatic Moments

Each cast member works out her own Dramatic Moment (page 48) with the Director. These Dramatic Moments must somehow aid the cast in pushing forward towards victory.

The Phoenix has entered real space, caught at the edge of an artificial gravity well generated by a frigate bearing the markings of pirates, The Kalashnikov Collective. Captain Sergio found them!

Their enemy's booming voice echoes over the comm. "Wells! I'm gonna to blast you out of the sky and sell your ship for scrap!"

Captain Wells remembers from her training in the Imperial Navy that gravity projectors are located at the back of the ship. If her crew can get The Phoenix past the frigate, they might be able to escape before being boarded. Wells decides to contact the pirates over comm channels to stall them, while Wang and Mouse navigate The Phoenix to a bypass course, and blast their engines.

Wells attempts to delay the pirates using Heart + Convince as her Action pool, total 9.

Wang wants to out-manuever the pirates with his flying, using Body + Transport + Wildcard: Phoenix, as his Action Pool, total 13.

Mouse will aid Wang using her mechanical abilities (Mind + Tech), total 10 (for a total of +2 bonus to Wang).

Step Two: Call Sheet/Order of Initiative

All characters go on their Call Sheet order, which is determined by their Action Pools, from highest score to lowest score.

Stock Characters in an Action Shot do not receive a Call Sheet order, as their interaction with this calculation is already factored into the Difficulty Rating of the Action Shot.

For the example of The Phoenix Crew Action Shot, the Call Sheet Order is:

1. Wang (Action Pool 15, aided by Mouse's +2 Supporting an Ally action)
2. Captain Sergio (Action Pool 11)
1. Wells (Action Pool 9)

Holding Your Call Order

If the cast has a plan that requires characters to act out of order, a player can voluntarily hold her action until the timing is right. In this example, Wang waits until Wells contacts the pirates to engage his plan. Although Sergio technically goes before Wells, the Director decides that Sergio would enjoy hearing Wells beg for her life.

Step Three: Rolling the Dice

Each player rolls two six-sided dice and adds the total to her Action Pool.

- If a character's total Action Pool is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Rating, she succeeds at her character's Dramatic Moment.
- If her total Action Pool is lower than the Difficulty Rating, then she fails and earns one point of Consequence, applied in the category the Director feels is most dramatically appropriate.
- If she rolls snake-eyes (double ones), she spectacularly fails. She has additional complications to the scenario and earns 2-points of Consequences, applied in the category the Director feels is most dramatically appropriate.

Wells attempts to delay the pirates with her banter. Sergio is a member of cast, even if he is a Supporting Character. His difficulty rating is (Heart 3) x 3 plus his two Attribute Specializations: Intimidating and Tough, equaling 11. Wells rolls double ones, and inadvertently insults and infuriates Captain Sergio. She earns 2-points of Consequences.

Alternatively, Wang seeks to outmaneuver the entire pirate crew. The Director decides she's going to make it a Heroic Difficulty (20) to represent such an impressive task. Wang's player rolls a 5 and a 6, for a total of 11. He adds 11 to his Action Pool of 15 (which includes the bonus from Mouse) and gets a total of 26. The Phoenix escapes!

Step Four: Applying the Consequences

Wells accrued 2-points of Consequences. She has the option of Reducing Complications via burning her Specializations, but it's early in the story and her player figures that she will have plenty of other opportunities to insult others before the night's over. The Director considers the matter, consults the chart, and awards her Provoked (2-point Heart Consequence), making it almost certain that the pirates will return later in this story.

Step Six: Repeat as Needed

If the cast fails to resolve the scene in their first run through the Call Sheet, continue as needed until the act concludes.

Contract Negotiations

Contract Negotiations is a mediation technique which completely replaces and supplants the traditional Dramatic Moment and One Act/Three Scenes rules. It may be used at any time, by any member of the Cast or the Director.

This technique should be used in the following circumstances:

- A member of the cast is not comfortable with the content of an unfolding scenario. She signals her discomfort by saying, *“That’s not in my contract.”*
- A member of the cast or the Director has an idea they wish to present and discuss. This is signified by the line, *“Cut! I have notes.”*

In Hollywood, this sort of scenario often occurs behind the scenes when directors, actors, writers, and the studio executives encounter creative differences. The documentary about the first season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, titled *Chaos on the Bridge* (dir. William Shatner), reveals the inside world of a production house that’s often at odds internally over creative direction, budget, and scripts.

Be Kind; Be Aware: “That’s Not in my Contract!”

This is a warning flag that a scene is asking a cast member to engage in something she’s not comfortable with. This meta technique is a great way to maneuver past awkward situations, without requiring discussion of individual tastes or personal history.

Step One: The Pitch

The cast member or Director calling for negotiations should make a short elevator pitch, defining exactly what the negotiator hopes to accomplish. Try to phrase things in a positive, encouraging manner, and avoid completely shooting down ideas if possible. This is a scenario where the *Yes, and...* improvisational comedy rule can help generate interesting scenarios. Here are examples of pitches that might occur:

- Alter the nature of a scene because it contains material outside of what the cast is comfortable with, even if such a scene is within the Rating and Descriptors of the Genre. Why a scene is uncomfortable isn’t as important as what can be changed to make every invested party happy with playing it out. For example, a player with an intense phobia of spiders might not want to imagine her character being thrown into a nest of them. This doesn’t mean the character escapes a dastardly fate, merely that the details change. Often, it helps to talk about the scene in third person to avoid any potential embarrassment or discomfort. Ex: “Rather than set his trap with a thousand spiders, what if Doctor Funktastic has an army of trained Dalmatians attack me? What’s more disco than that?”
- Change the setting of the Genre. This might include:

- Retool the premise of the series. *What if instead of monster hunters, the cast became monster lawyers?*
- Change the basis of the central Genre:
 - Increase or decrease the Budget: *This is season two, shouldn't we have better sets?*
 - Alter the Rating: *The audience seems to want more violence. Think we can jump to PG-13?*
 - Add New Archetypes: *I know this is a Western, but what if we added Ninjas?*
- Propose an end-date for the series: *What if this Arc introduced the series finale?*
- Retool a character from the cast
 - Alter the personality or quirks of a character in the cast: *What if the experience of war turned my character bitter and mean?*
 - Change the background of a character: *What if I was secretly the murderer all along?*
 - Retire a character from the cast: *What if I offer to retire my character in a blaze of glory to help the others escape?*
 - Upgrade an existing Support Character to a Lead Character: *My character is Knocked Out, and I've always enjoyed the dogged sheriff chasing us down. What if I take over that role, and she is forced through circumstances to join the cast as an outlaw?*
- Reboot the series with mostly new characters, because the players love the Genre but some of them might want to try different characters or a slightly different premise.

Step Two: Writer's Room Discussion

Once a proposal has been made, it's time to return to the Writer's Room, with the Director leading the discussion as the Producer. Some topics to discuss:

- How will the proposed change affect the Genre?
- How will the proposed change increase the enjoyment factor of the Genre?
- Is there anything that could be done to modify the pitch to make it a better fit for everyone's needs?

Step Three: Producer's Incentive

If the Producer believes the proposal is a good idea, and would help the overall enjoyment of the Genre, she has the power and authority to offer incentives in the form of a story's worth of XP, removing Consequences, and allowing the opportunity to remove a flaw or purchase an unusual Quality.

Step Four: Bargaining Power

Each member of the Writer's Room has an opportunity to make a counter-pitch. They might have an alternative idea, or want more of a payout from the Producer. This is an opportunity to play through an intense negotiation at the meta level and there might be several iterations of proposals and compromises to be made before the final decision is done.

Step Five: A New Direction

Once a proposal is agreed to by all parties, then it's time for the Director and cast to narrate through the results. Just because the results were decided doesn't mean the trip to get there can't be fun and exciting. Narrate the scene full-tilt and enjoy the moment.

Consequences

A Cinematic Consequence is the result of a Dramatic Moment, be it a failure of some sort or taking a hit from a cast member. A good Consequence raises the stakes of the scenario and ensures future scenarios become more interesting moving forward.

After the resolution of Dramatic Moment, the Director assigns a number of points of Consequences of a specific type based on the outcome of the roll (see Consequences, page 52). These Consequences apply to the character until they're removed, either by converting them to Flaws of equal point value, or by meeting a story condition which the Director deems appropriate.

Consequences break down into the following:

- Type
- Penalty
- Condition

Consequence Type

There are four general types of Consequences, each associated with a specific Attribute.

Body Consequences

Physical Consequences are tolls taken upon the body due to strenuous activity. They represent fatigue and injury suffered from exertion and combat. Those who suffer Body Consequences must cope with their body shutting down as bones break and organs fail.

Heart Consequences

Heart Consequences represent damage to a character's Heart, whether it's perceived, actual, or internalized. Characters who accumulate Heart Consequences find themselves ignored, isolated, punished by society, or embarrassed; and feel the need to socially withdraw.

Mind Consequences

Consequences of the Mind represent frustration and mental fatigue. Those afflicted by these Consequences find it difficult to process thoughts or articulate them clearly, eventually suffering severe impairments to their cognitive ability.

Soul Consequences

Soul Consequences represent wounds to the psyche suffered through traumatic events. As Consequences accumulate, characters find their ability to empathize, as well as their capacity for creative expression, diminished.

Consequence Penalty

A Consequence penalizes all Action Pools of its type, so long as the conditions are met.

Example: A two-point Body Consequence (Condition: Wound) subtracts 2-points from every relevant Body Action Pool until it is resolved.

Consequence Condition

Consequence conditions encompass a variety of effects and limitations designed cover any imaginable scenario.

A Consequence shouldn't directly oppose an already existing Consequence. Likewise, characters cannot suffer from the two different iterations of the same Consequence at the same time. Some Genres will have more details on how some of these conditions might apply in their world. For example, the Genre: *Punching Nazis* has an expanded section on Shell-shock (see page 92).

Here's a chart to help Directors create thrilling and unusual conditions for their Consequences:

Condition	Effect	Flaw Conversion
Taboo	<p>You've been caught breaking one of society's taboos or laws, resulting in some form of punishment.</p> <p>You could have been caught speeding, slept with a married person, or were arrested for a crime you didn't commit. The more heinous the taboo violation, the higher the penalty.</p> <p>Some examples might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Ridicule • Community Service • Jail Time (misdemeanors) • Prison Sentence (felonies) • Execution 	<p>A taboo can make for a dangerous Flaw as it sets society, and the Genre itself, as a challenge for your character. She will always suffer the penalty as though it is an active Consequence, and consistently be mistrusted. Here are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheater • Ex-Convict • Traitor
Trigger	<p>This sort of condition can be quite insidious. You carry the Consequence inside of you until certain conditions are met (such as facing an enemy who's defeated you, visiting a feared place, or being in the presence of a mysterious</p>	<p>The trigger becomes a regular feature of the character as a Flaw. She will always suffer the penalty as though it is an active Consequence. Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cursed (has effect under certain conditions)

	object) before the Consequence triggers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phobia • Shell-shocked
Wound	You have been wounded, and will suffer from this Consequence until you heal via rest or medical attention. While this condition is most often associated with Body, it applies equally to all types of Consequences. You may wish to be specific about the damage so as not to overly restrict a character. For example, a wounded eye might penalize perception rolls for the Body.	<p>The wound becomes a regular feature of the character as a Flaw. She will always suffer the penalty as though it is an active Consequence. Here are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing Eye • Crushed Hand • Limp

Removing Consequences Through Story

Consequences are not permanent. If certain story conditions are met, the Director can allow a character to overcome her Consequences. Most often, these are actions taken during downtime or in the background.

- Body Consequences can resolve with First Aid or medical treatment, depending on the severity and on the story setting.
- Heart Consequences can resolve with resources expenditures, and demonstrations of remorse, such as gifts, acts of contrition, or good works.
- Mind Consequences can resolve through relaxation or introspection, such as meditation, cognitive therapy, or medical treatment.
- Soul Consequences can resolve by emotional connection and support, such as counseling, psychotherapy, or time spent with loved ones.

What these conditions are is up to the Director, different circumstances and different settings can require different things. Likewise, a setting's access to technology or certain Heart stigmas (such as a strict honor code or a bias against mental illness) may make some Consequences more difficult to shed than others.

Level 1 Consequences

These Consequences can be removed with an hour or so of rest, reflection, or non-strenuous action. Characters can often meet this requirement between scenes.

Level 2 Consequences

These Consequences can most often be removed with a night's rest, or performing some action which take a few hours to fully benefit from. Characters can often meet this requirement between stories, or even acts.

Level 3 and higher Consequences

These Consequences can take anywhere from a full day to a week or more to fully resolve. A break like this is usually infrequent, but may be appropriate in some settings.

Consequences: Knocked Out of the Story

If a character earns more Consequence penalties than points in her relevant Attribute category, the character is Knocked Out of the story. The exact narrative method by which this happens depends entirely upon a discussion between the Director and the player. Some narrative examples might include:

- An explosion knocks her backwards, out of sight, and presumed to be dead. No one could survive that. (Body)
- The horrors of the war, shells exploding all around her, terrified her. She flees from the battle. (Heart)
- The eldritch terror of the creature drives her mad, leaving her trapped in a fugue state. (Mind)
- The demon sapped her strength, feeding upon her soul itself, leaving her a mere shell of her former self. (Soul)

A player of a character Knocked Out of the story can still be a vital aspect of the game. Such players become assistants to the Director, play Supporting Characters, and organize the Writer's Room.

Turning Your Consequences into a Flaw

A Flaw is a permanent Consequence that can't be gotten rid of without a specific storyline and Director approval. The player must then expend the appropriate amount of XP (see Experience Points, page 58).

A player can review her Consequences before taking the Knocked Out of the Story option, and decide to accept one of the Consequences as a Flaw. This reduces the points she has in said Consequence category. Some examples might include:

- Flaw: Wound. She's injured her eye, and suffers a -2 Wild Card penalty to any resolution that deals with sight or the Firearms Skill. (Body)
- Flaw: Taboo. The horrors of the war, shells exploding all around her, terrified her. She flees from the battle, or suffers a -2 penalty to all Heart rolls, and is now known far and wide as a coward. (Heart)
- Flaw: Trigger. The eldritch terror of the creature drives her mad, forcing a -4 penalty to her Mind rolls when confronted with evidence of the dark lord and his presence on this world. (Mind)

- **Flaw: Wound.** The demon sapped her strength, feeding upon her soul itself, leaving her a mere shell of her former self, forcing a -2 penalty on all Soul rolls. (Soul)

Consequences: Collateral Damage

Before Consequences are applied, a player who failed the resolution to the point of being Knocked Out can ask the cast to shoulder some of the burden. Each Lead Cast member can choose to accept one or more of her Consequences. Tactically, this is especially wise if the character is vital to the resolution, or the cast doesn't want to lose a member too early in the story.

Consequences: Final Death

Sometimes, failure and death are a brilliant way to end a story for a character. If a character is Knocked Out of the story, the player should consider if that's a proper ending for the character. She and the Director should discuss and possibly edit the scene to ensure her character's death has the maximum emotional impact.

Equipment

Equipment and weapons are created via a simple formula. Characters may automatically have anything that matches the feel of the Genre and fits within its Tech Level limitations. A Detective with modern Tech Level is expected to have a fast car and a .38 special, whereas a laptop or laser blaster is clearly out of bounds.

Each item naturally contains 2-points that can be applied to any appropriate Skill as a Wild Card bonus. Advanced equipment that grants additional Skill bonuses or special Qualities requires the purchase of one of the MacGuffin qualities.

Here are some examples of regular items:

- Broadsword: +2 Fighting
- Student laptop: +1 Knowledge and +1 Technology.
- Switchblade: +1 Fighting, +1 Stealth
- Pickup truck: +2 Transport

MacGuffins: Advanced Equipment

“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”

— *Arthur C. Clark*

In the language of Cinema, a MacGuffin is a unique object: the Maltese Falcon, a special briefcase containing the soul of a wicked man, or a legendary sword. The item itself is usually less important than the plot it drives.

In *Morra*, a MacGuffin is an item, piece of equipment, or weapon that is special beyond the norm. Said item might be made with advanced technology, mystical might, or simply be rare and

valuable. To possess such an item, Lead Characters must purchase the appropriate Quality (as listed below) before gaining the benefits.

All MacGuffins gain the standard equipment bonuses (see **Equipment**, page 56) and then Bonus Skill Points to spend as per the guidelines. These Skill Points can be spread across several Skills, though low-level MacGuffins are restricted in how much they can raise any given Attribute. High-level MacGuffins may also grant Qualities to the wielder. Note: MacGuffins cannot grant Qualities that gift the knowledge of magic (such as Magic Dabbler, page 73) or science (such as Super Science, page 71).

Some qualities, such as Calling Card (page 65), can be stacked onto a MacGuffin. In this example, a vigilante detective would have special equipment marked with his sigil, aka his Calling Card.

Here’s the chart of available MacGuffin Qualities, and what might be made from them.

Quality	Additional Bonus from Quality	Examples
Trivial MacGuffin – a slightly better than average tool, piece of equipment, or weapon (see page 65).	+1-point to spend on Skill Bonus Points.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magnum: +1 Firearms • Getaway Car: +1 Transport • Smart Phone: +1 Tech
Minor MacGuffin – an advanced or expensive tool, piece of equipment, or weapon (see page 68).	+3-points to spend on Skill Bonus Points, but may not raise any single Skill above 3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sniper Rifle: +3 Firearms • Modified Pursuit Vehicle: +2 Transport, +1 Stunts • Hacker Rig: +2 Technology, +1 Knowledge
Major MacGuffin – an elite tool, weapon, or item created with cutting-edge technology, or imbued with low levels of magic (see page 77).	+5-points to spend on Skill Bonus Points. May not raise any single Skill above 4. Add 2 Qualities (must be 8-points or lower) to any wielder of the MacGuffin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sword of Truth: +4 Fighting, + 1 Notice, Qualities: Armor (page 74), Major Projectile Blast (Lightning) (page 77) • Battle Armor: + 3 Fighting, +1 Firearms, +1 Transport, Qualities: Hard to Kill (page 75), Indomitable

		<p>(page 77)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spectral Googles: +4 Notice, +1 Fix, Qualities: Clairvoyance (page 74), Eagle Eyed (page 72)
Epic MacGuffin (see page 79).	+8-points to spend on Skill Bonus. May not raise any single Skill above 5. Add up to 4 Qualities (must be 8-points or lower in total) to any wielder of the MacGuffin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Band of Justice: +3 Fighting, +3 Knowledge, +2 Notice, Qualities: Armor (page 74), Avatar (page 74), Enhanced (page 72), Hard to Kill. • Ring of Power: +4 Convince, +2 Stealth, +2 Subterfuge, Qualities: Voice of Authority (page 71) Indomitable (page 77), Hypnosis (page 75), and Camouflage (page 72). • Forever Nanites: +4 Technology, +3 Knowledge, +1 Fix, Qualities: Telekinesis Indomitable (page 77), Immortal (page 75), Flight (page 74).

Experience

Experience points (XP) are earned after the completion of each story. *Morra* recommends awarding one experience point per Budget level per game.

Experience Point Chart

Experience Cost	Item
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3x New Level	Attribute
3x New Level	Skill
5 x Quality Point	Quality
2x Flaw Cost	Buying Off Flaws

Experience Points and Qualities

Attributes and Skills are purchased at the current base level. All bonuses from Qualities are applied after this purchase.

*Jack “Mad Dog” Kincaid has a Body of 4 and Fighting of 3. If he wants to increase his Fighting to 4, he pays 12 XP (3 XP per New Level). He can then purchase the Quality **Specialized Training** (1-point Quality), at 5 XP, to increase his Fighting to 5.*

Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities

“Cinema is the most beautiful fraud in the world.”

— Jean-Luc Godard

What makes fictional characters interesting or unique? What do they have that enables them to stand out among a crowd of extras? What’s that special *something*?

A *Cinematic Quality* makes a character special or unique when appearing on screen. *The Morra Cinematic Universal Game System* measures these theoretical traits, then weighs them against each other, transforming every element into game statistics. The end result is a simulation of what might be seen on-screen through special effects and camera tricks.

A Cinematic Quality can be a trait of the actor portraying the character, relevant to unique story beats, or something connected to stunts or special effects.

Cinematic Qualities are an opportunity to round out your character, while also helping them fit into the Genre. You can use them to build cyborgs, wizards, intelligent animals, tech geniuses, or even a Plain Jane or Joe whom everyone seems drawn to. The combination of options to make your character a star of the story is virtually endless.

Some Cinematic Qualities may be restricted according to your Genre, Genre Umbrella, Genre Factions, Archetype, or Budget. It’s also possible for Directors or players to create new Cinematic Qualities that meet your needs. The Director is always the final arbiter of what Cinematic Qualities are appropriate for any given Genre.

Quality Limitations

The following are general limitations on the purchase of Qualities.

- Budget determines the type of Qualities players can select and purchase. Players can purchase Qualities from below their budget, but not from above. If the Budget is set for Syndication, a player can’t build a character with Blockbuster Qualities.
- Some Qualities are restricted due to the conventions of your Genre or Genre Umbrella, even if said Quality is otherwise within the Budget. The Director of a gritty, 1940s detective story would be well within her rights to disallow extraordinary Qualities such as Flight (see page 74), because flying detectives don’t match the Genre’s themes or aesthetic.
- Archetype Qualities can allow you to purchase a Quality that is outside your Budget, but at a discount which brings it within range.
- Some Qualities can have a pre-requisite Quality that must be purchased first. For example, the Quality: Psychic (page 73) must be purchased before taking Clairvoyance (page 74). All Magic Qualities must be purchased in sequence.
- A character can only have a single Quality that increases a specific Attribute, but she can have multiple Qualities which increase different Attributes. She can also upgrade her Quality to one of a higher cost (and thereby obtain a more potent bonus).

- A character can't purchase a quality which weakens or completely removes a Flaw until the Flaw has been removed via spending XP (see **Chapter Four: Core Rules: Experience**, page 58).
- If upgrading to a higher-point Quality, the character pays the difference in XP to graduate, presuming that she meets all other requirements. For example, if a character wants to upgrade from a 10-point quality to a 20 point Quality, she needs to spend 10 XP.
- If a character somehow loses access to a Quality through story, such as a MacGuffin being stolen or a Sidekick murdered, the XP expended gaining that Quality is lost forever.

General Qualities

General Qualities are designed and calibrated according to current cinema's capabilities. Some of history's greatest movies like *Casablanca* (dir. Michael Curtiz), *Citizen Kane* (dir. Orson Wells), or *Seven Samurai* (dir. Akira Kurosawa) would today be considered Independent Movies due to their budget, technological limitations, and conventions of the era. Though *Citizen Kane* was revolutionary in terms of directing, cinematography, and how far it advanced the art, every trick, camera angle, or special effect can be duplicated today by a modest camera and affordable laptop.

Independent Movie/Web Series Qualities

General Qualities at this Budget are designed to be low-level traits to simulate an average-person, street-level story which uses inexpensive methods to capture the action. These tricks might be captured via excellent acting, cunning edits, the perfect camera angle, a great Foley (sound effects) artist, or a clever props master.

Some Umbrella Genres that work best at this Budget level include: B-Movies/Exploitation Flicks, Comedy, Film Noir, Melodrama, Drama, Romance, Slasher, and Spaghetti Western.

1-point Indie Qualities

Alternate Route (1-point Quality)

Once per game, you can ask the Director for a hint regarding an alternate solution or route. If your group has hit a brick wall, you can ask the Director for hint towards the right direction. If someone in your group wants to do things one way, and you're not sure if it's a good idea, you can ask your Director for a bit of guidance.

Alternate Route doesn't mean you can randomly ask, "Is this a good idea?" and get a direct yes-or-no answer. The Director gives you a few good hints, the rest is up to you and the other characters.

Animal Companion (1-point Quality)

You have a trained animal companion, a true friend who would do anything for you. This companion is a Stock Character who knows a few special tricks. This companion could be an obedient dog who answers questions yes or no by barking, or a tarantula who grabs your wallet for you. It could also be a monkey who rides around on your shoulder, or a rodent you carry around in the pouch of your

hoodie. This companion can take simple actions on your behalf, but cannot fight your battles, carry you to the hospital, or perform overly complex tasks.

Bread and Fishes (1-point Quality)

You've always been handy in the kitchen. You are one of those folks who can whip up a gourmet meal after shopping at the local Quick Stop. You can open a nearly bare pantry, and feed a large gathering at short notice. You always know what ingredients go together, and can stretch the grocery bill to make something nutritious and tasty. You can't make something out of nothing, though; you need at least the proverbial bread and fishes to feed your guests.

Clockwork Mind (1-point Quality)

You have a mind programmed to track the passage of time. If you wake in a completely dark room with no windows, you immediately know the time and how long you've slept. If you concentrate, you can execute complex maneuvers and activities with exacting precision. If familiar with the task at hand, you can accurately predict the length of time to complete it, barring any surprises.

However, there's always a catch. Normal folk can distract themselves to ignore the passing of time, you can't. You are always aware of the clock ticking, and depressing monotony can seriously harm you if you ever become trapped or imprisoned.

Real Friends (1-point Quality)

You know the old adage about real friends moving dead bodies? Some benevolent power blessed you with such friends.: people in your life (created as stock characters) who are closer to family than acquaintances. These friends genuinely care about your well-being, and are willing to do favors and errands to make your life easier. You can ask your friend to aid in your investigations, perform minor research, or occasionally help you skirt the law if the cause is just (or the pay is right). And yes, they'll even help you move a dead body, if it ain't too risky.

Remember that even close friendships can break if you abuse them, or mooch too much without giving back. They won't fight your battles for you, continually pay your way through life, or murder someone for you.

Sixth Sense (1-point Quality)

When danger is near, the hairs on the back of your neck stand up and start tingling. You know the moment before something dangerous or troublesome is about to happen. You don't have enough time to formulate a complex strategic response, but can shout a warning and jump out of the way. You know the intensity of the danger, but not necessarily who or what the cause might be. Once you are already in a fight, this Quality becomes useless, as you already know you are in danger.

Spatial Awareness (1-point Quality)

You have an instinctual understanding of how things fit together. You can 'Tetris' a moving truck blindfolded, you can pack that round vase in that square box just

right, and you can stuff those 12 clowns into that mini car. You know which Jenga block to pull to keep the tower standing, or where to set that explosive charge to bring down the whole building. If driving or piloting, you gain a + 5 Wild Card bonus to fit your transport through impossibly tight spaces. You can't break the laws of time and space, but you can sure maneuver your way through some tight spots.

Street Cred (1-point Quality)

You have a reputation in your neighborhood or a chosen area of the city. This Quality allows you to gain access to information, ask for help from your neighbors, or even get out of a potentially sticky situation. If you are caught in someplace you shouldn't be, or accused of a minor crime, you receive one less point of Social Consequence.

Stunt Driver (1-point Quality)

You are amazing behind the wheel of your favorite vehicle, and go as fast as bat out of hell. You are attentive, efficient, and know all the best ways to pull off risky moves. You take one less point of Consequence for failures incurred while behind the stick or wheel.

Working Class (1-point Quality)

You might not be a Rockefeller, but you have a job and an income that makes sure all of your basic needs are covered: rent, groceries, a cell phone, medical insurance, and a little left over for leisure. Your job comes with a flexible schedule, so you can still go on adventures. This doesn't mean you can afford to foot the bill all the time, or continually miss work shifts, but on occasion you can treat your friends or stretch your paycheck to afford a low-level MacGuffin.

2-point Indie Qualities

Assistant (2-point Quality)

Through employment, adoption, or bounds of honor, you have someone to aid you in your tasks. This person might be your ward, laboratory assistant, or apprentice. Create your assistant as a Supporting Character with half of the initial starting points (rounded up) for your Genre's Budget. The character gains experience as you do. This Assistant is willing to do your scutwork, makes sure the lights stay on, and takes care of day-to-day operations while you dodge your responsibilities in favor of adventure and mayhem.

Small Business (2-point Quality)

You own a legitimate small business that operates out in the open: a small hole-in-the-wall bar, a detective's office above the laundry, or a private security company. It ain't much, but it pays the bills, gives you a place to plan and resupply, and a place for others to find you.

Clown (2-point Quality)

You're the class clown, the one that always cracks an inappropriate joke at just the right time to ease the tension in the room. Leveraging humor in this way helps

reduce incoming Heart or Soul Consequences by 1-point for yourself or others within casual speaking distance. It doesn't matter if it's gallows humor or witty repartee, you don't have to succeed in a Dramatic Moment to use this quality, you simply have to make your castmates laugh.

Connected (2-point Quality)

You have a special friend, of any type appropriate to the Genre, who's connected to some shady business. She might have access to weapons, ancient demonic knowledge, black market merchants, slave traders, or drug dealers. Given enough time, you can acquire anything possible in your Genre: faerie dust, illegal automatic weapons, or inside information about the local Mob. Any acquired items or information must match the conventions of the Genre, and, if kept long enough (more than a single story), must be purchased as a Quality or MacGuffin.

Escape Artist (2-point Quality)

Nothing can hold you for long; neither trap, nor prison, nor bondage. Every hour you are locked or tied against your will, you lose either 1-point of Consequences, or a point of Difficulty Rating to escape, until you are no longer bound.

Fake It 'Til You Make It (2-point Quality)

You were born with great style. Somehow, you can strut into a Goodwill with ten dollars, and walk out with an ensemble that's the peak of haute couture. You know how to apply cheap dime-store makeup to show off your best features, and how to disguise your appearance, as long as the folks around you aren't paying attention or the room is dark.

If supernatural, alien, or otherwise strange characters appear in your Genre, and if you have had experience with them, you might be able to pass as a member of this group without too much trouble, if you're not questioned too closely.

Memory Palace (2-point Quality)

Either through an accident of birth or through training, you've built a Memory Palace in your mind. Using visualizations of important spatial memories, you can take a snapshot of what your eyes see, and store the memory in a mental 'file'. You can watch someone enter a password, PIN, account number, or safe combination and store the code perfectly as an image in your memory. You can look at blueprints, read a book, watch a movie, or see a painting, and later recall it exactly. You can't recall something you heard, tasted, smelt, or felt, your memories must be visual.

Needful Things (2-point Quality)

You know the old saying about trash and treasure? You've inherited, accidentally found, or bought access to some place with tremendous amounts of both. It might be a dusty used bookstore which houses the occasional mystical tome, a storage unit with the notes of your beloved mentor (along with his endless scribbles about Elvis), or a junkyard with thousands of spare parts for your getaway car... and every other car.

This place won't supply you with anything shiny and new, and you can't make money off it without purchasing an appropriate Quality, but your stash can come in handy when you can't find what you need at the local drug store.

Trivial MacGuffin (2-point Quality)

You possess an unusual or expensive exceptional item. This single item gives you an additional Wild Card Skill bonus. The Trivial MacGuffin Quality cannot be purchased twice for the same item, but can be purchased separately for different, unique items. In addition, this Quality cannot stack with other MacGuffin Qualities, no matter their rank, but can be added to other Qualities such as Calling Card (page 65). For more information about MacGuffins, see **Chapter Four: Core Rules: Equipment**, page 56.

3-point Indie Qualities

Base of Operations (3-point Quality)

Your hideout is small (just enough for you and a couple of friends), but you otherwise have a hidden base of operations such as a compound out in the wilderness, an underground bunker in the sewers, or an abandoned warehouse that's well-supplied, out of the way. In addition, for some reason, your enemies can't easily find it.

Calling Card (3-point Quality)

You have a sigil or symbol associated with your name and reputation. Perhaps you leave a white rose at your crime scenes, or your pistols are marked with the Ace of Spades. The sign might be a way for others to communicate with you, such as the illumination of the town's lighthouse or shining a spotlight into the cloudy night. If this calling card is incorporated during a successful physical attack upon a target, you may add an additional point of Social Consequences, in addition to the normal Physical Consequences.

Face-in-the-Crowd (3-point Quality)

You have one of those faces that just blends into the crowd, ignored and unconsidered so long as you don't attempt anything unusual within the conventions of the Genre. If you wear some sort of disguise, even a cap and sunglasses, you enjoy a +5 Wild Card bonus to any Resolution involving escaping notice or identification. This Quality cannot be purchased along with any other Quality which involves an enhanced or unusual appearance, such as Attractive (page 67).

Healer (3-point Quality)

You are a kind and empathetic soul, gifted with the healing touch. You might have learned special lore from a family member, taken nursing classes at the local university, or perhaps simply enjoy the blessing of the gods. No matter how you came by this gift, you know how to heal and bind most common wounds, how to apply poultices to avoid infection, and how to help others process mental trauma. For every hour spent under your care and ministrations, your patients lose 1-point of either Physical or Soul Consequences (depending on the type of treatment).

My So-Called Average Life (3-point Quality)

You have the “average” life of a television character on television: you wear fashionable clothes, own a cool place to live (and perhaps have a mortgage to go along with it), and drive a nice car. Your job pays enough for travel, vacations, and a small amount of savings. Those who still believe in it say you’re living the American Dream.

Nick of Time (3-point Quality)

You have brilliant timing, always arriving at the very moment when you are needed the most. This doesn’t mean you magically teleport to places, but if you voluntarily accept one point of Mental Consequence, you can propose a future scene to the Director to turn the wheel of destiny in your favor. Alternatively, if you are trying to outrace an explosion, leap onto a moving train, or perform any other stunt which requires precise timing, this Quality allows you to automatically survive. You’ll never gain enough Consequences to get Knocked Out of the Story as the remaining Consequence(s) in a category will spill onto another Attribute.

Resourceful (3-point Quality)

You might not have been a scout, but you certainly believe in their motto: Be Prepared. You seem to always have the one common item that’s needed in any given scenario (suitable within your Genre): a pocket knife, a set of tools, a bandage, or even a banana, if that’s what’s needed at the moment. This Quality doesn’t apply to magical, rare, or expensive items that are difficult to acquire or unusual for you to possess.

Special Attack (3-point Quality)

You have a special fighting maneuver that is simply badass. It might be the dreaded double-axe handle, the devastating one-inch punch, or the infamous shocker. Anytime you succeed on an attack with this maneuver, you inflict one extra point of Body Consequences, which may not be healed until the fight is over.

Specialized Training (3-point Quality)

Sometime in the past, you had special training at an elite academy, or apprenticed under a master. Perhaps you apprenticed under a talented mechanic, took First Aid classes, went to school for Computer Science, or even got a doctorate in psychology. Upon purchasing this Quality, select any single Skill and add two points, even if it brings you above the skill caps for your Genre. This Quality may be purchased multiple times, but must apply to a different Skill each time.

Stone Cold Killer (3-point Quality)

You’ve become emotionally numb to the evil and pain in the world. You are so detached that you could calmly watch your best friend get mutilated, chat amiably with your enemy while plotting his destruction, or enjoy a tasty sandwich while reviewing gory crime scene photos. This doesn’t mean you don’t feel anything anymore, but traumatic events just don’t affect you as much as they would the average person. This detachment sucks the joy and happiness out of your life, but

it has one advantage: you suffer one less point of Soul Consequence when you commit, witness or experience acts of evil. When suffering magical attacks, you take 2 fewer points of Soul Consequences from horror-based attacks.

Talented (3-point Quality)

You have a special talent with a select Skill, and spent many hours honing this talent. Rather than the standard one Professional Specialization slot, you gain two Professional Specialization slots per Skill point. You can take this Quality multiple times, selecting a different Skill each time.

Movie of the Week/Syndication Qualities

You've made it past the days where you had to fund everything yourself, and you've seen modest success with audiences. The bigwigs have yet to come knocking, but you're pretty sure they've at least noticed you.

General Qualities at this Budget are designed to be of moderate power-level, somewhat beyond the mundane. These are powers that can be simulated with light Computer-Generated Imagery, practical effects, a budget for impressive sets, a higher caliber of actors, or experienced Directors.

Some Umbrella Genres that work best at this Budget include: Action Films, Crime/Gangster Fictions, Costume Dramas, Detective Stories, Psychological Horror Movies, Police Procedurals, and Thrillers.

4-point Movie of the Week Qualities

Attractive (4-point Quality)

You've got the looks, baby. You rarely lack attention from any gender, and live the life of the attractive privileged. You aren't a jet-setting model or famous movie star, but overall you are someone who turns heads when out and about. So long as you are nice about it, others tend to do you favors and seek your attention. You gain a +3 Wildcard bonus to charm, seduce, or beguile others. The downside of being attractive is that monsters, robots, and aliens find your flesh especially tasty, and sometimes they just can't stop at one bite. You are more likely to be targeted when fighting such creatures.

Babylon Tongue (4-point Quality)

The superstitious claim you carry the blood of the angels from before the fall of the Tower of Babel. Others suspect you have some sort of biogenic retrovirus, or an implant that translates languages. Maybe you are just a quick study. You can speak, understand, and read any language you encounter.

Quick Reflexes (4-point Quality)

You have extremely fast reflexes. You can draw your weapon quickly, snatch up a falling vase, or dodge the glass being thrown at your head. You can catch a beautiful supermodel falling off a building, or fling that grenade back before it goes off. You can't dodge a speeding bullet or move faster than light, but you gain +5 to your Call Sheet order. Alternatively, if you accept one point of

Physical Consequence at the end of the scene, you may automatically go first (if you don't already).

Ninja Reflexes (4-point Quality)

You have perfect balance, as though a gyroscope is part of you. You always land on your feet, and can easily balance while crossing a slender wooden log over a 50-foot waterfall. You have no problem scaling a fence and walking atop it, or jumping off a garage roof and landing easily on your feet. You gain a +5 Wild Card bonus to any challenge where falling or stumbling is a risk, and it is only negated in extreme conditions such as scaling a sheer cliff or climbing during a monsoon, or when someone is actively trying to hurt you as you climb or balance.

Jack of All Trades (4-point Quality)

You've learned a little bit about everything. You know how to get by and survive no matter the situation. All your Skills automatically have a phantom point that allows you to always attempt a dramatic moment, even if you haven't spent the points to have even a 1 in the skill. If you later decide to start spending XP in an empty skill, you still have to purchase that first point.

Psychic Bond (4-point Quality)

Some folks are just close: twins, lovers, or best friends who have a low-level psychic bond. You have such a storied connection. You always know their state of mind, such as when she is in deep trouble or suffers a serious injury. You know when something is wrong with them, even if they try to hide it with a smile and say everything is okay.

This Quality does not confer Telepathy (page 76), or allow you to know with GPS precision where your cast mate is, but you always have a sense of each other's wellbeing, even if you're a world apart. All characters who wish to have access to this bond must purchase this Quality. Characters created through the Real Friends (page 62) are an exception to this rule.

Psychic Training (4-point Quality)

There are weird things out there, and you've trained your mind, heart, and soul to fight their influences. You gain a +3 Wild Card Bonus against any Heart, Mind, or Soul attacks against you.

Minor McGuffin (4-point Quality)

You possess an advanced piece of truly inspiring equipment. This single item gives you three additional Wild Card Skill bonus points, with a cap of 3, to assign to any given Skill. The Quality: Minor MacGuffin cannot be purchased twice for the same item, but it can be purchased separately for different, unique items.

In addition, this Quality does not stack with other MacGuffin Qualities, no matter their rank, but may be added to other Qualities such as Calling Card (page 65). For more about MacGuffins, see **Chapter Four: Core Rules: Equipment**, page 56.

No Fear (4-point Quality)

You either lack the bio-chemical response to fear, or have mastered your body's responses to fear-inducing stimuli. You can easily jump off a dizzyingly tall cliff, lean out the window of a fast-moving vehicle, or otherwise defy mundane death. You aren't immune to supernatural horrors, such as vampires or Baba Yaga (should they exist in your Genre), but you gain a +3 Wildcard bonus to resist such attacks.

Sidekick (4-point Quality)

You have a follower, a sidekick, or henchperson. This loyal companion fights for you and your cause so long as you treat her well, furnish her weapons, and continue to train her. You are responsible for this character and on occasion, she will generate dramatic storylines and scenarios.

A Sidekick is created as a full Support Character at the starting points for your Genre's Budget and earns XP at half your rate. If you earn 10 XP during a Story, the Sidekick earns 5 XP. If you are upgrading a character created with Assistant (page 63), then add the difference between the two types of characters.

Trick Shot (4-point Quality)

You can do fancy shots with your weapon, like shoot a gun out of someone's hands, or a hat off someone's head. You can make an impossible shot by having your bullet ricochet three times until it hits your target, or just make an easy shot look fancy with a few flourishes. You can't magically shoot around corners, or have your bullet miss the three people directly between you and your target. You can't shoot faster than is humanly possible, but all Dramatic Moments involving your use of ranged weapons are decreased by 3 levels. A shot that would normally be Impossible would now only be Challenging. (see Dramatic Moment, page 40)

Tech Cantrips (4-point Quality)

Machines like you so much they work better in your presence. This gift might be magical, cyber-enhancements, or you're so cool that the fundamental laws of the universe don't apply to machines around you. If you focus, even for a moment, you can snap your fingers to turn on a radio or kickstart a motorcycle. You can't activate a complex machine, nor program a computer, with this Quality, but you can ensure that either run efficiently within your presence.

5-point Movie of the Week Qualities

Astral Projection (5-point Quality)

With great effort, and at the cost of 1-point of Physical Consequence, you can separate your soul from your body. While in astral projection, you travel between two separate and distinct realms of reality: the material plane and the spirit world. You can spy upon the material world, travel at the speed of thought, and explore alternate spiritual or mental realms as defined by the Genre.

While you can always return to the spot your soul split from your body, if your body is moved you are unable to sense its current location. Indeed, unless you are lucky, or have a Quality such as Clairvoyance (see page 74), your soul slowly fades to mist. Every twenty-four hours spent away from your body inflicts one point of Body Consequence. While in Astral Form, you have no form or substance, and lack the ability to affect the Material Realm. However, you can directly challenge other creatures or entities in the spirit realms by replacing your Body Attribute with your Soul Attribute. You can perform magic or other powers granted by Qualities that are powered by non-Body Attributes, but you cannot inflict Body Consequences across realms. You are Knocked Out of the Story as per normal.

Battle Form (5-point Quality)

You can walk the streets as a perfectly average person, but when trouble starts, you morph into a Battle Form with unusual powers and abilities, as defined by your Genre. In your normal form, you are bound by human limits. Your Battle Form is limited, and might involve a vampire flashing fangs and turning into a ghastly beast, a cyborg revealing technological implants, or a superhero donning a uniform that grants special powers.

This transformation only takes a moment or two, but if witnessed leaves little doubt that something's unusual or even unnatural about you. While this form does not change your Budget Ceiling, it does lower the cost of any Quality associated with your Battle Form by 1-point. For example, a demon might have Battle Form (5-point Quality) and then the following associated Qualities which are only active while in Battle Form: Natural Weapon (normally a 4-point Quality, but now costing 3), Enhanced (normally a 4-point Quality, but now costing 3), Horror Factor (normally a 5-point Quality, but now costing 4) and Flight (normally a 5-point Quality, but now costing 4). However, if a Quality is unrealistic or not possible due to story logic, the Director should disallow it.

Empath (5-point Quality)

You are a highly sensitive being, with a keen ability know what others around you are feeling. By touching another character, and allowing yourself to fully experience her pain, you can draw some or all (your choice) of her Heart and/or Soul Consequences into you. These Consequences can lead you to madness, spiritual suffering, or even being blamed for your patient's legal trouble. This effect stays with you until the end of the story. Be careful! If you take on too much, you might get Knocked Out of the Story (page 55).

Environmental Adaptation (5-point Quality)

You can live and breathe anywhere, as your body automatically evolves to survive any hostile environment. You are immune to all poisons, toxins, and radiation. You can survive without water in the desert, the massive pressure from the bottom of the ocean, or the coldness of the vacuum of space.

Fast Healing (5-point Quality)

You heal quickly, and can bounce back from injuries that would kill others. When resting, you heal 1-point of Body Consequence per thirty minutes.

Lucky (5-point Quality)

The stars themselves blessed you, making you really lucky. You often get to the stop right as your bus pulls up, take the last cookie in the cookie jar, find your friend's missing keys, or pick the winning scratch ticket. You might even survive a dive out of moving train by landing on a pile of hay, but you aren't invulnerable. Three times per story, you can choose to roll three six-sided dice instead of two, and keep the best two results.

Natural Weapon (6-point Quality)

You might be a mutant, a bioengineered soldier, or a monster of legend, but you possess a "natural weapon" that's part of your body, such as fangs, claws, or bone spurs. Some Genres, such as Cyberpunk, Science Fiction, War, or Anime, can even consider advanced weaponry as part of the cybernetic conversion process.

This weapon is created just like any other weapon (see Chapter Four: Core Rules: Equipment, page 56). If you wish to improve this natural weapon, you can do so by purchasing a MacGuffin Quality. This weapon cannot be removed without significant cost, such as horrific surgery or taking a Flaw.

Super Science (5-point Quality)

You have advanced skills with science and technology. This Quality allows you invent, design, and build fantastical devices up to two Tech Levels above your Genre's Technology Level. These devices are naturally MacGuffins, and anyone who wishes to benefit from your work (including you) must purchase the appropriate Quality. However, the cost for you to own one of your own MacGuffins is reduced by 2-points.

Training Package (5-point Quality)

This ain't your first rodeo. You've been on the job so long that you can't separate yourself from your work. You have seven points total to add to your Skills, and can break the standard cap for a Skill.

Voice of Authority (5-point Quality)

You hold a major leadership position in an organization important to the Genre: Space Force, Police Captain, CEO of a large corporation, or something with similar power and authority. The drawback is that you are constantly watched. If you are caught breaking the rules, you earn double the standard Heart Consequences.

Wealthy (5-point Quality)

You live among the top 10% of your society. You live in a giant villa, mansion, or orbital sky-complex, as suits your Genre. You are more concerned with travel, experiences, and your legacy than smaller desires. You are the sort of person who owns skyscrapers, banks, and even entire towns. You may have anything you

want. Should you want a Minor MacGuffin, you pay half cost (round up). Thus, a Minor MacGuffin which would normally cost 4 XP, costs you only 2 XP.

6-point Movie of the Week Qualities

Camouflage (6-point Quality)

If you move slowly and avoid making any noise, you have a bio-electric or magical camouflage field (or similar) that renders you virtually invisible. If you pick up a small item, you may extend your field to cloak said item. You can climb, walk, and move about normally, but you can't run or swim without bringing the camouflage field down. You gain a +5 Wild Card bonus when hiding.

Eagle-Eyed (6-point Quality)

You might be blessed with second sight, possess the latest cybernetic implants, or perhaps are simply an individual acutely aware of her surroundings. You have perfect vision, and when you concentrate (and do nothing else), very little gets past your gaze. You gain a +5 Wild Card bonus to any Resolution involving seeing through disguises; detecting camouflaged characters, illusions, compartments, or passages; and discovering unusual visual clues. A character with this Quality in a Science Fiction Genre might be able to identify power signatures and metal fractures, whereas another character in a Hunters Genre might see ghosts, signs of demonic possession, or a monster even when not appearing in Battle Form (see page 70).

Enhanced (6-point Quality)

Magic, science, or the blood of the angels enhanced you. Select one Attribute Category and add 2-points, even if doing so breaks the standard human cap. This Quality may only be purchased once per Attribute Category.

Fortress (6-point Quality)

You own a small fortress, manned with support staff, security guards, and even a professional chef (all Stock Characters). You and your team can refuel, restock weapons and ammo, and sleep in relative safety.

Illusions (6-point Quality)

Master of subterfuge and distractions, you can conjure illusions (the nature of which depends on your Genre: chimerical, holographic, or mystical befuddlement). Your illusions aren't real, and as soon as someone attempts to touch them, the deception is revealed. You can create illusions as large as a small house, and as small as a ring. You can't create moving illusions unless they are based on you (creating up to a dozen duplicates) or your clothing. Enemies may attempt to pierce through your illusions by winning a Resolution: Showdown with their Mental + Notice.

Minor Projectile Weapon (6-point Quality)

Through arcane incantations, a cybernetic blaster, or channeling your inner *chi*, you possess the ability to blast your enemies with a projectile or energy bolt.

When purchasing this Quality, select the source of your means to cast the bolt (cybernetic, magical, mystical, technological, spiritual, etc.), the energy type (concussion blast, electrical, fire, ice, laser, necrotic, plasma, etc.), and the category of the Consequence your bolt inflects. Once selected, these attributes may not be changed. Thereafter, if you succeed in a Resolution against a target, you inflect 3-points of the selected Consequence.

Magic Dabbler (6-point Quality)

You've acquired the occult knowledge necessary to twist your divine spark, and can transform that energy into magic. You might have apprenticed under a powerful wizard, gone to magic school, or even taught yourself by painstakingly studying rare tomes. You can learn up to three schools of magic, selected when purchasing this Quality. You can cast any spell so long as the Difficulty Rating is 10 or lower, and doing so does not break any of your Genre's Laws of Magic.

These spells can be hostile towards others, but can't inflict Consequences on your targets. This Quality requires your character possess at least one point of the Wild Card Skill: Magic. Each Genre that allows Mystical Dabbler has a Reference Material section, titled *Theory and Practice of Magic*, that details the origin, unique limits, and range of magic within the Genre. For more information, see **Chapter Five: Qualities: Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Magic**, page 82.

Psychic (6-point Quality)

Knowledge of the future is dangerous. It's never exact: just enough to tip the balance and maybe save your life. It might be you have the fabled mystical sight, cybernetic implants that tune your brain into extra-sensory-perception, or maybe your Jungian understanding of the universe has you seeing signs and portents everywhere.

When the Director feels it is dramatically correct to foreshadow the plot, you see glimpses of what's to come, events that might be, and a chance to fight to said that future. In addition, you can add a +5 Wildcard bonus to any dramatic moment that relies upon chance, randomness, or synchronicity.

Shape Changer (6-point Quality)

You can change your shape into any mundane animal that you've seen, studied, or formed a mystical connection to: amphibians, birds, fish, fowl, mammals, or reptiles. While you assume another form, you keep your Attributes and Skills, which can turn awkward for you when trying to fly as a bird or climb like a monkey if you don't have an appropriate Skill for the Dramatic Challenge. Shape changing is limited to animals no smaller than a mouse or larger than an elephant. You are limited to species that currently exist (no dinosaurs or dodo birds), and somehow your clothing always disappears and reappears when changing form.

Major Motion Picture/Prime Time Qualities

You're at the top of the game as a Director, with the budget to make nearly any dream a reality, and hordes of adoring fans (and more than a few critics).

General Qualities at this Budget are designed to be of awesome power-level, beyond what the ordinary person has ever seen or imagined in the mundane realm. These are powers that can only be simulated with high-quality Computer-Generated Imagery, teams of practical effect artists, epic sets and costumes, super-star actors, or top-talent Directors.

Some Umbrella Genres that work well at this Budget include: Animation, Anime, Apocalyptic, Adventure, Action, Fantasy, Science Fiction, Spy Films, Superhero, and War.

7-point Major Motion Picture Qualities

Avatar (7-point Quality)

Be it a trained sprite, an advanced AI assistant, or a bound demon, you have an ethereal assistant who is always connected to you. This avatar can perform research, undertake investigations, and even aid in the creation of new spells, programs, or wards. This avatar has a wholly separate personality, but it is merged into your being, perhaps even your soul.

It doesn't have stats of its own, as it can't operate outside of your consciousness. However, it can aid in your defense, granting you a +5 Wild Card bonus against Mental and Soul attacks. While it's possible for an Assistant (page 63) or a Sidekick (see page 69) to be upgraded to an Avatar, it requires a significant story reason.

Armor (7-point Quality)

You have protective armor, naturally hard skin, or mystical shields that keep you functioning. Select one Consequence Category when purchasing this Quality, and thereafter all Consequences received as a result of a lost Resolution are reduced by half (round up). This Quality can only be purchased one per Consequence Category.

Clairvoyance (7-point Quality)

If you concentrate for a moment or two in deep meditation, you can project your consciousness to remotely view anyone you've ever known significantly, such as a friend, enemy, or coworker. You see this target as though looking at them from a wide-angle television shot: you can't perceive details, and see and hear just enough to get the gist of what's happening and overhear casual conversations. This doesn't mean you know where your target is located unless you see an address or know the location personally. Pre-requisite: Quality: Psychic (page 73).

Flight (7-point Quality)

You can do a thing of what the Wright Brothers could only dream: you can fly unaided by machines. You can hover, fly slowly until you clear landlocked obstacles, and then blast away at supersonic speeds. Your body has the endurance to survive such speeds, but alas, unless you've gone through the trouble of acquiring a relevant MacGuffin, your mundane clothing is shredded. Flight does not work in outer space or a vacuum.

Hard to Kill (7-point Quality)

You've gained a toughness throughout your life which makes you less likely to be shot and killed or bludgeoned to death. You know how to survive situations like a house fire, hostage situation, robbery, or collapsing building. You know the safest ways to get out of situations like being trapped under rubble, being close to an explosion, or stopping gas leaks.

You are not impervious to damage, however. You can still be shot, arrested, trapped, or otherwise injured. Once per story, you can ignore the results of gaining Consequences (of any Attribute category) if it would otherwise Knock You Out of the Story (see Chapter Four: Core Rules, page 55).

Horror Factor (7-point Quality)

According to H.P. Lovecraft, the oldest and most potent human emotion is fear. Gazing upon your face and/or your form elicits a primal terror response. To remain in your presence, all targets must succeed in a Resolution: Action Shot. To attack or harangue you, targets must first defeat you in a Resolution: Showdown (page 48). You may spare your allies such fear by taking care to hide your true form when interacting with them.

Hypnosis (7-point Quality)

You have the power to command, control, and alter the mind of others: issuing commands, implanting nefarious triggers, or even rewriting memories. You can't force your target to harm themselves or anyone else, or force them into sexual situations. Engage your target in a Resolution: Showdown (page 48). If you win, her will is yours and she must obey you.

This power requires concentration, the direct attention of the target, and a relatively quiet environment. It is impossible to use this power on a battlefield. If you lose concentration, the power ends immediately and the target suspects that something happened.

Immortal (7-point Quality)

You are immortal. You will never know the ravages of time nor disease, nor will you produce children. Barring an accident or horrible murder, you might live forever; walking this world, and many others, until the heat death of the universe. You might already be a hundred years old, a thousand, or even one of the very first sentient people to awaken in the universe. You gain either the Quality: Jack of All Trades or Fast Healing for free.

Lightning Speed (7-point Quality)

You move so fast that you appear as a flash of light, running or flying at a speed close to Mach 1. You can complete simple and complex tasks in a tenth of the normal time, provided you have tools that can keep up with you. You act first in the Call Sheet order, so long as no one else involved has this Quality.

Those attacking you find it quite different to get their hands, weapons, or laser sights on you. All Body attacks against you, perpetrated by those who do not also have this Quality, suffer a -5 Wild Card penalty.

Psychometry (7-point Quality)

Touch has always been your strongest sense. You, willingly or not, read the quantum entanglements and/or psychic residue left on objects touched or used during dramatic and traumatic moments. You can learn all sorts of information about a decades-old happy wedding by touching an old ring, see flashes of a hit-and-run by bumping into a hot rod, or feel the utter despair of the lost soul who took her own life when holding a particular knife.

The exact information learned by touching the object is determined by the Director. Directors should take care to apply just enough foreshadowing to entice the players without making them feel railroaded (see **Chapter Six: Director's Primer: Foreshadowing, Days of Future Past, and Alternative Ways of Playing with Time**, page xx).

Tough (7-point Quality)

Life is tough, and it never stops coming at you, so you learned to be that much tougher. Upon purchasing this Quality, select one type of Consequence (Body, Heart, Mind, or Soul), and thereafter when you take Consequences of that type during a Resolution, cut the total in half (rounded up). This Quality may be purchased more than once, but each instance of this Quality must be applied to a different Consequence category.

Telepathy (7-point Quality)

Thoughts are an energy that you've learned to read, project, and dampen. You can project your natural thoughts to anyone within line of sight. If you wish to read the thoughts of others, you must defeat them in a Resolution: Showdown. If successful, you may read current thoughts, ask the target a few questions, or review memories. Pre-requisite: Quality: Psychic (page 73).

8-point Major Motion Picture Qualities

Global Teleportation (8-point Quality)

You can create a portal or a wormhole that leads to anywhere in the world. You can take up to five characters with you. The only limitation is that you must have previously visited this location or studied it via an accurate picture.

Horde of Followers (8-point Quality)

You lead a horde of followers (approximately ten support characters devoted to you) who worship you and obey your every whim. These Followers are created as full Support Characters, of your character's Archetype, at the starting points for the Budget: Movie of the Week (see **Chapter Two: Define a Setting: Budget**, page 12).

Indomitable (8-point Quality)

You are an indomitable force of nature, beyond the scope of human limits. You have five points total to add to your Attribute scores as you see fit, even if doing so breaks the standard human cap for a category.

Major MacGuffin (8-point Quality)

You possess an advanced piece of truly inspiring equipment. This single item gives you five additional points to apply to your Wild Card Skill bonuses, with a Wild Card Skill cap of 4 to any individual Skill. In addition, while wielding this MacGuffin, you gain any two additional Qualities (8-points or less in total) at your Budget. You, or the MacGuffin, must have all of the pre-requisites for these Qualities.

The Major MacGuffin Quality cannot be purchased twice for the same item, but it can be purchased separately for different, unique items. In addition, this Quality cannot stack with other MacGuffin Qualities, no matter their rank, but can be added to other Qualities such as Calling Card (page 65). For more information, see **Chapter Four: Core Rules: Equipment**, page 56.

Major Projectile Weapon (8-point Quality)

Through arcane incantations, a cybernetic blaster, or channeling your inner *chi*, you possess the ability to blast your enemies with a projectile or energy bolt. When purchasing this Quality, select the source of your means to cast the bolt (cybernetic, magical, mystical, technological, spiritual, etc.), the energy type (concussion blast, electrical, fire, ice, laser, necrotic, plasma, etc.), and the category of the Consequence your bolt inflects. Once selected, these attributes cannot be changed. Thereafter, if you succeed in a Resolution against a target, you inflect 6-points of the selected Consequence.

Midas Touch (8-point Quality)

You were born blessed, as everything you touch seems to turn to gold. You are among the top 1% of your society, possessing wealth far beyond what the common person can even dream of. You have more money than you could spend in a dozen lifetimes. You may purchase any mundane item you desire, but still must purchase a Minor MacGuffin Quality for unusual items, though at half the normal cost (round up). Thus, a Minor MacGuffin would normally cost 4 XP, but costs you 2 XP.

Sorcerer (8-point Quality)

A scholar of the arcane, you've learned how cast potent spells that terrify the unlearned. You can learn six schools of magic (this includes the first three learned from previously possessing Magical Dabbler, page 73). You can cast any spell of these schools, so long as the Difficulty Rating is 15 or below, and doing so does not break one of your Genre's Laws of Magic.

This Quality requires that your character possess at least three points of the Wild Card Skill: Magic. Each Genre that allows Sorcerer will have a Reference Material section titled Theory and Practice of Magic that will detail the origin,

unique limits and range of magic inside of this Genre. (For more information, see **Chapter Five: Qualities: Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Magic**, page 82.)

Super Genius (8-point Quality)

You are a super genius, merging science, gumption, and occasionally spite. This Quality allows you invent, design, and build fantastical devices are four Tech Levels above your Genre's Technology level as defined in their Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Technology (see page 91). These fantastical devices are naturally MacGuffins, and anyone wishing to benefit from it (including you) must pay the price for the Quality. However, the cost for you to own one of your own MacGuffins is reduced by 4-points. If a McGuffin that costs zero or less points is considered

Telekinesis (8-point Quality)

You possess the ability to move objects with your mind. You can summon objects to your grasp, flick a switch, or push your enemies off a ledge. The heavier the object you wish to handle, the more difficult it is to control. Some Genres can introduce a Wild Card Skill that replicates this Quality, such as Magic.

9 point Major Motion Picture Qualities

Intangible (9-point quality)

One second, you are solid as rock, and then, with some concentration, you are as a ghost. You become immaterial to anything on the physical plane. You can only remain a ghost for brief periods of time, as you need to eat, drink, and otherwise sustain your physical body. While intangible, you can float in the air, move through walls and locked doors, and swim through the earth as if you were in water. However, this state of being has limits. Energies still affect your form, and you are susceptible to Heart, Mind, and Soul attacks.

Power Mimic (9-point quality)

By touching someone with a given Quality, you can duplicate the powers granted by this Quality (must be rated 9 points or less). This power lasts for the remainder of the story, unless you duplicate another power. Obviously, you can't duplicate a Quality that gives you relationships, wealth, or physical equipment.

You don't need to know the nature of the Quality before you absorb it, as you'll instinctually select the one you need the most. Directors can either choose a Quality, or allow the player to select one at random.

Regeneration (9-point quality)

Your healing and regeneration abilities are a miracle. You can recover from any illness, regrow limbs, and recover from grievous wounds within minutes. If wounded, you heal one point of Body Consequences every five minutes, even while in combat.

Shields (9-point quality)

You project an energy shield surrounding yourself, and anyone else within your line of sight. The nature of this shield depends upon your Genre, whether it's proton energy, magic, or something else. When purchasing this Quality, select one Consequence category. Thereafter, whenever someone protected by your shields loses a Resolution, halve the point value of all Consequences received (round up), leaving a minimum of 1-point of Consequence. This Quality may only be purchased one per Consequence Category.

Skin Changer (9-point quality)

You can change your form to resemble any person, alien, or humanoid creature that you've met. You accurately replicate your target's form, clothing, and voice, but you must have Subterfuge to properly act like her. Those with the Quality: Eagle-Eyed may attempt to see past your disguise with a Resolution: Showdown.

Tough as a Diamond (9-point quality)

Almost nothing can crack your protective shell. Select one Consequence category. Thereafter, you can't be Knocked Out of the Story, no matter how many points you acquire in that particular category. You simply start the next Act with 1-point in the category. For example, if you have a Body of 5, and are caught in an explosion that would kill anyone else, you start the next Act with 4-points of Body Consequences.

10 point Major Motion Picture Qualities

Demigod (10-point quality)

You are a living demigod, bound in human form and with unimaginable inherent or divine abilities. You have ten points to add to your Attribute scores as you see fit, even if doing so breaks the standard human cap for a category.

Epic MacGuffin (10-point quality)

You possess an advanced piece of truly inspiring equipment. This single item grants you eight additional Wild Card Skill bonus points, with a bonus cap of 4 to any given Skill. In addition, while wielding this MacGuffin, you gain four additional Qualities (of 8-points or lower) at this Budget level. You, or the MacGuffin, must have all of the pre-requisites for any Quality purchased.

The Quality: Epic MacGuffin cannot be purchased twice for the same item, but can be purchased separately for different, unique items. In addition, this Quality cannot stack with other MacGuffin Qualities, no matter their rank, but can be added to other Qualities such as Calling Card (page 65). For more information, see **Chapter Four: Core Rules: Equipment**, page 56.

Master of the Mystic Arts (10-point quality)

A scholar of the arcane and magic, you've learned how cast potent spells that terrify even other masters. You can cast spells and rituals from any school of magic, so long as the Difficulty Rating is 20 or less, and doing so does not break one of your Genre's Laws of Magic.

This Quality requires that your character possess at least three points of the Wild Card Skill: Magic, along with the Qualities: Mystical Dabbler and Sorcerer. Each Genre that allows Master of the Mystic Arts will have a Reference Material section, titled *Theory and Practice of Magic*, that will detail the origin, unique limits and range of magic inside of this Genre. For more information, see **Chapter Five: Qualities: Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Magic**, page 82.

Master of Technology (10-point quality)

You are a once-in-a-lifetime genius, a giant among mere mortals. You invent technological devices that nevertheless seem to operate by magic to others. This Quality allows you invent, design, and build fantastical devices up to six Tech Levels above your Genre's Technology level, as defined in the Reference Material: *Theory and Practice of Technology* (see page 91). These fantastical devices are naturally MacGuffins, and anyone wishing to benefit from this device (including you) must pay the price for the Quality. However, the cost for you to own one of your own MacGuffins is reduced by 6-points. If a McGuffin that costs zero or less points is considered

Wealth Beyond Measure (10-point quality)

You are amongst the ruling elite. There is no mundane item, no matter how rare or valuable, you cannot own. You must still pay to obtain MacGuffins, but at a half-cost discount due to your wealth. Thus, a Minor MacGuffin which would normally cost 4 XP, costs you 2 XP.

Weather Control (10-point quality)

You can control the weather with your thoughts and emotions. You can cause any natural condition, from a strange and sudden fog, to a snowstorm, or even a hurricane. You can push the weather in a certain direction with a Resolution: Action Shot or Resolution: Showdown, with a Difficulty Rating equal to the scope of the change (Director's discretion). For reference: taking weather from calm and clear skies to a hurricane would be an Epic Difficulty Rating.

Blockbuster / Major Cable Qualities

You're at the top. You have the budget to make nearly any dream a reality, and a horde of adoring fans (and definitely more than a few pointed critics).

General Qualities at this Budget are designed to be top of the line, Omega power-level, and beyond the pale of reality. Powers featured in these works can only be simulated through great amounts of Computer-Generated Imagery, entire teams of practical effect artists, and sky-high budgets to create epic sets, attract super-star actors, and recruit top-talent Directors.

Umbrella Genres that work well at this Budget include: Animation, Anime, Apocalyptic, Adventure, Action, Fantasy, Science Fiction, Spy Films, Superhero, and War.

Writer's Room Warning: Player Agency and Qualities

The nature of Qualities at this level is not always be appropriate for Lead Characters. These

Qualities may be best served being used by Support Characters, such as Antagonists. As always, the final decision is lies with the Director.

11-point Major Motion Picture Qualities

Army of Darkness (11-point Quality)

You lead an army of dedicated warriors, who live and die to serve you and your cause. These warriors are created as full Support Characters, at the starting points for the Budget: Major Motion Picture (see **Chapter Two: Define a Setting: Budget**, page 12).

Galactic Teleportation (11-point Quality)

You can create a portal or a wormhole that leads anywhere in the universe. You can take up to five characters with you. The only limitation is that you must have previously visited this location or studied it via an accurate picture.

Limited Vulnerability (11-point Quality)

You are, for all practical purposes, invulnerable to physical damage: you can endure bullets, explosions, and all manner of blunt trauma accidents without even a bruise. Yet, you are not yet beyond death's reach in regard to environmental factors, such as a lack of oxygen, poison, or hazardous pressure. In addition, you are vulnerable to certain metals or radiation as determined by your story and your Genre. You gain no Body Consequences unless via your established vulnerability.

Space Flight (11-point Quality)

You can fly like a bird anywhere. You can hover, fly slowly until you clear landlocked obstacles, and then blast away at supersonic speeds. When you reach space, you can travel at intergalactic speeds, bouncing from planet to planet. Your body has the endurance to survive such speeds, but unless you've gone through the trouble of acquiring a relevant MacGuffin, your clothing will be shredded.

Reality Warper (11-point Quality)

You can change the very fabric of reality. The laws of the universe are mere suggestions to you, as you rearrange reality to suit your purpose. Like a hacker who has root access to reality, you can reprogram the world to be what you want. Your weakness is that too many changes to reality causes problems with your mental health.

To change reality as you know it, you must succeed in a Resolution: Action Shot, and the Difficulty is determined by the radicalness of the change to reality. If you fail, you gain Mental Consequences, 1 level per Difficulty Rating missed/.

Creating New Qualities Guidelines

The list of general Qualities found in *Morra* is but a beginning. Future supplements will detail a wide range of Umbrella-Genres and specific Genre Qualities, along with new Archetype Qualities.

Directors or players can create Qualities specific to a unique story. To accommodate that, *Morra* presents a set of guidelines for creating custom Qualities. As always, all Qualities are subject to Director approval.

Creating New Archetypes Qualities

Each Archetype has three unique Qualities, ranging from one to three points, discounted to encourage mechanical support of specific story themes within the Genre.

There are three common types of Archetype Qualities; however, this list is not all-inclusive:

- A Quality that establishes an authority, position, or rank within the Genre.
- A reskinned General Quality that strengthens the Archetype's place in the Genre.
- A Package Quality that grants a new low-level Qualities.

Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Magic

Magic is a five-letter word for the impossible and impossible is where the best stories thrive. In some Genres, the flavor of magic is as important as character and location.

A story involving magic has the unique challenge of invoking the feeling of accomplishing the impossible, while still defining limits and rules to encourage creativity. This streamlined chart helps Directors define the boundaries of magic by giving every story texture and spice.

Step One: Mastery of Magic

There are four Qualities granting a character the ability to wield and practice magic. You can alter the value of these Qualities to match the specific needs of your Genre.

- Magic Dabbler (page 73)
- Sorcerer (page 77)
- Master of Mystic Arts (page 79)

Step Two: Determine the Origin of Magic

The origin of magic tells the cast and crew a good deal of information about your Genre. Here's some common historical and mythological examples. Select one of these options, or create your own as needed.

- A divine creature sacrificed his or her life to bring knowledge and wisdom to mortals (Buddhism, Christianity).
- A great battle between the gods once took place on this world. Magic is the last ember of their divine blood.
- Some people inherit an innate talent for magic, and must learn how to use it safely (*Dresden Files*, *Harry Potter*).

- One of the gods took pity upon humanity, and gave the spark of magic to them in defiance of the Allfather (Prometheus).
- Magic is an energy field that surrounds us and binds us all together. Those who are sensitive to this energy field, through talent, training, or both, can manipulate it to achieve great effects. Of course, some say magic manipulates you for its own benefit as well (Wicca, Hermeticism).

Step Three: Magic Ecosystem: Base Difficulty Rating

Magic is the art of manipulating energy and patterns to achieve preternatural results. The richer the vein of magic, the easier it is for the caster to access the ambient mystical energy and transform it into the fuel for magic. Based on the origins of magic in your Genre and your desire for magic to be accessible to characters, select one of the ecosystems below and modify it as needed for your Genre.

- Low: Mystical energy or knowledge is scarce, and therefore those with the skill and talent to cast magic are few and far between. Casting spells is extremely difficult without aid from others, ritual components, or other investments.
 - Base Difficulty Rating for magic that falls within your schools of magic: 15
 - Base Difficulty Rating for magic that falls outside your schools of magic: 25
- Medium: Mystical energy flows through this Genre, but training and discipline are required to tap into it. Think of the magical world and mundane separated by a barrier, and travel between them takes effort.
 - Base Difficulty Rating for magic that falls within your schools of magic: 10
 - Base Difficulty Rating for magic that falls outside your schools of magic: 15
- High: Magic flows freely in this Genre, and accessing it is relatively easy, even among untrained adepts. There is no barrier between worlds, there is only magic and the will to use it.
 - Base Difficulty Rating for magic that falls within your schools of magic: 5
 - Base Difficulty Rating for magic that falls outside your schools of magic: 10

Step Four: Determine the Genre's Laws of Magic

Magic by its very nature is unknown and mysterious. It can feel wrong to attempt to contain or define it. However, an authentic and believable Genre must follow consistent rules, lest the audience feels cheated. Magic should always *feel* possible, the cast and audience alike catching near-glimpses of it out of the corner of their mundane perception. To feel real and frightening, magic must have rules to explain what is allowed, what is forbidden, and what is impossible. To be interesting and part of the story without being the entire story, magic must have limitations, weaknesses, and costs.

When creating a magical system for your Genre, select from the magical laws below (adapted from the work of Aleister Crowley, Isaac Bonewits, and James George Frazer) that best suit the needs of your story. If you don't find a law that fits your exact needs, modify or create your own.

Here's a list of some historical and mythological examples of Laws of Magic:

- Law of Backlash: Casting a spell requires exact precision and timing; if interrupted or miscast, the magic will backlash upon the caster. The caster takes double Consequences from any failures when casting magic.
- Law of Balance: Balance is always restored. Magic can neither create nor destroy, merely change the form of a thing. Casters must always take from something or someone to give to something else or someone else. Nothing is created anew, only changed in form or function.
- The Law of Consent: Magic is easier to cast upon those who have consented to it. If a target consents to the spellcasting, the Difficulty Rating of the casting lowers by 3.
- The Law of Contagion: Once two things have been linked together, they are always linked together. Thus, a magical link between two formerly connected things may be leveraged for magic. If you have something that once belonged to your target, or was in close proximity to her for at least a scene, the difficulty of casting a spell when incorporating that object lowers the Difficulty by 3.
- Law of Distortion: Magic cannot change anything permanently. The universe will have her way, given enough time. The world will bend back into shape along the course of least resistance. This might be thwarted, but only with great risk of provoking the Law of Backlash. Anything changed or altered by magic will revert to its natural state in time, if the spell is not recast. If that happens, then Law of Backlash is possible, if applicable to the Genre.
- The Law of Equivalent Exchange: Magic always has a price. A spell conveys a specific effect based on the worth of the components sacrificed in its casting. Due to some traditions' practice to engage in animal, or even human sacrifice, this principle is also referred to as *Blood for Blood*. Magic must be paid for with components of equal value to what the spell would create, even if it's in a different form.
- The Law(s) of God: The boundary between magic and faith can be fuzzy; and those who perform miracles on behalf of their chosen divinity can be just as powerful as any magician. However, such power comes with a price. Players making characters blessed with divine (or infernal) power should work with their Director to devise a moral code, which *must* be adhered to. A character who violates this code risks angering her divine patron, and may lose her power until she repents or otherwise redeems herself.
- The Law of Items: Power is contained in enchanted or blessed items, such as a grimoire, magic wand, saint's medallion, or paper charm. A magician who loses the items she relies upon cannot cast magic until she regains them. These items may very well be MacGuffins.

- **Law of Mortality:** Death is the natural outcome of mortality. Magic can't prevent death, only extend life. A natural death may not be undone with magic. This limit does not extend to magical creatures, the divine, infernal, or those born without souls.
- **Law of Names:** Knowing the true and complete name of a phenomenon or spiritual entity (such as a ghost, a demon, or sphinx) grants the caster complete mastery of it. A magician may summon such a creature to do her bidding, or destroy it as she wishes. For this reason, many of the more powerful entities take great pains to conceal their true names; finding the name of a greater demon or powerful faerie lord should be quite difficult.
- **The Law of Places:** Some areas in the world are more replete with magical energy than others. This might be where ley lines cross, a specially blessed building, or a combination of the two - a structure that takes advantage of sacred geometry or similar principles. Magic can be impossible outside of these boundaries, or grant a Wild Card bonus to spells cast within them, as the Director sees appropriate.
- **The Law of Reciprocity:** Also called the Threefold Law, after the witches' saying that whatever one works by magic, the effect will rebound upon them threefold. Whatever a caster does by magic, for good or ill, will be repaid to her threefold. Dark deeds bring darkness into one's life, and violence begets violence. But those who sacrifice for heroic reasons shall also be rewarded.
- **The Law of Reversal:** Whatever magic can do, magic can undo. Anything created by one magician can be dispelled or otherwise undone by another caster, without needing to be physically destroyed. Conversely, this also allows space for anyone killed by magic to be brought back under the right conditions, even if doing so violates the law of Mortality.
- **The Law of Words:** Words, like names, have power. A magician must first learn these words of power to cast her spells. Unlike names, these do not summon and bind entities. Rather, they allow the caster a Wild Card bonus when attempting to create environmental effects – such as speaking the magic word for 'wind' to summon a hurricane. Such words of power are often jealously guarded by those who already know them, and a magician operating under the Law of Words must work hard to learn them.

Step Five: Select the Available Schools of Magic

Along with operating according to specific rules, magic also frequently has schools or traditions – collections of spells which have thematic elements in common. A Genre may have all, some, or just one school present. When designing the magic system for your particular Genre, select the school(s) available for your Genre. Then, detail any alternations to its standard scope, magical limitations, or magical laws. For instance, in a setting where all magic is tied to the classical elements, a Director may choose to assign Divination to water and Transfiguration to earth. Thus, all Divination spells cast within this Genre incorporate water in some way. In an urban

fantasy setting, however, the Director might decree that only vampires can cast Glamour and hedge witches have access only to Tantra and Necromancy.

If a type of magic is not covered here, but would be useful for your specific Genre, alter or add a new school of magic as best works for your Genre.

Abjuration

This school of magic leverages the Laws of Consent, Contagion, and Naming to weave a series of spells concerning protection, shields, and wards against particular creatures, forces, or items. Abjuration spells may limit or forbid certain actions from those under its dominion, often refusing entrance into a closed space, causing violence or harm, or using their powers through wards. Some spells allow those under their dominion to swear an oath of conduct, lest they be banished from this plane of existence. Qualifications for dominion might include a true name, some of the creatures' blood, or masterful knowledge of the creature (from a Specialization or MacGuffin). As always, the Director is the final arbiter of what is considered dominion for this purpose.

Chaos

This school of magic wields the Laws of Balance, Distortion, and Contagion to inflict bedlam, disrupt patterns of mystical energy, and even change the stars themselves to alter destiny. Chaos is change without form, purpose, or reason. Realities overwhelmed with chaos are indecipherable to the human mind, and are believed to be ruled by the monstrous and inscrutable elder gods. This school of magic claims dominion over extradimensional travel, weather patterns, and the disruption of vast ecosystems.

Conjuration

Conjuration is a school of magic that revolves around the spaces between objects, and traveling from different points in the universe. The magician doesn't simply pull the rabbit out of his hat, but conjures one from a different place. The closer the item, the easier the spell. Grabbing a diet soda from a nearby fridge is easy enough, but somewhat more difficult if the fridge is located several time zones away, or on Mars. High levels of Conjuration can involve teleportation across the city, the world, or even travel to another dimension or galaxy. Casters must have extensively researched the place she wishes to travel to or pull objects from. The school of Abjuration opposes Conjuration, and Abjuration spells can be used to prevent Conjuration. As always, the Director has the final say as to how difficult a conjuring is. This school leverages the following Laws of Magic: Backlash, Balance, Distortion, Equivalent Exchange, and Names.

Destruction

Also known as War magic. With it, one can hex her enemies, or call heavenly fire down upon their armies. A magician who flirts with this school takes many risks – one slip, and the tremendous power she wields turns upon her in turn. Some magicians see their work as a holy calling, to clear away the weak or faithless so the strong and devout may thrive. Others are patriots, putting their talents to use for their family, community, or nation. Destruction relies on

the Laws of Backlash, Equivalent Exchange, and Sympathy. In some cases, the Law of Reversal must needs come into play, as well.

Divination

Divination is magic that studies the divine order of the universe. The word comes from the Latin *divinare*, to foresee, or to be inspired by a god. Despite the etymology of the word, however, this magic may or may not be divinely inspired. Practitioners seek to understand the hidden patterns in seemingly-random occurrences, and drag secrets into the light: foreseeing and foretelling the future through augury, synchronicity, or divine revelation. Divination spells oppose the school of Phantasmagoria, as one is based on truth and the other deception.

Elemental

Elemental magic revolves around the creation, manipulation, and command of the four classic elements according to the Western Occult traditions: earth, wind, fire, and water. Casters shape the elements according to their desires, and they move objects, start fires, or change water into ice. While traditionally, this school focuses on the four elements, mastery can extend to any substance, and advanced practitioners can channel and focus energy such as light or electricity. This school is bound by the following Laws of Magic: Equivalent Exchange and Balance. Matter and energy are always taken from some place in environment, and casters must be careful not to inflict too much environmental damage when performing spells. Note: in the Eastern Occult tradition the elements are Metal, Wood, Fire, Earth, and Water.

Enchantment

Enchantment is the mystical school for creating items imbued with magic. All magic items are created according to the following Laws of Magic: Distortion, Contagion, Equivalent Exchange, and Sympathy. Items must be crafted with unique and unusual materials, along with requiring effort and symbolic sacrifice during their creation. Uninitiated magicians (those without one of the Magical Qualities (see page 82) must quest to bond with the item. Creation of an item requires the XP expenditure of the appropriate MacGuffin Quality to tether it to this reality. This can be spent by either the caster or the intended wielder.

Glamour

The school of Glamour concerns itself with mental and emotional dominion over people, animals, and, even monsters. Those brought under a caster's power are completely helpless to actively disobey, attack, or plot against her. While this school of magic might simulate some of the outwardly effects, it can't force someone to love you or anyone else. However, you could Glamour two rivals to like each other very much for a short time. This school is especially bound by the following Laws: Contagion, Distortion, Words.

Limitations of Glamour

Glamour cannot be used to force a target to do something directly self-destructive, such as "shoot yourself in the foot." However, the caster can issue orders which are not automatically harmful, but might nevertheless lead to a dangerous situation. A magician could Glamour someone to attack a mob of dangerous robots or pack of werewolves.

This action would almost certainly lead to trouble, and possibly get the target harmed, but it is not directly self-destructive.

It is possible for an order issued with Glamour to be initially non-harmful and then become directly harmful later. If this happens, the Glamour breaks just before its implanted orders become directly harmful. If a character commands her target to, “Walk straight ahead until I say stop,” the target would be forced to move forward. However, she will stop before stepping in front of a bus or walking off a cliff. This power grants the target no supernatural ability to sense when something is dangerous. Therefore, if the victim did not know a cliff lay ahead and could not sense it, she would continue walking forward until she realized the danger — which may very well come too late.

Kinetic

Kinetic magic relates to the motion and animation of matter and energy. Casters can telekinetically move objects at will, channel and redirect energy such as electricity, and animate inanimate objects. This school is bound by the following Laws of Magic: the Laws of Equivalent Exchange and Balance. Matter and energy are always taken from some place in environment, and casters must be careful not to inflict too much environmental damage when performing spells.

Necromancy

Necromancy is the art of communicating, commanding, and communing with the dead, undead, and everything in between. Casters may summon ghosts, reanimate dead bodies, and learn the secrets of transforming the living into the undead. This school of magic is often considered unclean at best, and evil in some cultures. Limitations on this sort of magic depends greatly on the Genre and the following questions: what role, if any, does the divine have in mortal life; is there an underworld where souls cross over into a new existence; and how (if at all) is a soul judged. The answers to these questions determine what a Director will or will not allow. The following Laws of Magic often relate to Necromancy: Balance, Distortion, Names, Mortality, Reciprocity, Reversal, and/or Sympathy.

Phantasmagoria

This school of magic is named for how its students exhibit trickery, optical effects, and illusions which are similarly employed by entertainers to delight their audiences. Phantasmagoria concerns the casting of illusions, deception, and general trickery. Casters can create intricate illusions, cloak their presence and intent, and otherwise distract or befuddle their enemies.

Summoning

The magician summons angels, demons, djinn, faeries, or some other entities of great power to do her bidding. Such magic relies heavily on the Law of Naming, and to a lesser extent the Law of Words, if the user must learn a special language to communicate with such creatures. Such entities can usually perform only a single service before being banished or released; though a very powerful magician may bind these creatures for longer service.

Tantra

Tantra literally translates to loom, warp, and weft. This school of magic leverages the energy of creation contained within all life, and key points on the human body, to weave spells of healing. A caster can even enhance the human form in short bursts, allowing for superhuman feats and actions. This school obeys the following Laws of Magic: Backlash, Balance, Distortion, Consent, Equivalent Exchange, and Mortality.

Transfiguration

The school of Transfiguration revolves around transforming one thing into something completely else. The amount of matter and energy in a transfiguration must remain the same. A caster might be able to turn a mouse into a teacup, or a piece of lead into a piece of gold, but cannot turn a pebble into a building. Complex items such as a laptop or a pistol are too intricate for this study. This school observes the following Laws of Magic: Backlash, Balance, Distortion, Consent, Equivalent Exchange, and Mortality.

Casting Magic

Magic is an art which must be practiced with discipline, will, and exacting precision. Depending on the Genre's Laws of Magic, a single wrong intonation or gesture might ruin a spell, or, worse, cause it to backfire painfully. Bending the universe to one's will is never an easy task, even under the best conditions, and attempting such a feat during a Dramatic Moment can be damned near impossible.

Casting magic has the same Action Pool as any Dramatic Moment:

Soul Attribute + Magic Skill + Wild Card + 2d6 = Action Pool

The following flowchart has been designed for players and Directors to calculate the Difficulty Rating of any particular piece of spell craft.

The base Difficulty Rating is derived from the type of magical ecosystem the Genre possesses. If a caster attempts to cast a spell that crosses schools, then the base Difficulty Rating is whichever is higher for the schools involved. For example, if a wizard wants to add an effect from the Out-of-School school of Glamour to a ring via the In-School Enchantment, then the cost for the casting would be for Out-of-School. Remember that each magical merit grants a limited, but successive number of schools of magic.

Magic Ecosystem	Base Difficulty Rating
Low Magic	In-School Casting: 15 Out-of-School Casting: 25

Medium Magic	In-School Casting: 10 Out-of-School Casting: 15
High Magic	In-School Casting: 5 Out-of-School Casting: 10

Directors should feel free to revise or even ignore this flowchart when determining the Difficulty Rating of specified magical spell, based on the needs of the story and constraints of the Genre.

Step One: Intent

The spellcaster clearly states her character's intention and goals for casting this piece of magic. The Director then calculates the exact Difficulty Rating for the spell.

Step Two: Preparation

The idiom that *knowledge is power* is quite apt when considering magic, but it might be better amended to state that preparation is mastery of power. Research, gathering mystical components to aid the casting, and finding the right time and place is as vital as the physical casting.

Spell Work	Difficulty Penalty
Researched Spell or Ritual	-3
Gathered appropriate spell components	-5
Invoking a deity or higher power, who claims the nature of this spell as his/her/its specialty	-3
Special sacrifice of that which is sacred to the deity or higher power	-4
Using the True Name of a deity or higher power, if appropriate.	-6
Worthy blood sacrifice	-4
Casting at a time and/or in a place of power	-3 to -6
Apprentices, assistants, cultists, covenmates, or similar help.	-4 to -8

Step Three: Scope

Scope is the number of objects or people affected by your casting. The larger the target, the stronger the magic required to alter it.

The Director and the caster should nail down the scope of casting via the below chart.

Spell Work	Difficulty Penalty
A small object /Self	+3

A collection of small objects that you can fit in your hand, or a person	+4
A very large object or a couple of people	+6
A neighborhood	+10
A city	+20
A state or region	+30
The world	+40

Step Four: **Laws of Magic**

The Laws of Magic are pillars of mystical mathematics. Casters who obey these known laws find their magic easier. Those who resist or attempt to circumvent these laws find that practicing magic is quite difficult. If a character can appropriately justify how the spell follows one of the principles of a Law of Magic necessary to the school, Directors can grant bonuses or penalties according to the following chart.

Laws of Magic	Difficulty Wildcard
Spell directly leverages one principle relating to one applicable Law of Magic.	-3
Spell directly leverages one principle relating to two applicable Laws of Magic.	-6
Spell directly leverages three or more principles, relating to three or more applicable Laws of Magic.	+5 to +10

Step Five: Calculate the Difficulty Rating

Calculate the final Difficulty Rating for the Spellcasting based on the steps above, and then verify that the proposed spell isn't outside of the mastery granted by the character's Qualities (see page 82). Then roll the dice, compute the Action Pool, and the Director will narrate the results!

Theory and Practice of Technology

REDACTED

Chapter Seven: Genre: Punching Nazis

“We’re gonna be dropped into France, dressed as civilians. And once we’re in enemy territory, as a bushwhackin’ guerrilla army, we’re gonna be doin’ one thing and one thing only... killin’ Nazis.”

— Lt. Aldo Raine, *Inglorious Basterds*

War movies are a staple of American cinema, with World War II being a favorite topic. It’s easy to understand why: the lines between bad and good were sharply drawn between fascism and genocide and those who opposed it. Directors take a variety of approaches to the topic, from serious to more fantastic. Even the same director can have wildly different takes: Steven Spielberg made both the dramatic, epic *Schindler’s List* and the more fantastic adventure *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

For *Punching Nazis*, the Director takes on the role of Indiana Jones’ Spielberg, *Inglorious Basterds*’ Quentin Tarantino, or *Captain America: The First Avenger*’s Joe Johnston. They create an adventurous war film which leaves room for super-science, magic, or alternate history. While, the themes inherent in a story about World War II are often dark, loosening the demands for strict historical accuracy allows for wish fulfillment by the players: they can imagine themselves as a crack squad of commandos able to end the war early by killing Hitler, super-soldiers who can singlehandedly bring an end to the fighting, or witches-in-training using their powers to send Nazis packing (*Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, dir. Robert Stevenson).

Punching Nazis Credits

Developer: Jason Andrew, Rachel E. Judd

Writer: Jason Andrew, Rachel E. Judd

Editor: J. Childs, Brendan Whaley

Here’s the recommended guidelines for running *Punching Nazis*:

Target Audience and Rating: PG-13/R

Really, anyone who wants to punch a Nazi. The Genre’s narrow focus on World War II allows the Director to be quite flexible in building a game which appeals to her individual troupe. That being said, the emphasis in *Punching Nazis* is on heroic adventure: this Genre is meant to appeal to those who enjoy stories full of action and high-stakes missions, not to mention copious bloodshed and quite a lot of soldier-style profanity, over more personal, parlor-style stories.

Writer’s Room Commentary: Consent Calibrations for *Punching Nazis*

Punching Nazis tells stories about one of the darker periods in modern history.

Eleven million innocents were systematically murdered. Players belonging to populations targeted by the Nazi regime, or who have gaps in their family tree due to Nazi violence, may have complicated feelings about how the plot unfolds. This topic must absolutely be covered in the Writer’s Room. Remember that *Punching Nazis* is

about showing evil, but not for the sake of showing evil. Rather, evil must be there to be vanquished, so the heroism of those who defeated the Nazis can be celebrated. For more information, see **Chapter Six: Director's Primer: Consent Calibration Techniques**, page xx.

Punching Nazis can be rated PG-13 to R, depending on how explicit the troupe wants to get with their violence. Certainly, the Genre's title already promises quite a lot of violence. The MPAA does rate 'war violence' as PG-13, though *Inglorious Basterds* still got an R for being as graphic as it is. And unless one is Steve Rogers, soldiers are known to use copious profanity.

Though there's no expectation for overt sex or nudity, there's room in *Punching Nazis* for some romance. After all, soldiers need reminders of who and what they're fighting for, and nothing brings people together like a secret mission into enemy territory.

The inclusion of themes revolving around alcohol or drugs are up to each Director. Certainly, the real soldiers who fought in World War II were on quite a pharmacological cocktail, and super soldiers usually rely on a serum of some kind for their powers. Directors and players need to cover these thematic elements in their Writer's Room, and come to an agreement which suits their personal troupe.

Punching Nazis Inspiration

Movies: *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (dir. Robert Stevenson), *Captain America: The First Avenger* (dir. Joe Johnston), *Casablanca* (dir. Michael Curtiz), *The Dirty Dozen* (dir. Robert Aldrich), *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* (dir. Steven Spielberg), *Inglorious Basterds* (dir. Quentin Tarantino), *The Imitation Game* (dir. Morten Tyldum), *Operation Petticoat* (dir. Blake Edwards).

Histories: World War II was a favorite subject of historians since the week after V-E Day. You'll easily find any number of works at your local library or bookstore. Some of the more notable ones are *An Army at Dawn*, by Rick Atkinson; *The Conquering Tide*, by Ian W. Toll; *Inferno: The World at War*, by Max Hastings; *The Longest Day*, by Cornelius Ryan; *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, by William Shirer; and *The Second World War*, by Martin Gilbert.

Novels and Other Works: *Captain America Comics*, 1941-46, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby (along with other depictions of the character); *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller; *Cryptonomicon*, by Neal Stephenson; *Diary of a Young Girl*, by Anne Frank; *Heroes* by Sabaton; *Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien; *Maus* by Art Spiegelman; *The Man in the High Castle*, by Philip K. Dick; *Primo Victoria*, by Sabaton.

Television: *Band of Brothers* (various creators); *Fleming: The Man Who Would be Bond* (created by Mat Whitecross); *Hogan's Heroes* (created by Bernard Fein and Albert S. Ruddy); *Marvel's Agent Carter* (created by Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely); *The Man in the High Castle* (created by Frank Spotnitz); *The Rat Patrol* (created by Tom Gries); *X Company* (created by Mark Ellis and Stephanie Morgenstern).

Punching Nazis Budget

War movies are always in vogue, and *Punching Nazis* is built as a Blockbuster. Directors and writers should feel like the sky's the limit when devising interesting powers, abilities, and equipment they can use to punch Nazis.

All characters begin with the following points during character creation:

- Starting Attributes: 12
- Starting Skills: 15
- Quality Points: 13

Punching Nazis Archetypes

Writer's Room: World War II Costuming

For the Nazis, their Hugo Boss-designed uniforms reflected the ideals of German precision. If your LARP production of *Punching Nazis* uses costumes and players cast as villains, you may wonder how to costume them appropriately while not crossing inappropriate lines.

Sharp, well-fitting uniforms in dark colors are good. If you can't get uniforms, then black or khaki jackets will suit, as long as everyone wears the same style. You can add some flourishes, such as gold braiding around the shoulders for officers. A black Greek fisherman's cap rounds out the look quite well.

Remember, though, that Nazism is not a dead ideology. The symbols used by Nazi Germany are still displayed today with much the same intent. Don't use symbols of current hate and real-world suffering for your own entertainment. *Do not* wear or utilize swastikas, the double-lightning of the SS, or any other Nazi symbol in your costuming or decoration. Your antagonist players can convey the malice of Nazi officers through roleplay.

The following custom Archetypes are available for play:

Commanding Officer

Catchphrase: "Atten-SHUN!"

Description: You rose through the ranks of your country's armed forces, and are now responsible for the lives of soldiers beneath your command. You might be a squad sergeant, a submarine captain, or an Air Force lieutenant. You receive orders from someone above you, and are responsible for seeing those orders carried out using the resources and manpower available to you.

Roleplaying: You have authority and you expect others to respect it. With that authority comes a weighty responsibility – you know you'll be ordering your soldiers to their potential deaths. Sometimes, you wonder if you know more dead people than living ones.

As a player, you have a responsibility to keep the story flowing. Likely, one or all of the other characters cannot act without your direct orders, and even characters outside your chain of command look to you for advice and guidance. Consider taking Qualities which allow you a greater understanding of the terrain, a heightened situational awareness, or allow you to otherwise steer the plot in the direction it ought to go. If you wish to play a tyrannical or overbearing CO, whose story can likely end with her getting fragged by subordinates, make sure to employ the Writer's Room and Consent Calibration techniques (pages XX and XX).

Appearance: You normally appear in uniform, appropriate to your particular country and branch of service. The average GI can get away with a little bit of slovenliness here and there, but you know the importance of setting a good example, and work to project the image of someone who can keep it together in a war zone. You almost certainly have a few medals pinned to your dress uniform, and a sidearm with you at almost all times.

Attribute Bonus: +1 Body, +1 Soul

Special Qualities: see **Commanding Officer Qualities**, page 104.

Intelligence Agent

Catchphrase: “The bluebirds take flight at noon.”

Description: Intelligence and counter-intelligence was crucial to the war effort, and that’s where you serve. You’re an expert in disguise, a master of cryptography, speak several languages, and know the critical importance of your work. Spies intercept and decode enemy messages, infiltrate occupied cities, and observe troop movements, broadcast propaganda, and bait the enemy with misinformation. You’re intelligent, resourceful, and more than a little sneaky.

Roleplaying: Keep your mouth shut and your eyes open. Bait the enemy into revealing more than she intends. At the back of your mind is a universal truth of warfare: captured soldiers are taken prisoner, captured spies are shot.

Unless you’re running a game with a heavy focus on the Resistance or Special Ops teams, you will likely disappear every now and then while on covert, intelligence-gathering missions. Your team might get frustrated with your elusiveness, but the information you bring back makes it all worthwhile. If you are on a Resistance or Special Ops team, then you bring to the table a valuable connection to the government employing you. You are one of the conduits helping the various Allied nations co-ordinate their plans and strategies.

Appearance: Spies wear whatever’s appropriate for the current mission. You have quite the wardrobe, anything from military uniforms to glamorous outfits to dirty farmer’s clothing.

Attribute Bonus: +1 Heart, +1 Mind

Special Qualities: see **Intelligence Agent Qualities**, page 105.

Medic

Catchphrase: “You! Hold this bandage in place while I suture the wound closed. Now, dammit!”

Description: You perform a vital service to the Armed Forces. You know how to stop a soldier from bleeding out, how to prevent infection, and, in the worst case, how to perform a battlefield amputation that *probably* won’t kill your patient. You might be a doctor who enlisted, a Red Cross volunteer, or just someone with medical know-how who wants to be where it matters.

Roleplaying: You go toe-to-toe with Death on a daily basis, and you’re determined not to let him win. You’re always slightly worried about the availability of needed medical supplies, and try to not waste a single bandage or drop of iodine. You care deeply for human life.

At the table, you’re the team healer, the person best trained and equipped to alleviate Consequences. Make sure to specialize in the Qualities which allow you to do such. Medics are specially trained to heal Body Consequences, but an empathic and committed healer can have the skills or training to help her squad mates overcome Mind, Soul, or even Heart Consequences.

Appearance: Medical uniforms are usually white and crisp – at least to start. The demands of war and your duties almost certainly left their mark on your clothing. You probably have some kind of insignia to mark you as a medic – usually a red cross emblem. If you’re a civilian or Resistance medic, you don’t have a uniform, but probably wear a lab coat or medical apron while working. No matter what you wear, you almost always have a bag of medical supplies close at hand.

Attribute Bonus: +1 Body, +1 Mind

Special Qualities: see **Medic Qualities**, page 105.

Pilot

Catchphrase: “A what on my six?!”

Description: Though airplanes were used in World War I, they became a critical element of World War II strategy. The British Royal Air Force and United States Army Air Force engaged in bombing raids and midair dogfights, while Russian Night Witches flew silent attacks against Nazi targets.

Roleplaying: Being a pilot is not a duty for the timid. Flying a bomber requires bravery above and beyond the normal courage expected of a GI. You’re willing to take risks and try out crazy plans, just in case they work. Sitting around and doing nothing is not your speed, and you always feel the need to be in motion.

When interacting with the rest of your team, be bold, brash, and brave. You can get people wherever they need to go, and back out again. Most pilots were enlisted members of their nation’s Air Force, and so you also have some pull with the official Allied forces.

Appearance: Flight suits were becoming common, and bomber jackets were quite popular. These jackets were usually decorated with any number of patches. Aviator glasses and airplane goggles were also in use. Some pilots performed their own airplane maintenance and thus frequently had a tool set on hand.

Attribute Bonus: +1 Mind, +1 Soul

Special Qualities: see **Pilot Qualities**, page 106.

Resistance Fighter

Catchphrase: “Not until my country is free again.”

Description: You are from one of the territories currently occupied by an Axis power, and are determined not to rest until they have been driven out of your home. You likely have a wide spread of skills dedicated to fighting, sabotage, and espionage. However, you must always act carefully – you know being caught engaging in resistance activities means a summary execution. The Resistance is full of people with unique skill sets, the only requirement to entry is a willingness to resist Nazi oppression.

Roleplaying: You are brave and paranoid in equal measure, driven to relieve the suffering of you and your loved ones at the hands of the Nazis. You’re much like an Intelligence Agent, but without the backing of a formal government. You know no one is coming to save you, so you must save yourself.

Unless your team is solely Resistance fighters, you are likely one of the most focused and determined characters. Your connections allow you access to information and needed goods, but erratically. Your help always comes with a price – you expect your allies to help you get people out of occupied territories or otherwise support the general aims of the Resistance.

Costuming: Resistance fighters only survived if they operated undetected. They wore civilian clothing most of the time, drab and unremarkable, though perhaps with a few secret pockets for hiding messages, weapons, and other important items. Some fighters disguised themselves as soldiers with stolen uniforms.

Attribute Bonus: +1 Heart, +1 Soul

Special Qualities: see **Resistance Fighter Qualities**, page 106.

Soldier

Catchphrase: “Yessir!”

Description: Millions of men and women enlisted to fight the war. Some were drafted, and many joined voluntarily. Soldiers were trained in the basics of combat, and given a healthy sense of military discipline.

Roleplaying: No matter how you came into the armed forces, you have your reasons for fighting. Whether service to your country or the duress of the draft, you know you’re here until the war is over.

As a character, you obey orders. If another player takes the role of Commanding Officer in your particular chain of command, defer to her, unless you have a *really* good reason not to. However, you’re not a robot. You’re trusted to use your training and judgement when it comes to deciding the best, most efficient way to carry out such orders, especially if you’re Special Forces or on a classified mission. Many soldiers had special training in cryptography, technology, or other skills vital at the front line.

Appearance: You’ve been given a set of standard clothing – shirts, pants, underwear, and boots – appropriate to the area where you’ve been sent. You have a set of dog tags, meant to identify your body if the worst happens.

Attribute Bonus: +1 Body, +1 Heart

Special Qualities: see Soldier Qualities, page 107.

Well-Placed Civilian

Catchphrase: “I’ve got something that might help.”

Description: You wouldn’t call yourself a resistance fighter. Perhaps you’re a German actress or Italian socialite who despises fascism and wants to see democracy restored to your home; or a journalist dedicated to documenting the truth of war. Either way, you have Allied sympathies and are willing to work in secret on behalf of the ‘enemy.’ Perhaps you have money, or access to the right kinds of travel papers, or the inside scoop on what the military will do next.

Roleplaying: You maintain a difficult balance. You must behave in ways to keep your social position, because that’s the only way you can get things done. You know it’s the end of you if the Nazis ever catch wind of your ‘subversive’ activities. Your only hope is to act quickly and decisively, and help bring the war to an end as soon as possible.

You are perhaps the freest Archetype out of all of them. Your country is not yet occupied, or if it is, you somehow have the wealth and privilege necessary to travel freely. You are not beholden to a chain of command. You can open doors, make introductions, and find out choice bits of intelligence at exclusive cocktail parties. Should you play a journalist, your role is to bear witness to the war; and your main concern is documenting what you see (with discretion, of course!) and sending inspiring stories back to the Home Front.

Costuming: Civilian clothing, usually fashionable or well-made, in order to show off your position in society. Items and equipment necessary to do your job.

Attribute Bonus: +1 Mind, +1 Soul

Special Qualities: see **Well-Placed Civilian Qualities**, page 107.

Genre Factions

War has a way of bringing people together. Throughout the conflict, various sides coordinated their abilities and resources to achieve wartime objectives. The Allied leaders not only coordinated their military capabilities, they also worked with the Resistance and friendly civilians when possible. The primary strategy of the Allies was *Europe First*. Since the German armies already had one major capital captured (Paris) and threatened two more (London and Moscow), the Allies focused on Europe before shifting to the Pacific.

American Armed Forces

Though Roosevelt quietly increased the American military since the outset of hostilities in Europe, the United States officially entered the war in December of 1941, the day after the Pearl Harbor attack. Americans were sent to both the Pacific and European theaters, and provided critical support on all fronts. Over sixteen million Americans enlisted or were drafted. In April of 1945, Franklin Roosevelt suddenly died, and leadership of the American army went to Harry S. Truman.

- Infantry

In the Pacific theater, General Douglas MacArthur commanded the Army; in the European, General Dwight D. Eisenhower led the troops. GIs were found everywhere, at every front line.

- Navy

The American Navy was predominant in the Pacific theater. Enormous aircraft carriers, from which planes could take off and land, helped secure a wide array of strategic islands using the island-hopping strategy. American submarines blockaded Japan. The Naval commander of the Pacific theater was Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. In the Atlantic, the American forces lent their ships and planes to the Battle of the Atlantic and the breaking of German blockades.

- Air Corps

Nominally under the command of the Army, the Air Corps organized to be nearly semi-autonomous by the end of the war. The Armed Forces weren't quite sure how to treat the Air Corps; as a result, airmen were often left out of important planning meetings. This

only inspired the pilots to prove themselves – and none more than the Tuskegee Airmen, the black men who served with honor and distinction in Italy.

- Special Forces/Espionage

The Office of Strategic Services formed during the war was the precursor to the modern CIA. This agency coordinated intelligence between all branches of the military, as well as with other allied nations. One of the Nazi's worst enemies was Virginia Hall who worked for both the British and American spy services. The Navajo Code Talkers gave the United States an unbreakable code in the Pacific Theater, as the Japanese simply had no base of reference for understanding Diné.

English Armed Forces

The British armed forces weren't only English. At the time, England commanded quite a wide swath of the globe, and soldiers from many nations fought under the Union Jack. As Hitler's choicest target, these soldiers had a weighty responsibility. Despite primarily being concentrated in the European and African theaters, the British Fourteenth Army (comprised mostly of Indian soldiers) was stationed in the Far East to defend British interests in Burma.

- Infantry

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery led the majority of British forces during the African campaigns, and was later integral in the invasion of Italy. Viscount Gort, a veteran of World War I, defied orders early in the war and allowed for the evacuation of over 300,000 trapped Allied soldiers after the Battle of France.

- Navy

As an island nation, England was largely dependent on exports to support her population. Germany knew this – one of the major elements of Axis strategy was not only to blockade England, but turn the Atlantic into territory controlled by German U-boats. The British Navy was an integral part of the Battle for the Atlantic. Admiral Alfred Pound was the leader of the British Navy.

- Air Force

The Royal Air Force was the crown of the English armed forces. British pilots defended their homeland from the air, and kept the Luftwaffe from dominating the European skies. They were a major element of Allied strategy. Hugh Dowding led the Air Force in the Battle of Britain, and Arthur Harris and Charles Portal were also core officers.

- Special Forces/Espionage

Britain led the world in espionage and counter-espionage. Bletchley Park, headed by Alan Turing, was instrumental in breaking the Enigma cipher. Counter-intelligence operations were integral in misdirecting the Axis, and the British were at the top of their game. One noted British spy was Ian Fleming, the future author of the James Bond novels. The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare, a group of men who in a different time might have found themselves imprisoned, conducted a variety of black ops missions, directed by Winston Churchill.

Russian Armed Forces

The Russian Armed Forces are often referred to as the Red Army. After Hitler's betrayal of Stalin, the Soviet leader had no choice but to throw in with the Allies. As Britain and the United States focused on the western front, Stalin was forced (with no small resentment) to maintain the eastern front almost entirely on his own. Out of every nation that went to war, the Russians saw more of her soldiers die than any other. The Russian army was the most gender-accessible, with women fighting in tanks, planes, and as snipers.

- Infantry

The Red Army provided the largest land force out of all the Allies, sending soldiers to both Europe and Asia. The Russian invasion of Manchuria was integral in forcing a Japanese surrender. After breaking Hitler's sieges, the Red Army advanced on Germany from the east, while the other Allies came from the west.

- Navy

The Russian navy was taken by surprise, like most of the army, during Operation Barbarossa. Most of the naval battles between the Soviets and Nazis were fought in the Black Sea. The Russian navy was integral in defending Soviet ports against blockades.

- Air Force

Though the Soviet army had more planes than the Germans, they lagged behind in technology and manpower. Operation Barbarossa saw many planes destroyed on the tarmac, and Russia hurried to catch up. Of special note are the Night Witches. These women flew planes originally designed to be crop dusters. Due to this design, they had to be flown low to the ground – low enough to escape radar detection. In order to drop bombs on Nazi targets, they often cut their engines mid-flight, coasted, and then re-started their engines once they'd released the payloads.

- Special Forces/Espionage

The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (in Russian, the NKVD) was a precursor to the KGB. During the war, the NKVD was primarily concerned with preventing desertions and sabotaging German war efforts.

Other Armed Forces

Though primarily led by England, Russia, and the United States, *many* nations sent their armies to war. Several thousand French citizens fled France after the occupation and formed the Free French Army. Australian soldiers fought hard alongside the Americans in the Pacific Theater, and Canadians could be found on every front line. After the collapse of Mussolini's dictatorship, many Italians followed their government and began working directly with the Allies. The British Indian Army became one of the largest volunteer armies in history, with 2.5 million Indians fighting in Africa, Europe, and Asia. Nearly every army had soldiers who enlisted after escaping the occupation of their homeland. A player wishing to create a soldier from a country other than one of the "Big Four" should work with her Director to devise a compelling story which allows her to work easily with the other characters. Certainly, nothing stops a troupe from making an all-Canadian or all-Indian team!

French Resistance

Germany occupied Paris, but it never conquered France. The hearts and minds of the French people were always with their homeland. Some Vichy officials attempted to collaborate, but their efforts were doomed from the start. French farmers hid Jewish families in their basements, and urban French property owners were only too happy to hit the Nazis where it hurt. Veterans of the Spanish Civil War also dedicated themselves to the cause of resisting fascism.

At the beginning of the war, the activities of the Resistance were disorganized, and performing relatively small acts of rebellion: cutting telephone lines, slashing tires, or defacing Nazi propaganda posters. That being said, getting caught engaging in such sabotage would earn one a summary execution in the street. As the war continued, those determined to resist Nazi occupation began to organize/ Out of self-preservation, Resistance agents divided into cells. Thus, if captured and tortured, a given agent only knew, and could reveal, a few others. Only a few well-placed leaders had the wider picture, and these operatives were ready to end their own lives as necessary.

As the war dragged on, the Resistance began to take on more ambitious objectives: running underground newspapers, forging identity papers, damaging railway lines, and smuggling Jews, Poles, and anyone else targeted by the Nazi regime out of the country. Assassination was a matter of great moral controversy. Not because the Resistance wasn't willing to kill Nazis— they certainly were—but because the Nazis would shoot up to fifty French prisoners in retaliation for every assassinated officer. The Resistance constantly argued among themselves as to the morality of killing Nazi officers with this cost in mind.

One of their major contributions to Operation Overlord was the destruction of the French phone line system. Giving up on telephones as too unreliable, most Axis leaders switched to radios to communicate – where intelligence analysts at Bletchley Park eavesdropped on every single message.

By 1943, smuggled weapons from England ensured the Resistance was well-armed, and they were declared part of the French army in 1944.

Polish Resistance

Another resistance movement, the Polish Resistance, provided crucial support and intelligence on the eastern front. The Poles had an easier time getting arms than the French Resistance, and the largest Polish Resistance organization was *Armia Krajowa*, or, Home Army. Other groups of fighting Poles formed, in alliance with or subordinate to the Home Army. A few other Resistance groups formed around Communist ideology, and were supported by the Soviets after Operation Barbarossa.

A founder of one of these groups, Witold Pilecki, willingly allowed himself to be arrested and transported to Auschwitz. At the time, no one outside the Reich had any idea of what was happening there, and thought Auschwitz was more along the lines of a prison camp than a death camp. He encouraged other prisoners to become part of the formal prison resistance, and went so far as to set up a secret radio transmitter to communicate with Allied leaders. By 1941, he'd ensured the Allies knew exactly what was happening in the camps. He escaped in 1943 with armfuls of Nazi intelligence. Due in large part to his work, the Polish Resistance devoted many of their resources to getting Jewish refugees to safety.

Jewish Resistance

Jewish people were deeply involved in both the French and Polish Resistance movements, though they could not move as freely throughout occupied territory. Especially in Poland, Jewish people were confined to ghettos. Many Jewish people sent to concentration camps resisted, including an uprising which forced the closing of the Sobibor death camp in 1943. They devoted many of their activities to helping other Jewish groups, either by smuggling supplies into ghettos or smuggling Jewish people out.

As the main target of Nazi hatred, Jewish Resistance agents were far likelier to resort to violence to defend themselves. Several Jewish fighters assassinated or bombed Nazi targets. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising occurred in 1943, as the Nazis systematically deported Jewish ghetto residents to the death camps. Knowing they were dead no matter what, the remaining Jewish people decided to go out fighting. With the support of the larger Polish Resistance, the Jewish people fought back. They were indeed killed, but took more than a few Nazis with them.

Resistance activities continued even after the war, as a group formed calling itself Nokmim (Hebrew: “Avengers”) spent the post-war years hunting down former Nazis and enacting vigilante justice.

Civilian Spies & Saboteurs

Many people living in occupied territory, or adjacent to occupied territory, lent their skills and talents without formally aligning with a Resistance movement or enlisting in a particular military.

Josephine Baker, a well-known entertainer, used her fame to gain access to military installations in Africa, which she reported back to the Allies. According to legend, she even went so far as to smuggle important documents in her clothing. Krystyna Skarbek, a Polish beauty queen, used her own fame and grace to much the same effect. Nancy Wake, an Australian woman, married into wealth before the war and spent much of her time during the war helping injured Allied soldiers in France escape to friendlier territories. Moe Berg, a former baseball player, was sent to Germany to assassinate Heisenberg. Berg opted not to shoot when he realized that German efforts to develop an atom bomb were utterly fruitless. A dashing Welsh airman named Roald Dahl, after being injured during a mission, joined forces with Ian Fleming to influence American war attitudes.

Lastly, one of the most important civilian roles was journalist. Though sometimes a little too indiscreet as early in the war, Germans learned quite a lot about Allied troop movements simply by reading American newspapers, journalists provided a useful and needed service. At the time, their photographs, film strips, and written accounts of the war were integral in raising and maintaining morale on the home front. In retrospect, their documentation of the war was crucial for future generations. One of the seminal books on the war, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, was written by journalist and eyewitness William Shirer.

Skill Adjustments

Characters in a *Punching Nazis* story have almost certainly been trained by someone, whether by a drill sergeant during basic training, a fellow member of the Resistance, or the specialized education of a spy. Such education comes with an emphasis on winning the war, and thus some specializations are more important than others. The following adjustments to the baseline skills are required to keep the tone and feel of *Punching Nazis*:

Crime

Certainly, the advent of war didn't mean that crime ended. Especially with constant shortages, people were more than tempted to resort to theft and burglary to meet their basic needs. Not to mention, the Reich's definition of 'crime' was expansive and unforgiving. That being said, *Punching Nazis* is a story about heroes. Characters with criminal backgrounds should currently be putting their nefarious skills to work on behalf of the Allies. Any Professional Specialization is appropriate.

Fighting

Though soldiers knew a little hand-to-hand combat, they relied more on bombs and guns. Resistance agents and spies were far more likely to find themselves in close quarters with a Nazi agent, and thus focused their combat training on this style of fighting.

The following Professional Specializations are most appropriate for *Punching Nazis*: Brawling, Improvised Weapons, Knife Fighting, Punching.

Firearms

If you started the war not knowing how to fire a gun, you'd learn by the end of it. Guns were everywhere, and even pilots usually had a sidearm.

The following Professional Specializations are most appropriate for *Punching Nazis*: Machine Guns, Mortars, Pistols, Rifles, Sniper Rifles.

Knowledge

Characters wishing to play an academic or professor pressed into service should choose specializations still related to the war effort, and use their knowledge of, say, Czech poetry or Weimar cinema for flavor. Specialties such as Occult or Religion should be taken only if the Director plans to create a story in which those specializations are relevant to the story.

The following Professional Specializations are most appropriate for *Punching Nazis*: History, Languages, Mathematics.

Medicine

Antibiotics no doubt saved the lives of many a GI. A small army of doctors, nurses, and surgeons kept soldiers alive and operational.

The following Professional Specializations are most appropriate for *Punching Nazis*: Emergency Medicine, Nurse, Pharmacist, Surgeon.

Science

See the Technology section of the Story Bible, page 103, for a detailed description of the science available in the early 1940s.

The following Professional Specializations are most appropriate for *Punching Nazis*: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Theoretical Physics.

Technology

See the Technology section of the Story Bible, page 103, for a detailed description of the general technology available in the early 1940s. Computer Science is a possible specialization, but only for characters working with Bletchley Park in England.

The following Professional Specializations are most appropriate for *Punching Nazis*: Engineering, Weapons Technology.

Transport

Driving was not quite as common as it is today, and those who knew how to drive (especially on rough or non-existent roads) had a valuable skill. Piloting was rarer, but no less valuable. Due to the nature of learning how to drive or fly, someone with this skill is presumed to have the basic mechanical knowledge to fix common problems, even engine failure, for machines in their purview. *Note: Military helicopters won't be in wide use until a Soviet engineer perfects the design in 1944.*

The following Professional Specializations are most appropriate for *Punching Nazis*: Airplanes, Cars, Fighter Planes, Submarines, Trucks.

Genre Qualities

The aim of *Punching Nazis* is for the Director and her players to have a lot of fun imagining any number of creative and interesting ways to punch Nazis. This Genre takes inspiration directly from movies like *Captain America: The First Avenger*, *Bedknobs & Broomsticks*, and *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Each of these films indulge in some kind of science fiction or fantasy when imagining how the Nazis met defeat. Another core inspiration is the pulp stories published during and after the war, such as the *Captain America* comic books. Adventure stories such as *The Shadow*, while not being specifically set in the war, do capture the essence of what *Punching Nazis* is supposed to be about.

Other films, such as Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds*, tell war stories with an alternate history twist, usually inspired by actual events. Obviously, Hitler wasn't assassinated in a movie theater, but the real war is full of extraordinary adventures and heroic struggles around which a *Punching Nazis* story can be told.

Thus, Directors should not feel overly restrictive when allowing Qualities, as long as they fit her overall aesthetic. Supernatural Qualities can be adjusted to represent the result of a hyper-serum, magical enchantment, or just plain good luck.

Archetype Qualities

The following Archetype Qualities are available for purchase, for characters of the given Archetype:

Commanding Officer

Charismatic Leader (1-point Quality)

A good leader has a certain air about her, an attitude that inspires her underlings to follow her into Hell itself. Once per game session, spend five minutes speaking to someone under your command who has suffered a non-Physical Consequence. For the next scene, she may ignore all old and new Consequences in that category. Afterwards, she might get Knocked Out of the Story (page 55), but you can always accept some or all of her Consequences afterwards.

Requisition (2-point Quality)

Due to your rank, you have the ability to ask for supplies, soldiers, or other needed resources in order to successfully execute the orders given to you. Wartime shortages are

common, however, and not every requisition can be fulfilled in a timely manner. You may not get all of what you want, or receive it on time, at your Director's discretion.

Rank (3-point Quality)

You're more than just a squad leader, you are someone with real rank in your armed forces. You're involved in high-level decision making for your area of the war, and have the power to direct the fighting towards (or away from) certain objectives. You can only issue direct orders to soldiers beneath you, but can expect to be treated with respect by other officers. Once per game session, you can pull Rank to get access to something normally off-limits to others. When issuing an order to someone under your command, she gains a +5 Wild Card bonus to any action directly related to obeying your orders.

Intelligence Agent

Informant Network (1-point Quality)

You've cultivated a network of informants, all who tell you bits and pieces of what they've noticed recently. No one person knows everything, but a collection of rumors gives you a solid picture of the whole. Once per game session, you can draw on your Informant Network to learn one important piece of intelligence. You can use this power once a session.

Training Package: Spy (2-point Quality)

You've been taught what makes a good spy or just learned on the job. Either way, you gain the Quality: Training Package (page 71) for the following Skills: Crime, Fix, Notice, and Subterfuge.

Assassin (3-point Quality)

Death is an art, and one you're well-practiced at. You're always armed— with poison, sidearms, and any number of improvised weapons. Once per game, if you're within ten feet of your target, you may invoke this Quality. If you inflict Consequences at least equal to half your target's Body attribute (instead of their full Attribute rating), you can Knock Them Out of the Story (page 55).

Medic

Emergency Medic (1-point Quality)

If you are within three feet of a target that has just taken enough damage to get Knocked Out of the Story (page 55), you can attempt a Medicine Dramatic Moment (Difficulty Challenging / 15-19) to reduce their Body Consequences by half.

Medical Bag (2-point Quality)

You receive the Quality: Major McGuffin (page 77): +3 Medicine, +2 Knowledge, and +1 Bushcraft. You have a collection of the good stuff— a variety of drugs, supplies, and tools which can heal (or at least ameliorate) any number of unpleasant conditions. In addition, your Director can lower the Difficulty Rating of a Dramatic Moment which relies on providing proper medical care by up to 5-points. If your medical bag is lost or destroyed, you lose access to this Quality until you retrieve or replace it. Nor is your bag

infinite – if you use up all your morphine, you'll have to requisition, purchase, or steal more.

Trauma Surgery (3-point Quality)

If you are operating on someone who's been Knocked Out of the Story (page 55), you can reduce the level of Body Consequences by one before turning it into a Flaw. For example, if one of your patients was shot in the legs for a 4-point Consequence, your medical expertise reduces that to a 3-point Flaw.

Pilot

Pet Bird (1-point Quality)

You have a favorite airplane – and you're the plane's favorite pilot, too. You gain the Quality: **Major McGuffin** (page 77) and can build your plane up to your specs so long as it falls within your Genre's tech levels (page 91).

Daredevil (2-point Quality)

A certain degree of bravery is required to be a fighter pilot. There's no running away or hiding when in midair. So long as you are still flying, you are immune to the effects of any Heart Consequences until after you land.

Internal Radar (3-point Quality)

You've had to fly enough nighttime missions with only a compass and a bad map that you've developed an unerring sense of direction. You can always find true north, and unless someone goes to the effort of knocking you unconscious for several hours while moving you, you always have a good sense of your geographical location. Even if you do get knocked out and moved, you just need a chance to look out the window or go outside to understand where you are. Additionally, your combat flying has trained you to always be on the lookout from a surprise attack – even from above! You receive a +5 Wild Card bonus to notice any attack, ambush, or other unpleasant surprise.

Resistance Fighter

Fake Papers (1-point Quality)

The Nazis made every person in occupied territory carry around a packet of identity documents, which had to be shown on demand to any officer, and at any of the many checkpoints. Thus, civilians became easy to track. You're lucky, in that you have several sets of forged (or stolen) identity documents. These are high-quality documents that will pass any cursory inspection, and allow you access to places you otherwise couldn't get to. Be careful, though, as getting caught with multiple identity documents is enough to brand you a spy!

Training Package: Spy (2-point Quality)

The Resistance needs fighters *now*. An agent has devoted his or her time to making sure you have gained the skills necessary to achieving the goals of the Resistance. You gain the Quality: Training Package (page 71), for the following Skills: Crime, Fighting, Notice, and Transport.

Resistance Leader (3-point Quality)

You're a leader in the Resistance, which can be a double-edged sword. You know the Nazis won't shy away from torturing you for information if you're caught (and you probably carry a cyanide pill for just that contingency). On the other hand, you have a good idea of what the local Resistance resources are, everything from weapons to personnel. You're also the person who decides how those resources get used. You can make tactical and strategic decisions when it comes to organized and targeted action, allowing you to do things like plan riots as a diversion for a jailbreak, or smuggle needed supplies under Nazi eyes. Additionally, when another member of the Resistance takes an action to directly implement one of your plans, she gains a +5 Wild Card bonus to the relevant Dramatic Moments.

Soldier

Beloved Back Home (1-point Quality)

You have someone back home for whom you're fighting, a spouse or lover or other important person in your life. You always carry some memento of them – a photo, a letter, or even a wedding ring. Keeping this person safe is why you fight. Spend a short scene talking about your beloved to someone else, and gain the ability to reroll one die on your next challenge.

Basic Training (2-point Quality)

You've completed the training courses given to all soldiers, and have the opportunity to learn more. You gain the Quality: Training Package for the Skills: Bushcraft, Fighting, Firearms, and Stunts.

Military Grade Equipment (3-point Quality)

The rationing and shortages back home are for your benefit. Your government made providing its fighting force with the best of the best a priority. You can purchase MacGuffin Qualities at half-cost, but the items must be something directly related to your branch of service. For example, you can requisition a Jeep, but not a sports car. And you can't get a flight suit if you're not in the Air Force, or a sniper rifle if you're not a sniper. You can also easily access mundane equipment, of the sort that might be found on a military base, such as canisters full of gasoline, typewriters, or high-quality machine tools.

Well-Placed Civilian

Press Pass (1-point Quality)

Whether forged or not, you have documentation identifying you as a member of the press corps, along with other important equipment such as cameras, notebooks, microphones, and the like. This grants you access to certain people and places you might not otherwise have; but it comes at a cost. If captured, the enemy is likely to assume you are a spy, or use you as a tool to spread propaganda. The upside is that, as a reporter (or 'reporter'), people tell you things. Once per game session, you can draw on your contacts to learn valuable information relevant to your current scene. This doesn't have to be in real-time. For example, your team is trying to break out of a Nazi jail when you happen to

remember someone casually mentioning that, when they redid the men's room, some saboteurs replaced the concrete with plaster.

Well-Educated (2-point Quality)

You received the finest education before the war, skills which have proved incredibly useful now. You can have the Quality: Training Package for the Skills: Art, Knowledge, Science, and Technology.

Star Power (3-point Quality)

You were someone before the war, someone famous: an actress, a sports star, a well-known tycoon, or some other celebrity. Even in Germany, you're still somewhat popular and admired. By batting your eyes or flashing a winning smile, you can convince enemy soldiers to grant you exceptions, show you around, or let you and your friends off with just a warning. You gain a +5 Wild Card bonus to any Dramatic Moment in which you lean on your fame. Additionally, fame brings riches. Any Quality related to money, such as Wealthy, you can purchase for one less point than normal.

Punching Nazis: The Story Bible

Though World War II was fought on multiple fronts, *Punching Nazis* focuses primarily on the European theater. The Pacific theater was no less critical to the overall outcome of the war, however, and will be included as much as possible should a group wish to highlight the heroism and adventure possible in the Pacific.

Writer's Room: Gender and Race in the War

In our world, gender, race, and sexuality all limited the roles and expectations in WWII.

Punching Nazis, however, does not adhere to these limitations. It is a pulp fiction world where any willing body can punch a Nazi and will be allowed to do so, despite what real world limitations would have otherwise existed.

If the Director wants to introduce some real-world elements or themes, such as racism or sexism, they should discuss it in the Writer's Room with the Players and establish parameters which everyone is comfortable with.

A Brief History of the War

This is no way meant to be definitive or inclusive. For an in-depth examination of the history of World War II, consult any of the non-fiction books recommended at the beginning of this Genre. Highlighted here are the moments and turning points which might be of interest to a *Morra* Director.

Pre-War

The First World War came to an end in 1919, with the Treaty of Versailles. Though this brought peace to Europe, it did so by levying incredibly burdensome terms against Germany. Constrained by this treaty, Germany struggled to stabilize her economy. It took several years, but by 1925, the Weimar Republic flourished as one of the most progressive nations of the time.

However, the Great Depression hit Germany especially hard. Their hard-won economic stability crumbled, and the anger and frustration of the people allowed fascist ideology to take hold

among a small but influential segment of the population. In 1932, the Nazi party of Germany won 37.2% of the vote in a general election, enough of a foothold to plant several key officers in the Reichstag, the German parliament. Their party leader, Adolf Hitler, is appointed chancellor, with no real expectation he'll take advantage of his power. However, after the false flag Reichstag fire just a few months later, Hitler began a series of maneuvers intended to consolidate Nazi political power.

Hitler started slowly flaunting terms of the Treaty of Versailles, gradually testing and then increasing his power when the war-weary Allies proved reluctant to enforce the terms. Hitler annexed Austria, then a portion of Czechoslovakia called the Sudetenland. The Prime Minister of Britain, Neville Chamberlain, believed Hitler's ambitions go no further than this, and assures Europe he secured, "peace in our time," by allowing Hitler to claim this territory.

Invasion of Poland

The German tactic for most of World War II was the Blitzkrieg – hit the enemy hard and fast before they have a chance to respond. Germany was slowly preparing for war while other countries hoped for peace, and thus Blitzkrieg works very, very well during the early years. Germany had the weapons and soldiers, while no one else could possibly compete.

The first target is Poland. Quick, overpowering attacks mean Germany occupied Poland within a matter of days.

This is the last straw for England and France. Hitler had, up until then, claimed he only wanted all German-speaking people united under a German government. When he moved to take over a Polish-speaking country, his ambitions were laid bare and England and France declared that enough was enough. Just days after the initial invasion, England and France declared war, soon followed by Australia, India, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Russia, nominally a German ally, attempted to negotiate a peace with Finland. But the Finns, suspecting treachery, refused any agreement. The resulting 3 month war inflicted over 300,000 Russian casualties and 70,000 Finnish casualties, as the Finns engage in a dedicated guerilla war. The Finns prevail, and Hitler began to think that invading Russia would not be as difficult as he assumed.

Further German Expansion

In early 1940, a German pilot transporting a Nazi officer crashed in Belgium. The officer was discovered to be carrying purported plans involving a German invasion of the Low Countries. This led to widespread panic among Belgians, and perhaps forced a change in German strategy as Belgium began preparing to defend itself. Around this time, unrelated to the crash, Reynhard Heidrich, who became the Holocaust's chief architect, is appointed by Hermann Goering to solve "the Jewish Question."

Later, in the spring of 1940, the Nazis quickly invaded and occupy Denmark, Norway, Holland, and Belgium. The Blitzkrieg tactic was brutally effective against a largely unprepared population. England responded by forcing Chamberlain out of office and installing war hawk

Winston Churchill as Prime Minister. He gave his famous ‘blood, toil, tears, and sweat’ speech in response to the rising hostilities.

France fell in June, unable to meet the challenge of the German war machine, especially when Italy entered the war and invaded over the Alps. A puppet French government was installed (the Vichy government), and while France was occupied by Germans until the end of the war, the French Resistance was a consistent thorn in their sides. The British destroyed the French navy to prevent it from falling into enemy hands, and the Germans started bombing Britain in earnest. Thousands of British soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk, as even small fishermen came together to get their people out of occupied France.

Russia expanded as well, slowly annexing territory as their forces moved west. Italy focused their energy on capturing British colonies in Africa, but invaded Greece by the fall. The Tripartite Pact was signed in September of 1940: a formal alliance between Germany, Italy and the Empire of Japan. The Axis was formed.

The Battle for Britain

Operation Sea Lion was a plan for a marine invasion of England in early summer of 1940, but bad weather and a few logistical concerns prevented this invasion from happening. By mid-summer, the Battle for Britain began. This was one of the first battles fought primarily in the air. The German strategy was to use their Luftwaffe to bomb critical military and civilian targets until Britain gave in. The Royal Air Force met the Germans in the air, head-on. Advantaged by on-board radar technology, the RAF had an easier time finding and shooting down German planes than the Germans expected.

The British responded, in part, with a massive evacuation effort. Over one million British children, young mothers, and pregnant women were sent away from urban targets to safer locations. The British wanted not only to protect their children from the horrors of war, but also preserve the next generation in case the worst happened. This event captured the popular imagination, and became the backdrop for seminal works such as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis; *The Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding; and *Bedknobs & Broomsticks*, directed by Robert Stevenson.

Ultimately, the Royal Air Force succeeded in defending Britain, and the Nazis were unable to invade. Though Hitler kept the heat on Britain, he began to secretly devise plans to betray his Soviet allies and invade Russia.

Nazi Occupation

One of the first things the Nazis did after occupying a territory was to separate out the Jewish population. The Jewish people of Poland and Germany were forced to wear yellow stars on their clothes, identifying them as Jews. This fails in Denmark. Though King Christian was never known to have worn a yellow star, he did threaten that every Dane would wear one if the Germans attempted to impose this on their Jewish citizens. The Nazis never made Danish Jews wear the yellow star.

The French franc was artificially valued at 80% of the value of the German deutschemark, which burdened the occupied French as they struggled to meet the various demands of the Nazis.

In places like Warsaw, the Jewish people were confined to the ghetto, an echo of a medieval custom of similarly restricting where Jewish people could live and work. The Warsaw ghetto saw much suffering, and it also gave birth to many heroes of the Jewish Resistance.

Auschwitz, a former military barracks, began accepting Polish prisoners of war in the summer of 1940 (mostly Polish nobility and educated Poles). Eventually, Polish Jews were deported to Auschwitz, and gassed by the thousands. Other prison camps and death camps popped up all over Eastern Europe.

Other populations were targeted with equal precision and brutality. The Nazis were determined to cleanse Europe of anyone with less than what they considered pure 'Aryan' blood; such as Romani and Afro-Germans. They also killed anyone deemed a drain on society, such as the chronically ill, mentally ill, or disabled. Political dissidents, including Communists and anti-fascists, were also sent to the camps.

African Theater

The African front developed early in 1940, as Italy invaded and captured British colonies. To support Mussolini's efforts, Hitler sent Erwin Rommel. The 'Desert Fox' is a worthy opponent for the British forces sent to oppose him. By the end of 1941, the Axis controlled most of North Africa. The one holdout was the British-controlled Egypt; the British were not about to let such a strategic holding go without a serious fight.

The Russian Front

In early 1941, Hitler set his sights on Yugoslavia. Though the Prince Regent favored an alliance with Nazi Germany, the common people did not. They revolted, and installed his brother as King. This did not dissuade the Axis, who invaded. This delayed the implementation of Operation Barbarossa: the invasion of Russia by German forces.

The invasion took Russia completely by surprise, who believed Germany an ally. They immediately, if reluctantly, joined the war on the Allied side. By the end of the war, Russia lost eleven million soldiers and somewhere between seven to twenty million civilians. The siege of Leningrad became legendary, as the Russians chose to starve and die rather than surrender to the Axis. Their determination in defending their city forced the Axis to take the city literally street by street, which proved far too high a price for them to pay. Finland joined the war just long enough to reclaim the territory they'd lost the year previously, but did not assist the German advance any further.

Hitler made several strategic errors. The Blitz technique worked to quickly overwhelm the defensive capabilities of Poland, France, and the Low Countries. However, he did not foresee the strength with which the Russians would resist his invasion. Rather than a few quick, decisive battles, his army ended up entrenched on the eastern front, where they eventually fell victim to the ravages of Russian winter.

Holocaust

Concurrent to the Russian invasion was the escalation of the death camp tactics, known as the Holocaust. Massacres and mass murders continued, especially at Ponary and Vilnius, but the Nazi death machine was only getting started. Gassing began in late 1941, intelligence about which Polish Resistance agent Witold Padlecki is able to get to the Allies.

American Involvement

At the start of the war, the United States pronounced an isolationist mindset. Europe's problems were their own to solve, and the majority of Americans simply didn't want to get involved. However, as the war developed, and gave all indications of not wrapping up any time soon, American military leaders began to understand that they would eventually get drawn in, anyway.

At the outbreak of war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt allowed war materiel to be provided to Britain, provided Britain paid cash up front. He also instituted the nation's first peacetime draft, and ordered a buildup of American war machinery. In the summer of 1941, the Lend-Lease Act passed, and America could sell war materiel to the Allies on credit.

Roosevelt also quietly built up military bases and stations of American troops in ostensibly neutral locations, such as Iceland. This freed up the Icelandic soldiers to fight elsewhere in Europe.

A Day of Infamy

Despite forewarning, and the many quiet maneuvers Roosevelt had been making, Hawai'i is taken completely by surprise when the Japanese air force initiated a bombing raid on December 7, 1941. The attack was a pre-emptive move by the Japanese, with the intention of keeping American support out of the Pacific theater. It backfired horribly; the attack was just the reason Roosevelt needed to formally enter the war. The day after Pearl Harbor, the United States formally entered World War II on the side of the Allies. By the summer of 1942, American forces pushed the Japanese back at Midway.

Infamy bred infamy. The United States government had already seized the assets of Japanese nationals living in America; now they began a system of internment intended to defend against threats of Japanese espionage. Over a hundred thousand people with Japanese ancestry (70,000 of whom were American citizens) were interned without trial or due process, along with 11,000 people of German ancestry, 3,000 people of Italian ancestry, and many Jewish refugees. Though the camp internees were eventually released, many lost significant property, including communities of Japanese farmers in California who lost their land and livelihoods.

Pacific Theater

Japan entertained notions of an Empire of the Pacific, and, even before the rise of Nazi Germany, had been at war with China. The notorious Rape of Nanking occurred from December of 1937 to January of 1938, and was an utterly brutal, dehumanizing action against civilians. Nanking was then the capital of the Republic of China, and the Japanese were determined to suppress resistance by any means necessary.

The Japanese continued to advance, seizing the British city of Singapore and taking several thousand captives, among other territorial gains. By the time the United States entered the war, the Japanese were deep into the Battle of Bataan and invading the Philippines. General Douglas MacArthur had to evacuate, but swore he'd return. The Japanese occupied the Philippines for the next several years; though, like the German occupation of France, there was a significant civilian resistance.

Axis Ascendant

The year of 1942 was the peak of Axis power. Nearly every country in Europe was occupied or under attack by the Axis, and Japan made steady gains in the Pacific. However, Axis victory was not assured. When the battle could be fought quickly and decisively, Germany prevailed. Thus, their many early victories. However, by now, other nations had caught up. Even civilian populations devoted their energies almost entirely to victory. The 'Home Front' emerged, as those at home engaged in rubber and scrap metal drives, cut up sheets to use for bandages, raised money for the Red Cross, worked in munitions factories, and otherwise dedicated their efforts to victory. America spent nearly 75% of her GDP on the war effort.

The Allies realized that raw power alone wasn't enough to win. Quite a few resources were dedicated to intelligence efforts – building unbreakable codes, breaking previously-unbreakable codes, and engaging in information war to deceive the Axis.

Japan seized Burma by the middle of the year, and forced American troops in the Philippines to retreat or face capture. The Bataan Death March began, the forcible transfer of thousands of Filipino and American prisoners of war. The march was characterized by various abuses and acts of violence which were later prosecuted as war crimes.

Malta became a sticking point, with Axis forces unable to fully neutralize the small territory. An assassination of Reinhard Heydrich was not immediately successful, but he succumbed to his wounds a week later. Despite his death, the Holocaust proceeded onward (with many innocent Jews being murdered in retaliation).

The Battle of Midway was a turning point in the war. Due to the previously mentioned intelligence work, American code-breakers delivered news of a planned Japanese ambush at the island of Midway. The United States successfully executed their own counter-ambush, from which the Japanese navy never fully recovered. The Guadalcanal campaign began in August of that year, which eventually ended with another decisive Allied victory.

Fuel became a necessity, especially for the Axis, who controlled no native sources of oil. The British recognized the strategic value of keeping Germany oil-starved, and sent considerable forces to Egypt to prevent an Axis takeover of the Middle Eastern oilfields. The battles of El Alamein ensured this crucial resource remains in British hands.

Seeds of Victory

The Manhattan Project formally began in June of 1942. Both Germany and Japan worked to develop fission weapons, but the Germans had only Heisenberg: all of the brilliant theoretical physicists who lived or studied in Germany, such as Albert Einstein and Robert Oppenheimer,

were either Jewish or, in the case of Enrico Fermi, had married a Jewish woman. They all left the country and ended up in Los Alamos. Japan wanted to develop nuclear technology, but simply didn't have the necessary resources to devote to the project.

The tide of war turned at the outset of 1943. With Egypt firmly in their hands, the British forces chased a retreating Rommel west, with the intention of taking his base at Tripoli. A few promising experiments conducted by Enrico Fermi established that the theoretical basis of fission weapons was sound. The last airfield near Stalingrad was brought under Russian control, cutting off any chance for further Axis airstrikes in the area. Stalingrad was soon liberated, the first real loss by the German army since the start of the war.

In Warsaw, the Jewish people rebelled against the inhuman conditions they were forced to live under, and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began. The Jews of Warsaw saw nearly two hundred thousand of their loved ones shipped off to death camps. They smuggled small arms and armaments past the guards, and eventually violence broke out. Almost 13,000 Jewish people were killed, compared to only a little over a hundred German soldiers. Those who took part knew they were going to die anyway, and are determined to go out fighting Nazis.

The Allies had several valid targets at this point – territory taken by the Axis they could reclaim. Sicily and Greece were both viable options. The Allies settled on Sicily, but enacted Operation Mincemeat, led by future espionage author Ian Fleming), in which the corpse of a Welsh person was disguised as an intelligence officer, dressed in a diving suit, and given false papers indicating the Allies plan to attack Greece. The corpse was dropped into Spain, and the Spanish government shared the intelligence with both sides. The Nazis were presumed to have believed the ruse, and Sicily was re-taken quite easily.

German-Italian Alliance Breaks Down

After losing the battles at El Alamein, and seeing Sicily taken by Allied forces, morale in Italy plummeted. This was not helped by continuous shortages of fuel, raw materials, and even food. Mussolini could see what Hitler did not – that the forces of fascism were about to lose badly. He begged Hitler to make peace with the Soviet Union and focus their concentration on Western Europe, but Hitler refused.

The Allied bombing of Rome ruined popular morale even further. In July of 1943, Mussolini was removed from power in favor of King Victor Emmanuel III, who promptly arrested the former dictator. Despite keeping up the appearance of Axis loyalty, the new Italian government negotiated a secret armistice with the Allies. This became public on September 8, 1943, and threw the country into chaos – especially when Italy declared war on the Axis a few weeks later, on October 13. Some Italians refused to fight their former allies, and defected to the German side. Others took up arms and fought as ordered.

One term of the armistice was handing Mussolini over to the Allies; but before that happened, Mussolini was rescued by German forces. Hitler planned to arrest the new government of Italy, but they escaped safely to the south of Italy. Mussolini was set up as the leader of the Italian Social Republic, which was little more than a German puppet state that loosely controlled northern Italy.

Resistance Grows

The string of Allied victories and Axis defeats emboldened Resistance fighters. When Hitler gave the order that all Danish Jews were to be deported to death camps, he was largely ignored by the Danes, who instead worked to safely evacuate as many Jewish people as possible. Only a few hundred Danish Jews were caught by the Gestapo, and many thousands survived.

At the death camp Sobibor, a resistance led by a Polish Jew and Soviet Jew succeeded in killing 11 SS officers and a number of guards. Though the plan was found out halfway through (they wanted to kill *all* the guards), 300 prisoners escape. Operations at Sobibor were forced to halt, and in late 1943, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was named as the head of Operation Overlord – the invasion of Normandy.

The Beginning of the End

In early 1944 battles were fought back and forth across all theaters. Japan attempted to invade India, but was ultimately unsuccessful as Allied forces gradually deprived them of resources. Japan was even more oil-starved than Germany; even though their soldiers were highly trained, they simply didn't have the equipment and fuel necessary to wage war.

The war decisively turned on June 6, 1944. Originally called Operation Overlord, it came to be known as D-Day or the Invasion of Normandy. Allied forces retook the shoreline of northern France, establishing a beachhead to eventually reclaim the entire country. At the eastern front, the Red Army successfully liberated cities previously held by Axis forces.

Hitler's condition had severely deteriorated by this time, due not only to his age and the stress of war, but also heavy drug use. He had become erratic and irrational, and several high-level German officers attempted to assassinate him in July. They failed, and the reprisals were vicious. Nearly 7,000 people were executed in retaliation, and Erwin Rommel, implicated in the plot, was forced to take cyanide.

Uprisings broke out, notably in Poland and Paris, with news of approaching Allied forces. Paris was liberated in August of 1944, and the remaining German officers defied Hitler's order to burn the city. Having alienated or executed most of his close allies, and reading the writing on the wall, Hitler became even more erratic.

The Final Chapter

In January of 1945, the Red Army liberated both Warsaw and Auschwitz. The Allies continued to liberate concentration camps and death camps, taking pains to document the horrors they witnessed. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died suddenly, and Harry S Truman became President.

The Battle of Manila began as, General Douglas MacArthur, keeping his promise, returned to liberate the Philippines. The battle for Iwo Jima was successful. Dresden and Tokyo were both firebombed. The German forces showed signs of weakening, but the Japanese, despite being significantly outnumbered and technologically behind, did not relent. Kamikaze attacks became part of the Japanese strategy, as Japanese pilots deliberately crashed into Allied ships in an attempt to sink them. Mussolini attempted an escape to Spain, but was captured and summarily

executed the next day, on April 28. Two days later, as Allies closed in on Berlin, Hitler committed suicide. Goebbels was appointed his successor.

Germany surrendered unconditionally on May 7. The surrender took effect at one-minute past midnight, celebrated as V-E Day.

Fighting continued throughout the summer in the Pacific theater. Believing that nuclear weapons were a humane alternative to more years of bloody, relentless fighting, President Truman ordered nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Emperor of Japan was ready to surrender, and thwarted a coup to prevent this action. V-J Day is declared on August 15, and General MacArthur assumed control of Tokyo.

The war was over.

Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Magic

This section defines modifications to the magic system used for the Genre: *Punching Nazis*, if the Director decides to include it. This system is presented as a baseline only; Directors should feel free to tinker as they wish. For more information about the template and how magic operates, see **Chapter Five: Qualities: Theory and Practice of Magic**, page 82.

Mastery of Magic

Three Qualities grant a character the ability to wield and practice magic. Some archetypes, such as Soothsayer, can offer a discount of these qualities.

- Mystical Dabbler (page 73)
- Sorcerer (page 77)
- Master of Mystic Arts (page 79)

The Origin of Magic

Magical energy is everywhere. It permeates the whole world, a source of energy just as potent as sunlight or electricity. Magic is elusive, however, and requires training and dedication to master. In the world of a magical *Punching Nazis*, would-be practitioners have several routes to power.

The first way can be called ‘academic’ magic. Magicians learn from tomes, or by apprenticing to a learned master of the arts. Spells take the form of long incantations, and usually require rare components or enchanted tools. Magicians of this school tend to form secret societies, sharing their wisdom only between sworn members. Noted British occultist Aleister Crowley leads one of these societies, currently dedicated to opposing the Nazi sorcerers of the Thule Society. The Laws of Backlash, Equivalent Exchange, Mortality, Reversal, and Words apply to academic magic.

The second method is referred to as either wild magic or witchcraft. Such power relies on harnessing the energies of the natural world. Spells are more likely to succeed when cast on a full moon, a solstice, or an equinox. Learning happens by doing rather than by reading books, though the apprentice/mentor relationship is still common. Circles of witches stay busy by hexing Nazi officers from a distance, and blessing airplanes before flying missions. The Laws of Balance, Consent, Contagion, Items, Places, and Reciprocity apply to wild magic.

Lastly are spiritualists. Some of this school believe themselves blessed by the divine, and pray for help. Others invoke elemental or ancestral spirits, striking bargains in exchange for magical favors. The Law(s) of God apply to spiritualism, as do the Laws of Consent, Equivalent Exchange, and Names.

Covens

Magic works best as a group effort, whether as part of a secret society, a coven of witches, or a prayer circle. Though individual spells can and do still work, *Punching Nazis* is about coming together to fight the Reich. For every two people in addition to the caster who participate in a single spell, summoning, or incantation, the Difficulty Rating is reduced by one.

Magic Ecosystem: Base Difficulty Rating

Low Magic: Mystical energy is scarce and therefore those with the skill and talent to cast magic are few and hard between. Casting spells is extremely different without aid from others, ritual components, and other investments.

- Base Difficulty Rating for magic that fall within your schools of magic: 15
- Base Difficulty Rating for magic that fall outside your schools of magic: 25

Laws of Magic

Punching Nazis defaults to all of the laws of magic as found in **Chapter Five: Qualities Laws of Magic, page 91**. Refer to the above section regarding the several schools of magic found in *Punching Nazis*.

Available Schools of Magic

Punching Nazis defaults to all of the schools of magic as found in **Chapter Five: Qualities: Schools of Magic, page 85**

Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Technology 1940s Technology

While the world was largely modernized by the outbreak of the war, keep the following standards in mind. Since *Punching Nazis* welcomes alternate history, don't feel constrained by any given standard. Presented here is a baseline for you to branch out from. The technology described here is base for the historical World War II, but you can decide to alter things for story reasons. For more information about the template and how technology operates, see **Chapter Five: Qualities: Theory and Practice of Technology, page 91**.

Alpha Note: The rules for tech levels are currently in development, but here is some background information.

Communications

Telephones are prevalent in urban centers, though the poor usually either don't own one, or live in an apartment complex with a shared phone. Rural areas might only have one or two telephones, located somewhere like a tavern, hotel, city hall, or post office. They are an unreliable method of communication, as they require physical wires to carry information from one phone to another. One simply has to cut the line to disrupt communications. Telephone lines cannot carry the call very far; only a few hundred miles at most. Lastly, most telephones rely on

an operator to connect calls; thus, they are not very secure. Resistance movements attack the phone lines, forcing Germans to use the radio, which is far easier to tap into.

Telegraphy is slightly more secure, but relies on physical lines the same way as telephones. Cutting the line, or taking out the telegraph operator, can disrupt communications for an entire network. Telegraphs are used primarily by journalists to wire stories to their news agencies.

Radio is the primary method of communication at the front lines. Signals are easily broadcast; however, anyone with a receiver can eavesdrop on radio communications. Thus, all armies used codes and other systems of encryption, including anything from code talkers to the Enigma machine. Radar technology (the process of detecting nearby large objects by bouncing radio signals off them) is developed during this time, and becomes a critical component of British air defense.

Radio is also used to communicate with the general population. Most homes have a radio, and receive war news via nightly broadcasts. Charles de Gaulle broadcasts into France, keeping up the spirits of the occupied French and in some places, Nazis shoot anyone they find in possession of a radio.

Both photography and film are established technologies, though only in black and white. Newsreels, depicting life on the front line, become important to civilians back home – especially as television is in its infancy and few homes own one.

Typewriters are another common technology, though typing itself is a rare skill. Photocopy technology does not exist – documents are copied by sliding a sheet of carbon paper in between two pieces of typing paper. The force of the key against the carbon paper leaves an imprint on the second piece of typing paper. Alternatively, the document can be copied by re-typing.

Cryptography

Given the prominence of radio, having an unbreakable code is critical for victory. The United States employs code talkers – Navajo men who communicate using a code developed from their indigenous language. The Germans, on the other hand, rely on technology. They design the famous Enigma machine, which, though initially secure, is eventually broken (though the English had to invent computer science to do it).

Transportation

Cars become quite popular by the 1930s, and are prevalent by the 1940s. Jeeps and similar vehicles are used, as are larger personnel carriers. Driving is not as ubiquitous a skill as it is today; however, most people who learned how to drive also learned generally more about car maintenance. Someone who knows how to drive can be presumed to also know how to perform common repairs, such as changing a tire or fixing a broken engine. Cars are rare in rural areas, where many people still rely on horse-drawn carts to move around their small towns.

Trains are extremely common, and the best way to get soldiers and materiel to the front lines in the European theater. Attacking, repairing, and defending train lines took up quite a lot of resources on all sides.

Ships are another common way to travel, especially in the Pacific theater. Commercial shipping and travel are largely suspended during the war, as these boats are sitting ducks waiting to be sunk or captured. However, many soldiers travel by ship to the front lines. Critical shipments of goods and food travel in well-defended convoys.

Air travel has not yet become a common way for civilians to travel, though is an option to move soldiers to where they are needed. For the use of airplanes as strategic assets, refer to the Weaponry section.

All methods of transportation rely on gasoline and oil, and securing enough fuel is a strategic concern for all armies. Britain controls most of the Middle East, and the United States and Russia both have their own oilfields. The Axis struggles the whole war to secure their own fuel lines.

Medicine

Modern medicine enables many soldiers to survive battlefield wounds which would have killed previous generations. Antibiotics are developed, and save many millions from dying of infection. Amputations are common, and most who undergo them survive. Diseases are better understood, allowing for more sanitary conditions in field hospitals and elsewhere.

Psychology is in its infancy, and though ‘battle fatigue’ is used to describe certain difficulties faced by soldiers who survive trauma, many leaders (including General Patton) refuse to believe it exists. Even among those who did believe in what we now recognize as PTSD, treatments are limited in their effectiveness.

Pharmacology made great strides by the 1940s, and many soldiers are on quite a cocktail. Morphine was an effective painkiller, and handed out readily. A drug called Pervitin was developed in Germany, and is distributed by the millions to German soldiers, especially pilots. Pervitin has no major differences from methamphetamine, and is critical for pilots wanting to fly long missions. Hitler himself is likely dependent on any number of drugs, including Pervitin and possibly opiates.

The Allied forces also indulged. Methamphetamine gave a pilot the alertness they needed to stay awake on long bombing runs, and the energy to fly safely back home.

Weapons

Weapons’ technology advances rapidly during the war, as scientists and engineers worked tirelessly to get any edge possible over the enemy.

Aircraft

Airplanes first saw use in World War I, but are fully developed by World War II. German air superiority gives them a significant edge early in the war, and the Allies struggle to catch up. American industry becomes critical to build enough bombers to meet demand. Once built, a cadre of mostly female pilots deliver the planes to the front by flying them across the Atlantic.

Bombers are a critical component of both defensive and offensive strategy. While the primary use of planes is to bomb the enemy, or deliver supplies and/or propaganda, the RAF engages in midair defensive warfare against the Luftwaffe.

Firearms

Semi-automatic rifles are developed for the war, along with several pinnacles of machine gun technology. However, bolt-action rifles are one of the most common weapons given to an average soldier, with each country developing their own design. Many soldiers, especially officers, are also issued a smaller sidearm.

Naval

Submarines come into wide use during this time. The Germans rely on their U-boats to find and sink Allied vessels, especially ships delivering needed supplies and personnel. Aircraft carriers are another critical naval element in the Pacific.

In response to the threat of U-boats, the Allies develop sonar technology. That, combined with code-breaking efforts, allow them to detect and avoid ‘wolfpacks’ of U-boats.

Vehicles

The tank comes into prominent use during the war – an armored vehicle of death and destruction. Attacking a tank with conventional firearms is impossible, the only solution is to get out of the way. Tanks can be bombed, but most aircraft are not able to precisely target tanks.. Finnish guerrilla soldiers do develop one useful innovation – they discover it’s quite easy to throw a bottle of vodka stuffed with a burning rag into a tank turret. They ironically name this improvised incendiary device after one of the Soviet leaders, Vyacheslav Molotov.

The Bomb

The Nuclear Age is born amid the fire and destruction of World War II. From the outset of hostilities, both the Allies and the Germans know that some kind of fission weapon is theoretically possible... and that whoever develops this weapon first has an unbeatable edge. Germany, however, severely devastated their cause. The development of the atomic bomb requires the effort of several brilliant theoretical physicists, among them Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, and Robert Oppenheimer. These men are German, or had studied significantly in Germany. But they are also Jewish, and thus fled Germany for the United States in the 1930s.

The Manhattan Project is conducted in incredible secrecy at various locations around the United States. The bomb is developed too late to be used in the European theater, but is used to bring a quick, decisive end to the Pacific theater.

Reference Material: Director’s Challenge: Change One Thing

Punching Nazis entertains some level of alternate history, modeled after the adventure war movies which take the same tack. Certainly, a Director and her troupe can play a relatively vanilla game, adhering mostly to history as written.

Some Directors might feel intimidated when contemplating an alternate history setting, but not to worry! Simply use the Change One Thing method, and let the rest of the changes develop organically.

For example: say the Director wants to run a game where magic is real. Everything else about the war happens roughly on schedule, only with squads of war wizards throwing fireballs as the Luftwaffe dropped bombs. Magic and magic items become a resource, like oil or steel, for armies to fight over. Basic training now involves some counter-magic techniques, and soldiers are given charms in addition to their weapons and flak jackets.

Alternatively, just change a historical fact. What if the Axis won the Battle of Britain? Now France and England are both occupied, and Hitler is systematically looting the wealth of England. How will the United States, Russia, Canada, and other nations respond?

Ambitious Directors can add extra layers onto their changes. Perhaps along with magic spells being real, dragons take the place of heavy bombers and players can create elven or faerie characters. Maybe the magical edge the Germans have is what allowed them to take over England so easily. But take care when making too many of these changes, as the shape of the game – an adventure story set against the backdrop of World War II – might be lost with too many alterations.

Changing one thing is a good topic for discussion in the Writer's Room. Even if the Director already knows the one change she wants to make, if it's a sweeping change like adding magic to the setting, brainstorming as a group can help bring this new world together.

Reference Material: Sample Plot Threads:

Here is a list of potential plot-threads that a Director might use in her series:

- Get the Enigma
- Kill Hitler
- Drop a Decoy
- Liberate a Town
- Capture an Enemy Officer
- Street Fighting
- Reflecting while on Leave

Chapter Eight: Genre: Mystical Rome

“If you must break the law, do it to seize power: in all other cases observe it.”

— Gaius Julius Caesar

Beware the Ides of March! We remember a world where mighty Caesar ignored this warning and paid the ultimate price. But what if the Three Soothsayers were wizards of unimaginable power and could foresee not only one future, but all possible futures?

In the world of *Mystical Rome*, Julius Caesar still failed to take heed, but faithful Marc Antony did not, and paid the ultimate price for his loyalty, forever altering the destiny of the Eternal City. Twenty years after the Soothsayers whispered their dire warning, Caesar still reigns over the unified Roman Empire. The oracles who saved him now operate a notorious academy, where they instruct the sons and daughters of elite families in the eldritch arts. The only obstacles preventing Rome's domination of the entire world are the barbarous Caledonians and the seemingly invincible Parthian Empire.

A central moment in history radically altered — Caesar lives, Antony dies; and, most importantly, magic and myth return to the world, along with monsters from the abyss. What would the world look like, twenty years later? Discover a plethora of potential storylines as players and Directors explore an alternate historical timeline and themes of family, social warfare, religious maneuvering, dark mysteries, the lust for power, the desire for freedom, and the ideals of a fallen Republic.

Mystical Rome Credits

Developer: Jason Andrew

Writers: Jason Andrew, Andrea Barr, April Douglas, Renee Ritchie, and Brendan Whaley

Editor: Rachel Judd and J. Childs

Subject Matter Expert: James Davey

Following are the recommended guidelines for running the *Mystical Rome* Genre:

Target Audience

The target audience for *Mystical Rome* is the center of a cultural Venn diagram that includes those who enjoy fantasy, but may have become dissatisfied with the Tolkienian tropes that dominated the fantasy Umbrella Genre for the last hundred years; alternate history fans who enjoy wondering, *what would have happened if*; and fans of dirty political drama and satire. The Rome of antiquity, and her legends and histories, weighed heavily on the minds of the Founding Fathers of the United States as they worked together to build a new nation. The similarities of the two cultures don't stop there as both are noble and dastardly. The audience for *Mystical Rome*

wants to experience both the light and the dark, then be offered a real choice, and play out the consequences.

Rating and Descriptors: R

Mystical Rome merges the gritty, bloody history of antiquity with fantastical elements derived from classical myths and legends. This world depicts extreme brutality, casual profanity, and unthinking depravity. *Mystical Rome* contains blood and gore, intense violence, strong sexual content, drug and alcohol use (and abuse), slavery and human trafficking, and the exploration of what human rights meant in the ancient world. The material contained within this Genre is an attempt to simulate a historical portrayal of ancient Roman society, and the intensity of the content is to suggest an authentic representation of that period without being gratuitous.

Writer's Room Commentary: Consent Calibrations for Mystical Rome

This Genre ventures forth into the dark places of the human psyche. Writers and Directors are encouraged to discuss these themes, and their own personal limitations, before playing. Adjust the rating as needed to better suit the needs of your own series. Some may not be interested in playing out all of horrific details of this time period or can find the tone too depressing. Likewise, as the great director Alfred Hitchcock showed in the immortal shower scene in *Psycho*, sometimes less is more. The human imagination will show such terrors that it's difficult to compete. Do what's best for your series. For more information, see **Chapter Six: Director's Primer: Consent Calibration Techniques**, page xx.

Mystical Rome Inspiration

Histories: *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, by Edward Gibbon; *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* by Mary Beard; and *The Roman Triumph*, by Mary Beard.

Movies: *Ben Hur* (dir. William Wyler), *Caligula* (dirs. Tinto Brass, Bob Guccione, and Giancarlo Lui), *Clash of the Titans* (dir. Desmond Davis), *Cleopatra* (dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz), *Gladiator* (dir. Ridley Scott), *The Last Days of Pompeii* (dir. Mario Bonnard), *Pan's Labyrinth* (dir. Guillermo del Toro), and *Spartacus* (dir. Stanley Kubrick).

Novels and Plays: *I, Claudius*, by Robert Graves; *Julius Caesar*, by William Shakespeare; the Marcus Didius Falco series by Lindsey Davis; and *Mystical Rome*, by Jason Andrew.

Television: *Game of Thrones* (created by David Benioff & D. B. Weiss), *Rome* (created by John Milius, William J. MacDonald, & Bruno Heller), and *Spartacus* (created by Steven S. DeKnight).

Writer's Room Commentary: Historical Accuracy

Mark Twain might have said, "Never let the truth get in the way of a good story." Or the saying might be an Irish proverb attributed to him. The truth might never be known, and, in some ways, gets in the way of a good story. Some of the inspirational works listed above took great pains to be historically accurate and pay homage to the

culture and thought of the time. Others are sword and scandal adventures, transcending their genre and finding their own truth in the story.

Mystical Rome contains a good deal of research, baseless speculation, and some wild inaccuracies that make for a good story. Some of the details of Roman society have been plucked from the Early Empire period of Rome, as enacted and enforced by Emperor Caesar Divi Filius Augustus. In this reality, he's known as Gaius Julius Octavius Ptolemy, the Governor of Egypt, but he is still Caesar's heir and considered brilliant. The Emperor is a genius tactician and isn't above using the ideas of his son to further his ends.

Strict attention to detail is the mark of a good writer. A great writer knows when to ignore such details for the sake of the story. It is recommended that the Writer's Room do likewise when running their own sessions.

Mystical Rome Budget

The recommended budget for *Mystical Rome* is Major Motion Picture / Prime Time, to reflect the heroic nature of characters playing for the stakes of worldwide power and the domination of the Soothsayers and their power. Characters with inhuman levels of attributes can be presumed to be legendary heroes or enhanced via magic, be it from the Soothsayers or the ancient horrors unleashed by the razing of Atlantis.

All characters begin with the following points during character creation:

- Attributes: 10 points (to spread across all four Attributes).
- Skills: 12-points (to spread across all your Skills).
- Qualities: 10 points to spend on any Quality up to the Budget's ceiling.

Mystical Rome Archetypes

Mystical Rome is a Genre designed to explore the trials and tribulations of life inside of the greatest metropolis known to the ancient world. The Three Soothsayers forever altered Rome's destiny via their intervention into the assassination of Caesar on that fateful Ides of March. The War of Infinite Regress re-introduced magic to the world and unleashed unspeakable horrors, once banished forever to the rim of existence, on an unsuspecting populace.

To explore the universe of *Mystical Rome*, the custom Archetypes for this setting were designed around the common professions of an average Roman (see **Chapter Two: Create the Genre Archetypes**, page 14). A character's profession defines how she experiences life in *Mystical Rome*, her political beliefs, and her social standing within the city. These Archetypes were created to cover the widest range of experiences; but if you wish to explore a special concept, work with your Director to define your concept as an Archetype.

The following custom Archetypes are available for play within *Mystical Rome*:

Artisan

Motto: Labor Omnia Vincit (Latin: Hard Work Conquers All)

Signa Romanum: A chisel

Description: The old Greek philosophers taught that for a mortal, creation stood closest to divinity.

Rare is the patrician who deigns to spend the time and sweat required for mastery of any trade, but a scant few dabble in weaving, poetry, and other so-call “noble arts.” Plebeians thrive in this field, taking advantage of the city’s great need for skilled workers and artisans to build her temples, design her luxurious bathhouses, and keep sharp Rome’s technological edge against her enemies.

Artisans of Rome built the Aqueduct of Segovia, the Amphitheatre of Nimes, and, of course, the Coliseum. These workers are highly sought after in Rome. Any servant can sling a shovel, but it takes knowledge and training to build a heated bathhouse, arm the mighty legions of Rome, construct aqueducts and temples, and create the roads. The Caesarian reforms have mandated skilled labor must be fairly compensated, and even enslaved artisans may now earn their freedom after twenty years of working for the city.

The rise of the Collegia’s collective power, and their open support of the Emperor and his policies, ensured the wealth and prestige of these men and women rose along with Caesar’s. Some among the dying patrician class feel society has pushed too far and too quickly from the founding of the Republic. They argue the Republic is divine and perfect, and change only sullies the greatness of Rome. Artisans who poured their sweat and tears into transforming the Eternal City into a work of living art quietly disagree.

Playing an Artisan: You might be mortal. Your flesh might decay. However, if the gods favor you and your hands, your works can last for a millennium and your name will join the august company of such legendary crafters as Skopas (the sculptor famous for depicting Aphrodite, and the head of goddess Hygieia, daughter of Asclepius) and Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (author of *De Architectura*, and the designer who popularized the theory that architecture is a unification of art and science).

You work with your hands and your mind, your *logos*, to create things considered miracles and wonders around the world. You might be a gifted artist blessed by the Muses, or a tradesman who mastered a valuable craft, such as masonry or civil engineering. To work with your hands and your mind, to create something from nothing, is considered by some in the Republic the closest thing to divinity a human can experience.

For more information about the art and technology of Rome, see page xx.

Attribute Bonus: + 1 Body, +1 Mind

Special Qualities: see **Artisan Qualities**, page 143.

Bureaucrat

Motto: *Omnia Mala Exempla Modis Iure Uti Coepit.* (Latin: All bad precedents begin as justifiable measures.)

Signa Romanum: Curia Julia (Senate building)

Description: Rome is a true cosmopolitan metropolis, ruling over more than twenty percent of the world’s population. Such a mass of people requires a great deal of organization, employing thousands of bureaucrats, municipal leaders, judges, politicians, and diplomats. You serve the

glory of the Republic by ruling over its citizens and ensuring the machine of government continues to press ever onward.

It has become fashionable and profitable for male patricians to dabble in politics, getting involved with the intricate bureaucracy that governs Rome and her empire. Patricians seeking to make politics their trade (considered familial service rather than individual), follow the *curus honorum* ('course of offices'), which colloquially describes the career path for a Roman politician, and the age at which he became eligible for certain offices. This path requires serving the public good in a series of offices of ascending importance before one qualifies for Senator. Those patricians who attain higher office, during the earliest year they qualify to serve each office, are said to have made "it in their year."

A surprising number of minor bureaucrats are plebeians who made their fortune in the municipal slave trade. These bureaucrats achieve rank more slowly, but those dedicated to this path find or create the necessary opportunities for advancement. Now that Rome has extended her reach to include hundreds of tribes and former nations, the plebeian bureaucrats found their own star on the rise within the social order.

An embittered rivalry is wrapped up in a symbiotic relationship between the bureaucrats and the clergy, as many of their spheres of influence, especially when concerning the mob of Rome, overlap. Together, they ensure the poorest have grain, public works and rituals are funded and attended, and civic order is maintained.

Playing a Bureaucrat: You are a cog, large or small, in the great machine that is Rome. You lead, organize, and manage the people of the Republic: as a local administrator, a civil judge or officer, or even an elected politician. Whether you are a plebeian or a patrician, you wield your social acumen and keen political mind to bring order to the masses, organize workers, and otherwise get things done.

You might be a lowly bureaucrat organizing the affairs of a minor neighborhood, a judge ruling over legal affairs concerning the docks, or even a Quaestor or Censor serving the great Republic at the highest levels. What matters is Rome forever endures, and yours are the hands that help her keep its commerce flowing and her people fed and sheltered.

Attribute Bonus: + 1 Heart, +1 Mind

Special Qualities: see **Bureaucrat Qualities**, page 143.

Clergy

Motto: *Honor Virtutis Praemium* (Latin: Esteem is the reward of virtue)

Signa Romanum: A sigil of the specific god or goddess who rules over the situation. A sword for Mars, a trident for Neptune, a lamp for a Vestal Virgin, etc.

Description: Few patricians join the clergy, but it's fashionable for the young women of noble families to join a few highly respectable cults and mysteries, such as the Vestal Virgins. Plebeians and freedmen see the clergy as a way to wash away their name, joining a celestial lineage of great power and prominence. Romans are practical worshippers, giving homage to any god who suits their needs.

The rise of the Soothsayers, and their Academy, sharply curtailed the clergy's power. Augurs still exist, but mostly as an advisory position on the god's will, rather than true seers of the

future. The mob viewed the loss of the Sibylline Books to the Soothsayers as a sign of whom the gods truly favored. Some say that despite the Soothsayer's revelation of true magic and eldritch monsters in the world, the mob's faith is still strong. Temples are still built, the calendars are still maintained, and the people are still sated by the festivals. As even more evidence of their faith, many still come to the priests to intercede on their behalf for spiritual matters.

Playing a Cleric: You serve the divine in all things; their *logos*, their divine spark, lives within your breast. You dare to hear the words of the gods and speak their truth with your tongue.

You serve as a member of the august clergy of Rome, whether as a humble street preacher who tends to former slaves and the lost, or as one of the most holy pontiffs of the state religion conducting the public religious rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. Religious matters are performed with gravitas and exactness, so as to maintain the god's good will and favor of Rome. Only the monotheists are openly scorned for their narrow-minded beliefs.

Depending upon the god you serve, you might bless marriages and new business ventures, prepare the legions for war, or announce the gods' will at celebrations. You serve the divine and there is still a role for the gods to play among humanity.

Attribute Bonus: + 1 Heart, +1 Soul

Special Qualities: see **Clergy Qualities**, page 144

Criminal

Motto: *Auribus Teneo Lupum* (Latin: I hold a wolf by the ears)

Signa Romanum: A sap (a short club of wood and/or leather, used to knock people unconscious).

Description: Criminals live outside of the law, and if caught offending the wrong Roman or breaking the law in the wrong place, they risk losing a hand or being strangled to death. Survival, much less freedom and creature comforts, are rare. Only the most savage thrive in such an environment. Many former slaves escape their masters only to become involved in the one place that will accept and shield them. There is no honor among thieves, except protect one's friends and hope they don't cut your throat while you sleep.

While there are criminals in every corner of every hill, the Aventine Hill is the most infamous of criminal locations, leaving a vast number of the docks along the Tiber river under gang control. Some of these gangs even have patrician patrons who use them as pawns in complex power plays.

The bureaucrats and clergy turn a blind eye to the criminal underworld. Corruption and graft are considered just another unsavory aspect of life. The stoic Roman heart believes crime will always exist because people are weak; the powerful tolerate some amount of crime, so long as the criminals limit themselves to the lower classes and avoid disrupting commerce.

Playing a Criminal: You exist in the shadows of the great empire, thieving and murdering to survive in her twisted alleys and hidden streets. Few make such a life for themselves by choice, instead falling prey to fortune and circumstance. You might be a starving pickpocket, a murderous cut-throat, or a member of a prestigious gang in the underworld Collegia.

For more information, see **Crime and Punishment**, page xx.

Attribute Bonus: + 1 Body, +1 Heart

Special Qualities: see **Criminal Qualities**, page 144.

Gladiator

Motto: *Ave, Imperator, Morituri te Salutant* (Latin: Hail, Emperor, we who are about to die salute thee)

Signa Romanum: A rudis (a wooden gladius or rod)

Description: Gladiators most often come from captured foreign soldiers (such as the infamous Thracian known only by the moniker Spartacus), criminals sentenced to death, or slaves raised and trained in the brutal blood sport from an early age. Those who fight well earn the adoration of the crowd, rewards in coin, and sometimes are even granted their freedom, including a pardon for all former crimes.

Some poor souls volunteer to test their mettle in the arena, seeking the fame and coin that comes with victory. Fallen freedman, broke or bored patricians, or even veterans of the legions sometimes became gladiators of their own free will. Among the most popular gladiators are women, such as the fearsome Achillia of Halicarnassus, who is said to have descended from a lost Amazonian tribe along the Rhine River. Single women who manage to survive the arena often have the coin to live independent lives as celebrities, out from under the control of their paterfamilias. Beloved encyclopedist and doctor Aulus Cornelius Celsus protested such behavior before the Curia, referring to them as a “disgrace to Rome,” and challenged men to imagine their wives coming home with armor and gladiator gear.

Playing a Gladiator: You are not a soldier, neither are you a mere mercenary or a common thug knifing someone in a dark alley. You are a god among mortals, a legend in the sand and arena – you are a gladiator. You’ve been branded into the brotherhood, given specialized training at a *ludus* (gladiator academy), and won the adoration of the Roman public. Bouts might be solo matches, chariot races, wild beast hunts, or even naval bouts mirroring old battles. Winners become heroes to the fickle mob, who often determined life or death by the roar of their applause. Losers are the bloody grist in the endless death mill of the arena.

Victory brings riches, fame, and even a certain amount of clout. Wealthy clients might even purchase vials of sweat and dirt scraped from your body after a match for health and beauty tonics, or pay more for certain romantic favors. It’s a paradise built upon the sand, waiting for the oncoming tide. So long as you risk your life in the arena, any error or misfortune could render your life forfeit at any moment. The mob is fickle, seeking only to sate their bloodlust. Should they ever turn on you, it will be your blood they demand when next they thirst. For more information, see **Panem et Circenses – the Arena**, page xx.

Attribute Bonus: + 2 Body

Special Qualities: see **Gladiator Qualities**, page 145.

Merchant

Motto: *Caveat Emptor* (Latin: Let the buyer beware)

Signa Romanum: A dupondius (a bronze-cast coin)

Description: Once wealth was measured in land and the patricians held a virtual monopoly on all the best acreages in Rome and outer Italia. In the aftermath of the Ides of March rebellion and assassination, Caesar broke this monopoly as he punished the Senators who were party to such treason. Mercy was once was the hallmark of mighty Caesar, but no more. The conspirators' lands were forfeit to the resettled veterans of the legions. Those with coin and cunning purpose took Hades' favor, and parted land from the gullible. Now, new families of power arise in Rome, drawing wealth from other sources.

The legions conquered the known world, but the merchants reaped the benefit by reselling the spoils of war: slaves, art, and goods of the conquered. They utilized the roads of Rome to create dynamic, protected trade routes. Despite the Caesarian Reforms, meant to encourage the hiring of plebeians and freedman by limiting the number of slaves who could be used on a single project in Italia, the cancer of slavery has spread throughout the Empire.

The patricians might consider the handling of coin distasteful, but the merchants know money is merely a tool that balances power between the high and the low. Trade is the one profession which can be entered into without family name or reputation. Coin has its own means and reputation. Many merchants are the freed slaves and low-born who have risen from nothing to power through trade. Not all trade is unsavory; many souls make decent livings while improving the community. Yet, to do business in the Eternal City is to deal with graft, corruption, and brutality.

Roleplaying a Merchant: Coin and shrewd business acumen are your weapons; your war is not waged for glory or honor, but profit. The patricians often refuse to even touch coins, and so it falls to the middle-men, the merchants, to buy and sell what the city requires, and, even more importantly, desires. You know how to track inventory, procure the best loans from moneylenders, and navigate the complex bureaucracy of the Eternal City, including dealing with certain members of its criminal population. You have connections within the municipals, the clergy, and, perhaps one day, you might have the wealth to stand with the Senate.

Attribute Bonus: + 1 Heart, +1 Mind

Special Qualities: see **Merchant Qualities**, page 145.

Legionnaire

Motto: *Senatus Populusque Romanus* (Latin: For the Senate and People of Rome)

Signa Romanum: Golden Eagle

Description: All legionnaires serve for a period of twenty-five years, unless given special dispensation by a general or the Senate. The Marian reforms ensured service always guaranteed citizenship, even for foreign nationals. The last five years of service were always lighter duties, often in a civilian capacity at home. However, by law and tradition, once a soldier crossed the Rubicon river, he immediately reverted back to a citizen unless given special dispensation.

Life in the military is hard. It breeds hard men who believe in doing whatever's required without sentiment. The citizens of Rome live in both terror and awe of its armies, always afraid a charismatic general will lead an open revolt against the Senate and, now, the Imperator. The traitor Brutus still controls three legions in Britannia, where he's surely been training British barbarians in Roman military techniques. Some whisper the truth is even worse: these lost

legions have gone native, running into battle naked, painted blue, and consuming the flesh of their enemies.

Playing a Legionnaire: You are a citizen-soldier in the world's greatest military power, capable of conquering enemy territory, building roads that encourage commerce, and bringing the civilization of Rome to the barbarians, whether they wish it or not. Each legion is a combination mobile army and brutally efficient government, which has a unique culture of service and glory dating back to when kings ruled Rome.

Whatever your rank and whatever your social class, you live to serve the Republic of the Eternal City, and you'll let nothing stop you from enforcing her will. For more information about the culture and structure of the legions of Rome and their legionaries, see the Legions of Rome, page xx.

Attribute Bonus: + 1 Body, +1 Mind

Special Qualities: see **Legionnaire Qualities**, page 146.

Soothsayer

Motto: *Praemonitus Praemunitus* (Latin: Forewarned is forearmed)

Signa Romanum: A human skull

Description: All Soothsayers serve the academy for a period of ten years either as a magister (teacher) or enforcer. In exchange, those who graduate earn a lifetime's membership to the school's gargantuan library, access to rare herbs and minerals required for rituals, and, most importantly, a constant stream of communication with the Three Soothsayers.

Every patrician family sends their children for testing, hoping one of the academy's magisters finds a spark of inherent talent. Some of the great patrician families, lacking such luck, offer patronage in the form of sacks of filled with coin or political influence. Few students who join in this manner manage to succeed, but there's great prestige even in limited training. Plebeians and freedmen also send their hopefuls, and, thus far, have succeeded in equal measure. Surprisingly, even slaves purchased at random have shown some natural talent for magic. The requirements for success at the Soothsayer Academy are blind to social standing or political sway.

Playing a Soothsayer: Through tireless hours of study, bloody sacrifice, and the tutelage of the Soothsayer Academy, you've mastered the subtle and terrifying art of magic. With but a gesture, together with the understanding of mystical principals and the proper application of energy, you can perform real magic – miracles that hitherto had been the province of the gods. Eternally bound by loyalty and oath to the Soothsayer Academy, you navigate the bonds of family and politics as an outsider; mortal but empowered with the force of a god.

In return for their protection and favored status, the Soothsayer Academy provides the Empire with new magicians, who aid their attempt to expend Rome's reach and position in the world.

Attribute Bonus: + 1 Mind, +1 Soul

Special Qualities: See **Soothsayers Qualities**, page 146

Genre Factions

Cato the Black is believed to have said that Rome rules the known world, but lacks the discipline to govern herself.

Patricians

Historian Titus Livy recorded the first one hundred men appointed as Senators by Romulus himself were granted the *cognomen ex virtute* (name by virtue) of *patres*, meaning ‘fathers’. Thereafter their clans (called *gens*, or collectively *gentes*) became known as patricians. While this origin story is dogmatically correct, adhering to Roman mythology and the accepted theology of the founding of the city, most rationalists presume the patricians were the leaders and land-owners of the first tribes who settled the seven hills of Rome. The twin pillars of patrician social power stem from a near-monopoly on land ownership within Rome and the length of their *gentes*’ Roman citizenship. Many eschew direct worship of the gods, and instead consider the Republic itself divine. Thus, the expansion of an Empire beyond Rome’s natural borders makes many uneasy.

Under the Caesarian reforms, patricians no longer enjoy more special rights than those possessed by an average citizen. However, many still believe the patricians are favored by the gods and their presence adds social weight to any occasion they deign to participate in. It is commonly said the patricians are the foundation of the Republic, and their blood is the mortar which keeps the walls standing strong. The word of a patrician is always accepted as true, and the courts will almost always favor one unless presented with overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

The civil wars, and banishment of the Senate Liberators, marked the decline of many patrician *gentes*, leaving them as names on dusty lists, soon known only to historians. Some stave off this extinction via adoption of cadet plebeian *gentes*, such as the Julii Caesares adopting the equestrian branch of the plebeian *gens* Octavia.

All patricians benefit from the following legal and cultural traditions:

- Cannot be judged, punished, nor detained without a trial
- Cannot be accused of lying or perjury, based on the honor of their house, without a trial.
- Can be sentenced to a lesser punishment due to their family’s service to Rome.
- Always the first to be seated at any religious or public festival.

Patrician Gentes Maiores (The Major Patrician Families)

Among the patrician families (known as *gentes*), six are considered the most noble houses, who best represent the great virtues of Rome. The Speaker of the Senate is traditionally chosen from this august group, and efforts to change this custom are greatly opposed.

Some of these ancient and storied families fell onto hard and desperate times, most notably the Valerii. However, despite the Caesarian reforms, the majority of patrician *gentes* still flourish and control important positions in the Senate and Rome. Many citizens of Rome believe these storied familial bloodlines are as sacred as the Republic of Rome itself, and are thus reluctant to take any direct action against them.

To become a member of one of the major patrician houses, characters must purchase the **Quality: Patrician Gentes Maiores**, page 147. Typically, this quality is purchased during character creation. But if the storyline warrants a change in status, such as the classical movie tropes of identity switched at birth, the revelation of one's true father, being adopted, or marrying above one's station, the character can purchase the Quality. Purchasing this Quality unlocks **Factional Qualities**, see page 147.

Aemilii

Legend has it that this patrician gente descends from Amulius, the tyrannical uncle of Romulus and Remus, who deposed his brother Numitor to become king of Alba Longa. Such myths, however, are not repeated in open due to the current political climate, for even the mighty Aemilii must publicly appear to support Caesar.

Historian Titus Livy claims the Aemilli founder is Mamercus, the son of Numa Pompilius, the legendary second king of Rome. The family name is thought to come from the persuasiveness and cunning of their founder's words. Some say the name comes from Mamercus being a fierce warrior. Others claim there were once twin brothers who battled the enemies of Rome under the banner of Mars. The eldest bore the cognomen *Aemilius*, *He Who Conquers*. The younger brother was Valerius, founder of the Valeria line. The centuries set these two cousin patrician families against each other. Whatever their origins, the Aemilii have been a part of Rome and her inner workings from the time of kings and legends to the current Republic and her Empire.

Astonishingly, the Aemilii recently publicly allied themselves with the Cornelii, despite Caesar's displeasure. Their paterfamilias is Senator Manius Aemilius Vetus, the richest man in all of Rome. It is said that only his appetite exceeds his wealth. His wife, Nephele of the Aemilii, is the materfamilias of a militia comprised of exceedingly wealthy sons and grandsons of Rome. Since the wife of the Emperor, Calpurnia, died of a strange wasting disease five years ago, Nephele has become the unspoken Materfamilias.

Claudii

The Claudii, sometimes written in the old histories as the Clodia, have occupied the highest offices of state since the dawn of Rome. They are noted in the current era for their overwhelming pride concerning their patrician status, as well as some bitterness over the Caesarian reforms and the subsequent removal of their special privileges. Their bearing is distinguished by a haughty defiance of any other gentes' claims to superiority, disdain for the laws that restrict their rights, and coldness of heart in all dealings with others.

While the other major patrician families speak of their origins during the dawn of the time of kings, the Claudii formed after the formation of the Republic. A young Rome warred with all of the surrounding tribes, including the Sabine. A Sabine military leader, Attius Clausus, came to Rome with his soldiers during these early years. Clausus offered the Senate of Rome their eternal loyalty, and was rewarded with a unique, grandfathered-in patrician citizenship. His followers were given land on the far side of the Anio river, where they formed the core of what became the "Old Claudian" tribe.

Many believe the Claudii are touched by the god Vulcan, for they are known to be clever, well-versed in design, exceptionally rich with their gold mines, and sometimes have children born with uncommon congenital deformities. This caused some scandal in the high society, and few other patrician families wish to marry their children into their gens.

Marcus Livius Drusus Claudianus, the paterfamilias, remains a strong supporter of the Emperor, despite the Caesarian reforms. While the Aemilii can't oppose Caesar directly, they can and do frequently oppose Claudianus in the Senate.

Cornelii

The origin of the Cornelii is lost to the fog of history. Their nomen suggests the cognomen *Corneus*, which means 'horny from having thick or callused skin.' Tradition holds the Cornelii first tamed the wild seven hills of Rome, and were Rome's first farmers and landholders. Historian Titus Livy is so bold to say that the Cornelii laid the foundation for the Eternal City. This family has sired many lesser patricians, and their adoption of a host of plebeian gentes was instrumental in many victories for Rome, including the Punic Wars.

Staunch defenders of the Republic, and not-so-quiet supporters of Brutus and his Senate Liberators, circulate rumors that Publius Cornelius Scipio Salvito sent men and gold to Britannia years ago. At least the Emperor believed that to be so, and then publicly forgave the Cornelii, while accepting their continued donations to the Republic's granaries to supplement the income from Alexandria. The implication was clear, and for nearly a decade, the Cornelii have nearly been social exiles. None would openly impugn their family honor, but they are often quietly excluded from the best parties and events.

Recently, the richest man in Rome made their redemption his cause. Manius Aemilius Vetus, along with the younger brother of Marcus Antony, Senator Lucius Antony Creticus, openly embraced the Cornelii. He reminded Caesar of the potential war with the Parthian Empire, and that victory in Africa is assured if a Scipio of the Cornelii line leads the battle. This is part of the same prophecy in the Sibylline Books, which says only a Rome united under a king can win against the Parthians.

Fabii

The Fabia established themselves forever among the greatest patrician families when three brothers were invested with seven successive consulships early in the history of the Republic. They won eternal glory at the tragic Battle of Cremera, when the best of several generations was wiped out in a futile defense of Rome.

Once, the Fabii were staunch supporters of the aristocratic policies of the Senate, favoring the rights of patricians. During the revenge war against the Veientes, victory was achieved only through cooperation between the Fabii, the Valerii, and a majority of the older plebeian families. Thereafter, the Fabii pledged to support whatever was best for Rome. This caused some tension with their ancient allies, the Claudii.

Fabii are staunch believers and devout supporters of the state religion. They have deep ties to the Luperci, the priests who perform the sacred rites of the ancient religious festival,

Lupercalia. They also worship Hercules, and maintain their family descends directly from the demigod, who visited Italy a generation before the Trojan War and sired the three brothers who founded the Fabii tribe.

Historian Titus Livy suggests it's more likely the first Fabii were the followers of the brothers Romulus and Remus, and offered up sacrifices in the cave of the Lupercal at the base of the Palatine Hill (which became the origin of Lupercalia). This tribe was believed to be shepherds and hunters of wolves, and hard men and women born from an uncivilized time and place.

The Fabii continue to support Rome and her gods. They oppose the fashionable wave of stoicism and remember a time when instinct and faith brought them out of the darkness. If they have opinions about the Emperor and the Soothsayers, they keep such thoughts to themselves. But they openly mourn the deaths of the Decemviri (see **Pagan Rome: Decemviri**, page xx) and the Augurs (see **Pagan Rome: Augurs**, page xx) on the Ides of March, and that alone is a risky position to take. Thus far, no Fabii have graduated from the Soothsayer Academy.

Sulpicii

The Sulpicii are one of the most distinguished and ancient families in Rome. This gen produced multiple, concurrent Consuls and other worthy and distinguished politicians. They were instrumental in driving out the Tarquins and establishing the Republic. The Sulpicii founded a number of prosperous plebeian families descended from their freemen, to which they still maintain close ties. Notable characteristics and virtues of this family include a passionate devotion to family and the arts, their liberal treatment of women, and a sense of civic responsibility.

It is said the legions of Rome supplied the materials, but the Sulpicii transformed Rome from a city of brick to one of marble. Many notable, famous artisans come from their patrician and plebeian gens. Currently, their most famous artist is the poetess known as Sulpicia, the daughter of Servius Sulpicius Rufus, a noted orator. The current Paterfamilias of the Sulpicii, Quintus Sulpicius Camerinus, seems content to allow the controversy his cousin by blood generates, and the accusations that she couldn't have possibly written such elegant poetry.

During the reign of the Emperor, the Sulpicii remained silent. They continue to concentrate on what they believe to be the real glory of Rome, its culture and art. Yet, they remain close, if non-political allies, of the Aemilii.

Valerii

The Valerii are dying. They have no cadet houses. Their current paterfamilias, Quintus Valerius Orca, led them to financial ruin to appease his wife, exiled in Alexandria (Septima Valerius Orca). In days past, many great leaders of the legions and Senate came from this gens. Much of their prestige stems from their leadership in removing the last kings of Rome and exiling the Tarquins. During the transition to the Republic, this gens was so trusted that they were granted royal power on behalf of their tribes.

Their early honors resulted in a number of unusual privileges awarded to this family, including the right to bury their dead within the city walls-- a right only otherwise granted to the Imperial family and former Consuls of Rome. They also hold a special balcony at the Circus Maximus, with a unique throne that not even the Emperor enjoys, and a villa built by the legendary Publius Valerius Publicola (one of the first Consuls of Rome), with doors that open outward into the street to allow for a proper military defense. No other gentes is allowed such a defense, and these doors are an honor, a symbol of Rome's debt to this family. Other gentes might have political power or great wealth, but the fortunes of the Valerii lie in their deeds and inspiration of others.

Starting with Publius Valerius Publicola, the Valerii are notable in their advocacy of plebeian causes, and helped pushed through many laws granting them the full rights of Roman citizens.

The former paterfamilias of the Valerii, Titus Valerius Perseus, was the senator who first sponsored the Caesarian reforms. While they lack patrician cadet houses, the Valerii sponsored many plebeian houses, even if they are too proud to take payment for their patronage. It is said that Titus Valerius Perseus himself shielded Caesar's body during that fateful Ides of March. To their critics, this is yet another sign of this fallen gens striving for the glories of ages past without concerning the consequences of their deeds.

The blood of the Titus Valerius Perseus grows strong in the shadow of Caesar, such that the enemies of the Empire have sought the lives of his children, citing an ancient verses in the Sibylline Books.

Patrician Gentes Minores (The Minor Patrician families)

Over a hundred or more minor patrician families, aligned under one of the Gentes Maiores, live in Rome. For example, the Julii Caesares are formally aligned with the Claudii.

This section contains a list of these minor houses, along with a simple description of what said family is known for during the events of *Mystical Rome*. Little is known about many of these gentes, except for their appearances on important lists, coins, or official records. There are many other houses addressed in history, and players should discuss their options with the Director.

Directors and players are encouraged to expand upon the limited descriptions here:

Developer's Note: We're going to allow patrons to help us expand this section with the upcoming Morra Kickstater.

- *Aquillia*: A gens with many patrician and plebeian branches, known for being traditionalists and sun worshippers.
- *Atilia*: Known for their support of the legions, and the rare willingness of a patrician gens to dive into commerce.
- *Cloelia*: Descended from Clolius, a companion of Aeneas, and a cousin branch to the last kings of Rome.
- *Curtia*: Part of the Sabine tribe from the time of kings, made citizens of Rome after their surrender.

- *Foslia*: A gens that has a strong interest in shipping and trade, known for offering rare pleasures to their guests.
- *Furia*: A gens of Tusculan origin, known for their great tempers, wealth, and passion.
- *Gegania*: Descended from Gyas, who accompanied Aeneas from Italy to Troy. They are said to be one of the noblest families of the Alban aristocracy, and were incorporated into the Roman state after that city's destruction by Tullus Hostilius.
- *Genucia*: Said to be gifted by Athena with incredible foresight. In the Time of the Soothsayers, they have more graduates of the Soothsayer Academy than any other gens.
- *Herminia*: Known for their roots as fishermen and bridge builders, allegedly the architects and first defenders of the great Sublician Bridge.
- *Horatia*: A small but legendary gens that hails from fabled Alba Longa, and is known for their heroes and horses.
- *Julia*: Of Alban origin, the Julii moved to Rome upon the destruction of Alba Longa. They claim descent from Ascanius, son of Aeneas, who is in turn the son of Venus and Anchises. This small house almost faded into obscurity until the rise of Caesar and his adoption of the plebeian gens Octavia, which breathed new life into the family.
- *Lartia*: A noble gens famous for their defense of Pons Sublicius in Lars Porsena's war against Rome.
- *Lucretia*: A cultured gens known for their skill with poetry, politics, and love.
- *Manlia*: A disgraced gens from the Latin city of Tusculum. Once revered for their loyalty, Marcus Manlius Capitolinus was tried for treason by the Senate two decades ago. He died in the arena, and his family was ordered to never again use the praenomen Marcus. They hunger for redemption.
- *Menenia*: Famous for their curly hair, this gens faded into obscurity in the Time of the Soothsayers.
- *Metilia*: A gens that moved to Rome following the destruction of Alba Longa. Known primarily from their deeds in the Punic Wars and avid support of the Imperator.
- *Minucia*: Known for their mercurial temperament and strong devotion to Stoic ideals to combat it.
- *Mucia*: A legendary gens descended from the hero Gaius Mucius Scaevola. Historian Titus Livy reports that as a young man, Mucius volunteered to sneak into the camp of Lars Porsena, the king of Clusium, then besieging Rome, and assassinate him. Unfamiliar with Etruscan dress, he mistook the king's secretary for the king himself and was captured. Later, Mucius demonstrated his bravery to his captors by thrusting his right hand into a brazier and standing silently as it burned. King Porsena could no longer stand the sight or smell of Mucius' burning hand and forced it out of the brazier. This sight of Roman bravery, and the promise of future assassinations, inspired Porsena to leave Rome.
- *Nautia*: Known for their service during the Samnite Wars, this gens seems to be fading, although it's said Caesar favors them.
- *Numicia*: A gens known for their service in the legions and the mines they own in Africa.
- *Papiria*: An old monied house with resources in land, mines, and shipping.
- *Pinaria*: Descended from Pinus, a son of Numa Pompilius, the second King of Rome. In a sign of their devotion to the Republic, they surrendered their divine right of kingship.

It's whispered that at private meals, they toast Brutus and prepare for the day he marches on Rome.

- *Politia*: One of the original Servian tribes, considered important landowners during the Roman monarchy.
- *Postumia*: Noted old and wealthy Roman aristocracy, the Postumii faded for a time into obscurity until Caesar appointed a number of them to city offices to replace the disgraced and exiled Senate Liberators.
- *Quinctilia*: Descended from one of the followers who left Alba Longa after the brothers Romulus and Remus restored their grandfather, Numitor, to the throne. They offered up sacrifices in the Lupercal at the base of the Palatine Hill, which earned the god's blessing and became the foundation of the religious festival, Lupercalia.
- *Scipiones*: A branch of the Cornelii family, founded by Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, famous for their many victories in Africa, and a subsequent prophecy in the Sibylline Books concerning a future battle against the Parthian Empire. Every general, Senator, and Emperor knows never to send armies to Africa without a Scipio to lead them.
- *Sempronia*: An ancient gens known for their beauty and poise. They are well-liked and thought of as the reason Rome exists, to produce such civilized refinement. Their wealth derives from the huge dowries other families pay for the privilege of marrying Sempronia sons and daughters.
- *Sergia*: Descendants of the legendary Sergestus, one of the heroic Trojans who came to Italy with Aeneas. Four hundred years ago, Lucius Sergius Fidenas became Consul and attempted to become a tyrant and abolish the Senate. He was stopped by the Bruti and condemned to the arena. They disappeared from public life for centuries, until the Emperor forgave the gens.
- *Servilia*: An old gens believed to have a magical copper coin that grows or shrinks in size in proportion to their prosperity. They are the only conspirator patrician family related to the Senate Liberators allowed to remain after the purge following the Ides of March, because they threw themselves upon the mercy of Caesar and paid some secret, but believed to be very expensive, price.
- *Sestia*: Known for their light touch, disposition, and neutrality towards politics, but consumed with fashion, art, and the arena.
- *Siccia*: A quiet, almost rural gen with many farms, orchards, and slaves.
- *Tullia*: A solemn gen known for a tradition of public service and working in the lesser offices of the Republic.
- *Verginia*: Vocal supporters of the Emperor, this gens got rich off the slave trade and other imports from western Europe.
- *Veturia*: Legend has it during the Time of Kings, the armorer Mamurius Veturius crafted the sacred ancilia. The beauty of these twelve shields was such that Mars himself was pleased, and when they were placed in his temple the god promised he would forever aid the Eternal City against her enemies. Thus, the Veturia family are forever elevated, and continue to build great and terrible things for Rome.
- *Vitellia*: The origin of this family is currently in dispute. They claim to have settled at Nuceria Apulorum in the time of the Samnite Wars, but their enemies claim this gens rose from a freedman who somehow found the coin to bribe his way into Roman society.

- *Volumnia*: A gens of little political or social importance, but overburdened with coin and land.

The following gens were exterminated or exiled after the infamous Ides of March:

- *Brutii*: An old and legendary gens, famous for killing the last king of Rome. Once on the rise, under the patronage of Caesar himself, Marcus Junius Brutus led the infamous Senate Liberators against Caesar. He would have won if the Three Soothsayers had not intervened with their magic. This old house relocated to Britannia, and allied their legions with the Caledonians and a foreign Soothsayer.
- *Cassia*: An old gens with ties to politics and farming, with a solid reputation until the Ides of March.
- *Cinna*: A cadet gens from the Cornelii, who funneled a good deal of Rome's worth and wealth to field the Caledonian army.
- *Ligarius*: A haughty gens, known for their opposition to Caesar and yet still thrice-forgiven by him. After the Ides of March, it is said those who remained in Rome were fed to the lions.
- *Tillia*: A fierce and respected gen, known for insisting that all of their sons serve in the legion before entering public life.

Plebeians

Plebeians are the general body of free Roman citizens. The precise origins of the group, and the term itself, are unclear. Historian Titus Livy suggests that Ancus Marcius, one of the early kings of Rome, granted the gentes of hardworking Romans whose blood had paved the streets of Rome the collective *cognomen ex virtute* (name by virtue) 'plebeians'.

Over the centuries, the patricians came to use the term pejoratively, forcing through the Senate many punitive laws restricting plebeian legal rights, and leveraging their monopoly on land ownership to reap many rewards. Plebeians were excluded from magistracies and religious colleges, and they were not permitted to know the laws by which they were governed. Plebeians served in the army, but rarely became military leaders. Dissatisfaction with their place in the social structure led to a *secessio plebis* (plebeian general strike), where they withdrew from the business of Rome. Commerce shutdown and the people went hungry and rioted, murdering others in the streets.

The Caesarian reforms ended the last of the legal restrictions upon the plebeians as a class, leaving them more or less equal to the patricians before the law of Rome. However, many patrician families were granted special privileges that became pseudo-laws under Roman traditions. For example, the Valeria are the only family allowed to bury their dead inside of the city walls, and to fortify their doors, so as to allow themselves a chance to fight invaders. Both are against the law for anyone else, but their storied family earned the right from the second King of Rome when they defended Rome from an enemy tribe.

Some plebeian families took advantage of these reforms and transformed themselves into a new nobility amongst the plebeians. Such rich plebeians are called *novus homo* (a new man) or, more specifically, a self-made man.

Here's a list of common plebeian *nomens*: Abronia, Afrania, Anneia, Arellia, Ateia, Balventia, Bantia, Bellicia, Betiliena, Caecina, Caelia, Caeparia, Caesia, Calpurnia, Calvisia, Canutia, Catia, Curtilia, Cuspia, Duilia, Durm//ia, Duronia, Epidia, Equitia, Erucia, Fidiculania, Flaminia, Fulvia, Fundania, Gallia, Gargonia, Gavia, Gegania, Gratidia, Hateria, Heia, Helvia, Hostilia, Insteia, Juventia, Laceria, Lamponia, Laronia, Lartia, Livia, Lollia, Lucilia, Lutatia, Magia, Maria, Memmia, Menenia, Menia, Mustia, Naevia, Nasennia, Neria, Nonia, Nymphidia, Obellia, Obultronia, Octavia, Ofania, Opetreia, Opsia, Ovidia, Paccia, Palfuria, Palpellia, Pantuleia, Papia, Papinia, Peducaea, Perpenna, Pinnia, Plaetoria, Pompilia, Pomponia, Pomptina, Porcia, Pupia, Quartia, Quartinia, Rabonia, Rabuleia, Reginia, Remmia, Rufria, Rullia, Sallustia, Salonia, Sanquinia, Saria, Scaevia, Servaeaa, Sicinia, Silicia, Tarpeia, Tineia, Titia, Tullia, Ulpia, Ummidia, Viridia, and Visellia.

Liberti (Freedmen and Freedwomen)

The Liberti are former slaves redeemed from bondage to a Roman citizen via a process known as manumission. Afterwards, the liberti enjoy freedom from ownership and *libertas* (voting rights). A former slave granted this freedom is called a *libertus* (freed person) in relation to her former master, who gains the title of *patronus* (patron). A patron is expected to ensure his former slave knows and obeys the laws of Rome.

Liberti are neither entitled nor empowered to seek public office or state priesthoods, nor can they achieve Senatorial rank without Emperor intervention. However, many liberti work in the bureaucracy of Rome, ensuring the Eternal City keeps running. By law, the children of any liberti can earn the full rights of citizenship, and their grandchildren are considered plebeians.

Slaves

The glory of Rome was built upon the blood and suffering of her slaves. The legions of Rome return after each victory with slaves taken from enemy forces, their captured families, and anyone else they could justify press-ganging into servitude. Slavery in ancient Rome played an important economic role. Aside from manual labor, they performed many domestic tasks (called body slaves), and were often quite skilled Artisans. Unskilled slaves, and those condemned to slavery as punishment, lived harsh lives working on farms, arenas, mines, and mills. Those who refused to work were sent for redemption in the Arena.

Slaves are considered property under Roman law, have no legal personhood and thus no rights as people. A slave can be subjected to corporal punishment, torture, and brutal execution. Attitudes have begun to change, in part because of the Caesarian economic reforms. These were greatly supported by the plebeians and freedmen, mainly because no-cost labor made competition impossible and killed trade. The Stoics, black-garbed disciplines of Cato the Black believed in the divinity of the Republic and that slavery as a taint on their souls. They have made it quite unfashionable for citizens to keep slaves in the Eternal City, believing all people contain within their flesh the *logos*, the divine word or spark that separates a person from an animal.

Thanks to the Caesarean reforms, it is now illegal not to pay slaves for jobs, transforming the horrific experience into an also horrible, forced, indentured servitude. Playing in this faction is a major challenge. A good portion of your agency is lost to the whims of fate.

Foreign Tribes

While some foreigners, such as the Greeks or the Alexandrians (children of Ptolemy) are held in high esteem, only two classes of tribes matter. Roman or foreigner. Romans naturally presume that all other tribes have a social order akin to their own, and respect that order so long as it is understood that Rome and her citizens are always first among equals.

Rome is the cosmopolitan center of an expansive economic and martial empire. Those who seek to advance their own business interests must find inroads to the Eternal City, learn to navigate the complex and often far too confusing bureaucratic system, discover who must be bribed, and then determine the underworld gangs who should be employed to protect their shipments. Ironically, Romans tend to respect the merchants and diplomats of foreign tribes, especially the ones who learn local laws and traditions. Only the Caledonians of Britannica are treated with suspicion as they are feared as Brutus' spies.

Playing in this faction is a challenge. Characters of this faction are considered to have a 1-point Consequence: Foreign Tribe (see **Genre Qualities and Consequences**, page xx).

The Collegia

A *Collegium* (translation: 'joined together' or 'college') is any association or club in ancient Rome with a legal persona, similar to a corporation in the modern world. They operate as trade guilds, social clubs, burial societies, religious orders, political factions, and even gangs or underworld organizations. Collegia generally organize themselves by copying the Senate, and meeting locations are known as *curia*, after the Senate building.

Skill Adjustments

The following adjustments to the baseline skills are required to keep the tone, feel, and historical accuracy of *Mystical Rome*:

Art

Advanced arts education and training is a rarity in ancient Rome. To advance beyond the second point of this skill requires a special Quality.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Bronze Casting, Ceramics, Dancing, Drawing, Glassblowing, Metalworking, Mime (acting), Mosaics, Painting, Poetry, and Sculpting.

Convince

Speeches and oration are a necessary form of communication for every profession. Merchants, politicians, actors, and even gladiators all have forms and rules to follow when addressing a crowd.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Debate, Insult Poetry, Political Oration, Public Announcements, Religious Oration, Senatorial Debate, and Threats.

Crime

Crime is a brisk and deadly trade in this Genre. Forgery is the largest threat to law and order. Most Romans are barely literate, and those with the skill to mimic official orders can take advantage of the unwary. Even apart from forgery, second-story workers do a brisk business for their Collegium.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Arson, Breaking and Entry, Forgery, Lock-Picking, and Pick-Pocketing.

Fighting

Romans are obsessed with the fighting styles of their fallen enemies, and so their gladiators often wield strange or archaic weapons.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Axe, Contus (Lance), Gladius (Short Sword), Knife, Mariobarbuli (Weighted Darts), Pilum (Javelin), Pugio (Dagger), Spear, and Trident.

Firearms

In *Mystical Rome*, this skill relates to archery, as appropriate to the geographic region. Naturally, modern firearms remain outside the Genre.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Arcubus Ligneis (Wooden Longbow), Ballistae (Bolt Thrower), Composite Bow, and Mounted Archery.

Knowledge

Formal education is a rarity in ancient Rome, with most relying upon parental instruction or private tutors. For those with the coin to pay, private academies are available. Those wishing to learn a trade or other skills can seek out the appropriate Collegia, and apprentice themselves to a master in exchange for training. To advance beyond the second point of this skill requires a special Quality.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Accounting, Bureaucracy, Cartography, History, Law, Politics, Philosophy, Religion, Rules of Order (how the Senate and other political bodies operate, useful for a politician).

Medicine

Nowhere is education's rarity more evident than in the field of medicine. Many religions and philosophers entertain strange theories related to the four humors (developed by the Greek physician Hippocrates), and other speculations regarding the physicality of the human condition. Yet, a few actual doctors advance their art by experimentation, and learn through repeat failures how to cure the sick and perform surgery without killing the patient. To advance beyond the second point of this skill requires a special Quality.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Faith Healing, Diagnostics, Herbal Remedies, Surgery, and Valetudinarian (military triage and combat medicine).

Science

Despite the advances of the Greeks and Romans in a number of scientific fields, such as Astronomy, the scientific method hasn't yet been developed. Romans encourage learning

through an appeal to authority rather than objective experimentation. To advance beyond the second point of this skill requires a special Quality. For more information, see **Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Science and Technology**, page 91.

Technology

One of Rome's significant strategic advantages is her technology. In a time of antiquity, they had heated baths, reservoirs and aqueducts, accurate maps, elevators, and strange wonders such as recreating sea battles in the Coliseum. Once they conquered a territory, the first thing the legions did was build roads, and then a bathhouse. Many a barbarian people joined the Empire once they realized the benefits of hot baths and straight roads. To advance beyond the second point of this skill requires a special Quality. For more information, see **Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Science and Technology**, page 91.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Architecture, Construction, Engineering, Masonry, Plumbing, and Weaponry.

Transport

In the *Mystical Rome* genre, this skill relates to the care and riding of horses, and other beasts of burden, as appropriate to the geographic region. It also covers other mechanized form of travel such as carts, caravans, and sailing vessels.

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*, and may modify said skill to the appropriate animal: Camel, Chariot, Donkey, Elephant, Horses, Giraffe, Rhinoceros, Sailing, Teamster.

Wild Card: Magic

In *Mystical Rome*, this skill relates to the casting of spells and rituals. Magic is exceptionally rare, requiring an approved Quality granting access to this special skill. The Soothsayers Academy, spiritual investments from otherworldly creatures, and divine favor are the most common methods of learning this skill. Some rare individuals master this art via time, dedication, and sacrifice (sometimes of themselves, most often of others).

The following Professional Specializations are appropriate for *Mystical Rome*: Aruspex (reading the future via entrails), Cryptozoology, Divine Energies, Healing, Ley Lines, Magical Theory, Prophecy, Ritual Training, and School of Magic.

***Mystical Rome*: Human Limitations and Genre Qualities**

Mystical Rome is a complex world of adventure, magic, and dark secrets that can freeze the soul. Characters with Qualities that shatter the traditional human ceiling on attributes or skills are thought to be of divine blood. All Qualities that represent unusual or impossible abilities, gimmicks, or powers are considered supernatural or divine in origin. Some characters might be imbued with the horrifying powers of the gods themselves. Directors should reject any Quality that seems strange for this Genre, or if the character lacks the story justification for it.

Archetype Qualities

The following Archetype Qualities are available for purchase, for characters of the given archetype:

Artisan

Apprenticeship (1-point Quality)

You've served time as an apprentice to a known and respected master of your trade, or worked several years for one of the elite Collegia of Rome. You are not bound to the Mystical Rome Genre limitations for the following skills: Art, Knowledge, Science, and Technology. You possess all of the required tools of your trade, are licensed to operate in Rome, and have a local workshop. You gain the following Qualities for free: Specialized Training (page 66) and Small Business (page 63).

Patronage (2-point Quality)

You might not be a patrician yourself, but you have the formal patronage of one of the major patrician families (page xx). So long as said family remains your patron, you live as though you possess the Wealthy quality (page 71) and you gain their immunity to certain laws. Alas, this Quality cuts both ways as you are considered to be part of that patrician family, but less important and more vulnerable, and their enemies are now your enemies.

Touched by the Muses (3-point Quality)

You have a special talent, even among your peers, and a special flair for creating and building; you can create items two levels above Mystical Rome's Tech Level. In addition, you gain a Major MacGuffin (see Chapter Five: Qualities, page 77) for free.

Bureaucrat

Eirenarchs (1-point Quality)

You are an acknowledged keeper of the peace in service to the Republic, often called on to develop young candidates for future service in the militias or as future members of the Empire's bureaucracy. Cato the Black laments that Rome is rife with corrupt bureaucrats, but you are seen as part of a new start. You are an acknowledged bureaucrat in service to the Republic, serving your *cursus honorum*. Whatever your post, you have intimate knowledge of the workings of Rome: you know where to find her public records, purchase orders, construction plans, laws, accounts payable, and any other legal document (with the exception of wills, which are kept by the **Reference Material: Pagan Rome: Vestal Virgins**, page xx). In addition, you gain the Assistant and Talented Qualities ([Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities](#), page 61). This Quality can be limited by a Director for story purposes.

Known Citizen of Rome (2-point Quality)

You are a known and venerated citizen of Rome, considered to be a living virtue and reflection of her glory. You have the ear of important people and with some work you can make things happen in the Eternal City; you can help local magistrates get selected for "elections," get the verdicts you want in trials, and offer or deny city permits. Pre-requisite Qualities: Plebeian or Patrician. Once you have achieved this quality, it's possible to lose it due to scandal or political maneuverings.

Magistrate (3-point Quality)

You've been elected to serve one of the lesser magistrate offices (see page xx; quaestor, curule Aedile, or censor) for the Republic (within Rome) or the Empire (serving as the assistant to a provincial governor). You have all of the rights and privileges afforded to this office, and it's considered the basis of a long, political career (see **Reference Material: The Body Politic: Quaestor**, page xx). Pre-requisite Qualities: Plebeian or Patrician. Once you have achieved this rank, it's possible to lose it due to scandal or political maneuverings.

Clergy

Initiate (1-point Quality)

You've been formally inducted into one of the official religious orders recognized by the empire, be it one of the mysteries, or cults. As a result, you are not bound to any limitations from this Genre regarding the following skills: Knowledge and Medicine. You can purchase any metahuman Quality as being divinely inspired. You have all of the rights and privileges afforded to this office, and it's considered the basis of a long, religious career (see **Reference Material: Pagan Rome**, page xx). Pre-requisite Qualities: Plebeian or Patrician. Once you have achieved this rank, it's possible to lose it due to scandal or political maneuverings.

Sacrificium (2-point Quality)

You have been officially recognized as a ritual master, able to perform rites of appeasement including sacrifice. By performing *expiations* (appeasing or seeking favor of a deity) or *piaculum* (seeking forgiveness from a deity) you are capable of influencing the attitudes of the Soothsayers and other Clergy toward specific actions or events. You are qualified to run one of the larger city festivals and rites such as Lupercalia. If you possess a Quality that grants you magic, or are working in concert with someone that does possess said quality, you can leverage the energy of the rite to lower the difficulty of the spell casting (see page 91).

Holy Cantrips (3-point Quality)

Through divine inspiration, or uncovered secret fragments of the Sibylline Books, you've somehow managed to learn the Wild Card Skill: Magic, and gained the Quality: Magic Dabbler (see **Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 60). This isn't *strictly* illegal, but those who possess magic outside of the auspices of the Soothsayers tend to be horribly murdered while the Senate looks the other way.

Criminal

Made (1-point Quality)

You belong, body and soul, to one of the underworld's state-approved collegia and were chosen to bear its mark upon your flesh. Only the strongest gangs gain acknowledgement by the state as a formal Collegia. Joining such a collegia takes cunning, strength, and the ability to apply cruelty judiciously. You can freely walk the criminal underworld, hide in any known safehouse, and if arrested you are immune to prosecution from all lesser crimes that are not against the state or disruptive to the flow of trade. You gain the following Qualities: Calling Card (page 65), and Connected (see page 64).

Noxii (2-point Quality)

You were sentenced and survived the deplorable conditions of the arena and the blood pits as penance for the crimes against Rome. Despite the lack of training or protection, you survived and made a name for yourself fighting trained Gladiators and even the beasts of the wilds. Children pretend to be you, and mimes perform recreations of your last battles. You gain two of the following qualities for free: Minor MacGuffin (page 68), No Fear (page 69), Stone Cold Killer (page 66), and Street Cred (page 63).

Honor Among Thieves (3-point Quality)

Your name is spoken only in fear and hushed voices, even in the halls of the Senate. Despite your disreputable trade, it is known you are a person of worth and honor. Legitimate tradesmen, politicians, and even elite patricians may seek you out to protect their interests in your territory. You walk a very fine line, existing in a brutal world where mercy is often a sign of weakness. The community treats you as honored citizen, merchants will seek your advice, and local criminals give you a cut of their ill-gotten goods as an honorarium.

Gladiator

Apprenticeship (1-point Quality)

You've served time as an apprentice to a known and respected Ludus Magnus (gladiator schools) of Rome. You gain the following Qualities: Calling Card (page 65), Specialized Training (page 66), and Special Attack (page 66).

Brotherhood (2-point Quality)

You are a member of an elite brotherhood: a gladiator of Rome. You trained in the ludus and shed your blood in the sands. You gain +1 Body and +1 Fighting. This bonus breaks the standard rule of not being able to stack bonuses from other Qualities.

God of the Arena (3-point Quality)

You are infamous for your bouts in the arena and are considered to be in line for future godhood. Wealthy patricians (men and women both) pay gold for your sweat (and occasionally other, more private services). You are a celebrity known throughout Rome, and your patrons adore you and shower you with presents. Your fame has attracted the attention of the Clergy, who often perform *expiations* in your honor. You have the best equipment and weapons. You gain the quality: Major McGuffin (page 77), which must be applied to your armor or weaponry in the arena.

Merchant

Open for Business (1-point Quality)

You've scraped enough coin and contacts to put together a solid business and are known in your trade as a fair merchant. You have enough income to have the Rome version of My So-Called Average Life (**Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 60) and Small Business (page 63). In addition, you can choose from one of the following Qualities: Needful Things (page 64) or Resourceful (page 66). You aren't rich, but have just enough coin to be known as an up-and-comer.

Shipping and Exports (2-point Quality)

You have a great deal of contacts in shipping. You know how to get your goods to where they need to go, which pirates to bribe, and what sailors are both honest and discreet. With a little coin and some discussions, you can ensure that a package (be it a group of passengers or cargo) arrives on-time and without any hassles.

Prosperity (3-point Quality)

Business goes well. Prosperity is your mistress. You are a god among mere mortals. You gain the Quality: Midas Touch (**Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 60).

Legionnaire

Training Package: Legionnaire (1-point Quality)

The legion has put special time and energy in your training. You may select one of the following Qualities for free: Specialized Training (**Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 60) or Special Attack (page 66). In addition, you gain a Trivial MacGuffin in the form of a weapon of advanced quality from your legion (see **Chapter Five: Qualities**, page 65) for free.

Veteran (2-point Quality)

You are a veteran soldier in one of the mighty legions of Rome. You've marched and fought your way across the known world. As you've already earned your salt in previous campaigns, you are treated as a revered veteran. The legion stores always repair and replace your equipment at no cost. Logistics gives you the easiest assignments and when you need to adventure away from the legion to earn a little coin or take care of personal business, your commanders are willing to grant you special dispensation so long as there isn't a battle imminent. Such soldiers are often given permission to marry, own businesses within Rome, and have a life.

Immunes (3-point Quality)

You trained at one of the elite Collegia as an artisan before joining the legion. You march and fight with the legions, as any other soldier, but then lead your fellow soldiers as an artisan, helping to build roads, construct bathhouses, and otherwise bring civilization to the wilds. This special status means you are afforded special privileges: you are excused from guard duty, and can work flexible hours. You are not bound to Genre limitations for the following skills: Art and Technology. In addition, you can select one of the following Qualities for free: Specialized Training (**Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 66) or Talented (**Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 67).

Soothsayer

Soothsayer Academy (1-point Quality)

Through rigorous study and training under the Three Soothsayers at the Academy, you've learned the Wild Card Skill: Magic, and gained the Quality: Magic Dabbler (see **Chapter Five: Cinematic Qualities**, page 73). Further, you are certified to perform magic and read the future for citizens of Rome. You can purchase any metahuman Quality and justify it as magically based.

Magister (2-point Quality)

You graduated from the Soothsayer Academy and were privileged enough to teach the next generation of students. You have a loyal research assistant (Quality: Sidekick, page xx), access to academy resources to continue your private studies, and immunity to legal prosecution for all minor offenses within the city of Rome. **See Reference Material: The Body Politic: Soothsayer Academy**, page xx.

Blessed by the Three (3-point Quality)

The sacred Three Soothsayers have a special interest in you. They trained you well, and as a departing gift upon graduation you were given either an Avatar (page 74) or a Major McGuffin (page 77).

General Qualities

The following Qualities are available for purchase by any character:

Literacy (1-point Quality)

You might not be a scholar, but you've managed to either bribe a tutor or teach yourself how to read, write, and even keep simple figures. You can read and write Latin, and must take this Quality again for other languages.

Classical Education (2-point Quality)

You had the standard Roman education in the classics via family instruction, tutors, and even some higher education. You studied literature, Roman law, history and tradition. You might even specialize in studies of rhetoric, philosophy, natural philosophy (metaphysics, mathematics, medicine, and natural sciences), and astronomy. This Quality automatically grants you the Quality: Literacy of one language, and it allows you to break Genre limitations for the following Skills: Art, Knowledge, Medicine, Science, and Technology.

Plebeian (2-point Quality)

You were born to a proud plebeian family, with strong ties to the history and glory of Rome. Select a name from the faction list or create your own (see: **Faction: Plebeian**, page 138). Your family should have one thing they are good at, be that art, commerce, politics, or something else and have a challenge to overcome. As a plebeian, you are a client to a more powerful patrician family.

Minor Patrician Family (3-point Quality)

You were born to a proud patrician family, with strong ties to the history and glory of Rome. Select a name from the faction list or create your own (see: **Faction: Minor Patrician**, page 135). Your family should have one thing they are good at, be that art, commerce, politics, or something else and have a challenge to overcome. You likely give patronage to several other plebeian families, and are the client of a more powerful Gentes Maiores.

Storied Cognomen (3-point Quality)

You've earned a cognomen from a great deed you performed, or you were blessed with a brilliant family cognomen, and are recognized as the heir apparent within your family.

Such names are often mentioned in prophecies. Great deeds are expected of one bearing a cognomen. For instance, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus conquered Africa for Rome, and thereafter it is said that only an army led by a Scipio could achieve victory there.

Major Patrician Family (4-point Quality)

You were born to a proud patrician family with strong ties to the history and glory of Rome. Select a name from the faction list or create your own (see: Faction: Major Patrician, page xx). Your family should have one thing they are good at, be that art, commerce, politics, or something else; and have a challenge to overcome. You likely give patronage to many other families, both plebeian and minor patrician.

Scholar (4-point Quality)

You are considered a scholar of Rome. You gain all of the benefits of Classical Education (page 147), and 5-points to spend on the following skills: Art, Knowledge, Medicine, Science, and Technology. You are one of the leading experts in your field. You've been quoted in Senate reports and often lesser students accept your theories as fact.

Mystical Rome: Story Bible

The universe of *Mystical Rome* is a rich, complex setting that merges legend, mythology, and history. This story bible is divided into different sections which provide shade and color to Rome's beautiful mosaic.

Writers and Directors are free to incorporate any and all of this material, or none at all, as suits their particular production.

Likewise, we've includes several reference primers to detail the historical world of *Mystical Rome*. To quote Bruce Lee, the great writer, actor, and film director, "Absorb what is useful, discard what is useless, and add what is specifically your own."

Story Overview

Beware the Ides of March! Caesar failed to take heed of the Three Soothsayers' warning, but faithful Marc Antony did not and paid the ultimate price for his loyalty, forever altering the destiny of the Eternal City. Twenty years later, Caesar still reigns over the unified Roman Empire, which includes the Republic of Rome, the Egyptian Empire, and the Europa Provinces. The oracles who saved him now operate a notorious academy of sorcery, where they instruct the sons and daughters of the elite in the eldritch arts.

The only obstacles preventing Rome's domination of the known world are the barbarous Caledonians led by the traitor Marcus Junius Brutus, who also commands the remains of the so-called Senate Liberators and three lost legions of Rome. Apart from the traitor prince, the seemingly invincible Parthian Empire threatens Roman power in the Mediterranean. One of the few true prophecies remembered from the Libri Sibyllini (a book of prophecy destroyed by the Soothsayers) claims that Rome will never win against the Parthians until united by a single king. Some whisper this was the real reason Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus led the revolt that killed Antony. If they know the truth of the matter, the Three Soothsayers have not shared it.

Even the mighty Imperator, Caesar, fears to move against Parthia, lest the mob rise up against him as a tyrant, and give Brutus an opening to return to Rome.

Yet Caesar grows old, and not even the Soothsayers can extend his life for much longer. The few remaining Patrician Majores smell blood, and want to expand their power after the Caesarian reforms. Caesar's heir, Gaius Julius Octavius Ptolemy, seems content to rule over Alexandria as Consul with his wife, Arsinoe the Astronomer, sister of infamous Cleopatra. The Pax Romana over the Mediterranean Sea is shattered by a new breed of pirates who are intent on slowing the shipments of grain from Egypt to Rome, leaving the common people hungry and dangerously angry.

The War of Infinite Regress: Soothsayer's Conflict

How do those who can observe and alter time war against each other? What happens when different sides view the infinite possibilities of the universe, and regress back again and again to try a different tactic? The Three Soothsayers refer to this fractal conflict as the War of Infinite Regress.

Two thousand years ago, before the Trojan War and before known civilization, there was only shining Atlantis. Her people conquered the elements, and commanded time and space with the power of their magic. The world was theirs, as nothing that walked the land or swam in the sea could ever hope to match their strength.

Then, a dread terror from outside, the evil from another world, broke the floating city. It struck beautiful Atlantis down with a meteor from the sky, scattering her people across the continents. Those who survived were strong with magic, and had the ability to communicate through their dreams, ignoring the laws of time and space. They knew that it was their magic, their threat to the otherworldly creatures, that drew them to this world.

Earthly magic could never challenge these eldritch horrors. But, if left to their own devices, humanity might grow strong enough to challenge the darkness. So, the magicians agreed to shut the door and lock away magic forever and kill both monsters and myths to save humanity.

The Divergence of the Soothsayer Timeline: The Ides of March

The beginning of Rome is steeped in myth and legend. Centuries of propaganda ensured that history is indeed written by the victors. Furthermore, the Three Soothsayers subtly altered the history of Rome from the beginning. Some believe it's entirely possible that the origins and even the mythology of the world remains in constant flux.

On the Ides of March, when the Senate Liberators prepared to assassinate Gaius Julius Caesar on the floor of the Senate Curia, the Three Soothsayers wielded their powers to intervene. Once, in world long forgotten, they merely warned Caesar and left him to his own devices. This time, they offered Marc Antony a choice: save his friend at the cost of his own life.

They could not change the world themselves, but required a soul with free will to choose. When the Senate Liberators struck at Caesar in the Senate Curia, in this world, Antony was there to deflect the first blow. The Three Soothsayers then appeared as though they were Dis Pater, and struck down the traitors with fires from the Underworld. Only one man survived.

Somehow, through some strange but equally powerful magic, Brutus survived the eldritch assault. Some say he accepted an investment from the world beyond. Others claim the Caledonian Soothsayer, the Morrigan, wielded her own might from across the world.

The flames and the chaos of the failed assassination attempt allowed Brutus to survive and escape the city. The Three Soothsayers could have stopped him, but instead chose to infiltrate the Curia further, into a hidden chamber where the Senate Liberators had secretly taken the Sibylline Books.

The Sibylline Books

The Sibylline Books were a collection of oracular prophecies written in Greek hexameters. Legend has it they were purchased from a sibyl (secretly a Soothsayer) by the last king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus. These sacred books were consulted in secret at momentous crises through the history of the Republic.

The secrets the Soothsayers gleaned from the Sibylline Books changed their behavior, and they decided to form their Academy. Magic returned to the world, but at a cost. Monsters and beasts of legend also returned to harrow humanity. Some say that it's only beginning and the real threat of the War of Infinite Regress hasn't yet begun. The door, once closed, now hangs wide open.

Alexandria: The Eye of the Storm

There's a shortage of grain in Rome. The city swells in size and power, but such growth requires resources. The Cornelii feed the Eternal City, and bill the Imperial treasury. Alexandria is held by the adopted son of the Emperor, Gaius Julius Octavius Ptolemy, who gave his sacred oath that his grain shipments are leaving Egypt unmolested. If piracy continues, though, the mob might well riot. This is the foundation of the Mystical Rome introduction script - Casus belli, page xx.

The Soothsayers extended Caesar's life, but even they can't halt the advances of time. Whisper among the patricians state Caesar's son married an Egyptian and now worships cats and dogs in the manner of her people. Politics is rarely kind with old dictators, who seek immortality through their deeds.

Rivals Parthia and Egypt have raided each other borders for a century. Their mutual hatreds go back to before memory. Each once held a Soothsayer of their own, and Alexandria's went into an eternal slumber. What of Parthia's?

The major patrician families are split in loyalty, and each seeks to improve their position and status in the Republic.

The Brutus Stratagem

Brutus took three legions to Britannia nearly twenty years ago, and worked to turn a collection of warring tribes into a force that could restore the Republic. Rumor has it they have their own Celtic Soothsayer named Morrigan and a hero of the Germanic tribes, a young lord named Armin.

The Return of Magic

A new generation of Soothsayers, trained at the Academy, began to filter into society. How will the presence of magic affect the average person? Would it drive a normal person mad to have such power? What is this War of Infinite Regress whispered in the halls of the academy?

Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Magic

This section defines how the modifications to the magic system used for the Genre: Mystical Rome. For more information about the template and how magic operates, see **Chapter Five: Qualities: Theory and Practice of Magic**, page 82.

Mastery of Magic

There are three Qualities that grant a character the ability to wield and practice magic. Some archetypes, such as Soothsayer, can offer a discount of these qualities.

- Magic Dabbler (page 73)
- Sorcerer (page 77)
- Master of Mystic Arts (page 79)

The Origin of Magic

The world was once rich with magic; gods and monsters roamed freely, and the first sorcerers banded together in fabled Atlantis. There, they consolidated their power, explored the universe, and tamed the world. Then, they discovered something horrible that terrified them so much they placed a universal capstone on the flood of mystical energy flowing in their world. In that time, gods and monsters became myth, their city sank into the oceans, and the empire of man rose.

The world was to be safe from the terrors beyond by wiping away magic, but three of the last Atlanteans, the Three Soothsayers, changed the future. They saved mighty Caesar to save magic and cracked open the capstone, starting the War of Infinite Regress between the survivors.

Magic Ecosystem: Base Difficulty Rating

Medium Magic: There's a wealth of mystical energy in this Genre, but it takes training and discipline to tap into it. Think of the magical world and mundane separated by a barrier and travel between them takes effort.

- Base Difficulty Rating for magic that falls within your schools of magic: 10
- Base Difficulty Rating for magic that falls outside your schools of magic: 15

Laws of Magic

Mystical Rome defaults to all of the laws of magic as found in **Chapter Five: Qualities Laws of Magic**, page 83.

Available Schools of Magic

Mystical Rome defaults to all of the schools of magic as found in **Chapter Five: Qualities: Schools of Magic**, page 85.

Reference Material: Theory and Practice of Technology

Redacted until Beta when Tech Levels are finished.

Reference Material: Monsters and Mayhem

Redacted

Reference Material: Rome Culture and Family Life

Redacted

Reference Material: The Legions of Rome

Redacted

Reference Material: Pagan Rome

Redacted

Reference Material: The Body Politic

Redacted

Reference Material: The Soothsayer Academy

Redacted

Reference Material: Important Names and People of Rome

This section will be completed after the Mystical Rome Event in September 2019.

Reference Material: Sample Plot Threads:

Here is a list of potential plot-threads that a director might use in her series:

- House Competition: Points to Die For
- Sneak into the Forbidden Library

NAME

GENRE

BUDGET

ARCHETYPE

MOTIVATION

QUIRK

BACKGROUND

FACTION

ATTRIBUTES

BODY

SPECIALIZATIONS

HEART

SPECIALIZATIONS

MIND

SPECIALIZATIONS

SOUL

SPECIALIZATIONS

SKILLS

SKILL

RATING

SPECIALIZATIONS

SKILL

RATING

SPECIALIZATIONS

CINEMATIC QUALITIES

QUALITY

RATING

QUALITY

RATING

CONSEQUENCES

ATTRIBUTE

RATING

DESCRIPTION

Warning: if the level of Consequences is greater than the Attribute score, your character is Knocked Out of the Story.

GENRE

TITLE: _____ MEDIA LENGTH: _____ BUDGET: _____

TARGET AUDIENCE: _____

RATING & DESCRIPTORS: _____

MOVIE TRAILER / ELEVATOR PITCH: _____

ARCHETYPES: _____

SKILL ADJUSTMENTS: _____



GENRE

THE STORY BIBLE:

Lined writing area for 'THE STORY BIBLE:'

Lined writing area for 'GENRE'

