KING OF STORMS

A GAME OF IGNOBLE POWER

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Praxis is an original game system, powered by Protocol.

DISCLAIMER

Praxis games contain some mature subject matter. While most Post World Games products aren't for kids, the materials contained in these pages are for adult readers and gamers. No attempt has been made to be overtly offensive, but these games tackle themes requiring a deeper sense of the world.

Or at least ourselves.

Also, I don't always watch my language.

DEDICATION

This one is for Paco. Now. Please shut up.

praxis...

POST WORLD GAMES

CONTENTS

PRAXIS: KING OF STORMS

Praxis is a series of story roleplaying games that thrusts characters into dramatic situations and is based on the principles of the *Protocol* game system. Each game uses the same set of rules, with vastly different parameters, start-points, roles, plot twists, and finales. *Praxis* does not play like a traditional roleplaying game. It does not require a gamemaster. There is no script. No endpoint. No cumbersome or extraneous mechanics detracting from the story. An entire epic can be played in under four hours.

Players are directors outside the story **and** characters inside the story. Seven different scene-framing styles help players tell meaningful stories about characters in crisis. The goal is not to succeed to the next level, but to tell interesting stories. Praxis worlds aren't safe. Characters suffer, grow, and possibly die. Failure is a story ingredient, like any other. This may seem new... and that's okay. This guide takes you step-by-step through your first game.

REQUIREMENTS

Each game in the *Praxis* series is zero-prep for four to six players. Game length is roughly three to six hours long. This *Praxis* requires pens, paper or index cards, a deck of playing cards (without the jokers), five dice (d6s), the character sheets (starting on page 74), and tokens to track drama points.

> I'll explain drama points later. For now, just be aware they give you authority over the story and allow you to break the rules.

WHY PRAXIS?

Praxis takes GMless game principles and makes them digestible for people who've never played this kind of game before. Conversely, players familiar with these ideas will find *Praxis* a little more focused on the outcome, encouraging characters to struggle for theirs, while collaborating to tell a great story.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Praxis is a dramatic game system that allows players to work together to write deep stories. The game can be played with or without a gamemaster. In fact, it plays best without one (the default setting). But even with one, the scene-framing system in *Praxis* is simple and elegant.

> You'll probably ask yourself why no one else does this. I know I do.

Scene-framing forms the basis of *Praxis*, but character roles are more important. Each role provides context, flavor, and its own unique point of view. Character abilities allow players more varied authority over the game.

GETTING STARTED

Praxis games are designed to start almost instantly. As soon as you sit down and crack open this book, you can start making characters. Just print out the character sheets and make sure everyone has something to write with.

Read the next section to everyone and follow the steps below:

KING OF STORMS

One thousand years ago, the gods and titans slew one another in a great battle for the heavens. In their destruction, their blood rained from the heavens, permeating the earth, and drenching the soil. Centuries passed. From this blood arose powerful beings, capable of unearthly feats. Some were born of god's blood, noble and perfect. Others were born from titans blood, twisted and malevolent. A third was born an abomination of the two — half god, half titan: the bloodless gorgons.

But the Storm is coming. The time of ascendancy is at hand. The kingdom can have but one ruler — the King of Storms. Which child of heaven shall take his or her place upon the throne?

And who will be consumed by the Storm?

DISCLAIMER

This is not a game about Greek mythology, despite the inclusion of the word gorgon. The artwork is not Greek and the concepts are not Greek. Create your own mythic characters and backgrounds while playing.

The cadence of *King of Storms* resonates for me. It's why I chose the title before ever writing the game. If you find it sexist or jarring, you are welcome to change the title to Stormmaster. Or whatever.

WORLD VIEW CANON

When making characters, it's important to determine how everyone knows each other and what brings them together. There are scenes where everyone is in one place at one time (or perhaps someone is teleconferencing in, etc.). In any case, there needs to be a reason why everyone knows each other.

What is the group's overall affiliation? Are they nomadic godkin, roaming the earth? Leaders of people who worship them as living gods? Human monarchs with a slight taste of titan blood coursing through their bodies?

The next few pages are an overview of what to expect from *Praxis*. Page 18 is where character creation start. From there, you'll learn to make characters and develop the environment those characters inhabit.

Game on.

HOW TO PLAY PRAXIS: QUICKGUIDE

- First, gather together 4 to 6 friends, including yourself.

- Next, make characters by selecting roles, objectives, relationships, and so on. This should take about 20-30 minutes, so take your time exploring the world before you finish.

- Choose someone to narrate the opening vignette, followed by another player to narrate the opening ensemble.

  Ensembles involve everyone. Flashbacks take place in the past. Forks create important choices in the story. Intercuts allow creative freedom for 90 seconds. Interludes involve only two characters. Interrogations pose five weighty questions to a single character or player. Monologues are exactly what they sound like. Vignettes are action, establishing shots, exposition, or mood pieces devoid of dialogue.

- Take turns framing scenes from your character sheet, while attempting to complete your milestones. Every character is different. The story you tell is your own!

- Roll dice when conflict emerges.

- When you fail, mark trepidation and make sure you narrate how it affects you.

- Once someone checks off all her scenes or milestones or four trepidation, the game is over.

- Narrate the finale.

- You're done. Talk about how awesome that story was.

OVERVIEW

CHARACTERS

Characters are the heart of *Praxis*. Every piece of the story grows from the successes and failures of the players' actions. Unlike traditional roleplaying games, where characters are insular until they interact with the environment, *Praxis* characters are are the environment, protagonists, and story, all wrapped into one. Everything needed to write a story is on the character sheets.

Characters are defined by roles, names, objectives, relationships, and abilities. Players develop an understanding of the game world they inhabit by answering *world building* questions. Each of these steps is explored on the following pages. Character sheets detailing this information are found on pages 74 through 87. A reference sheet for play appears on page 90.

Each player must perform the following steps:

* Select one role for your character from the six provided
* Name your character
* Take a moment to identify your character to the other players
* Determine your character's objective
* Determine your character's relationship to at least one other character
* Answer one world building question
* Choose one quirk
* Choose your character's ability

ROLES

Roles are like character classes in other games. Your role in the story helps create context for who and what you are, and what you'll be doing inside the story. It's an anchor for all your other ideas. Being a rifleman might not be enough context at first, but once you decide your character is also an alcoholic, dedicated to traditional values, with a vendetta against her brother-in-law, you'll have a better sense of who she is.

Each role also its own unique goals, objectives, abilities, and failings.

Character sheets for these roles appear on page 74.

KING OF STORMS

There are six roles to choose from: Child of the Sea, Heir to the Sun, Iron Widow, Prince of the Dead, Scion of the East, and Troll King. Two are godkin, two are trollkin, and two are gorgons. Each has its own focus, style of play, and theme — divinity, wisdom, isolation, power, peace, and war (respectively).

NAMES

Naming your character is an important step. It gives the other players a sense of who you are. A mythic name (Athena) conjures the imagination. A heroic name (Richard) inspires confidence. An allegorical name (Atticus) sets a tone and gives meaning where there might not have been without it. A traditional name (Sarah) gives the other players the sense this character is an anchor for the story. A silly name immediately tells them not to take you seriously.

> A list of character name suggestions appear on each character sheet. You are welcome to use any name you like, however.

OBJECTIVES

Praxis uses objectives to define characters. While each story has its own distinctive plot, each character has a *want*. A character drives toward this want as an extension of the story. Once you know your role, you can further examine the objective you pursue. Your objective can be to save another character from herself, but it is not the courage you need to accomplish this end.

> Courage *motivates* you.

Determine your character's objective by drawing one playing card and consulting the related role. The objectives are vague enough that you can always add more. For instance, you may draw a ♦, indicating wealth as your objective. Why is this your character's objective? Perhaps your character seeks wealth to change her life for the better, or to invest that money into the community.

> What motivates a character to chase a goal is as important as the goal itself. It's okay for a goal to be dramatic without being beneficial. A character obsessed with money cannot eliminate every problem with her wealth (i.e. being trapped in the desert). Think of how a character's wants and needs might not be fulfilled, despite her efforts.

> The best stories revolve around characters whose objectives are tested. See page 24 for more on three-dimensional characters.

Objectives are a tool for roleplaying. There are no hard and fast rules on how to use them in the game. Like everything else in *Praxis,* the tools are there to make your games better. If anything is holding you back, ignore it.

RELATIONSHIPS

Traditional roleplaying games gloss over the issue of relationships. Sometimes players sit down to ask the question, "How does everyone know each other?" But not every time. In *Praxis*, the characters rely on their relationships with each other to define themselves. The relationships between characters reveal more than what is on the page. Relationship mapping is essential.

> Relationship mapping is a term that describes how everyone knows everyone else. **NPCs**, villains, characters, and so on, all go onto the relationship map. Some people actually draw out the map, showing how everyone is interrelated. Some just list on their sheets how the characters knows each other. Use this time to talk out loud with one another about how best to explore these relationship prompts.

In *Praxis*, relationships are important when setting up the established **canon**. But they also play an important part in the rules. Later you're going to read about **interludes**. Only characters sharing a relationship can be in an interlude together. When making your relationships, be sure to create them with characters you want to share scenes with.

> I'm going to use the word canon a lot. And agency. And community. At the end of this document you'll find some definitions for terms that may not be part of your usual gaming jargon. For now, just understand agency means authority and the ability to impact the canon, or established 'laws' or 'facts' of the story you're creating together. Community is how well you share this authority.

> I promise, it won't be too painful to learn all this.

To figure out who has a relationship with whom, each player selects one character to have a pre-existing relationship with before the game starts.

> For instance, Abe selects Diana's character to have a relationship with his character.

Each pair of players with a relationship defines their relationship by drawing a playing card and consulting the chart on the acting player's character sheet. The relationship descriptions are vague, so — just like objectives — specificity is up to you. For instance, you may draw a prompt of *decaying trust*. The players sharing this relationship may define it as an ongoing issue of trust between two life-long friends who now lie to each other at every turn, or a mother and daughter pair who once trusted one another on the surface, but now...

A list of relationships appears on each role.

> Page 19 has a walkthrough, detailing each step. With examples.

QUIRKS

Each character sheet includes three unique quirks to help players get 'into character' faster. Choose one (or all) and go with it. They are loose and devoid of rules. Ignore them all if you want to.

> A character might enjoy collecting souvenirs from the people she's killed, or sing out of tune while sitting alone at bus stops.

WORLD BUILDING

Traditional roleplaying games have hundreds of pages of information to describe every facet of a game world. Nothing is left to chance. Even the price of wheat is etched in stone. At the end of the day, players typically remember the three most important facts that matter to their characters. This means a 20-book game series is overkill.

In *Praxis*, games are often less than four hours long. Reading two hundred pages of world information in order to play a character for a few hours doesn't make a lot of sense. We only need to define a few canonical facts to inhabit this game world since the plot has already established.

And unlike traditional roleplaying games, everyone has agency over what the world looks or feels like. This **canon** is built together, instead of by a single authority (e.g. gamemaster). Everyone has a voice in determining which ingredients go into the mix.

Each role comes with a two world building questions. From this list, each player answers one question to solidify the canon. I recommend a random method of answering questions, but there is no right or wrong here. Do what feels right.

> Jump ahead to any role. Take a look at the questions. See how each question is loaded. Each one has built-in conflict or drama. And when it doesn't, it's adding new flavor and elements to the world from which to build drama. This is all intentional.

ABILITIES

Each role comes with three unique abilities to choose from. The titles of each ability provide flavor, while the mechanics provide power over the story. Because of the nature of *Praxis*, these abilities provide the player with authorial control, rather than 'combat' abilities like a traditional roleplaying game.

MILESTONES

Each character has a list of five unique milestones that help tell her story. Completing each milestone eventually leads to the story's conclusion. Each time a character does something befitting of a milestone (helps a friend in need, stops two people from fighting, etc.), she can make a die roll (see page 41) to see if this satisfies her milestone.

> Sometimes an event is too insignificant to matter. Sometimes things don't go a players way.

If she rolls well enough, she checks off the milestone. Once all five are checked off, the game ends.

LEVERAGE

Leverage represents additional abilities that unlock when a milestone is reached. As a character's story unravels, she gains more control over the narrative. These 'leverages' give the player abilities that can be used at different times during the game.

Each role list the same five leverages, though each is tied to a different milestone. Whenever an action would allow a player to trigger a leverage, she may select from those unlocked.

> Leverage represents additional narrative authority in the game. As the characters achieve their goals, more agency is unveiled. Leverage is triggered whenever a player rolls a specific result on the action charts. However, only the associated leverage from completed milestones can be triggered.

TREPIDATION

When things go wrong for a player (i.e. the dice are against her), she must select one of the five unique trepidations listed on her character sheet. Each trepidation represents something bad that a character suffers as a result of failure. These are mostly flavor that the player interprets on her own, adding to the larger story. Each 'point' of trepidation moves a character closer and closer to death, or some other inescapable conclusion.

When four of the five trepidations are checked off, the game ends.

FINALES

Finales represent the five different ways in which a particular character's story might end. In *Praxis,* only one character's finale is relevant (though there are advanced rules that can change this fact). The person who triggers the endgame narrates a scene based on one of her remaining finales. Since finales are tied to trepidation, whenever a trepidation is checked off, that potential finale for a character is gone. Not all finales are happy endings, so it's important to monitor which trepidation one is suffering at any given time.

SCENE TYPES

Praxis uses a scene-framing system that is foreign to traditional games. Players take turns directing scenes, essentially narrating situations the other players may or may not roleplay in. Based on the outcome of a particular scene, a player may achieve a milestone, suffer trepidation, or trigger leverage. It's possible for none of these things to happen as well.

> There are seven basic scene types in Praxis and each has its own rules, which are explained in detail later. For now, just know that some scenes take place in the past, some have no dialogue, and some involve everyone. A short-hand explanation of scene types appears on each character sheet.

Each character has a different list of scenes available to her. When all of the scene types are checks off, the game ends.

OPENING SCENES

There are always two opening scenes to get the game started. One is a vignette and the other is an ensemble. These scenes do not count against a player's total number of scenes, nor can a player attempt to check off a milestone during one of these opening scene. Players are free to decide who directs these scenes, but in each *Praxis* the opening scenes are different.

FLOW

Once the game starts, the flow of play is the same. A player directs a scene, setting the stage for what is to happen, roleplays (when necessary), and then passes the responsibility of directing another scene to the next player. In this regard, *Praxis* is like any roleplaying game, except that there is not a singular gamemaster, but rather the shared responsibility of directing the story.

> Everyone gets a turn. Everyone gets a chance to shine.

DRAMA POINTS

Each player starts the game with one drama point and only gains more as a result of specific abilities, scene types, and trepidation. Drama points provide players with more control over the story.

Drama points are explained in greater detail on page 37.

DICE

Praxis uses six-sided dice, sometimes call d6s. Players generally roll about two or three dice at a time, but may roll as many as five.

Make sure you have enough dice for everyone.

PLAYING CARDS

A standard deck of playing cards is used to determine objectives, relationships, and story milestones. They aren't used for any other situations. If a deck isn't available, any random method of determining 1–4 can be used to replicate the suits of a poker deck. A 1d4, for example.

Each chart in Praxis is unique. When a card is drawn it is compared against a specific chart on a specific character sheet.

ALMOST THERE

You're just about ready to start making characters and building relationships. Get some friends together. Print out the character sheets. Shuffle a deck of playing cards. Get some pens and paper, and start playing.

A reference sheet for play appears on page 88.

MAKE CHARACTERS

CHOOSE ROLES

NAMES

DETERMINE OBJECTIVES

DETERMINE RELATIONSHIPS

WORLD BUILDING

CHOOSE QUIRK

CHOOSE ABILITY

PLAY GAME

OPENING VIGNETTE

OPENING ENSEMBLE

TAKE TURNS DIRECTING

TRACK STORY MILESTONES*

DIRECT PLOT TWIST*

DIRECT FINALE

DIRECT EPILOGUE*

*REPRESENTS OPTIONAL RULE

CHARACTERS

ROLES

Each player starts by selecting a role. Roles provide context, flavor, and some mechanical benefit. Who you are is as important as what you are doing. The game changes every time by merely including new roles and answering questions differently.

> One thing that separates historic life and modern life is the cultural evolution of roles into goals; your place in society vs. your relationships. It's also what separates traditional roleplaying games from modern storytelling games. Who you are is only half the equation of your role in the group. Who you know is the other half. Changing one means you impact the other. And this is strange to players who are used to creating characters in a vacuum.

> Who cares if I change my character's birthplace half-way through the game, right? Well. The people playing with you do. Who *you* are affects who *we* are.

The roles can be found on pages 74 through 87.

> In *King of Storms,* the characters comprise their own pantheon. They are not Greek, Egyptian, or from any classic real-world mythology. The characters are the most powerful remaining immortals, still living some 1000 years after the gods and titans warred in the heavens. They need not have anything else in common but that. *Praxis* doesn't control how you play, so essentially any deviations players make from the original intentions fall squarely on them.

THE WALKTHROUGH

At the end of each segment is an example of four players who are about to play *Praxis*. The walkthrough shows them setting up their game, as the players define their characters and the world. These examples reveal a thought process on setup. But these are not absolutes. Rather they are examples of how *I* do it.

> There are no wrong answers.

WALKTHROUGH: ROLES AND NAMES

Four people sit down to play *King of Storms:* Abe, Bianca, Carl, and Diana. They have selected the roles Child of the Sea, Prince of the Dead, Heir to the Sun, and Troll King and named them Brahma, Freya, Gamayun, and Mab, respectively. These players appear throughout the following pages.

Next, determine character objectives.

OBJECTIVES

Once roles have been selected, each player determines her character's objective. Each player draws a single card and compares the suit against the unique chart on her character sheet. Each character sheet lists four objectives tied to the four playing card suits.

Interpreting the objectives chart is open-ended. Define for your character what it means to be *rewarded for a job well done*. Or a *new deal*. The charts reveal prompts to spark the imagination. They are not limitations. Character objectives are tied to the character goals of a particular *Praxis*.

> If you're struggling to figure out what your objective means, ask around, or **spend one drama point** to draw or pick something else.

WALKTHROUGH: OBJECTIVES

Using the players and characters from the previous page, we determine the following:

Abe draws a ♣, indicating *(make) everyone your servant*. Abe concludes he wants the rest of the group to submit to him. Not out of fear or respect, but out of wisdom. He is clearly the most powerful and they need to recognize this.

Bianca draws ♦ — a *hand off the reins of the underworld*. Since she is the Prince of the Dead, and therefore undead, Bianca wants her character to be freed from the shackles of this unending job. If she can ascend to the heavens, great. If not, she's leaving the underworld behind anyway.

> Without someone to rule over the dead, the world would grow dark.

Carl draws ♥. This is *enlighten humanity (through gifts)*. Carl sees himself as a beacon of hope for the people. As the King of Storms, Carl would place humanity in higher esteem, elevating those who are worthy to positions of exalted saints. In the mean time, he must stop the others from laying waste to the earth.

Diana draws ♥, which is promote *find inner peace (if that is even possible)*. Diana is the Troll King, a beast of violence and hostility. Yet. She wants to be an even-handed and methodical leader — when the time comes. The only thing standing in her way from being the King of Storms... is herself.

> Bear in mind, we are making these decisions without fleshing out the world. The characters are the center of the story here, so objectives and relationships are more important than the other elements in the game.

RELATIONSHIPS

Now it's time to determine the relationships the characters have with one another. In turn, each player selects one other character for her character to share a relationship with. This ensures every character has at least one. For each, draw one card and look at the unique chart on **your** character sheet.

Relationships between characters are dynamic. They can be positive or negative, but they aren't easy. In most cases, two players can easily work out the details of their characters' relationship. However, there are instances when two players do not like the result drawn. Topics of romance and sex, for instance, are uncomfortable for some. Take the safest route to the conclusion without crossing the line of your gaming comfort.

> Conversely, dive in with both feet. This game tackles adult themes. Nothing is gained by avoiding them.

This is an important step in game play, but it can feel foreign to players coming from traditional gaming. The walkthrough explains everything in-depth, using real examples.

WALKTHROUGH: RELATIONSHIPS

Abe would like to explore his relationship with Diana, so he selects their characters to have a pre-existing relationship. Drawing ♣ reveals *awkward, distant, and unfulfilled*. The two are titankin and should be on good terms, with one ruling the earth and the other the sea. But this is not the case.

> The unique relationship charts for each role, mixed with the dynamic of picking someone to share a relationship with, provide numerous avenues of play. Had Abe selected Bianca or drawn a ♥, the results would have been much different.

Bianca decides she and Carl know one another. Another ♦ is drawn, but because Bianca's character sheet is different, this indicates a relation where it is *painfully clear that one of you is the victim*. This matches Bianca's view of how she sees herself. Relegated to rule the land of the dead, she blames Carl for his focus on humanity and lack of interest to help the immortals.

The players continue in this manner until everyone has selected a character to have a relationship with.

> Since Bianca elected to have a relationship with Carl, Carl must pick someone else. Similarly, since Abe has already established a relationship with Diana, Diana must select someone else on her turn.

In the rare instance a character cannot select someone to have a relationship with, that player skips this step.

WORLD BUILDING

This stage is where players add details to the canon before the game starts. *Praxis* games open with a short premise, and players add to this premise by answering questions. Each character sheet includes two questions, but each player answers only one from her sheet.

> *King of Storms* is set in a mythical place. The characters are all immortal descendants of godlike beings and titans. Players should consider spending a moment to describe what makes this world interesting or unique. Avoiding traditional myths (Egypt, Greek, Norse, etc) helps create your own personal story. Drawing upon traditional myths means less time is spent understanding the foundation of the world.

Each answer is kept secret until all players have answered one question, at which time the answers are revealed to the group. These answers are canonical.

> No one can change your answer for you.

Character and player knowledge are not universal. Just because the players all hear the answers does not mean that the characters share in canonical facts.

> These questions are answered in secret and revealed to the group in any order. Your answers aren't affected by the rest of the group.

WALKTHROUGH: WORLD BUILDING

Abe elects to answer the first question from his character sheet: *"Who among you is the most brash, demanding, and stubborn? How do you excuse this behavior to others?"*

> The easy answer here is Abe. But Abe is answering the question, so he makes it about Diana instead. The two share a relationship and Diana is the most violent in the group, so making her the loud and demanding one takes the pressure off of Abe. Abe defends Diana by explaining "You're not a titankin. You wouldn't understand."

The players reveal their answers, one at a time. A lot of information is revealed here. Write down what you need to and explore ideas that intersect.

> For instance, if another player also selected Abe or Diana for her world building question, how does that impact what Abe has established?

Reconcile issues that don't add up and feel free to leave some things vague so you can explore them during play. Ultimately, the person answering the question has final say.

Note: Some world building questions may affect other characters. This may imply a relationship, but it does not impart a relationship.

QUIRKS

Each character sheet includes three quirks. Players choose one quirk to round out their characters. Quirks are roleplaying prompts. There are no rules on how to use them and you are welcome to ignore them. Don't let them narrow your play and don't feel like you need to honor them 100%. Play off them and make your character unique.

> They are included to help the game start faster.

WALKTHROUGH: QUIRKS

Abe looks over his characters sheet and selects *always requests a specific drink, but never drinks it* from the list of three options.

> To round this out further, Abe won't start talking with a host until his drink arrives, but he never touches the glass. This power-play has turned into an almost obsessive act.

The remaining players choose character quirks they are comfortable with.

ABILITIES

Each character sheet includes three abilities, and each player chooses one. Abilities give characters (and players) influence over the story in unique ways. No two abilities are the same, so each session is made different by the combination of abilities at play.

> Abilities impact the game at either a micro or macro level.

WALKTHROUGH: ABILITIES

Abe looks over his sheet and sees the Child of the Sea can join any interlude during the game. The *rain of blood* ability would be nice for controlling who he interacts with. So, Abe picks that.

> Rain of Blood: You may always join an interlude, regardless of relationships or whether or not you were invited.

The rest of the players follow suit, selecting abilities for the characters based on what they've generated so far.

THE REST OF THE SHEET

The remaining elements of scenes, milestones, leverage, trepidation, and finales are all explained later. Everyone is ready to play.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERS

Characters are comprised of a number of elements. Players need to understand they are building three-dimensional characters with wants they can't always satisfy. The choices players make form complex relationships.

That's a lot to expect if you're only going to be playing for four hours.

When players make choices during character creation that intersect in strange or uncomfortable ways, that's good. Conflict is the heart of drama. Internal conflict is where the best characters come from. Take your time to reconcile all the information going on at the table before moving on…

THREE DIMENSIONS

The first dimension of a character is what. As in, *what* is she?

She is the mother of a sickly child.

The second dimension of a character is *what does she want*?

She wants her life back.

The third dimension of a character is what stops her from getting what she wants. This third dimension is *critical* to making an interesting character full of *ethos, logos,* and/or *pathos* (see page 72).

A character might be good with a rifle. She may even want to go home to see her family, but she can't because her friends need her. Such a character is more complex than one who gets her way all the time.

Characters with personal obstacles in front of them are more fun to roleplay. Instead of focusing on how to 'win,' these characters have built in dramatic conflict.

RESULTS

Praxis is a game where the successes and failures all flow together to build a story. 'Losing' not only adds drama, it advances the story. Look to the ingredients to inform your ideas.

SAMPLE CHARACTER: CHILD OF THE SEA

Names: Brahma, ~~Calypso, Mu, Zodiac~~

"When the apocalypse of heaven drowned the world with blood, the oceans teemed with viscera. From its cloying broth was born all manner of fiend, cruel and terrible."

The Child of the Sea is the most powerful descendant of the titans. She rules the oceans and seas, perceiving herself more worthy than any other to sit upon heaven's throne. Those who challenge her might are crushed with tidal waves and unfathomable beasts hidden behind each eddy.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **(Make) Everyone Your Servant**
- ♦ **Take What is Yours**
- ♥ **Never Let Hope Drown**
- ♠ **Guide Those Who Are Lost**

Brahma is the greatest of all immortals. Everyone should know this.

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Awkward, Distant, and Unfulfilled**
- ♦ **An Embarrassing Past**
- ♥ **A Broken Promise**
- ♠ **Rivalry: Treating One Another Like Servant and Master**

Diana is too involved with her own issues.

WORLD BUILDING   *Diana. You don't understand titankin.*

- ⊙ **Who among you is the most brash, demanding, and stubborn? How do you excuse this behavior to others?**
- • **Why has your courage failed in this moment of crisis? How will you restore it?**

QUIRKS

- ⊙ **Always requests a specific drink, but never drinks it**   *But won't*
- • **Can't leave a place without leaving or taking a souvenir**   *touch it.*
- • **Views compromise as a form of weakness**

POWERS

Altar of Jade: Your followers willingly die for you. Whenever you suffer trepidation, you gain one additional drama point. However, you cannot trigger the endgame, nor direct the epilogue.

Rain of Blood: You may always join an interlude, regardless of relationships or whether or not you were invited.

Tidal Waves: Select one player to direct the opening vignette and another to direct the opening ensemble. At the end of each scene, each player gains one trepidation.

SCENES

Ensemble ❑	All characters present
Flashback Interlude ❑	Flashback with two characters
Fork* ❑	Target player* makes a choice
Interlude ❑❑	Two characters with a relationship
Interrogation ❑❑	Ask five questions
Monologue ❑❑❑	Deliver a speech in character

MILESTONES

		LEVERAGE
❑ Bring Together Lost Things	››	Direct another scene
❑ Commit Act of Senseless Destruction	››	Gain two drama points
❑ Make Others Respect You	››	Gain one ability
❑ Preserve Something Beautiful	››	Give one trepidation
❑ Return Something to the Sea	››	Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

		FINALE
❑ Brought to Your Knees	››	Inherit a Craven Throne
❑ Oceans Fill With Blood	››	A Glorious Reign
❑ Power Perverted (Against You)	››	Convocations in Your Honor
❑ Returned to the Sea (Death)	››	Challengers to the Throne
❑ Trapped Under Regret	››	Blessings at the Altar

PUSHING LIMITS

MILESTONES

Milestones are specific goals unique to each character. They represent elements of a character's accomplishments over the course of the story. Each role has its own list of five milestones. Some characters may only complete a few, while others may ignore this part of play entirely. However, completing all a character's milestones is one of the endgame triggers.

> Milestones are simple enough to use, though foreign to most roleplaying games. Milestones are 'events' players race toward when writing out a character's story.

An example of Abe's milestones:

MILESTONES		LEVERAGE
❑ Bring Together Lost Things	››	Direct another scene
❑ Make Others Respect You	››	Gain two drama points
❑ Preserve Something Beautiful	››	Gain one ability
❑ Return Something to the Sea	››	Give one trepidation
❑ Senseless Act of Destruction	››	Remove one trepidation

Each character sheet lists five milestones. Each milestone indicates a significant event in the character's story. They are vague enough for unique interpretations, while being specific enough to be tailored to each role.

Milestones can be completed in any order. Only one player can reach all five milestones.

To complete a milestone a character must:

a. be in a scene that allows for milestones

b. perform an action related to that milestone in the scene

c. successfully **get what you want** or **make things happen**, which requires rolling dice on the respective chart (see pages 42–44)

Some scene types do not allow for milestones. Flashbacks and forks, for instance. Players may not even attempt to roll dice in these scenes.

> Since some milestones are vague, it is up to the players involved whether or not a game action qualifies as a milestone.

If a die roll results in failure, the milestone is not checked off. Story-wise, this means someone attempted to do something, and failed, or not significantly enough to warrant mentioning as a milestone. How each players writes that into the game is up to them.

TIMING

In a scene with more than one character, the director has the first opportunity to roll dice for a milestone. Under no circumstances can someone complete a milestone before the director.

MILESTONE WALKTHROUGH

Abe wants to *make others respect you*. At this point in the story, he hasn't done anything to get people's attention, so he decides he's going to wipe out a city with a tidal wave in order to get everyone's attention.

Since this doesn't require a lot of interaction, Abe selects a vignette. Before narrating, he chooses to roll dice — **get what you want** — and narrate the results with the vignette.

Abe spends one drama point and rolls three dice. He rolls 1, 2, and 5, a total of 8. Horrible. While a 8 is a success and he can mark off the milestone, Abe also suffers one trepidation (explained on page 32).
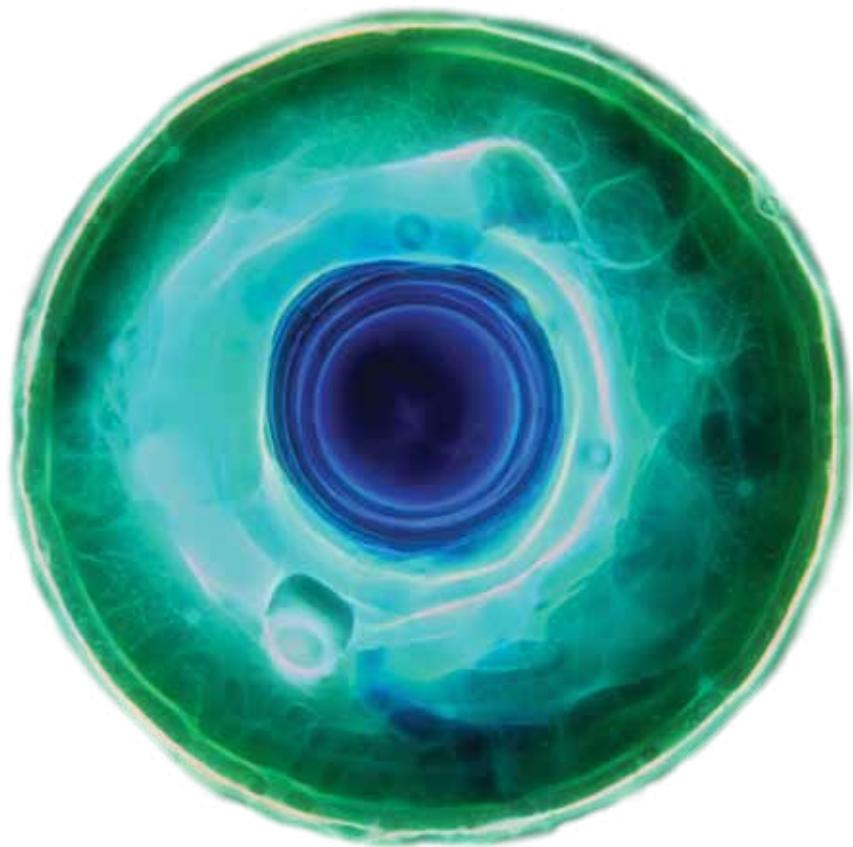
LEVERAGE

Leverage represents additional narrative authority in the game. As the characters achieve their goals, more agency is unveiled. Leverage is triggered whenever a player rolls a specific result on the action charts. However, only the associated leverage from completed milestones can be triggered.

For instance, these are Abe's milestones and leverage.

MILESTONES		LEVERAGE
❑ Bring Together Lost Things	>>	Direct another scene
❑ Make Others Respect You	>>	Gain two drama points
❑ Preserve Something Beautiful	>>	Gain one ability
❑ Return Something to the Sea	>>	Give one trepidation
❑ Senseless Act of Destruction	>>	Remove one trepidation

Each character sheet lists five milestones and five associated leverages. Whenever a player checks off any given milestone, the leverage to its right is unlocked. That leverage can now be used whenever leverage is triggered on the appropriate chart.

LEVERAGE WALKTHROUGH

Abe has checked off *make others respect you* and *return something to the sea* milestones, indicating that he has also unlocked the gain *two drama points* and *give one trepidation* leverages. If Abe were to roll a '10' on bring harm to others, he could choose to trigger either of those leverages (but not both).

TREPIDATION

Trepidation represents the outcome of a character failing or reaching too far. Each character sheet has a list of five points of trepidation. Most trepidation is negative and each line of the sheet impacts the character's finale. When trepidation is rolled as a result of action, the player chooses one of the five trepidation from her character sheet and marks it off.

An example of Abe's character's trepidation and finales:

TREPIDATION*		FINALE
☐ Brought to Your Knees	>>	Inherit a Craven Throne
☐ Oceans Fill With Blood	>>	A Glorious Reign
☐ Power Perverted (Against You)	>>	Convocations in Your Honor
☐ Returned to the Sea (Death)	>>	Challengers to the Throne
☐ Trapped Under Regret	>>	Blessings at the Altar

When a player marks off a trepidation, she also marks off the associated finale. In addition, that player **gains one drama point**. This is one of a handful of ways drama points are gained.

> Abe suffers one point of trepidation and marks off *trapped under regret*, and therefore he can no longer develop the *blessing at the altar* finale.

Trepidation is fast and loose. The player suffering the trepidation may interpret the results however she likes. But they are designed to be dramatic events of the story. A public shaming, for instance, shouldn't just be called out for lousy cookies at the bake sale. It should have resounding effects.

> When Abe is trapped under regret, he returns to the sea to reflect on himself. If the next player chooses to direct an ensemble after Abe's scene, it is assumed to be a while later, to honor Abe's scene. Otherwise, what's the point?

TREPIDATION WALKTHROUGH

> Abe attempts to reach a milestone by wiping out a coastal city with a tidal wave. He succeeds at getting the others to respect his power, but he also earns a point of trepidation. Abe has already marked off *oceans fill with blood*, so he selects *power perverted (against you)*.

> The city has been destroyed, but word has spread to other cities that the sea is angry and vengeful. Instead of showing fear, the people show scorn. Abe's followers turn their back on him and his power base wanes.

GAME PLAY

GAME PLAY

In *Praxis*, players take turns directing scenes involving some or all characters. Being a director is like being a gamemaster. You'll decide what the scene is about, who is in it, where it takes place, and so on. But you won't have to work from a blank slate. *Praxis* utilizes milestones to guide the story and help directors set up scenes, if necessary. These prompts give a launching point for ideas. Ultimately, you'll want to frame scenes that help you reach your milestones.

Each turn the active player (director) determines the scene type she would like to direct — ensemble, fork, interrogation, etc. — from the list of available scene types on her character sheet. Not all character sheets have the same scene options, or the same number of scenes.

> For instance, the Prince of the Dead can direct up to 3 interrogations, while the Child of the Sea can direct only 2. Additionally, the Prince cannot direct a monologue.

Once the director has selected the scene type, she selects location, mood, weather phenomenon, or whatever themes are needed to frame the scene properly. All this informs who is in the scene, what it's about, and what is happening.

> Details on how to frame each scene type are explained in the appropriate sections. For now, you just need to know how it works.

Once the players have a sense of what is going on, they can roleplay their characters within the scene. Roleplaying a scene is essentially engaging the ongoing conversation of the story — arguing, compromising, consoling, fighting, negotiating, or outright undermining one another. This is the heart of the game: these interactions within the scenes. The results of these scenes compound onto one another to create a full and complex narrative (which is a fancy way of saying tell a story).

This last point is critical, because it is what separates a campfire story from *Praxis*: conflict within a scene could end in compromise or die rolling; milestones or trepidation. Or some combination of the above. These results aren't always guaranteed. A die roll could fail, resulting in a character losing face in front of an entire community, or a foot from a tragic accident.

> And these results form a story unique to each gaming group.

Dramatic conflict is an essential ingredient in stories. Characters shouldn't always get what they want without repercussions. And *Praxis* measures that with die rolls (see page 41). It's not that success isn't good for a story, but if the characters never face challenges, there are no surprises.

IMPORTANT

If you've only played traditional roleplaying games, *Praxis* presents its own challenges. Scene framing isn't much different from traditional play. It gets the players into dramatic roleplaying situations, as any game would. But instead of having a gamemaster who controls the ebb and flow of the story, the players take on this responsibility by setting scenes vital to their characters' interests.

For newer players, don't worry about all that 'traditional roleplaying hooey.' This game is designed to support you. It wants you to play it well.

Throughout this book are examples of how to setup a scene so the players can roleplay. There's also a game aid on drivethrurpg.com called the *Protocol Primer* that can help here if these ideas seem foreign. In any case, you already know how to roleplay. *Praxis* isn't difficult. It just shifts the traditional mindset of who is in charge.

Sometimes a director might provide a lot of information when framing a scene. Other times she may give players bare bones, expecting them to bring something to an 'empty canvas.' Neither method is wrong.

WEAVING THE STORY

Praxis is about the path to getting what you want. Characters have unique milestones that point to their objectives. They also have trepidation to impede their successes. Whenever a milestone is reached (or trepidation is suffered), it's checked off a player's character sheet. Together, milestones and trepidations form the complex web of a character's story

Both have their own sections (pages 29 and 32).

Success and failure are just different forks on the narrative path. Even if you fail at everything, you are still writing your story. Understand that 'winning' and 'losing' are merely ingredients that flow together. The effects of "losing" add as much to the drama as anything else. Stories are informed by the results, whether the players view them as positive or negative.

Abe has rolled poorly and failed to accomplish one of his milestones — *bring together lost things* — so he suffers one trepidation: *trapped under regret*. Abe must now explain how his character's failure has lead to this problem. This can go a number of ways, but Abe decides that his attempts to bring peace between two immortals who refuse to talk to each other has now led to war. As a result, Abe has let his failure play with his mind, driving him into a deep pit of regret. Abe resolves to roleplay the next few scenes 'darkly.'

Had Abe succeeded, his story would go in another direction.

DRAMA POINTS

Drama points are a key ingredient of *Praxis*. They are used to break the rules, add to the existing canon, and give players advantages when rolling dice. Drama points can keep people out of scenes, change outcomes, and speed up play. The list of uses is nearly endless. They are your authority over the story.

> Some designers call this narrative agency.

The rules on spending drama points are purposely vague. Anything is possible. Any rule you want to break, break it by **spending one drama point**. Want to avoid answering a question during an interrogation? Spend one drama point. Want to direct an additional scene or go out of turn? Spend drama points. Want to win a fight against another character? Spend more drama points than anyone else. Each section has specific rules and a few examples of how drama points can be used to break those rules.

> A player once spent one drama point to have an interlude between herself and an NPC. And she roleplayed both characters.

It's counter-productive to list everything drama points can do, but the quick math of determining how to spend them is to calculate how many rules you are breaking. Each broken rule is one drama point.

> Jumping into an interlude (see page 52) would be expensive, if you intend to also create dramatic conflict inside that scene.

Under no circumstances can drama points be used to check off additional abilities, milestones, or trepidation.

IMPORTANT

Drama points are mostly gained during fork scenes, when trepidation occurs, and under certain character abilities. You may have anywhere from three to five points at any given time, though some roles have more points than others. Players can hoard points or spend them during play. Either style is valid.

DRAMA POINT WALKTHROUGH

> Abe wants to direct an interlude with Bianca, but the two do not share a relationship. Before the scene, he spends one drama point, draws a card, and checks it against his relationship chart. Abe now has a relationship with Bianca (*a broken promise*). The pair can now appear in interludes together, regardless of who directs.

> During the interlude, Bianca has decided she has seen enough and she spends one drama point to end the scene before Abe can roll for his milestone. If Abe still wants to roll, he'd have to spend one drama point to continue the scene.

THE CANON

A story's canon is defined as everything we know to be true. Every time a player defines a facet about her character, or answers a world building question, or something happens in the story, the canon grows. The canon is not law, but it's as close to it as possible.

> Players disrespecting or contradicting the canon deserve to have their contributions ruined as well.

This doesn't mean the canon cannot be changed. A good twist is always appreciated. Great stories pull the rug from out under us, defying what we know to be true.

> "Oh man. I thought he was dead."

But the players shouldn't be allowed to undo everything out of whim.

That's where **making things happen** comes in. Changing the established canon, or taking agency away from another character is not guaranteed. There is risk in trying to change things. And despite the fact the player is the one taking this risk, the character is the one who suffers if she fails.

This does not mean that player can't add details by spending drama points. Adding to the world is different than altering the canon.

> This is a game of storytelling and not crunchy mechanics after all.

Players know the difference between mucking with the world and adding to it. The **making things happen** chart is there to protect players from being steamrolled over by other aggressive players.

> If players are using the optional plot twist rules on page 61, the director of the plot twist may alter one element of the canon during her scene.

MILESTONES AND TREPIDATION

Milestones are what a character does. **Trepidation** is what happens to the character. Whenever a character marks off one (or both), the story changes. The player is responsible for addressing how these ingredients affect the game, noting both milestones and trepidation have impact on the story, but neither is 'good' or 'bad.' They are merely moments in the story that change the direction of the narrative.

> And that's a good thing.

EBB AND FLOW

There's an inherent logic to scene framing. Imagine you are playing a 4-player game. Each turn around the table is an act of the story and each scene is a scene in a movie. Movies do not go from crowd shot to crowd shot to crowd shot, or action to action to action. Instead, the scenes bend and twist their way through the story as short interruptions in what you expect to happen next.

> If a story follows the logic of this-then-this-then-this, why are you watching it? Or playing in it?

It especially works when players are flexible and committed. The scene types and prompts give you the tools you need to fill a blank page with new ideas. Taking what comes your way is the hallmark of good writing. What doesn't work is when a stubborn player tries to force an agenda onto a scene and make a fifth interlude in a row, strips another player's character of agency, etc.

> I cannot stress this enough. Your goal is not to win anything.

The roles, motivations, relationships, world building, scene prompts and types, and locations all work together to form a story collage. Resisting what the game is designed to do and trying to create new tensions that weren't there before is a great way to spoil your evening.

Being raised on books, movies, and television, people have an inherent understanding of drama and story. Not every person commands the vocabulary to explain why a jump-cut from one scene to another felt awkward, but "you know it when you see it." The same is true of characters no one cares about, or story arcs that go nowhere. *Praxis* scene types take care of a lot of the messy work for players, leaving the group with the creative and fun elements people read books for in the first place.

PASSAGE OF TIME

Scenes are snapshots of a story. Each one takes place in rectilinear order, unless there is a flashback, but it is not necessary for them to occur one after the other in chronological order. That is to say, a great deal of time can pass between scenes. One scene can end with a cliffhanger, devoid of resolution, while the next scene takes place a week later, making us wonder what happened in the intervening time.

> Good stories make us ask questions. Nailing down the resolution happens when the story starts coming to a close.

ENDING THE GAME

The *Praxis* finale is triggered when one player completes four of the five trepidation, all five milestones, *or* marks off all ten scenes from a character sheet. Once this happens, the player who ends the game writes the finale based on the remaining finale's available on her sheet. If there are no remaining finales, the story ends on the last trepidation that was marked off.

More information about finales appear on page 63.

Finales are tied to the remaining trepidations on a character sheet. Each trepidation checked off also checks off a potential finale.

DICE

There are three occasions in *Praxis* when dice are used to resolve problems: **bringing harm to others, getting what you want,** and **making things happen.** These broad concepts are explained below. Each has its own specific rules and charts for dealing with problems.

One doesn't just roll dice to roll them. Instead, dice are used in roleplaying games whenever there is conflict or crisis to overcome. How and when you deal with this conflict is up to you. After all, a character can always step away from a situation, compromise, or choose to lose a fight.

> *Praxis* allows for a greater deal of inter-character conflict than most GMless games. You can actually hurt each other, instead of ending a scene with a cliffhanger or spending drama points to step away from conflict. Dice bring a level of uncertainty to the conflict.

Praxis uses a game system called **5-10-20**. The basic mechanic of 5-10-20 is to roll dice, add them together, and compare the total against the values on the specific chart. Since there are only three actions to take in Praxis, there are only three charts.

The dice pool starts at 2d6 [two traditional six-sided dice]. Players may choose to roll additional dice by spending drama points (on a one for one basis). These dice are added to the total. Should an action or ability result in an **advantage**, that player rolls one additional die per advantage. As one might expect, disadvantages remove dice. Advantages add dice to the dice pool before disadvantages remove dice.

Note: At no point can a dice pool have more than five dice.

> Abe wants to hurt someone. He has an ability that gives him an advantage during a physical conflict. In addition, he spends one drama point to roll one additional die. Abe rolls 4 dice in total. He could spend one more drama point to increase his dice pool to 5, however additional drama points beyond that would be lost, as his dice pool can never exceed 5. Other players could now spend points to give Abe disadvantages, if they wanted.

Once the dice are rolled, they are added together. There is no other math. There are no +1 or −1 modifiers to compute. Nothing can change the result once the dice are rolled. Drama points cannot be spent after the fact. The total is then compared against the appropriate chart. If a roll does not exceed a given value (5, 10, or 20), compare the total against the value below it.

> Each action has its own inherent rules and results (see pages 42–44).

BRINGING HARM TO OTHERS

At times, *Praxis* can be competitive. At other times, you just want characters to suffer. In either case, **bringing harm to others** is how you take other characters down a peg. *Praxis* does not have hit points, but it does have **trepidation**. Trepidation slowly builds up and eventually pushes a character toward failure (or death).

> A player might have very specific reasons for wanting to do this. For instance, another player has one unchecked milestone remaining and you want to knock her back a step. Or maybe just to make a point. Or put her in her place. You get the idea.

Use this chart when harming others, or making others do what you want. You can harm another character or an **NPC**, but she must be in the scene in order to be harmed. Actions taken on this chart **rarely** lead to a character reaching a milestone.

0   acting character suffers trepidation
in addition, choose:
the target character may immediately bring harm to you, or
the target character gains two drama points

5   both characters suffer trepidation

10 choose:
target character suffers trepidation, or
acting player triggers leverage

20 target character suffers trepidation, and choose:
acting player triggers leverage, or
target player loses two drama points

Note: If someone brings harm to a character and that character has not acted, she in turn can bring harm to another character before the scene ends.

EXAMPLE

Abe and Bianca have been having trouble lately and he wants some closure on their infighting. Abe decides to direct an interlude where they can argue things out in person. Things don't go well, however. At the close of the scene, Abe attempts to **bring harm** to Bianca and rolls on the chart.

> Spending two drama points, Abe rolls four dice and gets a 19 — 1 short of 20, the best result in the game. Looking at the 10 result, Abe selects the second option of Bianca gaining one trepidation. Looking over her list, Bianca selects *your 'magic' fades*. Her character can feel her grip over the dead weakening. Adding to the canon, Bianca concludes that some of the dead have challenged her authority.

GETTING WHAT YOU WANT

In *Praxis*, you can always do whatever it is you want. But for your actions to have lasting effects in the story, you're going to have to work for it. **Getting what you want** is how you accomplish things important to you. It doesn't matter what the odds are or how difficult something may seem. The only thing that matters is whether or not the action produces lasting results.

> If you're trying to check off a milestone, chances are you'll need this chart. A great example of getting what you want is anytime an element of the environment (NPCs, bureaucracy, laws, etc.) is between you and your goals.

Use this chart to get what you want. Successful actions taken on this chart **almost always** lead to a character reaching a milestone.

0 acting character suffers trepidation
in addition, choose:
acting player loses two drama points*, or
uncheck one milestone

5 acting character succeeds and suffers trepidation

10 choose:
acting character succeeds, or
acting player triggers leverage

20 acting character succeeds, and choose:
acting player triggers associated leverage, or
acting player unlocks an additional ability

* this option is only available if the acting player has two or more drama points

EXAMPLE

Looking over his milestones, Abe sees *senseless act of destruction*, and decides his character wants to bring a tidal wave upon a coastal city. If he can summon forth a massive storm, he's sure the beautiful city will fall.

> If Abe succeeds at his roll, he can mark off the milestone and narrate the effects of disrupting the meeting. If he fails and suffers trepidation, he can mark off any one trepidation and explain how his failure changes the story.

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

When something doesn't serve a character's personal needs and it doesn't hurt another character, it must (by default) impact the world. Changing the world for the better (or worse) can be be a lot of work. That's when characters start **making things happen**.

> Making things happen is the most abstract of the three rolls. While the player still needs to have a story reason for how the character is changing the world, how the world changes is sometimes more macro than a simple 'get what you want' situational roll.

Use this chart whenever a player wants to change the world, without the character getting involved, or wants to alter the game canon. Successful actions taken on this chart **can sometimes** lead to a character hitting a milestone, but oftentimes not.

This chart is meant to get NPCs to behave differently, or have the police arrive at an inopportune moment. This is the one chart a player rolls on when she is not in a scene. The extent to which the world changes is up to the players. A player cannot, for instance, alter physics, or change a nation's entire economic system.

0	acting character suffers trepidation
5	acting player changes the world and loses one drama point
10	**choose:** acting player changes the world, or acting player triggers leverage
20	acting player changes the world, and **choose:** acting player gains two drama points, or acting player removes one trepidation

EXAMPLE

Abe thinks the local school board should ban some questionable books, but doesn't think his character should be involved. Since this is a lot bigger than just sneaking into a meeting, Abe explains how the policy will change through meetings, petitions, and make forceful phone calls to key members of the PTA. Finally, the superintendent is cornered by an angry mother in a parking lot, where threatening remarks are made.

> To see if any of this works, however, Abe still has to make a die roll. Even if he fails the roll, the actions take place and fallout ensues. Even though Abe isn't directly doing anything, trepidation still falls on his shoulders if the roll fails.

NPCS

Praxis focuses on the characters, putting them at the center of the drama. Collectively, the characters are the protagonists of your story, though some may work against the common good. Nevertheless, the four to six characters are the focus of the game.

The opposite of a player character is an NPC.

NPC is an acronym for non-player character. These are characters who may appear during play that no single player controls. A cop on the street, a bartender at a restaurant, and a cashier at the check-out line are all NPCs. Sometimes they are the background noise from the world and sometimes they interact with the player characters. How often they appear and how much they influence play is up to you.

> NPCs' value to the story never trumps the characters' value. They are easy enough to kill off, should they become a nuisance.

Creating them for the game is easy. If you're the director, you can create one NPC during any scene. Each scene type provides information on how NPCs are used in those scenes. When you are not the director, you can **spend one drama point** to create an NPC in a scene, following the same rules.

Keeping track of NPCs should be done on a separate piece of paper or index card easily available to all players.

Whoever adds the NPC to the scene plays that character in the scene. Later, this NPC can be played by anyone.

If an NPC suffers **trepidation**, she dies.

DEATH

Death can add a great deal to stories. In fact, death can happen easily in some games. But most games don't allow players to continue playing without a character. In *Praxis*, players can direct the story in significant ways as if their characters had lived. If a scene requires a player to join and her character is dead, she can either play an NPC or sit out, though she would still be required to play her character if a **flashback** required it.

> It should be obvious that dead characters cannot accomplish milestones.

Some trepidation can force characters out of the game without being dead. The terms should be obvious, especially if it's the last remaining trepidation a player has been avoiding to check off: abandoned, bed-ridden, left-behind, and so on. The character is out of the story, but not the player.

SCENES

SCENE TYPES

There are seven basic scene types (listed in alphabetical order): ensemble, fork, intercut, interrogation, interlude, monologue, and vignette. Each type has its own inherent operating system, with different characters in it. An ensemble, for instance, includes all the characters, but an interlude has only two. In addition, some scenes may be designated as flashbacks. These scenes take place before the the opening scene of the story.

When a player takes her turn as director, she selects from the list of remaining scene types on her character sheet. Taking into account the factors of the relationships, world, conflicts, and her own milestones, she sets the scene, giving the players in the scene enough information to roleplay. It's the director's job to make things as clear or vague as necessary to achieve these ends. If the scene is going to have conflict, this needs to be stated. If the scene is an attempt to reach a milestone, this also needs to be stated.

> Scenes sometimes go in unplanned directions. Players shouldn't be upset about this. It's the nature of *Praxis* (and GMless games) in general. If the scene goes in a direction that doesn't fit your plans or that you just don't like, just end the scene.

All scenes should be allowed to run their course. Not too short and definitely not too long. Players can slow down play and distract from the story if the scene runs too long and voyages into unrelated territory. Knowing when to stop is a semi-intuitive (and teachable) sense. It's almost an art form. Give everyone their moment in the sun, reward ingenious ideas, and know when it's time to cut the action.

> Once you've resolved the scene's primary focus, you're done.

ENDING A SCENE

A scene can end organically, e.g. everyone knows it's over.

A scene can end when the director calls cut.

A scene can end when a character walks out of the scene.

A scene can end with unresolved conflict.

> I would punch you, but I don't want to roll dice.

ENSEMBLES

Ensembles include all the characters together in one place. The director determines the focus and location. She may preempt the scene as much as she likes, but once the ensemble starts, the players should let things develop organically. There's no end-point to run toward and the director can't tell anyone how to play their characters.

The director still has the right to call "scene" at any moment, but any player may override the director by **spending one drama point** to end a scene early, or to extend a scene. Once this point is spent, the original director no longer has authorial control, unless she also **spends one drama point**.

Any player may **spend one drama point** to take on the role of an established NPC instead of her character. The director may take on the role of an NPC in the ensemble, instead of her character, without spending a point. However if anyone takes on an NPC role in an ensemble, she cannot attempt to hit a milestone.

> Under no circumstance should a player take on the role of two characters in an ensemble, but switching (once) from one character to another is fine.

The director must address why everyone is in the same place, at the same time, dealing with the same issue.

> Characters that have disappeared and suddenly reappeared need an explanation. If you don't want to be responsible for explaining how a missing character has suddenly reappeared, don't select an ensemble or be prepared to spend one drama point to keep her out of the scene.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE
Spend one drama point to keep one player out of the scene.

MILESTONES
It's possible for any character in an ensemble to check off a milestone, so long as the action matches the milestone.

ENSEMBLE WALKTHROUGH

> Abe needs to complete his *senseless act of destruction* milestone, but he's not ready yet. So he frames an ensemble about his followers building a massive temple in his honor at the edge of the water. He invites the other immortals to the great temple's unveiling. The characters roleplay the scene until Abe summons a massive storms to destroy the temple in front of them all. Abe still has to roll successfully to **get what you want** even if he destroys the temple in the story.

FLASHBACKS

Flashbacks are tied to a specific scene type (ensemble, interlude, etc.) and must be set in the past, before the story began. The director determines the focus of the flashback, as well as the location. The director may preempt the scene as much as she likes, but once the flashback begins, let things develop organically. The director still has the right to call "scene" at any moment, but any player may override the director by **spending one drama point** to end or extend a scene.

The important distinction of a flashback vs. playing out of order is a flashback takes place *before* everything started to happen. A flashback might even reveal a time when characters felt differently about one another.

Flashbacks are not there to fill in the gaps of the story we already know. A good flashback takes us to a time and place we didn't expect. Sometimes, it adds a twist we didn't see coming.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to turn a flashback into a flashforward or a dream sequence.

MILESTONES

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during a flashback.

> The past is the past. Milestones that change the canon before the canon is canonical makes for confusing sentences.

FLASHBACK WALKTHROUGH

> Abe directs a flashback interlude involving his character and Diana's. Abe wants to explore a time when the pair were closer (and kinder), before things took a turn.
>
> It is centuries ago. The time is not important. The two stand at the edge of a majestic chasm, looking over their domains where the land and sea meet. They are alone.
>
> From there, the players can roleplay their characters.

FORK

Forks are different from other *Praxis* scenes. They are quick decision-making scenes where the director poses a problem to another player. Essentially, the director creates a dilemma with only two options, leaving another player to choose one of two options. The choices do not require obvious conclusions or repercussions, but the choices should be clear and meaningful.

From this choice, the director then narrates the conclusion to the group, regardless of whether or not all the characters would know the outcome. At the end of the fork, the director and player **gain one drama point** each.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE
Spend one drama point to follow up on the decision and offer another fork.

MILESTONES
Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during a fork.

FORK WALKTHROUGH

> Abe posits to Diana that her character will never find an heir to the underworld. Her choices are to leave the underworld behind forever, or stay and never assume the throne of heaven. There is no need to establish where the scene takes place. Abe merely explains the fallout of Diana's decision, once it's been made.

INTERCUT

Intercuts are special scenes. They are only 90 seconds long. They can be about anything. Anything at all. They can involve any characters, but they have to be done in 90-seconds. In fact, from the moment you choose this scene type, you have 90 seconds to finish it.

> You may want to use a timer.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE
Spend one drama point to extend an intercut another 90 seconds.

MILESTONES
Only the director of an intercut may check off a milestone.

INTERCUT WALKTHROUGH

> Abe writes a short vignette, then jumps to a short interlude between his character and Diana's. Then he switches to an interrogation, where he asks Bianca's character two questions. However, before she can answer the second question, the time is up.

INTERLUDES

Interludes involve two (and only two) characters with a pre-existing relationship, but neither character needs to be the director's. The director sets the scene based on the cards drawn. The scene runs as long as the director likes, without being self-indulgent — calling "scene" when the characters have said or done enough. An interlude involves only one location. If the characters leave the location (or reach a moment of conflict), the scene ends.

Interludes are mostly about the drama between two characters. While interludes can be used to advance the plot, this is secondary to the interpersonal actions and reactions of the characters. Let them explore their relationship in the context of the scene's focus.

Unlike an interrogation, both characters are the focus of the scene. Questions can be asked and ignored. Players can even respond with questions of their own, without consequence. Interludes provide an opportunity to focus the roleplaying and therefore the story. The best interludes advance a character's personality and the story's tension. Some even introduce more complications.

As always, be aware of where you are in the story. Early interludes reveal much about a character, while late interludes resolve tension about a character.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE
Spend one drama point to put two characters into an interlude who do not share a relationship.

Spend one drama point to add a third character to the scene.

MILESTONES
Only the characters in the interlude may check off milestones.

INTERLUDE WALKTHROUGH

Abe directs an interlude involving his character and Diana's. Abe wants to mark off his *make others respect you* milestone and sets up a scene with Diana at the edge of the sea. Abe has summoned Diana to demand an explanation for her behavior of late. She intends to force Diana to show some respect for once.

The pair roleplay the scene like any other. At the conclusion, Abe decides that Diana's behavior is insolent so he rolls to **bring harm to others** in order to teach her a lesson, rather than try to hit her milestone. Regardless of his success, afterwards Diana uses this opportunity to *project fear of death (aura)*, by rolling on **get what you want**.

INTERROGATIONS

Interrogations are complicated to explain, but are quite simple once you understand the purpose. There are many ways to direct an interrogation, but the core concept involves one player asking another player up to five questions. What makes interrogations unique is how these questions are asked.

Interrogations focus the attention of the story on a single character or NPC. This is the moment in the story where players try to glean more information or press a character into a corner. Interrogations are an opportunity to learn more about a character, the plot, or the world.

METHOD

The director selects one player to take on the role of the interrogator and another player to become the subject.

The interrogator asks the subject up to five questions. The interrogator can be anything: a voice in someone's head, an application, a character, a diary, an NPC, or anything she can think up. The setting is flexible, too. The environment can be static, like a confessional, cubicle, or prison cell. Or the interrogator can ask the subject questions inside a montage that takes place over several days.

The subject must play her character or an NPC of the director's choosing.

This process is organic. The interrogation may be out-of-character as well, in which case the interrogator asks the questions in an abstract fashion, as though going down a list. Regardless, the questions can be anything befitting the director's setup.

> The director can be intimately involved in the scene as the interrogator. Or she can be hands off by giving the reins to another player. Conversely, the director may choose to be the subject of an interrogation, setting up the scene and seeing where things lead.

Note: Unlike *Protocol*, drama points do not move during an interrogation.

QUESTIONS

The subject cannot say *"no,"* nor can the subject avoid answering the question **without spending one drama point**. If a question paints the subject into a corner, all the better.

An interrogation is not about the interrogator, but about the subject. Ask pointed questions. Avoid questions that can be reduced to short answers. *"Why are you waiting for your friends?"* beats *"Are we waiting for your friends?"* Avoid questions/interactions that are valueless (i.e. "How are you?" and then not listening to the answer).

ANSWERING A QUESTION WITH A QUESTION

It is easy to turn an interrogation into a conversation. Subjects get carried away or rambunctious, turning questions around on the interrogator. While a question is an acceptable answer, the interrogator doesn't have to answer the subject's question unless the subject **spends one drama point**.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to ask another question.

MILESTONES

Only the interrogator of the interrogation may check off a milestone.

INTERROGATION WALKTHROUGH

Diana sits atop a pile of skin and skulls, inside a hand-carved cave. Abe plays Diana's most trusted underling, Paris.

Paris: "My lord. A word?"

Diana (sounding exasperated): "Yes. What is it?"

Paris: "I would be remiss if I didn't say that you seem low of late. What troubles you my lord?"

Diana: "If you must ask, it is the coming storm. The time to ascend. The throne of heaven should be mine. But I don't feel it in my bones. Someone will steal it from me, I am sure. And I will wait another 1000 years for my right to the throne."

Paris: "Steal? How can someone steal what is yours… if they are dead?"

Diana: "Do not vex me, young Paris. I know quite well that I am capable of destroying each in turn to claim the throne --"

Paris: "Even the Child of the Sea?"

Diana squints. Her anger turning to guttural noises inside her throat. She grabs Paris by his scruff and barks in his face.

Diana: "I will do whatever it takes!"

Clearly shaken, Paris dusts himself off.

Paris: "Of course, my lord. Ahem. Will there be anything else?"

Diana: "Until you can find a way to bring the throne of heaven here, do not disturb me."

With that, Paris bows, leave, and Abe ends the scene.

MONOLOGUES

Monologues are solo scenes where the director delivers a single speech that cannot be interrupted. The director must take on the role of her character or an NPC. The director also decides who else is at the location where the speech is delivered.

> Monologues can go sideways fast. If the director wanders or strays from her point, the scene becomes incredibly indulgent. To borrow a metaphor, get to the 'podium,' say what you have to say, and get off the 'stage' fast.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE
Spend one drama point to interrupt a monologue.

MILESTONES
Only the director of a monologue may check off a milestone, and *only* if she delivers the monologue in her character's voice.

MONOLOGUE WALKTHROUGH

> Abe swims alone in a blood wine sea. "I am their true ruler. I am the strongest. I command the seas, the oceans, and if I will it, the rivers and lakes. I can summon tidal waves that can wash away the world. I was born from the first rains. The blood from the heavens cleansed the sea first. And from it, I was born. Brahma. The first. The alpha and omega. Why can't they see my power? What must I do next to show my might?"
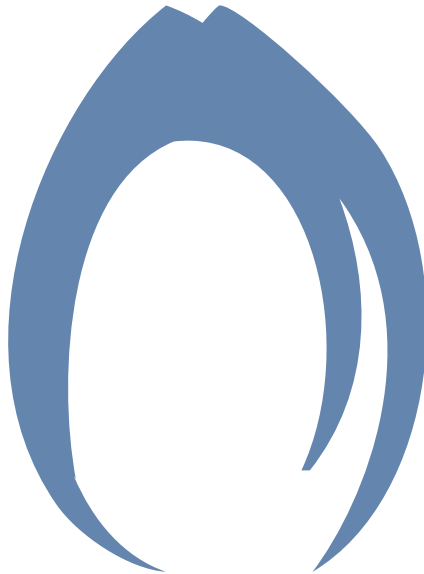
OPENING SCENES

All *Praxis* games open with an opening **vignette** (page 58), followed by an opening **ensemble** (page 49). Select a random player to direct the vignette and another player to direct the ensemble. These do not count against the player's list of scenes. Milestones and trepidation cannot be gained in the opening vignette or ensemble.

> If players are having trouble getting started, three different opening vignettes appear on page 70.

In *King of Storms*, the opening vignette is a prophecy about the final storm coming to the world and a new king being created. The opening ensemble takes place in a legendary place, allowing the characters an opportunity to talk about the prophecy and how it affects them.

After those two scenes, play develops normally.

OPENING SCENE WALKTHROUGH

> In the opening vignette, Abe describes a scene about a herald from the last age, descending from heaven on a bolt a lightning. The entire world witnesses the event as orbs of light shoot from the hands of the herald. From these orbs of light comes the knowledge of a new era of man, repleat with a new king. Abe elaborates as much or as little as he wants, excluding dialog.

> When he's done, he passes play to a random player (Diana), who sets up the opening ensemble.

> Diana sets a scene at a holy site near the center of the world, where the characters talk about the prophecy and who should rule.

From here, the players take turn directing scenes. Use any order you like, so long as everyone gets a chance to direct.

MILESTONES

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during an opening scene.

VIGNETTES

Vignettes are short scenes that set the atmosphere for the story. They do not involve dialog or character interaction. The director simply narrates a brief scene about anything relevant to the game world. A vignette takes no more than a minute or two to describe.

> Keep your vignettes short and simple. Narrate enough information to set the tone, but don't overdo it by dragging the action on too long. Concise sentences are a storyteller's best friend.

Vignettes are an opportunity to show what else is going on in the story that doesn't involve the main characters. They can highlight a single event, resolve a crisis from another scene, or set up future tension. No one can interrupt a vignette, so explore the game space as much as you like.

> Vignettes are a great way to check off a milestone.

Vignette are like the establishing shot of a movie, or the landscape shots between tense scenes. The reader or viewer needs a break from the action, just to cool down. Vignettes can also be the action between dramatic scenes. A chase on foot, a fight between two combatants, or a full-scale war. Sometimes they are cut-scenes or voice overs. Whatever you like. The key is to keep the vignette focused.

> You don't need to include every character that comes to mind. Sharpen the action into a narrow lens and make sure the other players are engaged. Use their reactions to help drive the vignette further, or to pull back (as needed).

If the director intends to reach a milestone with a vignette, it's better to roll the dice before the scene starts, rather than at the end of the scene. This isn't always true, but it allows the director more room to improvise after the fact.

NPCS

Any number of NPCs may color the story background. In fact, since vignettes can be about anything or anyone, this is an opportunity to show the 'audience' what is going on elsewhere in the story. Point the lens at NPCs, or someone less vital to the story. Drop hints of things to come.

> Normally players must **spend drama points** to pull NPCs into scenes. Vignettes are a chance to do so without giving up precious points.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to interrupt a vignette or add one detail.

MILESTONES

Only the director of a vignette may check off a milestone.

VIGNETTE WALKTHROUGH

> Abe wants to mark off his *senseless act of destruction* milestone and chooses to roll the dice before narrating the vignette. He announces to the group which milestone he is aiming for and rolls a '4.' Abe gains one trepidation and loses two drama points.

> Abe narrates a vignette about breaking open an ancient, massive pearl at the heart of the ocean. Unfortunately, when he does this, the pearl spews the blood of a titan hidden within.

> Abe checks off the *oceans fill with blood* trepidation, **gains one drama point,** but loses two more. He then ends his scene.

THE END

THE END

Praxis can end with up to three different scene types: plot twists, finales, and epilogues. Plot twists are optional. Only use them once the players understand all the rules. Finales end the story and focus on one player's goals. Epilogues follow finales, sometimes allowing a player to slip one final detail into the story before it all wraps up. Each is explained below in detail.

> The finale is triggered when one player checks off four trepidation, five milestones, or all ten scenes.

THE PLOT TWIST (OPTIONAL)

Plot twists extend the story, giving players time to wrap up their plans before the impending finale. These rules add a lot of drama to the game, but should only be used once the players are comfortable with *Praxis*.

The player who triggers a finale condition, triggers the plot twist. This player **gains one drama point** and unlocks a second ability from her list. In addition, immediately after the present scene, that player directs one additional scene without checking one off her list.

The plot twist is any scene the director wants to direct, even one not on her character sheet. It does not count against her scene total, but the scene's theme must be derived from one of her character's remaining finales.

Once the plot twist scene is over, play continues until a **second player** triggers the finale, which causes the game to end normally. Once a second player has completed her finale, the player who triggered the plot twist may direct one *epilogue* vignette so long as she has at least one drama point remaining.

> This epilogue takes place before any other normal epilogue.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to interrupt a plot twist or add one detail.

Spend one drama point to eliminate one finale option from the list.

PLOT TWIST WALKTHROUGH

> Abe is the first player to check off all his milestones. After the scene ends, Abe gains one drama point, chooses another ability for his character, and chooses to direct a fork that is aimed at Bianca. The fork is based on one of his two remaining finales. Rather than determine the finale randomly, Abe spends one drama point to narrow it down to the one he wants. After the fork, both players gain one drama point. Play continues normally from there.

THE FINALE

In *Praxis*, the finale belongs to the person who ends the game, either by checking off four trepidation, *or* five milestones, *or* all ten scenes. Regardless, after a player triggers one of these conditions, she randomly determines a finale from those remaining and narrates a vignette based on that finale's theme.

> For instance, the Child of the Sea has crossed off *broughts to your knees* and *trapped under regret* from his list of trepidations. That leaves the possible finales of *a glorious reign*, *convocations in your honor*, and *challengers to the throne*. Using a random method of his own devising (rolling a die, drawing one of three poker cards, etc.) to pick from three remaining finales, the Eagle gets a '1' indicating *a glorious reign*.
>
> The Child of the Sea proceeds to narrate a vignette about activism.

Once the finale is narrated, the game is over.

DRAMA POINT EXAMPLE

Spend one drama point to interrupt a finale or add one detail.

Spend one drama point to eliminate one finale option from the list.

FINALE WALKTHROUGH

> Abe has checked off three trepidations, leaving the finales of *convocations in your honor*, and *challengers to the throne* remaining. He has a 50-50 chance of getting either one, so Abe rolls a die. He rolls low, indicating *challengers to the throne*.
>
> Abe narrates a vignette explaining how he deserves the throne, but the Prince of the Dead and the Troll King have challenged his authority, leaving the world without a singular King of Storms.

EPILOGUES

Once the finale is over, the player with the single most drama points remaining may direct one vignette following the finale. No more than one player may direct an epilogue.

> If two or more players are tied for most drama points, no one directs the epilogue. Players may not spend drama points to break this rule. They can however spend drama points before the epilogue happens to ensure there is not a tie.

Just like a finale, the scene's focus is derived from the remaining finales on the character sheet.

OPTIONS

GAMEMASTER

Praxis can be played with a gamemaster, though it is not required. With a gamemaster, the rules remain the same, but the director never changes from scene to scene — effectively the game master is a single director all game. The gamemaster can take on the roles of NPCs, interpret results, and select trepidation (instead of the players). Players used to traditional games should have no problem with the transition.

The players may point out to the gamemaster what milestones they have remaining, but the director is under no obligation to create scenes about their milestones. Playing *Praxis* in this manner allows the gamemaster to run a game as long as she wants, adding more and more details to the story.

> Make sure everyone gets a 'turn.'

Scene types are also at the director's discretion. The only important rule the director needs to follow is making sure everyone gets equal screen time to accomplish her goals.

> Normally, characters may only check off milestones during specific scene types. These rules do not apply with a gamemaster. The gamemaster alone has authority of when a character may attempt to complete a milestone.

SUGGESTIONS

When the half-way point of the game feels obvious, create a *plot twist*.

When the game is slowing down, create a story milestone.

Create vignettes the players have no authority over, detailing the actions of NPCs and antagonists behind the scenes.

Introduce NPCs into interrogations, interludes, and ensembles.

Spend drama points, just like the players, to generate game effects. This means the director gains drama points during forks.

Never have two scenes of the same type in a row.

Create interludes with any two characters you like. Just not all the time.

Play *Praxis* once as a GMless game first before running it with a gamemaster, unless the group is predominately used to traditional play.

Some character abilities may not make sense when gamemastering *Praxis*. Err on the side of the character when interpreting an ability.

IMPORTANT NPCS

The strongest feature of a gamemastered game is the ability to add numerous NPCs to the story. Typically, games revolve solely around the characters. This is great in a short, directed game, where the players are the stars of the show. But it can also feel artificial. The players rarely interact with anyone else. This makes the world feel plastic.

The gamemaster is encouraged to create NPCs who interact with the players. To make things easier, each game comes with three sample NPCs. These NPCs might also make an appearance in the GMless version of the game.

ARCH HERALD NEZUL

Sitting at each corner of the empty throne of heaven is a herald. All of the heralds have existed before time and will continue beyond the world. In front of the throne stands Nezul, a herald made of fire and water all at once. Nezul never sits in the throne, but also makes sure no one but the King of Storms sits there, either. Nezul is neither human, nor godkin, nor anything definable. Nezul itself is a determined and loyal herald who speaks through lightning and wind. He has no choice over who will be the new King of Storms, but takes a great disliking to the gorgons.

Randomly determine which character has a fearful/hateful relationship with Arch Herald Nezul.

BARRETT, THE CONDEMNED

500 years ago, Barrett — a hero of Diospia — attempted to take the throne of heaven by force. He was squarely defeated and sent back to earth, powerless. He retains only his immortality and now walks the earth, unable to rest. His skin has been baked hot by the sun and each time it peels, he grows weaker.

Randomly determine which character has a pitiful relationship with Barrett.

KRONOS

Kronos is a titankin, living on the edge of the world. It is unclear what Kronos is... Man. Woman. Beast. Thing. Everything it touches slowly withers to nothing. To protect the world, Kronos has shut itself out from everyone. Legends and lies abound about what Kronos truly is, but no one has lived to tell the truth. Once every hundred years or so, it makes the journey to the heart of the world to see what has changed... and what remains.

Randomly determine which character has a mysterious relationship with Kronos.

ADVANCED RULES

There is no way to make comprehensive *advanced rules* for a game like *Praxis*. The rules are so simple, players can easily come up with their own. The following is an attempt to address the rules I enjoy playing with. I don't recommend using them all at once.

- Be sure to read the suggestions on page 65, regardless of whether or not there is a gamemaster.

- All players answer both world building questions.

- Players may **spend one drama point** to give another player a disadvantage, even if they are not in the scene.

- The players who direct the opening scenes **gain one drama point** each.

- Each drama point a player has during the finale can be used to narrow down the available finale options.

- Players may not trigger the finale until they have directed a **fork** scene.

- Players may not attempt to reach a milestone until every player has directed one scene.

- Players may choose their finales from those remaining, instead of determining randomly.

- The player to your left is your 'foil.' The foil is responsible for interpreting your trepidation. See page 68.

- Character death can be avoided by **spending five drama points**.

- Once per game, the players may (collectively) **award one drama point** to a director who has framed a particularly good scene or a player who has contributed to a scene in a dramatic fashion. If there is a gamemaster, she alone has this prerogative.

- Continue playing one more time around the table after the director reaches the finale, but before the finale is narrated.

- The first player to trigger the finale, triggers a **plot twist** instead. See page 61.

FOIL

The foil is a contrast to a given player's goals. The foil interprets all of the bad things that befall a character. She also splits decisions on whether or not something constitutes a violation or adherence to a rule. The foil sits to the player's left (clockwise).

MILESTONES

Some actions constitute a milestone. Others do not. While GMless games usually share narrative authority with all players, confusion can lead to game tension. The foil is the final arbiter of what is (and is not) a milestones.

LEVERAGES

A player that brings harm to another character may not give that character more than one trepidation in a given scene, regardless of the outcome of the dice. In the unique instance where harm generates one trepidation and a leverage generates on trepidation, the second trepidation must go to another character **and** everyone involved must explain how and why this trepidation came about.

FLASHBACK RESOLUTION

Whenever a total of '5' is rolled on any chart, the director must direct a short flashback interlude or flashback vignette about the incident. The flashback should reveal why this trepidation is happening, perhaps explaining the present circumstances. If the flashback still isn't enough to explain the circumstances of the die roll, spend two drama points and direct another scene, chosen from the list of remaining character scenes.

RULE OF '19'

Remember. These are optional "advanced" rules. Apply them with discretion. After any roll, a player may **spend one drama point** to turn a 19 into a 20.

I personally don't like this rule, but I'm including the option, because so many players seem upset about missing a '20' by 1.

There is no rule of 18. And there never will be.

STORY MILESTONES

Story milestones are different from player milestones. Story milestones reflect the changes in the environment the players cannot control or account for. Each Praxis comes with a list of things that can happen once the group (collectively) reaches four, eight, and twelve milestones. Simply draw a playing card when a personal milestone triggers a story milestone.

Note: The game may end before some story milestones occur.

FOUR MILESTONES

The next director must incorporate one of the following rumors into her scene. How this information reaches the characters (if any) is up to the director.

- ♣ **The storm roils in the sky. It grows. And people die.**
- ♦ **The clouds part, portents of another era with no King of Storms.**
- ♥ **Peace breaks out and the people claim all the gods are just.**
- ♠ **War. There is always war.**

EIGHT MILESTONES

The director creates an interlude with any one character and a herald of the heavens. Under no circumstance can anyone else join this scene, regardless of abilities or drama points spent. This scene does not count as the director's scene and she may take her normal turn after this scene.

- ♣ **"… and you will inherit the throne."**
- ♦ **"… your destiny is written, none can take this from you."**
- ♥ **"… you will share the throne of heaven… but with whom?"**
- ♠ **"… no one deserves the throne. It shall be bathed in blood."**

TWELVE MILESTONES

The next director must incorporate one of the following facts into her scene.

- ♣ **The old King of Storms returns from beyond the veil**
- ♦ **Heavenly light shines down on a single godkin.**
  The titans are banished from heaven.
- ♥ **The throne of heaven crashes to the earth, cracking the land in two. The titans will claim the earth and break the sky.**
- ♠ **The heavens rain blood upon the land, drowning humanity in its effluence. The gorgons alone shall rule.**

OPENING VIGNETTES

Below are four possible opening vignettes for players having trouble devising their own. I can't write your ensembles for you, so this is as far as it goes.

Feel free to select one randomly or let the players decide.

Three crones walked from the Fires for Eisill, each bearing a different gift — a ring, a conch, and a mummified finger. Alone, the gifts mean nothing. But together, they foretell the coming of a new King of Storms. The ring represents power, the conch heralds the choice, and the mummified finger belongs to the first god, Dagon. When the crones arrive, the climb to the top of a great tower and announce to the world, in booming, magical voices that a new King is coming.

Two godkin — Lotimus and Araya — lie dead on the edge of a long ravine, where few people dare to tread. Either the godkin have killed one another, or someone has killed them both, leaving their bodies for discovery. Or worse. A reminder that even so-called immortals can die.

For one thousand years the people of Jollan have lived in poverty and fear, suffering the yoke of immortal oppression — from godkin and titankin alike. Every day the people pray for the gods to return. But they aren't coming. The world isn't going back to the way it was. The only hope for the people is for someone to ascend to the throne of heaven and take it all back. Hopefully with the people's needs in mind.

Holy crusaders from a distant land have slaughtered five bishops in five days. Their bodies were strung up from trees, along with anyone else who stood against them. The people of Goramant are worried the crusaders will attack again. Who will protect them? The immortals haven't responded. The immortals who promised to protect them in dark times have stood silent. Where will the holy crusaders strike next? Who will help the people? By the heavenly throne, what will become of the people?

VARIANTS

Below are three possible setup variants for advanced players or people looking for something out of the ordinary.

Feel free to select one randomly or let the players decide.

Born from the Sanguine Pit at the heart of the world, ten immortals ruled over the world, waiting for the end times when one would become a singular god and ruler of everything. These immortals bore many shapes and roles in the world. Some dominated humankind, while others found isolation. A few ruled over creatures, like orcs and ogres. But all of them grew in power, from birth to now, waiting for the final storm to arrive.

Four brothers and sisters each inherited a corner of the world, with a fifth and sixth taking the oceans and underworld. Born from a single thought of the last god, they have always had to share the world. But never willingly. Never without spite. Never without a desire to take it all for oneself. And now, a herald of the end times has announced that the time for the gods has returned. But only one immortal will become a god. The rest will serve at her feet, if they survive.

Seven planets orbit around a dying sun. Each planet is ruled by a single immortal, with thousands of humans in servitude. Each immortal has a society that is dependent upon her. Each one praying that the sun lasts one more day. But everyone knows that one of the immortals must die in order to reignite the dying star.

NOMENCLATURE

The following is a general list of terms that might make communicating about gaming easier. It might also help with your understanding of GMless gaming. Otherwise, obsessing over these kinds of details can be pedantic to those who don't care so much about them.

AGENCY

A buzzword for a character's authority within a story. In gaming circles it includes a player's authority as well, both inside and outside the story. If a character has agency, she has the power to impact her fate. A character without agency is nothing more than a plot point.

CONTEXT

I use this word a lot. It's a dying subject, but I believe you can't have a good story without it. Context is all the things that go together. Too many ingredients and you lose context. For instance, if you create a game about pirates stealing treasure in a supernatural world, adding zombies at the bottom of the ocean is contextual. Adding fire-breathing Russian bears is not.

CONCEPT

Concept is the abstract idea of a (written) work. For *Praxis*, it is the plot of the game you are playing. In *The Deep Country,* the concept is the infighting amongst fantasy clans. In *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the concept is a futuristic wasteland where people are chattel and women, especially pregnant ones, are bartered or controlled. In *Star Wars,* the concept is a moisture farmer who finds a laser sword and kills his dad.

ETHOS

Ethos is a character's credibility or ethical appeal. In order to believe something a character says, we must respect her. If a player wants to be heard during play, she must create a likable character. This is not always true, but an evil character who is charming gets away with a lot more than an antisocial hero.

GENRE

Genre is a term that gets bandied around a lot. At its simplest, genre is a combination of structure and veneer. In literature, the fantasy genre follows specific structural rules, while maintaining a veneer of elves, dragons, magic, and the like. People love to argue whether or not something is within a genre. For the purposes of this document, it is merely to explain what makes up a genre, not whether your favorite science fiction show is sci-fi or not.

LEITMOTIF

When people say theme, they usually mean leitmotif. It is what something looks like. A cowboy-themed party where people only dress up as cowboys, but don't brand cattle (for instance) is actually a party with a cowboy leitmotif. In order for it to be cowboy-themed, people would have to do some cowboy stuff, including listening to Merle Haggard.

LOGOS

Logos is a character's appeal to reason. In order to respect the character, we must believe her decisions are based in logic. If she makes fool-hardy decisions, she loses credibility.

PATHOS

Pathos is a character's appeal to emotion. In order to empathize with a character, we must feel what she feels. If she over-reacts or displays inhuman emotions, the character is likely to loose our sympathy.

THEME

This word never gets used correctly. It does not mean genre or veneer. The way something looks is not a theme, though one could decorate their home in an art deco theme, the term theme is more complicated than that.

Theme is the combination of all underlying subtext in a story: family division, hopelessness, love, valor, and so on are all themes. The list of themes is near endless. What it is not is "fantasy village."

TONE

Tone is the mood of a piece… what it feels like. The specific tone of a game might be subtle or obvious. For instance, a dark tone might be oppressive, with each scene making the players more and more depressed. Conversely, a mysterious tone might only be noticed in scenes where people aren't getting direct answers to their questions.

ZEITGEIST

Zeitgeist literally means spirit of the age, which is a high-brow way of saying "of a particular period in time." In game design, it primarily refers to what the game is about and what am I doing in it. What is the zeitgeist? In *King of Storms*, the zeitgeist is immortals who want to rule over all other immortals.

ROLES

CHILD OF THE SEA

Names: Brahma, Calypso, Mu, Zodiac

"When the apocalypse of heaven drowned the world with blood, the oceans teemed with viscera. From its cloying broth was born all manner of fiend, cruel and terrible."

The Child of the Sea is the most powerful descendant of the titans. She rules the oceans and seas, perceiving herself more worthy than any other to sit upon heaven's throne. Those who challenge her might are crushed with tidal waves and unfathomable beasts hidden behind each eddy.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **(Make) Everyone Your Servant**
- ♦ **Take What is Yours**
- ♥ **Never Let Hope Drown**
- ♠ **Guide Those Who Are Lost**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Awkward, Distant, and Unfulfilled**
- ♦ **An Embarrassing Past**
- ♥ **A Broken Promise**
- ♠ **Rivalry: Treating One Another Like Servant and Master**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you is the most brash, demanding, and stubborn? How do you excuse this behavior to others?**
- **Why has your courage failed in this moment of crisis? How will you restore it?**

QUIRKS

- **Always requests a specific drink, but never drinks it**
- **Can't leave a place without leaving or taking a souvenir**
- **Views compromise as a form of weakness**

ABILITIES

Altar of Jade: Whenever you suffer trepidation, you gain one additional drama point. However, you cannot trigger the endgame.

Rain of Blood: You may always join an interlude (but not a flashback interlude), regardless of relationships, or whether or not you were invited.

Tidal Waves: This ability may only be selected at the beginning of the game. Select one player to direct the opening vignette and another to direct the opening ensemble. At the end of each scene, each player gains one trepidation.

SCENES

Ensemble ❑

Flashback Interlude ❑❑

Fork* ❑

Interlude ❑❑

Interrogation ❑❑

Monologue ❑❑

DESCRIPTIONS

All characters present

Flashback with two characters

Target player* makes a choice

Two characters with a relationship

Ask five questions

Deliver a speech in character

MILESTONES

❑ Bring Together Lost Things »
❑ Make Others Respect You »
❑ Preserve Something Beautiful »
❑ Return Something to the Sea »
❑ Senseless Act of Destruction »

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

❑ Brought to Your Knees »
❑ Oceans Fill With Blood »
❑ Power Perverted (Against You) »
❑ Returned to the Sea (Death) »
❑ Trapped Under Regret »

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

Inherit a Craven Throne

A Glorious Reign

Convocations in Your Honor

Challengers to the Throne

Blessings at the Altar

HEIR TO THE SUN

Names: Atticus, Brunhilda, Gamayun, Wolfgar

"On the fourth day, the red sky broke in half and the sun emerged, shinning its blessing and guidance on a shattered world."

The Heir to the Sun honors wisdom above all other traits. He builds houses of knowledges, erects temples, and demands the people submit to learning. Those who worship the Heir, are not just scholars and engineers, but also those who believe their humanity will improve through wisdom. The Heir's people are hopeful that he will bless them with a better life.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Shame and Punish the Ignorant**
- ♦ **Rule Justly**
- ♥ **Enlighten Humanity (Through Gifts)**
- ♠ **Educate, Through Force**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Platonic**
- ♦ **Opportunity and Fortune**
- ♥ **Respect**
- ♠ **A Shared Love for Knowledge**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you will exploit the one weakness in your wisdom?**
- **Why did the spirits of the sun and wind stop talking to you?**

QUIRKS

- **Consumes libations and impurities, hypocritically**
- **Denies parts of heritage**
- **Sets impossible standards for others to follow**

ABILITIES

The Chariot: When directing a fork, you may immediately present that character with a second choice. In addition, you may take another turn as director.

Heart of the Sun: The next time you suffer a trepidation, you may give one to another character as well.

Wisdom of the Gods: Gain three drama points.

SCENES

SCENES	DESCRIPTIONS
Ensemble ❑	All characters present
Fork* ❑❑	Target player* makes a choice
Flashback Interlude ❑❑	Flashback with two characters
Interlude ❑❑	Two characters with a relationship
Interrogation ❑❑	Ask five questions
Monologue ❑	Deliver a speech in character

MILESTONES

- ❑ Build Libraries
- ❑ Control Minds
- ❑ Dedicate an Act/Momument
- ❑ Preserve a Significant Relic
- ❑ Sully Your Hands

LEVERAGE

- ›› Direct another scene
- ›› Gain two drama points
- ›› Gain one ability
- ›› Give one trepidation
- ›› Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

- ❑ Followers Turn Away
- ❑ In a Prison Without Light
- ❑ Words Turn to Ash
- ❑ Words Turn to Poison
- ❑ Your Temples Decay

FINALE

- ›› Plagued By Vicious Lies
- ›› Storm's Power Consumes
- ›› Absolution
- ›› The Heavens Open
- ›› Monuments to You

* Gain one drama point

THE IRON WIDOW

Names: Danae, Grel, Kali, Kyron

"The blood of the gods have granted us life. The blood of the titans have taught us humility. But they claim our empty mongrel, half-living gorgon blood is devilry that must be destroyed. This is the shame I bear."

The Iron Widow has lost everything. She is one of the last remaining half-forged gorgons, born from the blood of gods and titans. She shambles in solitude, making sense of the empty world around her. But she bears the tools of patience and power. Nothing stands between her and the throne of heaven.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **To Rule Over Humanity, Unquestioned**
- ♦ **The Throne, The Sceptre, The Orb, and The Storm**
- ♥ **Rule the Earth With Another at Your Side**
- ♠ **Destroy All Godkin and Titankin Alike**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **At War**
- ♦ **Licking at Your Boot**
- ♥ **Sexual Slave**
- ♠ **Uncomfortable Allies**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you only cannot grasp the magnitude of the storm's power (and therefore must be controlled)?**
- **What will you do when the storm calls your name?**
  Who dies first when you become 'King of Storms?'

QUIRKS

- **Constantly toys with gray and brittle hair**
- **Eyes made of glass that see more than is there**
- **Toxic blood that leeches your energies**

ABILITIES

Abomination: During an ensemble, you may select one player to sit out of the scene. If you select yourself, gain one drama point.

Heir to the Kingdom: This ability may only be selected at the beginning of the game. Check off one milestone and narrate the opening vignette, being sure include your milestone in the scene.

Undead: Whenever you would suffer trepidation, you may spend one drama point to avoid it (losing the point you would have gained as well).

SCENES

Flashback Interlude ❑

Flashback Interrogation ❑

Fork* ❑

Interlude ❑❑❑❑

Monologue ❑

Vignette ❑❑

DESCRIPTIONS

Flashback with two characters

Flashback with five questions

Target player* makes a choice

Two characters with a relationship

Deliver a speech in character

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

❑ Avenge Your Father/Mother

❑ Build Your Throne

❑ Drink the Blood of a Titan

❑ Raze the Temple of Apollo

❑ Recount Lines [Book of Thel]

LEVERAGE

›› Direct another scene

›› Gain two drama points

›› Gain one ability

›› Give one trepidation

›› Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

❑ Followers Question Authority

❑ Imprisonment

❑ Kingdom in Tatters

❑ Parade of Misery

❑ Public Disgrace

FINALE

›› Blood of Fire

›› Loneliness

›› Right to Rule

›› Enslaving Humanity

›› Worshipped as a God

* Gain one drama point

PRINCE OF THE DEAD

Names: Apollyon, Freya, Hekate, Varuna

"The dead are thoughtlessly built, without considering where they'll be housed."

When heaven empties and blood spills from the sky, the people of earth must spring from its residue. And when that residue turns to ash, the Prince of the Dead must claim his prizes — the flesh, bone, and blood of thousands who die every day at the hands of the godborn and titanborn. But the Prince of the Dead is neither… he is an unholy gorgon, trapped eternally between life and death.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Collect a Very Specific Soul**
- ♦ **Hand off the Reins of the Underworld**
- ♥ **Free Yourself from the Shackles of Unlife**
- ♠ **Rule With Wisdom and Clarity**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Unsafe and Unkind**
- ♦ **Painfully Clear That One of You is the Victim**
- ♥ **Secretive (As In, the Others Don't Know About It)**
- ♠ **Disquieting, But Pleasurable**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you fears death the most? What will the afterlife be like for her?**
- **Why do you still toil at ruling the underworld? How does it fulfill or sustain you when everyone else seeks power?**

QUIRKS

- **Bring a myriad of servants everywhere you go**
- **Fallen in love with one of your prizes**
- **Strange collection of novelties from the souls in your care**

ABILITIES

Deathly Stare: When directing an interrogation, you may steal one drama point from the subject.

Monarch of the Dead: When directing an interrogation, you may ask two additional questions, which must come from a ghostly figure from the character's past.

Unquestioned Rulership: Gain one drama point. In addition, as the subject of an interrogation, you may ignore one question per scene. You may ask one question of the interrogator, who must answer it.

SCENES

Flashback Intercut ❑
Flashback Interlude ❑
Fork* ❑
Interrogation ❑❑❑
Interlude ❑❑
Vignette ❑❑

DESCRIPTIONS

Flashback anything for 90 seconds
Flashback with two characters
Target player* makes a choice
Ask five questions
Two characters with a relationship
Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

❑ End a Meaningful Life
❑ Predict a Death
❑ Produce an Heir/Successor
❑ Project Fear of Death (Aura)
❑ Sever a Relationship

LEVERAGE

›› Direct another scene
›› Gain two drama points
›› Gain one ability
›› Give one trepidation
›› Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

❑ Abandonment
❑ Leave the Underworld (Never to Return)
❑ Punished
❑ Someone Dead Returns
❑ Voices of Judgment

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

›› Lost

›› Wander the Earth
›› Climb the Stairs to Heaven
›› Summon an Army
›› Darken the Skies

SCION OF THE EAST

Names: Crow, Minerva, Rana, Wisteria

"My Mother gave me the tools of love in a time of hate. I would be a fool to throw them away now, when the Power of Storms is at hand."

The Scion of the East seeks peace and contentment. He is the only descendent of the gods and titans who does not seek war. For this, he is surely doomed. The Scion of the East bears the responsibility of convincing power-hungry immortals that peace is the only part of valor that matters.

He is sometimes envisioned as a fisherman.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ Surrender Yourself to Your Wants
- ♦ Convince Others to Serve the Greater Good
- ♥ Rekindle Love in Your Heart
- ♠ Sacrifice Your Love for the Good of Others

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ Feelings That Each Is Entitled to More
- ♦ No Longer on Speaking Terms
- ♥ Unconditional Love
- ♠ Overbearing, Almost Suffocating

WORLD BUILDING

- Who among you has rejected the teachings of the 'one-king,' despite all the warnings of the coming conflict?
- What can be done to calm the animosity between the others?

QUIRKS

- Mind and soul that cannot rest
- Never has the last word
- Seems to make a ring with whatever is at hand

ABILITIES

God's Love: When directing an ensemble, each character in the scene may give you one drama point to remove one trepidation.

Sacred Smoke: Once per game, you may direct two scenes in a row. In addition, after the second scene, you choose the next player's scene type from their remaining list of options.

Sanctuary: When directing an ensemble, you may exclude one character from the scene from those available. Both you and the excluded character gain one drama point each.

SCENES

Ensemble ❑❑

Flashback Intercut ❑

Flashback Interlude ❑

Fork* ❑

Interlude ❑❑

Vignette ❑❑❑

DESCRIPTIONS

All characters present

Flashback anything for 90 seconds

Flashback with two characters

Target player* makes a choice

Two characters with a relationship

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

❑ Bring Peace/End Conflict

❑ Cherish/Find New Love

❑ Heal the Hatred of Another

❑ Suffer Heartache/Rejection

❑ Watch Loved One Die

LEVERAGE

›› Direct another scene

›› Gain two drama points

›› Gain one ability

›› Give one trepidation

›› Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

❑ Body Mangled and Crippled

❑ Isolation

❑ Loved One Dies in Agony

❑ Stoned to Death

❑ Wars Tear Nations Apart

FINALE

›› Bodhisattva

›› Ascendence

›› Ennui

›› Purgatory

›› Enlightenment

* Gain one drama point

TROLL KING

Names: Clotho, Cormoran, Gog, Mab

"You may have the sea and air. You may climb the skies into heaven to claim the throne of the king. But you'll never rule the land without me. I am it's warden. It's jailor. It's wretched tyrant mass."

The Troll King rules over the remnants of the titanborn. He commands a retinue of loyal, if not terrified minions and a kingdom of ash and blood that extends beyond one's vision. His claim to the heavens is through sheer might.

And he just might take it.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Be the Only Titanborn**
- ♦ **Expand Your Empire**
- ♥ **Find Inner Peace (if that is even possible)**
- ♠ **Slaughter the Scions of the Gods**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Aggressive (Emotionally/Physically)**
- ♦ **Convenient Until Proven Otherwise**
- ♥ **Calming and Confusing (All at Once)**
- ♠ **Authoritative and Disrespectful**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you needs to die first? Why?**
- **Why are you so angry? What makes you think you deserve the throne of heaven?**

QUIRKS

- **Covered in ritual scars and tattoos**
- **Sleeps underground, half-buried in mud and clay**
- **Speaks with the dead, whether or not they speak back**

ABILITIES

Cold-Blooded: Ignore your next two points of trepidation.

Hollow Eyes: Once per game, you can take over any other player's ensemble, stopping all other characters from getting what they want. In addition, you decide when the scene is over.

Might Makes Right: Whenever you are in an interlude, you decide when the scene is over.

SCENES | DESCRIPTIONS

SCENES	DESCRIPTIONS
Ensemble ❑	All characters present
Fork* ❑	Target player* makes a choice
Flashback Vignette ❑❑	Narrate an action/moment in past
Intercut ❑❑	Anything for 90 seconds
Interrogation ❑❑	Ask five questions
Monologue ❑❑	Deliver a speech in character

MILESTONES | LEVERAGE

MILESTONES		LEVERAGE
❑ Betray a Trust	››	Direct another scene
❑ Conquer an Enemy	››	Gain two drama points
❑ Excessive Display of Power	››	Gain one ability
❑ Remind Someone of Station	››	Give one trepidation
❑ Spare No One	››	Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION* | FINALE

TREPIDATION*		FINALE
❑ Death	››	Rule Alone
❑ Lands Invaded	››	Kingdom Expands
❑ Lose Status	››	Climb to the Heavens
❑ Underlings Rebel	››	Respect
❑ Wealth Discarded	››	Wealth

* Gain one drama point

BRINGING HARM TO OTHERS

0   **acting character suffers trepidation**
in addition, choose:
the target character may immediately bring harm to you, or
the target character gains two drama points

5   **both characters suffer trepidation**

10   **choose:**
target character suffers trepidation, or
acting player triggers leverage

20   **target character suffers trepidation, and choose:**
acting player triggers leverage, or
target player loses two drama points

GETTING WHAT YOU WANT

0   **acting character suffers trepidation**
in addition, choose:
acting player loses two drama points*, or
uncheck one milestone

5   **acting character succeeds and suffers trepidation**

10   **choose:**
acting character succeeds, or
acting player triggers leverage

20   **acting character succeeds, and choose:**
acting player triggers associated leverage, or
acting player unlocks an additional ability

* this option is only available if the acting player has two or more drama points

0   acting character suffers trepidation

5   acting player changes the world and loses one drama point

10   choose:
acting player changes the world, or
acting player triggers leverage

20   acting player changes the world, and choose:
acting player gains two drama points, or
acting player removes one trepidation

REFERENCE SHEET

All information in one place, including the set-up info, opening scene information, and shorthand for what each scene type is.

MAKE CHARACTERS

- Select roles (pages 74 to 87)

- Name characters (page 9)

- Determine objectives (page 20)

- Determine relationships (page 21)

- Answer world building questions (page 22)

- Select quirks (page 23)

- Select abilities (page 23)

MAKE SENSE OF EVERYTHING

- Address where the game takes place

- Reconcile relationships and world building questions

- Define where the game is set and how everyone knows each other

START PLAYING

- Narrate opening scenes (page 57)
  [One vignette about tragedy, one ensemble regarding reaction to tragedy]

- Take turns narrating scenes (page 46)

- Track milestones and trepidation (pages 29 to 32)

- Track story milestones* (page 69)

FINALE

- Narrate plot twist* (page 61)

- Narrate finale (page 63)

- Narrate epilogue* (page 63)

* Optional rules

REFERENCE SHEET

ENSEMBLES

It's possible for any character in an ensemble to check off a milestone, so long as the action matches the milestone.

FLASHBACKS

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during a flashback.

FORKS

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during a fork.

Each player in the fork **gains one drama point** at the scene's conclusion.

INTERCUTS

Only the director of an intercut may check off a milestone.

INTERLUDES

Only the characters in the interlude may check off milestones.

INTERROGATIONS

Only the interrogator may check off a milestone.

MONOLOGUES

Only the director of a monologue may check off a milestone, and *only* if she delivers the monologue in her character's voice.

OPENING SCENES

Milestones **cannot** be accomplished during an opening scene.

VIGNETTES

Only the director of a vignette may check off a milestone.

NOTES

DESIGNER NOTES

I designed the original *King of Storms* game about 10 years ago, but I never published it. It was far too abstract. Seeing themselves as agents of the gods, the players wanted lists of powers to choose from, not loosely defined goals and cards that guided them on how to frame scenes.

> The original game was GMless and used a poker deck.

If fact, the Jon Hunt cover edition of this game was painted nearly 10 years ago — a byproduct of my over-enthusiam.

> It's been sitting around that long.

> You'd be surprised how much art I have waiting to be used. For a small company, I'm really inefficient about art.

> Where was I?

It's hard sometimes to talk about the logic behind some of my designs. After all, there are tons of games out there about god-like power. *Godlike*™ comes to mind. Why make a story game with loosely-defined powers in a genre that is all about power?

> That question sort of answers itself.

I've never wanted to compete in the same waters in gaming. If there's already a *Scion*™, why make another version with different dice pools? That's repetitive.

And I don't want to make the same game over and over. Even though I'm using the same mechanic five times, these — *The Lambs, King of Storms, Odin's Eye, Of the Flesh, The Black Monk* —are genuinely different games. I cover a lot of the same thematic ground in my work. Authority, the hero's journey, internal conflict, purpose, and determinism, but I always try to tackle these issues differently, even in the context of the same mechanics.

Coyote and *Devil's Highway* are both games about authority, but they don't play anything alike. Even *The Carcass: Exodus* has similarities with Devil's Highway (plotwise), but the two share nothing else in common.

> What's your point?

There's a common thread in these five games. But they share nothing in common other than mechanics and some inner spirit (if you will). I won't give too much away, but I hope you take time to play each one and find out for yourself what sets King of Storms apart from the rest.

— jim pinto

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