

praxis...

OF THE FLESH



A GAME OF SINS

CREDITS

words and graphics by jim pinto

editing by Allison Heenie, Morgan Weeks

art by Florian Stitz

additional art by Nagy Norbert

special thanks to Carissa Dapp, Brian Feister, Gareth H. Graham, Dan Green, Kairam Ahmed Hamdan, Glenn Harrison, Allison Heenie, Timothy Hidalgo, Gareth Hodges, Mike Leader, Emma Hespa Mann, Ben Mellor, Darren Pearce, Amy Pensyl, Diana Kwolkoski Stoll, Caias Ward, Morgan Weeks, Laura Wilkinson, Ben Woerner

Of the Flesh is part of the *Praxis* game series.

Copyright 2016 © post world games and jim pinto. All rights reserved.

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

Diana Kwolkoski Stoll hates zombies. Hates them. With a passion. I can't even get her to play a game where she is killing zombies. So, of course, I had to make a game where you are mindless undead *trying* to be mindful. This one is for her.

praxis...



CONTENTS

PRAXIS: OF THE FLESH	4
GETTING STARTED	5
QUICKGUIDE.....	6
OVERVIEW	8
CHARACTERS	18
ROLES	19
OBJECTIVES	20
RELATIONSHIPS	21
WORLD BUILDING	22
QUIRKS	23
ABILITIES	23
THREE-DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERS	24
SAMPLE CHARACTER.....	26
PUSHING LIMITS.....	28
MILESTONES	29
LEVERAGE	31
TREPIDATION.....	32
GAMEPLAY	35
DRAMA POINTS	37
THE CANON.....	38
ENDING THE GAME	40
DICE	41
NPCS	45
SCENES	46
SCENE TYPES	47
THE END	60
THE PLOT TWIST.....	61
THE FINALE.....	63
EPILOGUES.....	63
OPTIONS	64
GAMEMASTER	65
IMPORTANT NPCS	66
ADVANCED RULES.....	67
STORY MILESTONES.....	69
OPENING VIGNETTES.....	70
VARIANTS.....	70
NOMENCLATURE.....	72
ROLES	74
REFERENCE SHEET	90
NOTES.....	92
INDEX	94

PRAXIS: OF THE FLESH

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:

OF THE FLESH

In *Of the Flesh*, the characters are tormented *undead*, fighting to return to normal after an infection has ruined the world. Each has suffered from a horrible disease ripping them from the living world, but not laid it to rest completely. Some undead have languished for decades, while others have returned from the grave, unsure of how much time has past.

After years of penance, these undead creatures want nothing more than to be whole again. But the world is a darker version of its old self. The streets are littered with reminders of the fight to stay alive. Boarded up windows. Checkpoints. Armed guards. People are wary of anything that isn't right. Passing for human among skeptics and hunters isn't easy.

But how can humanity be found in this detritus? How can something reclaim its humanity without losing all that remains?

DISCLAIMER

This game looks like it's about zombies. But it's not. Zombies are an easy trope to understand, so it's the first thing we conjure up when imagining modern undead. But, this game is about people who've become infected with a horrible, malignant disease that makes them less human, and more savage. It is about losing the battle between our past and future selves (if I want to get philosophical).

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 in a cult? A road crew? A gang? A desolate world devoid of any other humans? 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.
- Play for 2 to 10 hours, depending on how fast you like your stories to move.
- 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 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 has its own unique goals, objectives, abilities, and failings.

Character sheets for these roles appear on page 74.

OF THE FLESH

There are six roles to choose from: Anchorite, Camber, Havoc, Hollow One, Magog, and Thorn. The Anchorite is the oldest. The Camber is loyal. The Havoc sees the world through another lens. The Hollow One has returned from the dead. The Magog eats rotting flesh. The Thorn believes salvation comes from faith, not science.

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 know 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 player's 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.

Rolling dice is explained on page 41.

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.

See page 57 for more information on these scenes.

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 90.



MAKE CHARACTERS

```
graph TD; A[MAKE CHARACTERS] --> B[CHOOSE ROLES]; B --> C[NAMES]; C --> D[DETERMINE OBJECTIVES]; D --> E[DETERMINE RELATIONSHIPS]; E --> F[WORLD BUILDING]; F --> G[CHOOSE QUIRK]; G --> H[CHOOSE ABILITY];
```

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 *Of the Flesh*, the characters are sentient undead. This is a different take on undead that some people are used to. The objective of this game is to explore the potential for redemption, using religion as a thematic backdrop to these ideas. The world these characters live looks like our modern world, but with the caveat that it is slowly rebuilding after a virulent plague. The undead in this story are those who suffered the plague, but who survived the aftermath.

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 *Of the Flesh*: Abe, Bianca, Carl, and Diana. They have selected the roles Anchorite, Magog, Thorn, and Camber and named them Baal, Nemed, Peter, and Talaash, 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 *heal someone else, return to seclusion*. Abe concludes that he wants someone else to benefit from a cure (if one exists). He's lost too much already and has no interest in the human world.

Bianca draws a ♠ — a secret objective. She marks it down telling the group that she seeks redemption.

To throw them off of her real objective.

Carl draws a ♦. This is *divinity*. Carl is a thorn who still believes in god. In fact, he was a Catholic priest before the plague. He believes this is a test. In due time what god intends for him will be revealed. Carl hopes to find salvation for not only himself, but for everyone.

Diana draws a ♣, which is *remove the cancer that harms the nest*. Diana is the group's protector. She doesn't know yet who inside the group is the cancer, but she has some ideas. Clearly it is not Abe, the most altruistic of the group, but the other two may have ulterior motives.

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 *they are lucky to know you*. Abe considers Diana fodder for the masses. Her lack of identity makes her expendable. She is fortunate to even share space with Abe.

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 *convenience that is underlined by opposing goals* relationship. This matches Bianca's secret objective to *choke the life from another*. Since Carl believes she seeks redemption, Bianca explains her opposing goal is that she isn't necessarily concerned about curing everyone.

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.

Of the Flesh is set in your home town, in the modern world. The characters all belong to a *nest* where safety in numbers keeps them alive. Players should consider putting the characters in a cyberpunk-style future, or 1980s America where cold war and disease fears were highest. The important thing for the game is that the characters live in a place that humans don't visit.

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 reason you stayed in seclusion so long? Why?*"

The easy answer here is Bianca, but Abe chooses Carl. Abe decides that Carl's piety is an issue for him. Abe doesn't trust him completely, despite keeping him in the nest for so long. Abe fears Carl will bring doom to the group, eventually.

This also plays in with their relationship and now he knows why.

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 *avoids eye contact, lest someone feel threatened* from the list of three options.

To round this out further, Abe has made it very clear he does not wish to be the nest leader. He'd rather stay in the background, than have someone feel threatened by his presence.

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 Anchorite can gain additional drama point. The *cardinal sins* power grants him three more drama points, with one caveat. So, Abe picks that.

Cardinal Sins: Gain three drama points. You cannot join the next ensemble.

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.

If you already know how to play *Praxis*, jump ahead to page 57 for details about the two opening scenes. Otherwise, the rules of play start on page 28 and the scene types begin on page 46.

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.



ANCHORITE

Names: Baal, Celestine, Mary, Monod

"I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for naught."

The Anchorite is the oldest undead, having survived for many, inexplicable years. The Anchorite has lived in seclusion, paying penance for its sins, it now returns to the waking world in hopes of regaining its shattered humanity. But everything about this time is different. Wrong somehow. The world is both paranoid and safe, all at once. Are the living so different from you?

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ Piece Together Fragments from the Past
 - ♦ Indulge in Eternity
 - ♥ Heal Someone Else, Return to Seclusion
 - ♠ Remain a Slave to Your Sins (Until You Completely Repent)
- Baal has no interest in the human world*

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ They are Lucky to Know You
 - ♦ A Capable Servant
 - ♥ Memories of Love/Lust
 - ♠ An Unbreakable (But Convenient) Bond
- Talaash is expendable*

WORLD BUILDING

- Who among you is the reason you stayed in seclusion so long? Why?
- Where have you lived for the past decade? What sin kept you in seclusion? Why have you emerged now?

Pete's piety surely spells doom for the group.

QUIRKS

- Avoid eye contact, lest someone feel threatened
 - Scratches away at skin, reflexively
 - Speaks in a preachy tone, as if always lecturing
- Baal does not want to be the next leader*

ABILITIES

Cardinal Sins: Gain three drama points. You cannot join the next ensemble.

Living Library: Whenever you make things happen, you gain one free advantage. In addition, if any die roll result grants drama points, you gain one additional drama point.

Unrepentant: Whenever you bring harm to others, you may reroll one of your dice.

SCENES

Flashback Interlude

Fork*

Intercut

Interlude

Monologue

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

Flashback with two characters

Target player* makes a choice

Anything for 90 seconds

Two characters with a relationship

Deliver a speech in character

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Endure (Painful) Hunger >>

Enter a Church >>

Fall to Knees in Supplication >>

Pass on Legacy of Knowledge >>

Take a Human Life >>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

Body Shattered >>

Flashbacks of Persecution >>

Flesh Eaten from the Inside >>

Isolation >>

Suffer for Your Sins >>

FINALE

Regeneration

White Light (of Eternity)

Food for the Nest

Perpetual Undeath

Consumed by Fire

* Gain one drama point

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
<input type="checkbox"/> Endure (Painful) Hunger	>>	Direct another scene
<input type="checkbox"/> Enter a Church	>>	Gain two drama points
<input type="checkbox"/> Fall to Knees in Supplication	>>	Gain one ability
<input type="checkbox"/> Pass on Legacy of Knowledge	>>	Give one trepidation
<input type="checkbox"/> Take a Human Life	>>	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:

- be in a scene that allows for milestones
- perform an action related to that milestone in the scene
- 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 player 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 *enter a church*. Abe has no use for religion and hasn't been inside a church in a long time. But something is gnawing at him. He wants to talk with a real priest and seeks out an active Catholic church near the nest.

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, 1, and 3, a total of 5. Horrible. While a 5 is a success and he can mark off the milestone, Abe also suffers one trepidation (explained on page 32).

This example continues 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
<input type="checkbox"/> Endure (Painful) Hunger	>>	Direct another scene
<input type="checkbox"/> Enter a Church	>>	Gain two drama points
<input type="checkbox"/> Fall to Knees in Supplication	>>	Gain one ability
<input type="checkbox"/> Pass on Legacy of Knowledge	>>	Give one trepidation
<input type="checkbox"/> Take a Human Life	>>	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 *endure (painful) hunger* and *fall to kness in supplication* milestones, indicating that he has also unlocked the *direct another scene* and *give one ability* 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
<input type="checkbox"/> Body Shattered	>>	Regeneration
<input type="checkbox"/> Flashbacks of Persecution	>>	White Light (of Eternity)
<input type="checkbox"/> Flesh Eaten from the Inside	>>	Food for the Nest
<input type="checkbox"/> Isolation	>>	Perpetual Undeath
<input type="checkbox"/> Suffer for Your Sins	>>	Consumed by Fire

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 isolation, and therefore he can no longer develop the perpetual undeath 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 goes into isolation, he cuts off connection with everyone. He disappears for a week. If the next player chooses to direct an ensemble after Abe's scene, it is assumed to be one week later, to honor Abe's scene. Otherwise, what's the point?

TREPIDATION WALKTHROUGH

Abe attempts to reach a milestone by walking into a church. He succeeds at forcing himself to walk up the steps into St. Thomas', but he also earns trepidation. He has already marked off *body shattered*, so he selects *isolation*.

Abe has gone into the church, but has had come out for a long time. Abe tells the group that he shouldn't be included in other scenes for a while.



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 Hollow One can direct up to 3 interludes, while the Anchorite can direct only 2. Additionally, the Hollow One cannot direct an ensemble.

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 — *take a human life* — so he suffers one trepidation: *body shattered*. Abe must now explain how his character's failure has led to this problem. This can go a number of ways, but Abe decides he tried to kill a patrolman breaking for a piss and a smoke on the side of the road. Unfortunately, he doesn't see the second patrolman is shot in the process. The patrolmen continue shooting, putting over a dozen rounds into Abe's body. Abe barely slinks off into the darkness.

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 capable servant*). 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 *supplication*. Her character won't be mouthing off to Abe anytime soon.

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 *enter a church*, and decides his character has trouble with this normally. Seeing as how god has forsaken him, Abe attempts to walk the steps to the local church, at night, when no one is around, without his legs buckling under him.

If Abe succeeds at his roll, he can mark off the milestone and narrate the effects of entering the church. 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 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 National Guard should increase their patrols in the local area, so there are less people stationed at the FEMA camp. This is more complicated than just creating a distraction that bring people out of the camp. So Abe decides that more people need to get sick in order to promote this kind of action from the camp.

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.

See page 38 for more on **canon** and making things happen.

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 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 *fall to your knees in supplication* milestone, so he enters the nest, showing his contrition to Carl for his past arrogance (in front of everyone). Rather than play the scene and then roll dice, Abe decides to **get what you want** and then roleplay the scene from there. Rolling a '10,' Abe succeeds and proceeds to play the scene under the auspice that Carl believes he is remorseful.

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. It's before they were undead and Abe wants to explore how he used to treat her. The two characters are on a subway together, traveling to work. Diana is reading the paper and Abe is asking to sit down next to her. Nothing else is planned.

From there, the players can roleplay their characters, giving voice to their concerns.

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 someone has come and gone from the nest. Her choices are to hunt down the person, which could cause her to expose the nest, or admit what happened. There is no need to establish where the scene takes place. Abe merely explains the fallout of Diana's decision. Afterwards, **each player gains one drama point**.

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 *endure (painful) hunger* milestone and proceeds to set up a scene where Diana is feeding on a human. Abe must stop himself from joining in the feast.

The pair roleplay the scene like any other. At the conclusion, Abe rolls to **get what you want** to see if he has successfully endured the hunger (or eaten the carcass). Regardless of his success, afterwards Diana uses this opportunity to *establish (physical) boundaries*, rolling on the same chart.



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

Abe is playing a human who Diana has cornered in an alley.

Abe: "Please. Please don't hurt me. I'll give you anything you want. What do you want?"

Diana: "To eat you."

Abe: "Oh god. Oh fuck. Oh god. Please. I can help you. Let me help you."

Diana: "Help me? What can a human do for me?"

Abe ignores the question and moves on.

Abe: "Please. I don't want to die. I'll become like you won't I?"

Diana: "I'll eat you down to your bones. There will be nothing left. Don't worry about it."

The human attempts to run, but Diana grabs him by the neck.

Abe: "Please. I won't tell anyone that I saw you. I'll be your- your friend. I can be a look out for you. I can tell you when people are coming. You need me, don't you?"

Diana: "Hmm...."

Diana seems to regard the question seriously, not have an immediate answer.

Diana: "Why should I trust you?"

Once again, Abe ignores the question, but Diana spends one drama point forcing the human to answer.

Abe (crying): "Because I don't want to die."

Abe likes the chilling moment that adds to the story and ends the scene there, forfeiting the final question.

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 talks to himself, alone in his sanctum. "Its been so long. I don't think I can do this anymore. This fight to be whole again. I mean. What does it even mean? Is being infected so bad? Why do I care that I don't belong? Perhaps it would be best if I just disappeared. Who would even notice if I just slipped away forever...?"



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 68.

In *Of the Flesh*, the opening vignette is about an uninfected person stumbling into a 'dark zone' — a place where no one dares to tread anymore. The opening ensemble takes place in a secluded place, allowing the characters an opportunity to talk about the humans and how one of them avoided their security measures.

After those two scenes, play develops normally.

OPENING SCENE WALKTHROUGH

In the opening vignette, Abe describes a scene about a junkie who stumbles into the dark zone while high. He describes the scene without dialogue. When he's done, he passes play to a random player (Diana), who sets up the opening ensemble.

Diana sets a scene inside a burned-out APC, under a wrecked overpass. Here the characters talk about the now-captured human and what to do with her.

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 *take a human life* 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 '9.' Abe gains one milestone and one trepidation.

Abe narrates a vignette about stalking a human at night. The human appears alone and weak, but is actually armed with a sawed-off shotgun. As Abe tries to crush the human's windpipe, the gun goes off. Abe's insides explode outward, as the human's neck snaps. Abe scurries into the darkness, fleeing the area.

Abe checks off the *body shattered* 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 remaining 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 Anchorite has crossed off *body shattered* and *isolation* from his list of trepidations. That leaves the possible finales of *food for the nest*, *white light (of eternity)*, and *consumed by fire*. Using a random method of his own devising to pick from three remaining finales, the Anchorite gets a '1' indicating *food for the nest*.

The Anchorite proceeds to narrate a vignette about his body being used as food for the other undead.

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 *white light (of eternity)* and *consumed by fire* remaining. He has a 50-50 chance of getting either one, so Abe rolls a die. He rolls low, indicating *white light (of eternity)*.

Abe narrates a vignette explaining how his body slowly withers to nothing, his soul is released into the ether, forever moving toward the blissful like of eternal sleep.

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.

DOCTOR RUTH WEBER

Ruth Weber is a FEMA camp doctor. She does not work in R&D looking for a cure, instead she is in charge of the camp's administration and security. Ruth is hands on with everything in the camp, making time to even meet with visitors. She works 12-hour shifts and even lives in the camp, which occupies a 4-acre parking lot outside the local (baricaded) Costco. Ruth's husband (Donovan) served in Afghanistan, but she lost contact with him three years ago. The U.S. Marines have him classified as MIA. Ruth fears the worst.

Randomly determine which character has a *confusing, but necessary* relationship with Doctor Ruth Weber.

FATHER JIM SANDOVAL

Jim Sandoval presides over the St. Thomas Cathedral on 7th and L. He works with the poor, homeless, and drug addicts. His congregation numbers around 30 parishners now — since the infection began — leaving the church empty 95% of the time. When he's not working, Sandoval often walks into quarantined areas of the city (hot spots) to see if he can offer any aid. His goals aren't 100% altruistic, however, as Father Jim likes to believe the cure to infection is through salvation and not medicine. The help he provides is spiritual, not physical.

Randomly determine which character has a *lost* relationship with Jim Sandoval.

SERGEANT NATALYA VOSS

Since the virus struck, governmental patrols have increased. The National Guard was brought in a long time ago, but now that everything is barricaded, contact with the military is minimal. Sometimes a random patrol goes out to find the infected. While most guardsmen shoot the infected on sight, Sergeant Voss is one of the good ones. She's made contact with some of the infected and tagged and documented a few interesting cases. She even keeps a personal log. She claims to be connected to Governor Voss, but there's no evidence of this.

Randomly determine which character has a *dangerous* relationship with Voss.

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 facts/rumors into her scene. How this information reaches the characters (if any) is up to the director.

- ♣ **'Human hunters' roam the streets looking for undead vestiges**
- ♦ **The government funds research for a cure**
- ♥ **An undead who could not previously walk in the daytime suddenly can**
- ♠ **A place of importance to the undead burns to the ground**

EIGHT MILESTONES

The director creates an interlude with any one character and a human who is not afraid of the undead. 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.

- ♣ **The human has selfish intentions**
- ♦ **The human wants a favor in exchange for something**
- ♥ **The human offers a favor**
- ♠ **The human has an undead fetish and wishes to become infected**

TWELVE MILESTONES

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

- ♣ **Wholesale slaughter**
- ♦ **Voices from the other side**
- ♥ **A sin is forgiven...**
- ♠ **(Incessant) Helicopter patrols**

OPENING VIGNETTES

Below are three 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.

Another helicopter flies over the city's dead zone, the third one in six hours. They must be looking for someone. Perhaps an infected has stepped from the shadows; made contact with an innocent person, or worse. Maybe an infected has escaped one of their death camps. What was that? Was that a shadow? Someone is coming.

News reports indicate that humans are winning the war against the infected, as the infection rate dwindles. While no cure has been found, the number of carriers has diminished to 2018 numbers. Meanwhile, the CDC has reported that large areas of the city will remain unlivable for the foreseeable future. Even the worst parts of the city may have to be abandoned for another 50 years. If this is true, some infected may be able to hideout in these areas, indefinitely.

Shots were fired at Columbus and Stone. A pack of four infected attempted to raid an animal shelter for food and were spotted by sentries before they could get in. Reports suggest that two of the infected were hit, though no bodies were retrieved. Anyone living in the area should remain indoors until the all-clear is given. This is the third time in six nights that someone has attempted to enter the animal shelter. The city council is meeting to discuss euthanizing all of the animals in order to starve out the infected.

VARIANTS

Below are three possible setup variants for advanced players or people uncomfortable with the topic of real-world faiths.

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

Five years ago the virus struck. There was no cure. 33% of Americans died overnight. Another 20% became infected and lingered for a few weeks before also dying. Within a month, nearly two-thirds of North and South America were gone. By the end of the year, the virus had spread to most of the industrialized world. Domesticated animals also became infected. With 1 in 108 people being completely immune and another 3 in 113 contracting the virus that wouldn't kill them, the world was forced to barricade itself against the infected. Those who miraculously avoided the virus were quarantined, but many infected were hunted down and killed. Over time, the world found equilibrium. But with the world population hanging at nearly 8% of its old numbers, things were very different now...

No one knew the truth behind the virus that was plaguing the poor. From the outside it looked like a TB outbreak — something for other people to deal with. People who didn't frequent the inner cities were spared. Eventually, most urbanites died from the virus or acquired inexplicable symptoms that didn't kill, but changed the host. The word zombie was thrown around on the internet and images surfaced of people with patches of dying skin. After a few weeks, people got tired of the news. It wasn't affecting them. It was just sensationalism. By the end of the year, the population of most inner cities fell to half. Those who were still alive and infected required flesh to sustain themselves. But they remained in the shadows, hiding from the forces which threatened their lives. People didn't go into certain places anymore, but conspiracy theorist still wrapped themselves up in the mystery of the 500+ sightings of 'zombies.' Rumor has it, the government is working on a cure, but they also say chemtrails aren't real. Who can you trust?

Detroit was abandoned six months ago. No one lives here but us. Sure, they try and bomb it once a month, but it's too big. Too scattered. There are too many hiding places for the infected. And if they don't find a cure for this, maybe we'll just live here forever.

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 lose 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 *The Lambs*, the zeitgeist is people who feel their faith is important above all other things.

ROLES



ANCHORITE

Names: Baal, Celestine, Mary, Monod

“I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for naught.”

The Anchorite is the oldest undead, having survived for many, inexplicable years. The Anchorite has lived in seclusion, paying penance for its sins, it now returns to the waking world in hopes of regaining its shattered humanity. But everything about this time is different. Wrong somehow. The world is both paranoid and safe, all at once. Are the living so different from you?

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Piece Together Fragments from the Past**
- ♦ **Indulge in Eternity**
- ♥ **Heal Someone Else, Return to Seclusion**
- ♠ **Remain a Slave to Your Sins (Until You Completely Repent)**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **They are Lucky to Know You**
- ♦ **A Capable Servant**
- ♥ **Memories of Love/Lust**
- ♠ **An Unbreakable (But Convenient) Bond**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you is the reason you stayed in seclusion so long? Why?**
- **Where have you lived for the past decade? What sin kept you in seclusion? Why have you emerged now?**

QUIRKS

- **Avoid eye contact, lest someone feel threatened**
- **Scratches away at skin, reflexively**
- **Speaks in a preachy tone, as if always lecturing**

ABILITIES

Cardinal Sins: Gain three drama points. You cannot join the next ensemble.

Living Library: Whenever you make things happen, you gain one free advantage. In addition, if any die roll result grants drama points, you gain one additional drama point.

Unrepentant: Whenever you bring harm to others, you may reroll one of your dice.

SCENES

Flashback Interlude

Fork*

Intercut

Interlude

Monologue

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

Flashback with two characters

Target player* makes a choice

Anything for 90 seconds

Two characters with a relationship

Deliver a speech in character

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Endure (Painful) Hunger >>

Enter a Church >>

Fall to Knees in Supplication >>

Pass on Legacy of Knowledge >>

Take a Human Life >>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

Body Shattered >>

Flashbacks of Persecution >>

Flesh Eaten from the Inside >>

Isolation >>

Suffer for Your Sins >>

FINALE

Regeneration

White Light (of Eternity)

Food for the Nest

Perpetual Undeath

Consumed by Fire

* Gain one drama point

CAMBER

Names: Jannah, Malik, Padurii, Talaash

“The sickness has made me grow. My heads. My head. My body. Even my heart. I wish I could retain this form when the cure comes. But I fear

The Camber is a massive undead ‘thing.’ Part human, part ghoul, and part slouching beast the Camber is a beast on the outside, but with the prescience of mind to be the nest’s anchor. The Camber does not stray far from the nest without a good reason.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Remove the Cancer that Harms the Nest**
- ♦ **Find Real Purpose in the Nest (Beyond this Empty Fate)**
- ♥ **Honor the Nest**
- ♠ **Take Command**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Poisonous and Manipulative**
- ♦ **A Loyal Servant**
- ♥ **Compassion/Respect**
- ♠ **Bootlicking (Of Which You are Ashamed)**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you came from a time when power meant something different? In what way?**
- **When did you last visit with the angel Ridwan (guardian of paradise)? What did she say to you?**

QUIRKS

- **Feeds only on innocent people**
- **Often hides face with hands**
- **Wrings hands until skin chafes and bleeds**

ABILITIES

Anchor: Gain three drama points. Choose one player to gain one drama point. Check off both of your flashback interlude scenes.

Beast: Once per game (after a scene is completed), you may interrupt play and direct a scene out of turn. This does not reset the turn order, nor does it skip your next turn as director.

Visions of Paradise: After completing a milestone, you may direct one flashback interlude (even if you have checked them all off).

SCENES

Ensemble

Flashback Interlude

Fork*

Intercut

Interlude

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

All characters present

Flashback with two characters

Target player* makes a choice

Anything for 90 seconds

Two characters with a relationship

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Bear Shame,
Beg for Forgiveness

>>

Direct another scene

Call Upon the Angels

>>

Gain two drama points

Establish Boundaries

>>

Gain one ability

Feed in Front of Others

>>

Give one trepidation

Grant a Want/Wish

>>

Remove one trepidation

LEVERAGE

TREPIDATION*

Decay (Inside Out)

>>

Stigmata

Humiliated Publicly

>>

Survive Judgment

Sins Boil Inside You

>>

Hand Drag You Down

Something Comes for You

>>

Ends of the Earth...

Voices of the Angels (Decry)

>>

False Prophet

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

HAVOC

Names: Asag, Regan, Song, Surgat

“I know what you thought, because I put that thought there. And now you can’t imagine ever think without wondering if your own thoughts are yours... or mine.”

The Havoc is a near-mindless creature. Its power stems from many places, including people’s fears, spellbooks, and superstitious traditions. It is possible for normal people to summon the Havoc, though it is another thing entirely to contain it. Because of the Havoc’s unstable nature, it is questionably the most powerful undead in the nest.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ Walk a Straight Line
- ♦ Trade This Body for Another
- ♥ Go One Day Without Crying
- ♠ Fight for the Prize

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ Crooked and Belabored
- ♦ Obedient and Respectful
- ♥ Narrow, But Maleable
- ♠ Acrid, But Recognizable

WORLD BUILDING

- Who among you is lying about who they are? Why? How do you know the truth? Who have you witnessed shape-changing?
- Why do you stay with the others if they are fake? When was the last time you trusted your own words?

QUIRKS

- Collects the fears of people and puts them in a little tinder box
- Stitches names into skin, like tattoos
- Writes down notes and codes in three dimensions, but on paper

ABILITIES

The Abyss: Whenever you complete a milestone, you may spend two drama points to give any character one trepidation.

Imp: Whenever you complete a milestone, steal one drama point from another character.

Unstable: Whenever you would suffer trepidation, you may spend three drama points to direct the next scene instead. This does not reset the turn order, nor does it skip your next turn as director.

SCENES

Flashback Monologue

Flashback Vignette

Fork*

Intercut

Interlude

Interrogation

Monologue

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

Flashback speech in character

Flashback action or moment

Target player* makes a choice

Anything for 90 seconds

Two characters with a relationship

Ask five questions

Deliver a speech in character

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Act Against Own Interest

Consume Still Living Flesh

Destroy a Church

Lie to Self

Turn Friend Against Friend

>> Direct another scene

>> Gain two drama points

>> Gain one ability

>> Give one trepidation

>> Remove one trepidation

LEVERAGE

TREPIDATION*

Death/Undeath

Sever Relationship

Shackled

Trust Becomes Twisted

Upside-Down, Inside-Out

>> Eyes Plucked From Head

>> Black and White World

>> Lobotomized

>> Lies Become Real

>> Wander for Eternity

FINALE

HOLLOW ONE

Names: Caine, Iku, Jaan, Saja

“Bereft of desire, a man acts with mind and body perfectly controlled. He relinquishes ownership of things he does not need, keeping only the bare necessities to maintain sustenance. Sinful reactions do not affect him.”

The Hollow One has already died and come back. It wasn't welcome on the other side. It was shunted back to this world of pain and violence. But. It has seen things. It has been to the place that no other has seen. It knows the true horror of eternal damnation and unlife in a way the others cannot understand.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Oblivion**
- ♦ **A Trail of Destruction**
- ♥ **To Be Overcome with Peace**
- ♠ **Revenge for What Was Done to You**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Inexplicable**
- ♦ **Convenient (For Now)**
- ♥ **Overly Protective**
- ♠ **Brothers in Arms**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you dug you out of the Earth and gave 'this' meaning?**
- **Why do you believe you can be made whole again? What if you can't? What form of salvation will take its place?**

QUIRKS

- **Chest cavity is crushed**
- **Eyes are missing (but can still see)**
- **Still wearing the clothes you were buried in**

ABILITIES

Craven: Gain two drama points. You may check off two of your interludes to gain two additional drama points.

The Empty: Once per game, when you run out of drama points, you may suffer one trepidation to gain four drama points. If this would trigger the endgame, the game continues.

From the Grave: Gain one drama point. Once per game, after an ensemble that another player directed ends, you may immediately direct one non-interlude scene out of turn. This does not reset the turn order, nor does it skip your next turn as director.

SCENES

Flashback Vignette

Fork*

Interlude

Interrogation

Monologue

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

Flashback action or moment

Target player* makes a choice

Two characters with a relationship

Ask five questions

Deliver a speech in character

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Confront Your Murderer

>>

Drowned/Pulled Under

>>

Forgive Someone

>>

Stand Upon Blessed Steps

>>

Wear a New Skin

>>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

Black Hand of Doom Beckons

>>

Death/Undeath

>>

A Memory Returns (Painfully)

>>

Reclaim the Grave's Dark Soil

>>

The Other Side Calls

>>

* Gain one drama point

FINALE

No Finale

Eternal Damnation

Unholy Blessings

Hunters and Priest Descend

Echoes in Your Ears

MAGOG

Names: Japheth, Nemed, Redd, Yajuj

“Damned to be free.”

The Magog eats the flesh of the long dead. This is different from other undead, who eat the flesh of the living before they rot. The Magog haunts quiet places and keeps its distance from humanity. But when forced to fight, it can easily overcome a few unarmed humans. The Magog has subsisted on dead flesh for so long, however, can it ever be clean?

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Swim Against the Deluge**
- ♦ **Open That One Box (You Know the One)**
- ♥ **Recount the Steps to the Place Where it All Went Wrong**
- ♠ **[Secret] Choke the Life From Another**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **Convenience That is Underlined by Opposing Goals**
- ♦ **Lending a Hand When You Can (When You Want)**
- ♥ **Shared a Shelter Once, Years Ago**
- ♠ **Never Talking Again About What Happened That Night**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you leaves rotting carcasses behind for you to eat?**
- **What two numbers have been branded into your flesh? What do they mean? Do you know? Does anyone else?**

QUIRKS

- **Carries a wallet filled with receipts and old photos**
- **Picky about eating fat and sinew**
- **Repeatedly visit an abandoned circus but doesn't know why**

ABILITIES

Filth: After directing a vignette, you may spend one drama point to immediately direct any scene that is not on your list.

Razor Claws: The next two times you bring harm to others, you gain three free advantages.

Reclusive: Each time you direct an ensemble, you may direct an interlude instead. Uninvited characters cannot join interludes you direct.

SCENES

Ensemble

Flashback Ensemble

Fork*

Interlude

Interrogation

Vignette

DESCRIPTIONS

All characters present

Flashback with all characters

Target player* makes a choice

Two characters with a relationship

Ask five questions

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Connect with the Living

Feed

Feed Again

Feed on Self

Learn to Go Without

>>

>>

>>

>>

>>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

An Abattoir of Flies

Death/Undeath

Go Hungry

Ravens Gather (In Ill Omen)

Supplication

>>

>>

>>

>>

>>

FINALE

The Long Line of Judgment

Broken Glass

Hammers and Nails

Prometheus' Curse

Scratching at the Skin

* Gain one drama point

THORN

Names: Gala, Nephi, Peter, Saul

“My Lord knows every word spoken in the sky and the earth.”

The Thorn still believes in a higher calling. It still believes that whatever being in paradise remains, she has a plan. The Thorn not only believes this to be true, it knows this to be truth. It believes the end times are upon us and that salvation is within our grasp.

OBJECTIVES

- ♣ **Ascend to the Throne of Judgment**
- ♦ **Divinity**
- ♥ **To Join the Others in Paradise**
- ♠ **Shepherd the Weak into the Arms of Paradise**

RELATIONSHIPS

- ♣ **The Downward Slide**
- ♦ **Servile and Contemptuous in Your Disregard for the Status Quo**
- ♥ **Capricious**
- ♠ **(Physically) Abusive**

WORLD BUILDING

- **Who among you also believes?**
- **What have you done to prepare for salvation?
Who are you taking with you?**

QUIRKS

- **Carries a staff with a bronze snake head**
- **Knows the name of every person its ever killed**
- **Quotes from the book of names**

ABILITIES

Kneeling Before Judgement: The next time you suffer trepidation, you may check off one milestone as well. If this would trigger the endgame, the game continues.

The Kingdom: When you direct an ensemble, no other players may roll dice.

Voice of the Djin: Once per game, you may spend one drama point to reroll all of your dice after a roll.

SCENES

Ensemble

Flashback Interlude

Fork*

Intercut

Monologue

Vignette

All characters present

Flashback with two characters

Target player* makes a choice

Anything for 90 seconds

Deliver a speech in character

Narrate an action or moment

MILESTONES

Channel the Voice of Paradise >>

Kill for Pleasure >>

Make Preparations
for the End of Times >>

Make Someone Your Thrall >>

Reveal the Truth to 'Mortals' >>

LEVERAGE

Direct another scene

Gain two drama points

Gain one ability

Give one trepidation

Remove one trepidation

TREPIDATION*

Branded With the Mark >>

Cut from the Nest >>

Eternal Suffering >>

Hunted >>

Summoned to Judgment >>

FINALE

Salvation

Standing Before the Throne

Eternal Suffering

A Voice Beyond Ages

Every Word Spoken...

* 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

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

- 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.

TREPIDATION

Gain one drama point at the end of narrating trepidation.

NOTES

DESIGNER NOTES

Why undead? Why?

Why on earth would I write a game about being undead and trying to find salvation, when so many games already explore the undead?

I wish I had a good answer. But the truth is, when I started working on this, I wasn't thinking of *Vampire*[™] and *Wraith*[™]. They weren't on my mind. I was doing unrelated research and the term "of the flesh" appeared. The idea of playing sentient zombies hit me and the game took off.

However, once I got started designing the roles, I realized that zombies weren't the answer. People have too many preconceived notions about zombies. And I always want to explore something different.

So. It became important to name the roles in ways that didn't scream walker, runner, stalker, and so on. I needed to explore roles that were unconventional. And with the exception of the Havoc, I think I have. The Anchorite is certainly my favorite.

If I'm allowed to pick a favorite.

But the Magog is also really cool. None of them fit into a box. And with a range of milestones and trepidations that look nothing like *The Lambs* or *Odin's Eye*, I'm pretty happy with this.

Now someone just needs to mix and match the characters from all five games into one massive story.

Enjoy.

— jim pinto

INDEX

ABILITIES.....	23
ADVANCED RULES	67
BRINGING HARM TO OTHERS.....	42, 88
CHARACTERS	9, 18, 24, 26, 74
DEATH	45
DICE.....	41
DRAMA POINTS.....	37
ENDING THE GAME.....	40, 60
ENSEMBLE	49
EPILOGUE	63
FINALE.....	63
FLASHBACK	50
FLASHBACK RESOLUTION	66
FORK.....	51
GAMEMASTER.....	65
GETTING STARTED	5
GETTING WHAT YOU WANT	43, 88
INTERCUT	51
INTERLUDE.....	52
INTERROGATION	54
LEVERAGE.....	31
MAKING THINGS HAPPEN	44, 89
MILESTONES.....	29, 47, 69
MONOLOGUE	56
NPCS	45, 66
OBJECTIVES.....	10, 20
OPTIONS.....	64
OPENING SCENES	57, 68
PLOT TWIST.....	59
QUICKGUIDE.....	6
QUIRKS	14, 23
REFERENCE SHEET	90
RELATIONSHIPS.....	11, 21
ROLES	9, 19, 74
SCENE TYPES	47
STORY MILESTONES	69
TREPIDATION	32
VARIANTS	71
VIGNETTE	58
WORLD BUILDING.....	12, 22