

FREEBOOTING VENUS

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A hundred million years ago, Venus was not the toxic hell that it is today. It was a world green and blue, alive, Terra's sister. FREEBOOTING VENUS is fun, freewheeling fantasy adventure on this ancient and marvelous world.

Join the playtest at lumpley.com/index.php/freebootingvenus.

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Wherein we oversee the labor and efforts of our networks and hosts of laborers, balancing profit with risk, loss with opportunity.

ATTENDANT MAGICS

NAME:

Kind:
Details:

NAME:

Kind:
Details:

NAME:

Kind:
Details:

NAME:

Kind:
Details:

I AM...

DETAILS, DOODLES,
& APPARENT FACTS

LODGINGS
()
RATE

UNEXAMINED TREASURE ()

TREASURE

- I have debts.
- I've saved ahead.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT
 — I add +1 to a stat (max +3).
 — I gain a new skill.

I AM...

STATS & MOVES

BOLD

Demand something of someone
Intrude somewhere

○

PATIENT

Recover, regroup & prepare

○

QUICK

Interrupt someone
Size someone up

○

VIOLENT

Attack someone
Fight with someone

○

SKILLS

BAD EXPERIENCES

○○○ — I was at my enemy's mercy.

○○○ — My blood flowed freely.

○○○ — I was dazed and fell senseless.

○○○ — I feared for my life.

○○○ — I was forced into perilous retreat.

○○○ — I was killed.

○○○ — I was left for dead.

○○○ — My soul was battered and torn.

○○○ — I was terribly wounded.

○○○ — I was thrown sprawling.

○○○○○○○○○○ — Special.

WEAPON

HARM

WEAPON

HARM

ARMOR

ARMOR

EXPERIENCE

ADVENTURE

I've indulged my appetites well and enthusiastically. ○○○○○○

I've helped another PC accomplish something notable. ○○○○○○

I've kept another PC from committing an atrocity. ○○○○○○

I've experienced life on one of Sol's other habitable worlds. ○○○

I've entered living into the world of death, and returned. ○○○

Have you been killed? For now, continue play as a ghost! >>

GLORY

I've slain a monster. ○○○○○○

I've recruited a warrior to follow me into battle. ○○○○○○

Leading a war-band? Create it and record its experience! >>

I've reclaimed fame and glory that is mine by right. ○○○○○○

I've visited gleefully bloody revenge upon my enemies. ○○○○○○

I've visited horrifyingly absolute revenge upon my enemies. ○○○○○○

I've been acclaimed champion and protector of a city-state. ○○○

I've brought peace and abundance to a troubled city-state. ○○○

I've accomplished momentous deeds, but unknown, unacclaimed. ○○○

I've thrown down a tyrannical legate, governor, or sovereign. ○○○

I've seized rule of a city and thrown down all who oppose me. ○○○

Seized a city? Create your city-state and record its experience! >>

MAGIC

I've learned a new spell or bound a new ghost to my service. ○○○

Pursuing magic? Create your grimoire and record your experience! >>

I've found a suitable site for my wizard's seclusion. ○

I've established the physical and magical structures of my seclusion. ○

Founded a seclusion? Create it and record its experience! >>

PROSPERITY

I've overcome this inconvenient state of abject poverty. ○

I've established and improved my estate. ○○○○○○

I've cultivated my estate and enjoyed its bounty. ○○○○○○

I've married well. ○○○

I've married rich. ○○○

I've invested in matters of custom and trade. ○○○○○○

I've cultivated my interests and enjoyed their returns. ○○○○○○

I've seized control of a mercantile enterprise. ○○○

I've seized control of a criminal enterprise. ○○○

Seized control of an enterprise? Create it and record its experience! >>

TRANSCENDENCE

I've abandoned the city and all my endeavors, duties and plans, and set forth at liberty with my friends. ○○○○○○

I've achieved perfect philosophical complacency, and no longer heed my vulgar and futile corporeal urges. ○

I've achieved perfect philosophical complacency, and no longer deny or restrain my native and instinctual urges. ○

I've transcended the biological, practical, philosophical, and moral boundaries of my heretofore mortal existence. ○

CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

To create your character, give yourself a name, stats, skills, belongings, and lodgings. Think just a bit about your future, your present, and your past. If you have already played “Hand to Mouth in the City of Nephthys,” use your existing character as a guide

Your character is friends with the other PCs. Make sure you make your character someone who can be somebody’s friend.

YOUR NAME

Make up a name.

The easier it is to say and remember, the easier it’ll be to say and remember!

You can use any naming system you like. Make up a given name, a family name, a patronym or matronym, a sobriquet, an honorific, a trade name, an appellation; whatever sounds good to you.

YOUR STATS

For your stats, choose one of the following sets, and assign the modifiers to your stats. Assign one modifier to each stat, but you choose which to which.

- *Set one:* +2, +2, +1, -1.
- *Set two:* +2, +2, 0, 0.
- *Set three:* +2, +1, +1, 0.
- *Set four:* +1, +1, +1, +1.

Bold, including brave, brash, forward, courageous, passionate, energetic, and fiery. Your Bold moves are to DEMAND SOMETHING OF SOMEONE, and to INTRUDE SOMEWHERE YOU’RE NOT WELCOME, ALLOWED, OR EXPECTED. The GM might call for you to make a Bold save when you must overcome fear, reluctance, good sense, or a meaningful injuncture against you.

Patient, including long-suffering, steady, reliable, strong, and enduring. Your Patient move is to RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE. The GM might call for you to make a Patient save when you must keep your head under duress or keep your strength against illness, pain, or injury.

Quick, including quick-witted, sharp, perceptive, alert, clever, and ready. Your Quick moves are to INTERRUPT SOMEONE ELSE’S EFFORTS and to SIZE SOMEONE UP. The GM might call for you to make a Quick save when you need your wits or your reaction time to save or protect you.

Violent, including unflinching, ruthless, ferocious, aggressive, impatient, and brutal. Your Violent moves are to ATTACK SOMEONE HELPLESS OR UNSUSPECTING and to FIGHT WITH SOMEONE. The GM might call for you to make a Violent save when you must muster your strength or your rage for the struggle to come.

Your stat modifier includes every component of the capacity for action and reaction, physical, psychological, and all.

Consider a modifier of 0 to be the average for human beings. A modifier of +1 is very good, a modifier of +2 is exceptional, and a modifier of +3 would represent the greatest human capacity. A modifier of -1 is weak, a modifier of -2 would be suitable for children or people otherwise frail, and a modifier of -3 would represent some kind of utter incapacity.

YOUR SKILLS

For your skills, choose two of the following:

- *Grace*
- *Instincts*
- *Ideology*
- *Necromancy*
- *Reputation*
- *Stealth*
- *Sword-binding*
- *Warfare*

There are 14 skills altogether, but for character creation, limit yourself to these 8. The other 6 are available for character development.

Grace, the social arts of beauty, dignity, conversation, and manners.

- *When you DEMAND SOMETHING OF SOMEONE, if you choose to do so graciously, you can add 1 to the roll.*
- *You begin play with treasure: fine clothing & jewelry.*

Instincts, the natural skill of reading people and situations.

- *When you SIZE SOMEONE UP, you can ask 1 more question than the roll gives you.*
- *When you RECOVER, REGROUP AND PREPARE, if you choose the option to study the situation, you automatically do so quickly as well.*

Ideology, philosophy & science, the study of facts, knowledge, ideas, suppositions, theories, and guesses.

- *Between sessions, you can peruse the “IDEOLOGIES, PHILOSOPHIES, AND SCIENCES” booklet, and feel free to bring it into your character’s conversations as you like.*
- *You begin play with treasure: a holy or scientific text.*

Necromancy, the magical art of dealing with the ghosts of the dead.

- *When you RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE, you can choose as an option to contact the world of death and the ghosts that dwell there. See “Acts of Necromancy” for details.*
- *You begin play with a ghostly guardian or tutor.*

Reputation, the art of making your name.

- *When you DEMAND SOMETHING OF SOMEONE, if you choose to bring your name, fame, stature and glory into it, you can add 1 to the roll.*
- *Before play begins, mark one experience on your character under “Glory.” Choose from the first five listed.*

Stealth, the skills of moving silently, forcing locks, easing doors, keeping still in hiding, and creeping up on people.

- *When you INTRUDE SOMEWHERE, if you choose to do it by sneaking in, you can add 1 to the roll.*
- *When you ATTACK SOMEONE HELPLESS, if they aren’t aware of your presence before you make the attack, you can add 1 to the roll.*
- *You begin play with 1 unexamined treasure.*

Sword-binding, the most advanced skill of personal combat (we would call it “fencing.”) When you catch your enemy’s weapon with your own, you can both judge how your opponent is about to move and also redirect your opponent’s strength.

- *When you FIGHT WITH SOMEONE, you can spend 1 more than the roll gives you. (Despite the name, this applies no matter your weapons, not just to swords.)*
- *You begin play with a weapon of your choice.*

YOUR BELONGINGS

For your belongings, you start with the things your skills give you, and then choose two more:

- *A weapon*
- *Armor*
- *A treasure*
- *A spell tablet*
- *A ghostly guardian or tutor*

For a **weapon**, choose one:

- *A crescent-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A feather-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A flame-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A leaf-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A sickle-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A straight sword (2 Harm)*
- *An axe (2 Harm)*
- *A hammer (2 Harm)*
- *A knapped stone cutter (2 Harm)*
- *A long knife (2 Harm)*
- *A skull club (2 Harm)*
- *A spear (2 Harm)*
- *A bow & arrows (2 Harm at range)*
- *A crossbow & bolts (2 Harm at range)*
- *A javelin (2 Harm at range)*
- *A spear-thrower (2 Harm at range)*
- *A stone-thrower (2 Harm at range)*
- *A throwing stick (2 Harm at range)*

For **light armor**, choose one:

- *A bossed vest (1 Armor)*
- *A hide apron (1 Armor)*
- *A hide coat (1 Armor)*
- *A jack of leather (1 Armor)*
- *A jack of layered linen or silk (1 Armor)*
- *A splinted vest (1 Armor)*

Wearing light armor makes you look serious, dangerous, and prepared. Wearing heavy armor makes you look like a soldier at war.

For **a treasure**, choose one:

- *An amulet of hammered copper*
- *A box of spices, some quite rare*
- *A jeweled knife (1 Harm)*
- *A naming-tablet of carved ivory*
- *A polished jasminite figure*
- *Weatherproof coat and boots*

For **a spell tablet**, roll two dice and choose between them:

1. *Acrid Clouds*
2. *Companion Creature*
3. *Plasmic Vision*
4. *Screeching Stone Darts*
5. *Transfer Wounds*
6. *The Wizard's Candle*

List the spell on your character, as an “Attendant Magic,” with a rating of 2. If you roll doubles, that’s the spell you get, you don’t get to choose, but list it with a rating of 3.

See “Spellcasting” for details.

For **a ghostly guardian or tutor**, choose its two duties and the nature of its service to you. Name the ghost. List it on your character as an “Attendant Magic,” with a modifier of +1.

Ghostly duties:

- *It alerts you to danger or opportunity*
- *It assists you in battle*
- *It defends you from magical attack*
- *It distracts and dismays your enemies*
- *It queries the souls of those around you*
- *It truthfully advises you on all matters*

The nature of its service to you:

- *It owes you service until you accomplish a particular achievement.*
- *It owes you service as long as you continue to do a particular thing for it.*
- *It serves you because you hold something over it.*

See “Necromancy” for details.

YOUR LODGINGS

You begin play in 5th-rate lodgings. Roll three dice and assign one to your lodgings themselves, one to their appointments, and one to your fellow lodgers. You choose which die to assign to which.

Your **lodgings** are:

1. *A drafty garret in a lodging-house*
2. *A half-chamber in a public bunkhouse*
3. *A let-room in a private home*
4. *The side-room of a friendly merchantry*
5. *Stolen rooms in a vacant dwelling*
6. *The worst room of a gracious inn*

Their **appointments** are:

1. *Access to bolt-holes and sewerways*
2. *Board at a common table, included*
3. *A land[lady] who asks no questions*
4. *Little rent and modest protection dues*
5. *Neighbors who keep watch and signal strangers' approach*
6. *Proximity to a benevolent deity's temple*

You **share** them with:

1. *An ascetic priest[ess], stern and silent*
2. *A changeable assortment of vagabonds*
3. *A hardworking family with many young*
4. *An infestation of whistling bats*
5. *A smoke-drinker, who falls into fits*
6. *A thief whose livelihood attracts enemies*

YOUR DEBTS & SAVINGS

Roll 2 dice and add your Patient. On 10+, mark that you’ve saved ahead. On 6 or less (a “miss”), mark that you have debts. On 7–9, don’t mark either.

YOUR FUTURE

Take a look at EXPERIENCE on your character. The object of the game is to mark as many of those experiences as you can and want, and to help the other players do the same.

You’ll mark some of them opportunistically, almost as an aside, but others you’ll have to plan for and fight to achieve. Consider now which you might pursue, and feel free to bring the topic into any conversation your character has.

YOUR PRESENT & YOUR PAST

Whenever anyone asks you anything about your character at present—your words, actions, demeanor, or appearance—it’s your job to answer them. If you don’t already know the answer, make one up. Consider your answers to be (more or less) binding. You can list the ones you think you might forget on your character as “Details, Doodles, & Apparent Facts.”

No one has quite the same right to know your character’s past. When someone asks you about it, you can answer them if you like, you can ask them for their input or their guess, you can put them off until you’ve had time to consider it, or you can tell them to mind their own business.

Nevertheless, always feel free to ask the other players anything about their characters that interests you.

GAMEPLAY

Once everyone’s finished creating characters, it’s the GM’s job to kick off gameplay.

BEGINNING A SESSION

At the beginning of the session, the GM tells you where you are and what’s happening, asking you for any details they require.

GM: see “The GM” for rules and details.

Other players: that section isn’t secret, so you can read it if you want, but you also don’t need to know what it says in order to play well.

DURING THE SESSION

During the session, say what your character does and says. You can have your character do—or try to do—whatever seems best to you, but remember two things.

First, be on the lookout for treasure. Obtaining treasure is how you secure the time and opportunity to expand your skills, buy new equipment, and better your state in this world.

Second, the object of the game is to fill in as many of your experience bubbles as you can and want. Whenever you aren’t sure what to do, look through the list of experiences and orient yourself.

AT THE END OF THE SESSION

- Examine your TREASURE, if you’ve obtained any.
- Mark your EXPERIENCES, if you’ve had any.

DEMAND SOMETHING

When you demand something of someone, roll Bold.

On any hit, they'll do it, but only if...

On 10+, the GM chooses 1.

On 7-9, the GM chooses 2, and it's only if both of them.

- ...*You have and exercise your leverage over them.*
- ...*You do ___ for them in return.*
- ...*You threaten them with violence.*
- ...*You can buy them out.*
- ...*You deceive them.*
- ...*You owe them for it.*

On a miss, be prepared for the worst.

If another PC helps you, they can do it by doing the thing(s) instead of you.

INTRUDE SOMEWHERE

When you try to intrude somewhere you're not welcome, allowed, or expected, roll Bold.

On any hit, you're in.

On 10+, you have your liberty, unless or until you draw attention to yourself or decide to depart again.

On 7-9, you have just a moment before you must leave again or be caught out.

On a miss, be prepared for the worst.

If another PC is in a position to help you, they can choose to buy you some time, turning a miss into a 7-9 or a 7-9 into a 10+.

RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE

When you take the time to recover, regroup, and prepare, roll Patient.

On 10+, choose 3.

On 7-9, choose 2.

The GM can narrow your choice.

- *The ongoing effects of any bad experience come to an end.*
- *You regroup with your allies. Compare experiences, if you like.*
- *You study the situation and make a plan. Ask the GM what you're able to determine, and declare your plan.*
- *See to your equipment, supplies, defenses, stores. Ask the GM their current state.*
- *Use a spell tablet to wrest a spell from its native world. See "Spellcasting" for details.*
- *Your skills may give you additional options. See their descriptions.*
- ...*And you do it quickly.*

On a miss, be prepared for the worst.

If another PC helps you, both of you roll, and both of you get the effect of the better roll.

INTERRUPT SOMEONE

When you try to interrupt someone else's efforts, roll Quick.

On 10+, you decisively interrupt them. They're frustrated, startled, thwarted, and/or dismayed.

On 7-9, you block and confront them. They choose: back down, or fight back.

On a miss, be prepared for the worst.

Other PCs can't help you, but can of course also try to interrupt the same person at the same time. All of you must roll at once, and you act in order from highest roll to lowest, with ties simultaneous.

SIZE SOMEONE UP

When you take a quick moment to look someone over and size them up, or look something over and figure it out, roll Quick.

On 10+, ask 3 questions.

On 7-9, ask 2.

- *Where are you strong and secure, and where are you weak or vulnerable?*
- *What do you intend to do?*
- *How might I be able to get you to do ___?*
- *Are you hiding anything, keeping anything back, or trying to deceive me somehow?*
- *Or ask a question of your own. If the other player chooses to answer it, it stands; otherwise, retract it and ask one of the above instead.*

On a miss, ask 1 question anyway, but be prepared for the worst.

Their player must answer your questions truthfully. These are things that your character has noticed or deduced about them.

If you choose, you may hold your questions. Conduct your conversation as you like, and when you choose to ask a question, ask it then.

Since this is a process of personal acuity and judgment, other PCs can't help you. They can size the same person up themselves, of course, and you might compare observations afterward.

ATTACK SOMEONE HELPLESS

When you attack someone helpless, unaware, or unsuspecting, roll Violent.

On 10+, inflict harm per weapon and armor. You choose the bad experience.

On 7-9, inflict harm per weapon and armor. Your victim chooses the bad experience.

On a miss, be prepared for the worst.

If another PC helps you, but does not strike a blow of their own, they can add 1 to the harm you inflict.

FIGHT WITH SOMEONE

When you fight with someone, there's an exchange of harm. You and your enemy both roll Violent.

On 10+, spend 3. Spend blind, without knowing how your opponent is spending theirs.

On 7-9, spend 2.

On a miss, spend 1.

- *For each 1 you spend to strike hard, inflict +1 harm.*
- *For each 1 you spend to defend yourself, gain +1 armor.*
- *For each 1 that you spend to seize the advantage, you better your chance to win.*
- *Certain skills or weapons may give you additional options. See their descriptions.*

Both of you reveal how you've spent. Exchange harm per weapons and armor, plus your expenditures.

If you spent more to seize the advantage than your enemy, you get to choose both your own bad experience and your enemy's. If it's a tie, you each choose your own.

If the exchange isn't decisive, go into another round, or decide mutually with your enemy which of you, or both, will cede the matter and depart the field.

If another PC helps you by joining the fight on your side, they also roll and spend. See "Group Fights" for details.

If they help you in some other way, you get 1 more to spend, but they spend it for you. They should spend it in the way that they feel best represents their help.

THE RULES

SKILLS

Not all of the skills are available during character creation, but all are available during character development.

Grace, the social arts of beauty, dignity, conversation, and manners.

• When you DEMAND SOMETHING OF SOMEONE, if you choose to do so graciously, you can add 1 to the roll.

Haught, the social skill of declaring your own worth and demanding obedience from those inferior to you.

• When you DEMAND SOMETHING OF SOMEONE, if your lodgings are of better rating than theirs, or if you own an estate and they do not, you can add 1 to the roll.

Instincts, the natural skill of reading people and situations.

• When you SIZE SOMEONE UP, you can ask 1 more question than the roll gives you.

• When you RECOVER, REGROUP AND PREPARE, if you choose to study the situation, you automatically do so quickly, for free.

Ideology, philosophy & science, the study of facts, knowledge, ideas, suppositions, theories, and guesses.

• Between sessions, you can peruse the “IDEOLOGIES, PHILOSOPHIES, AND SCIENCES” booklet, and feel free to bring it into your character’s conversations as you like.

Necromancy, the magical art of dealing with the ghosts of the dead.

• When you RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE, you can choose as an option to contact the world of death and the ghosts that dwell there. See “Acts of Necromancy” for details.

Reputation, the art of making your name.

• When you DEMAND SOMETHING OF SOMEONE, if you choose to bring your name, fame, stature and glory into it, you can add 1 to the roll.

Stealth, the skills of moving silently, forcing locks, easing doors, keeping still in hiding, and creeping up on people.

• When you INTRUDE SOMEWHERE, if you choose to do it by sneaking in, you can add 1 to the roll.

• When you ATTACK SOMEONE HELPLESS, if they aren’t aware of your presence before you make the attack, you can add 1 to the roll.

Sword-binding, the most advanced skill of personal combat (we would call it “fencing.”) When you catch your enemy’s weapon with your own, you can both judge how your opponent is about to move and also redirect your opponent’s strength.

• When you FIGHT WITH SOMEONE, you can spend 1 more than the roll gives you. (Despite the name, this applies no matter your weapons, not just to swords.)

Warfare, the skills of soldiers, war-captains, strategists and generals.

• When you DEMAND SOMETHING OF SOMEONE, if they’re warriors who follow you as a war-band, you can add 1 to the roll.

Wizardry, the magical art of spellcasting.

• When you RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE, you can choose as an option to resettle an unsettled spell.

• Wizardry is also a prerequisite for all the endeavors of a wizard in your library, laboratory, seclusion, or enclave.

GOOD EXPERIENCES

At the end of every session, look over the lists of experiences on your character and any other sheets you’ve got, like your estate or your wizard’s seclusion. Think back over the events of the session, and mark a bubble for any experiences you’ve now had.

The object of the game is to mark as many experiences as you can and want, and to help your fellow players to do the same. If you’ve marked all that you can and want, congratulations! You’ve won FREEBOOTING VENUS. You can keep playing in order to help your friends to win, create a new character to pursue different experiences, or end the game and play something else instead.

ROLLS, MOVES, & SAVES

There’s rolling & choosing, rolling & assigning, rolling moves, and rolling saves.

ROLL & CHOOSE

Roll your dice—two dice unless the rule tells you otherwise—and choose one of them. You can read both results before you decide which one to choose.

ROLL & ASSIGN

Roll your dice—usually three dice but it might be some other number—and choose one of them to assign to each table. You can read all the results before you decide which to choose.

MOVES

Roll two dice and add your stat. A result of 10+ is a strong hit, a result of 7–9 is a weaker hit, and a result of 6 or less is a miss. The text of the move tells you which stat to add and how to interpret the result.

Generally you should feel free, at any point in play, to declare that you’re making a move, and which move you’re making. The only limit is that it must make sense as something your character could conceivably do at that moment.

SAVES

Roll two dice and add your stat. The GM calls for you to make the save and tells you which stat to add. Most saves are “save to avoid” on Quick, “save to endure” on Patient, “save to escape” on Bold, or “save to notice” on Quick, but the GM can improvise others freely.

It’s the GM’s job to call for saves and judge their results, but you’re allowed to ask for a save if you think it’s to your benefit to roll one.

There are two kinds: easy saves and hard saves. You’re entitled to know which one you’re rolling, so hold onto the dice and ask.

For an easy save, a result of 7+ is a successful save and a result of 6 or less is a failed save. A result of 10+ might give you an extra advantage or bonus going forward, at the GM’s option.

For a hard save, a result of 10+ is a successful save and a result of 9 or less is a failed save. A result of 7–9 might mitigate your failure in some way, at the GM’s option.

Examples of saves that you can expect, on occasion, to roll:

- Save to avoid being burned.
- Save to avoid being caught out in the open.
- Save to avoid a falling stone, crashing door, or charging beast.
- Save to break off an engagement that has turned against you.
- Save to endure pain without flinching or crying out.
- Save to carry weight without dropping it.
- Save to endure hunger.
- Save to escape someone’s unwanted pursuit.
- Save to hold perfectly still until danger is past.
- Save to hold your breath as long as you must.
- Save to lead a pursuer on a chase to a destination of your choice.
- Save to notice a slowly-developing change in your environment.
- Save to notice something out of place in a familiar space.

INFLECTING & SUFFERING HARM

When you strike someone, you inflict Harm equal to your weapon's listed Harm, minus your foe's listed Armor, plus and minus any modifiers from your or their skills and moves. The same when someone strikes you: you suffer harm equal to your foe's weapon's Harm, minus your own Armor, plus and minus modifiers.

BAD EXPERIENCES

For each 1 Harm you suffer, you have a bad experience.

Normally when you suffer harm, the move, your skill, or another rule tells you who chooses the bad experiences you have, you or your attacker. If the rules leave it unspecified, or contradict one another, then everyone chooses their own bad experiences.

Very often, who chooses your bad experiences is more important than how many bad experiences you have. When you have the option, you might prefer to suffer more harm in order to choose your own bad experiences for yourself, and to impose the bad experience you prefer upon your enemy.

DUPLICATE BAD EXPERIENCES

When you suffer more than 1 Harm, you have a different bad experience for each 1 Harm. So whoever's choosing, you or your attacker, must choose different bad experiences.

Furthermore, before you can have the same bad experience a second time, you must have at least five different bad experiences. And before you can have the same bad experience a third time, you must have at least five different bad experiences twice.

The rule is easy to follow: On your character, the bad experience bubbles are in columns. Before you can mark a bubble in the second column, just make sure you've marked 5 bubbles in the first column, and before you mark a bubble in the third column, just make sure you've marked 5 bubbles in the second.

"Special" bad experiences are an exception to all of these rules. They come from monsters' and other enemies' special abilities, and you can have as many of them in a row as you happen to have.

NPCS' BAD EXPERIENCES

When a monster or an NPC suffers harm, they too have bad experiences. However, instead of having one bad experience for each harm they suffer, they have only one bad experience, and the more harm they've suffered, the worse it must be.

Simply choose their bad experience from the appropriate list.

GROUP FIGHTS

When more than two people fight, they all make the move, roll, and spend blind.

- If you spent the most to seize the advantage, you choose bad experiences for *everyone*. If you tie for most, then you and they choose your own bad experiences, and now whoever spent second-most chooses for everyone else. In case of a second tie, those tied choose their own, and third-most chooses for everyone remaining, etc.

- You strike one enemy of your choice. For each 1 that you spent to strike hard, you can choose to attack an additional enemy, *or* you add +1 harm to all of your attacks. So spending 3 to strike hard means that you can strike a single enemy at +3 harm, 4 enemies at no bonus to harm, or anything in between.

- For each 1 that you spent to defend yourself, you gain +1 armor against all attack against you.

- To determine bad experiences, subtract your armor from each attack against you individually, then sum the harm that remains.

- For NPCs, the GM can choose to roll and spend for each, or to have any number of them act as helpers instead, spending 1 more on their allies' behalf.

SPELLCASTING

Spellcasting is an uncertain endeavor. Undertake it, if you choose to do so, informedly.

Before you can cast a spell, you must wrest it from its native plasmic world and compel it to take residence in your brain. You may hold it in your brain until you need cast it. To cast it, you expel it forcibly from your brain, which process it necessarily finds disconcerting. It expresses its pique by creating the spell's bizarre effect, and then departs back to its own world to console itself. You must wrest it forth again before you can cast it again.

A spell tablet is a text that describes the spell, its nature and native plasmic residence, the appropriate methods to use to draw it forth, and the psychic leverage you must apply in order to do so. If you have a spell tablet, when you RECOVER, REGROUP AND PREPARE, you can choose as an option to follow its instructions and thereby wrest the spell from its home and install it in your brain.

Until you have established your grimoire, you can have at most four attendant magics, spells, ghosts, curses, magical items, in sum. If have four already, this spell must displace one of them. Roll dice to determine which one. It departs, returning to its native world, passing through the jasminite gates, evaporating into the atmosphere, or becoming abruptly inert.

When you cast a spell, roll and choose from the listed exceptions. Roll dice equal to the spell tablet's rating on your character.

If you don't like your roll, you can change any die to whatever number you choose, but *in addition*, the spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.

When a spell becomes unsettled, reduce its tablet's rating by 1 until you're able to resettle it, which requires the Wizardry skill. If it becomes so unsettled that you reduce its tablet's rating to 0, the tablet is no longer of any use to you or to anyone else; the spell simply will not answer to it anymore.

Though you may begin play with a spell tablet, and though you may find or acquire others thereafter, until you develop the Wizardry skill you can't resettle a spell if it becomes unsettled, establish your grimoire or found your seclusion, nor indeed pursue any of the endeavors of a true wizard. See the Wizardry skill for details.

See "The Spells" for spell listings.

ACTS OF NECROMANCY

When you RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE, you can choose as an option to contact the world of death and the ghosts that dwell there. You can choose to open your plasmic senses to the dead around you; to call upon a ghost by name or token to come forth from the world of death and enter into a compact with you; or to contend with a ghost already manifest and compel it to obey.

OPENING YOUR PLASMIC SENSES

When you open your plasmic senses, you can see and hear any ghosts present. If you choose to address a ghost, it can hear you.

CALLING UPON A GHOST BY NAME

When you know a ghost's name or have a token of its former life, it need not be present for you to call upon it. Hold the token before you or pronounce its name aloud, and call upon it to come forth from the world of death and attend to you.

Ask the GM which of the three customary responses it gives you:

- "I hear, and come to you. Do you compel me, or do you offer me a bargain?"
 - "I hear, though I have passed through the jasminite gate. What is your business with me?"
 - "I do not hear you, nor can I. I am beyond your summons."
- ...Or whether it answers you improperly instead.

No matter its answer, once the ghost has acknowledged you, you can contend with it or bind it to your service, as follows.

CONTENDING WITH A GHOST

Contending with a ghost means FIGHTING WITH IT psychically, so make that move. Your force of will is a weapon inflicting 1 harm.

For most ghosts, 3 harm is enough to compel them to obey you, or else to drive them through the jasminite gates.

BINDING A GHOST

In order to bind a ghost to your service, you must make an arrangement with it, either compelling it to serve you for what you hold over it, or else bargaining with it for an exchange of services.

If the ghost serves you because you **hold something over it**, then should you ever lose what you hold over it, the ghost's service is ended. Examples:

- You know its binding-name.
- You have a piece of its body or a token of its life.
- You have a threat that you could execute against its living loved ones.
- It is philosophically or ideologically required to serve you.
- It owes you service for some past consideration.

If you too inconvenience or put upon the ghost, it might decide that the consequences are worth ending its service.

If the ghost agrees to serve you as long as you **continue to do a particular thing** for the ghost, then if ever you fail to do it, the ghost's service is ended.

- Provide materially for its living loved ones.
- Pursue an unachieved ambition on its behalf. (Should you achieve it, the ghost remains in your service, and now you hold it over it.)
- Perform rituals on its behalf.
- Sacrifice things to it.

When you fall down on this, the ghost can threaten to depart in order to spur you, it can negotiate, wheedle, give you time, or it can end its service at once.

Until you have established your grimoire, you can have at most four attendant magics, spells, ghosts, curses, magical items, in sum. If have four already, this ghost must displace one of them. Roll dice to determine which one. It departs, returning to its native world, passing through the jasminite gates, evaporating into the atmosphere, or becoming abruptly inert.

GHOSTLY DUTIES

(For bound ghosts)

When you bind a ghost to your service, you secure from it two duties:

- The ghost has the duty to **alert you to danger or opportunity**. When you INTERRUPT SOMEONE, the ghost can choose to turn a miss into a 7-9 or a 7-9 into a 10+.
- The ghost has the duty to **assist you in battle**. When you FIGHT, the ghost gets 1 to spend on your behalf, in addition to those you get to spend.
- The ghost has the duty to **defend you from magical, immaterial, and ghostly attacks**. Count this as 1 Armor against such attacks.
- The ghost has the duty to **distract and dismay your enemies**. When you INTRUDE SOMEWHERE, the ghost can choose to turn a miss into a 7-9 or a 7-9 into a 10+.
- The ghost has the duty to **query the souls of those around you**. When you SIZE SOMEONE UP, in addition to the questions your roll gives you, the ghost can pose any one question directly to their soul, and report to you their soul's answer. You may tell the ghost the question you'd like it to ask.
- The ghost has the duty to **truthfully advise you on all matters**. When you RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE, you can choose as an option to consult with the ghost. It must truthfully answer all of the questions you put to it.

WHEN YOU'VE BEEN KILLED

You come to your ghostly senses, where your body lies, a few seconds after your death. In most part, things are as they were.

Nearby there is a doorway of polished jasminite. The gate is kept by a pair of guardians, whose appearance is never the same to any who come before them. Ask the GM how they appear to you. You may go through the doorway if you choose, but only by an act of intentional submission to their judgment. No matter where you go, when you are dead, this doorway is always close by.

You can see and hear any other ghosts who happen to be in this place, and interact with them freely, though you may not touch them.

You can see and hear the living, but as though through moving water, unclearly. By an act of concerted attention you can bring them into focus, but not lastingly. They can't see or hear you at all, except necromancers, and your touch passes utterly through them.

Necromancers, when you address yourself to them directly and intending to be seen and heard, can see and hear you. You nevertheless still can't touch them.

All nonliving physical things are visible and opaque to you. You are able to pass through them, but only with an intentional effort.

You are substantially bound to your former body. You may persist as a ghost only as long as your body remains. If it is destroyed, ritually interred, or when it succumbs to ruin, you must submit to the judgment of the keepers and pass through the doorway.

You are able to bind yourself to a living person present as a ghostly guardian or tutor. Follow the procedure below. In principle they could rebuff you, but in practice it is impossible for them to do so. This bond replaces the bond between yourself and your body, so that while you remain in their service, you remain a ghost.

But regardless, first, roll two dice and choose:

1. *The gate of jasminite is unguarded. You may pass through it unjudged, if you choose.*
2. *The living can see and hear you, as you them, as though through water. By an act of concentration you can make yourself clear to them, but not lastingly, and you still can't touch them.*
3. *You are not bound to your body. You may persist as a ghost indefinitely, bound to a living person or not, whatever becomes of your remains.*
4. *You can touch and, with effort, move nonliving physical objects. You can muster about the strength of a house cat.*
5. *You come to your ghostly senses a few seconds or a minute before your death, in time to watch yourself die.*
6. *Your ghostly might, usually +1, is +2 instead, and should you bind yourself to someone living, you have three duties to them instead of two.*

BINDING YOURSELF TO ONE LIVING

Choose two ghostly duties that you will do for them and declare them. Ask them what service they will do for you in return. If you are not content, you can decline to bind yourself to them after all, or you can go along with them until your prospects otherwise improve.

GHOSTLY DUTIES

(When you are the ghost)

- You have the duty to **alert them to danger or opportunity**. When they INTERRUPT SOMEONE, you can choose to turn a miss into a 7-9 or a 7-9 into a 10+.
- You have the duty to **assist them in battle**. When they FIGHT, you get 1 to spend on their behalf, in addition to those they get to spend.
- You have the duty to **defend them from magical, immaterial, and ghostly attacks**. You can give them 1 Armor against such attacks.
- You have the duty to **distract and dismay their enemies**. When they INTRUDE SOMEWHERE, you can choose to turn a miss into a 7-9 or a 7-9 into a 10+.
- You have the duty to **query the souls of those around them**. When they SIZE SOMEONE UP, in addition to the questions their roll gives them, you can pose any one question directly to the subject's soul, and report to the answer. They may tell you the question they'd like you to ask, but you can ask whatever you choose.

- You have the duty to **truthfully advise them on all matters**. When they RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE, they can choose as an option to consult with you. You must truthfully answer all of the questions they put to you, and you may tell them more truths as you choose.

RETURNING FROM DEATH

When you've decided you're done being a ghost, you have two options:

- If it is soon after you died, announce that you'll RECOVER, REGROUP & PREPARE. Roll that move and choose to end the ongoing effects of your bad experience. You are able to reassert your claim to your body and so reanimate it.
- If it is the beginning of a subsequent session, announce that you've stolen a body or otherwise achieved possession of one, and so you have. If it is your old body, say so. Otherwise, answer any questions that the GM and the other players might have about how it is different from your previous body.

IMPOSSIBLE TIMELINES

It may happen that, by a combination of circumstances including wizardry, necromancy, plasmic interference, or other unusual power, you create an impossible timeline.

When this happens, everyone is dazed, and the laws of reality reassert themselves without witness. You come to yourself a few minutes later with the impossibility resolved in whatever way the GM chooses, shaking your head. Under these conditions it is best to be philosophical, and not over-curious; nevertheless, ask the GM what has changed.

DEVELOPING YOUR CHARACTER

Recall that at the end of the session, you do two things:

- Examine your treasure, if you've obtained any.
- Mark your experiences, if you've had any.

EXAMINING YOUR TREASURE

When you examine your unexamined treasure, for each 1 treasure you examine, roll two dice and choose:

1. *Enough to buy a new weapon, armor, a spell tablet, or any particular piece of equipment or treasure, and the opportunity to do so.*
2. *Enough to hire or retain someone's services.*
3. *Enough to lay the foundation for or invest in an estate or a mercantile enterprise, and the opportunity to do so.*
4. *Enough to move to better lodgings, and the opportunity to do so.*
5. *Enough to pay off your debts, or enough to save ahead, and the opportunity to do so.*
6. *Enough to make the investment to cultivate yourself and pursue your own character development, and the opportunity to do so.*

Any roll: *enough for a time of high living, generosity, and extravagance, and the opportunity to indulge in it.*

If you roll doubles, instead:

1. *An item from another world.*
2. *An item of historical significance and value.*
3. *An item that holds power over a ghost.*
4. *An item of magical potency.*
5. *An item significant, sentimental, or dangerous to someone great.*
6. *An item of unique beauty.*

Ask the GM to tell you about it.

If you did not roll what you hoped:

- *If you have saved ahead, erase the mark and change either die to any number.*
- *If you have no debts, mark that you have debt, and change either die to any number.*
- *If you already have debts, you cannot change your roll.*
- *But no matter your roll, it's always enough for a time of high living.*

1. BUYING NEW EQUIPMENT

When you want to buy a new weapon, new armor, or a particular piece of equipment or treasure, choose one from the following list. Ask the MC who will sell it to you, and it's yours.

For **a weapon**, choose one:

- *A crescent-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A feather-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A flame-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A leaf-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A sickle-shaped sword (2 Harm)*
- *A straight sword (2 Harm)*
- *An axe (2 Harm)*
- *A hammer (2 Harm)*
- *A knapped stone cutter (2 Harm)*
- *A long knife (2 Harm)*
- *A skull club (2 Harm)*
- *A spear (2 Harm)*
- *A bow & arrows (2 Harm at range)*
- *A crossbow & bolts (2 Harm at range)*
- *A javelin (2 Harm at range)*
- *A spear-thrower (2 Harm at range)*
- *A stone-thrower (2 Harm at range)*
- *A throwing stick (2 Harm at range)*

For **light armor**, choose one:

- *A bossed vest (1 Armor)*
- *A hide apron (1 Armor)*
- *A hide coat (1 Armor)*
- *A jack of leather (1 Armor)*
- *A jack of layered linen or silk (1 Armor)*
- *A splinted vest (1 Armor)*

Wearing light armor makes you look serious, dangerous, and prepared.

For **heavy armor**, choose one:

- *A brigandine (2 Armor)*
- *A chest-ring or -plate (2 Armor)*
- *A coat of plates (2 Armor)*
- *A hide cape (2 Armor)*
- *Lamellar armor (2 Armor)*
- *A war-apron (2 Armor)*

Wearing heavy armor makes you look like a soldier at war.

For **a treasure**, choose one:

- *Luxurious perfumes, balms, and creams. Ask the GM about their marvelous qualities.*
- *An outfit in high style. Ask the GM about the fashion modes of the day.*
- *Rare spices. Ask the GM about their flavors and their provenance.*
- *Unset jewels and weighed lozenges of precious metal, resellable and unromantic.*
- *Valuable jewelry. Ask the GM about its artful construction and dazzling beauty.*
- *A work of beautiful art. Ask the GM about the artist and the work.*

For **a spell tablet**:

When you want to buy a spell tablet, ask the GM who is selling, and what. You must buy one of the spell tablets the GM tells you about.

2. HIRING OR RETAINING SOMEONE

You can hire or retain the services of an accountant, a bodyguard, a burglar, a guide, a murderer, or a soothsayer.

When you retain **an accountant**, for the duration of the accountant's service, instead of rolling two dice when you examine treasure, roll three. You can choose to count it as doubles if you roll any two dice the same, and if you roll all three dice the same, you must count it as doubles. Your accountant's term of service lasts until the next time you spend your treasure on a time of high living.

When you retain **a bodyguard**, let's assume that you do so for very good reason. During your bodyguard's service, the GM isn't allowed to have NPCs attack you by surprise. However, at the beginning of your bodyguard's service, the GM rolls two dice and chooses:

1. *You come under attack, and by inattention or accident your bodyguard is not able to defend you. They are fighting their way toward you now. Ask the GM where you are and what is the situation.*
2. *You come under attack, and your bodyguard is at this moment standing your attackers off. Ask the GM where you are and what is the situation.*
3. *You come under attack, and your bodyguard gives their life to see you to safety. Ask the GM where you are now and what is the situation.*
4. *You come under attack, but your bodyguard is able to drive your attackers away and see you to safety. Ask the GM who your attackers where, where you are now, and what is the situation.*
5. *Your bodyguard comes to you with news that your enemies have offered to buy them off. Ask the GM where you are, and what your bodyguard says.*
6. *Your bodyguard's presence invisibly dissuades your would-be attackers. You would have come under attack, but by retaining the bodyguard you avoid it.*

The bodyguard's term of service lasts until the next time you examine treasure.

When you hire **a burglar**, name a treasure or a spell tablet. The burglar brings it to you, except...

1. *The burglar considers turning blackmailer against you.*
2. *The burglar has another buyer, who is offering more for it.*
3. *The burglar later disappears, perhaps for unrelated reasons.*
4. *The burglar is unable to steal it after all, and instead brings you ____.*
5. *In order to steal it, the burglar must murder someone, and does, whose blood is now perhaps on your hands.*
6. *Your name comes later to be mentioned in association with the burglary.*

This fulfills the burglar's service to you.

When you hire **a guide**, name a place you would like to go and/or a person you would like to see. Your guide warrants to bring you there, at your liberty and in possession of yourself and your valuables, with a minimum of indignity along the way. Their services include paying bribes, knowing whose permission to secure, making introductions,

vouching for you, circumventing defenses and inconveniences, concealing you if necessary, and negotiating all of the logistics of your passage.

When they have safely delivered you to your destination, this fulfills their service to you. You may negotiate with them whether they will consider a safe return passage to be part of their service to you, but it is within their rights to flatly refuse.

Except that, if the situation's outcome leaves your guide in a perilous position, the GM may roll two dice and choose between them:

1. *Your guide is forced into truly unpleasant service as punishment for their involvement.*
2. *Your guide is forced to commit violence.*
3. *Your guide is thereafter dismissed from their position and reduced to penury.*
4. *Your guide thereafter comes to you for protection, in terror.*
5. *Your guide thereafter disappears, dead or in hiding.*
6. *Your guide, under pressure, names you and reveals every detail of your transaction.*

When you hire a **murderer**, name your victim. The murderer kills them, except that the GM rolls two dice and chooses between them:

1. *It starts a blood feud of retaliation and revenge.*
2. *The murderer considers turning blackmailer against you.*
3. *The murderer didn't exercise appropriate restraint, and took several innocent lives in the attack.*
4. *The murderer thereafter disappears, dead or in hiding.*
5. *Word gets out that you were behind it.*
6. *Your victim survives the attack after all, and furthermore, the GM counts the other die too.*

This fulfills the murderer's service to you.

When you retain a **soothsayer**, at the beginning of every session, roll two dice and choose between them:

1. *The soothsayer predicts that during the session, you will encounter love, or at least true beauty.*
2. *The soothsayer predicts that during the session you will face your enemy and triumph decisively over them.*
3. *The soothsayer predicts that during the session, you will have nothing but good luck.*
4. *The soothsayer predicts that during the session you will be killed, or maimed, or else your soul will be lost in a plasmic otherworld.*
5. *The soothsayer predicts that during the session someone you trust will betray your faith by leading you into peril, but without warning you.*
6. *The soothsayer predicts that during the session you will suffer a turn of terrible misfortune. Perhaps a terribly-timed missed roll or a string of missed rolls in a row.*

At the end of the session, make a note whether your soothsayer was right. If they are wrong for two sessions running, this ends their service to you.

If, on the other hand, they have been right for the past three sessions, then the next time you examine and spend your treasure, you may consult with them about it. Their uncanny counsel counts as 1 additional unexamined treasure.

3. YOUR ESTATE

Laying the foundation for your estate means buying a parcel of land outside of the city. Roll and assign three dice, to your land's situation, its charm, and its current inhabitants.

Your land's **situation** is:

1. *Down directly upon a wide river, with utilities for dockage and right-of-way to a city highway.*
2. *In a fertile region of orchards, vineyards, and spice fields.*
3. *In a low-lying region of pools and flowing water.*
4. *In a zone legally within the city's bounds, but ignored and allowed to ruin.*
5. *On a high hillside, overlooking a lovely river valley.*
6. *On the site of an ancient farm, reclaimed by wood and vine.*

Its **charm** is:

1. *The foundations of old buildings, sound and still useful.*
2. *A now-neglected shrine to a local minor goddess.*

3. *A picturesque view of the city, its domes, spires, and high-arching bridges.*
4. *A small standing herd of tusked gazelles, curious and half-tame.*
5. *A stand of violet humming-fern, whose spore-pods are a costly spice.*
6. *A stream and small lake, lively with fish and salamanders.*

Its **current inhabitants** are:

1. *A breeding pair of burnished jackals, frighteningly predacious.*
2. *A colony of flower-nosed priest-bats, intrusive and territorial.*
3. *A desperate criminal, making their home under an overhang, waiting to be forgotten by their enemies in the city.*
4. *An entrenched stand of biting ivy.*
5. *A family of arboreal howler-bats, big, loud, and tenacious.*
6. *A family of squatters, claiming ancient right of ownership, probably fraudulently.*

INVESTING IN YOUR ESTATE

Investing in your estate means employing people to work to improve it. Roll three dice and choose two among them:

1. *You employ builders.*
2. *You employ a guard.*
3. *You employ laborers.*
4. *You employ a priest[ess].*
5. *You employ a servant.*
6. *You employ a specialist.*

When you employ **builders**, choose 2, but don't employ builders until you've already had laborers dig and lay your foundations.

Building your **estate house**:

- *They finish your kitchen and hall.*
- *They finish your private chambers.*
- *They finish your courtyard.*
- *They finish your baths.*
- *They finish your entryway.*
- *They add wardrooms.*
- *They add a mezzanine.*
- *They finish your cellars.*
- *They finish your attics.*
- *They add a library.*
- *They add a balcony.*
- *They add an improvement of your own.*

Building your **outbuildings**:

- *They add a guest house.*
- *They add a shrine.*
- *They add a well-house.*
- *They add a smokehouse.*
- *They add a servants' house.*
- *They add a tower.*
- *They add a workhouse.*
- *They add a gatehouse.*
- *They finish your walls.*
- *They add a laundry.*
- *They add a patio.*
- *They add an outbuilding of your own.*

When you employ a **guard**, add a guard to your estate's staff.

When you employ **laborers**, choose 1:

- *They clear land.*
- *They dig and lay your foundations.*
- *They harvest and/or plant non-specialized crops.**
- *They harvest fish, edible salamanders, or herd animals.* (They cannot hunt game.)*
- *They pillage your specialized crops, ruining them.**
- *They reverse neglect.*

* The increase from your harvest gives you 1 unexamined treasure.

When you employ a **priest[ess]**, choose 1:

- *They identify malignant fluxes or sites of plasmic stagnation. Ask the GM what they find and how you might remedy it.*
- *They identify standing truces that you might inadvertently violate. Ask the GM what they find and what are their terms.*
- *They identify unfinished spiritual business of your estate's past inhabitants. Ask the GM what they find and how you might mitigate it.*

- They identify your estate's patron goddess. Ask the GM Whom they name and how to enshrine Her.
- They supplicated the goddesses on your behalf. Ask the GM what benefit they assure you that you will receive.

When you employ a **servant**, choose 1 and add them to your estate's staff:

- A barber.
- A body servant.
- A butler.
- A clerk.
- A cook.
- A dresser.
- A gardener.
- A housekeeper.
- A launder.
- A messenger.

When you employ a **specialist**, choose 1 of the following:

You employ an **engineer**. Choose 1:

- They drain standing water.
- They redirect flowing water.
- They plan a bridge, dock, or cantilevered building.
- They oversee the construction of the same, including hiring the builders to complete it.

You employ an **exterminator**. Choose 1:

- They mitigate a rampant infestation.
- They eliminate a mitigated infestation.

You employ an **herbalist**. Choose 1:

- They identify the wild plants on your land, noting any interesting, valuable, or useful species.
- They properly harvest the same, giving you 1 unexamined treasure.

You employ a **hunter**:

- They properly harvest your wild game, giving you 1 unexamined treasure.

MOVING TO YOUR ESTATE

You can move to your estate as soon as you consider it habitable.

Once you've done so, it no longer makes sense for you to spend your treasure to move to better lodgings. Now, when you examine your treasure and roll a 4, count it as a 3 to improve your estate.

A MERCANTILE ENTERPRISE

Laying the foundation for a mercantile enterprise means buying something for resale or investing in the return on someone else's efforts. Roll two dice and choose between them:

1. You buy a bale of perjure's-cumin, a costly spice, for resale.
2. You buy a caravan-lot of uncut jasminite, for resale to temples and mausoleums.
3. You buy or erect a warehouse, convenient to dockage or caravan embarkage.
4. You buy an investor's share of the returns of an established service venture, an eating-house or a lodging-house.
5. You buy an investor's share of the returns of a trade ship's cargo.
6. You hire a cadre of scribes, copyists, illustrators, and scroll-parchers, to enter into the publishing trade.

INVESTING IN YOUR ENTERPRISE

Investing in your enterprise means hiring its employees. Roll 2 dice and add your Bold. On 10+, choose 3 new employees. On 7–9, choose 2. On 6 or less (a miss), choose 1.

- You hire a warehouse.
- You hire a labor overseer.
- You hire a foreign trade advisor.
- You hire a team of drovers.
- You hire a ship's captain and crew.
- You hire a caravaner.
- You hire guards.
- You hire porters.
- You hire a notable chef.
- You hire local guides and experts.
- You hire skilled artisans.
- You hire a merchant.
- You hire bookkeepers.
- You hire a land[lady].
- You hire a person skilled in the trade.

HOW IS YOUR ENTERPRISE FARING?

If you've hired 0–3 employees, roll one die. If you've hired 4–7, roll two dice and count them both. If you've hired 8–11, roll three dice and choose two of them. If you've hired 12 or more, roll three dice and count them all.

1. Your enterprise declines. You must dismiss an employee. If you have none, your enterprise fails.
2. Your enterprise's returns are enough for a time of high living.
- 3–5. Your enterprise's returns are 1 unexamined treasure.
6. Your enterprise's returns are enough for you to cultivate yourself and develop your character.

Make this roll whenever you wonder how your enterprise is faring, or whenever the GM asks, but at most once in any single session.

4. MOVING TO BETTER LODGINGS

When you move to better lodgings, improve the rate of your current lodgings by one place, find the corresponding tables, and roll and assign three dice.

If you own an estate, you can choose instead to employ builders, to invest in the improvement of your estate house.

4TH-RATE LODGINGS

Your **lodgings** are:

1. Fine rooms in a grand house, in a state of substantial decay.
2. Galley rooms overlooking a public square.
3. A house for let, spacious but crumbling.
4. An outbuilding adjoining a tidy workshop of craft and trade.
5. A shared suite in a simple lodging-house, plain but well-maintained.
6. A tiny tower room in one of the city's palaces of learning.

Their **appointments** are:

1. Communal meals, comforts, and a hired housekeeper.
2. Convenient access to the city's avenues of commerce.
3. Enrollment in a society for mutual aid and succor.
4. An enviable view of river, bridges and temples.
5. The secure and reliable protection of a local boss thug.
6. A tiny balcony upon which you have an unblocked view of the night sky.

You **share** them with:

1. A half-deranged necromancer, who rants into the night at ghostly companions or tormenters.
2. A minor infestation of fragrant wall-mosses, and the harmless tardigrades who dwell thereupon.
3. A person of easygoing and comfortable nature, who does not mind your keeping late hours or uncouth company, provided that you do not mind their doing the same.
4. A person of fastidious and refined taste, severe enough, but never short or late with their portion.
5. A serious student of philosophy, who is sometimes willing to discuss esoteric matters with you, and sometimes willing to lay off discussion.
6. A skilled apprentice chef, who brings home the remainders of fine meals.

3RD-RATE LODGINGS

Your **lodgings** are:

1. Apartments on a narrow street famous for its performers and prophets.
2. A houseboat on the river, water-sound but prone to phosphorescent mold.
3. A large room in a free-house reclaimed from decay by its colorful and determined dwellers.
4. Private rooms in a sturdy lodging-house of decent repute.
5. Second-floor rooms in the pilgrim's hostel of the temple of an iconoclastic cult.
6. A small house of three rooms, with a hidden second entrance.

Their **appointments** are:

1. A cunning system of burner and coils, providing a steady supply of hot water.
2. Fruit trees that house a colony of chiming bats, who sing sweetly at dawn and dusk.
3. A good view of a busy open square and public market.
4. Lovely hangings and cushions in reds, oranges, and deep browns, somewhat worn, but not more than a decade out of fashion.

5. A sharp-eyed elder who spends their days sitting in the sun, willing to share their observations on all matters to any polite and interested listener.
6. Trustworthy and affable neighbors whose ambitions are toward bettering the neighborhood.

You **share** them with:

1. An assortment of half-tame ruffled cats, self-sufficient and occasionally overheard to be discussing matters of philosophy.
2. A beautiful and charming person who enjoys entertaining guests.
3. The ghost of a former tenant, eager to share secrets and stay involved in the living world.
4. A hard-working tradesperson who is good natured and free handed, while inclined to over-indulgence.
5. A person competent, reserved, violent, and loyal.
6. An undercataloguer at the library of the city, who can be plied to steal texts for you, provided you promise to return them again.

2ND-RATE LODGINGS

Your **lodgings** are:

1. A comfortable house in a safe quarter of the city.
2. A generous houseboat with white and yellow sails and ample cargo space.
3. Opulent rooms hidden behind twisting alleys and a password-barred door.
4. Quiet and well-appointed rooms in a palace of learning, along with an area for research into philosophic arts.
5. The rooms of a hastily-departed dignitary, still containing their books and belongings.
6. Small rooms in a lesser palace.

Their **appointments** are:

1. An armory and strongboxes.
2. A colorful and diverse neighborhood market in which you may occasionally find wonders.
3. Easy access to the park and pleasure grounds along the river.
4. Kitchens and a tidy, productive vegetable garden to supply the table.
5. One piece of unusual and inspiring artwork left behind by the prior tenant, at some personal expense.
6. A share in the collective hiring of a troop of professional guards to patrol the neighborhood.

You **share** them with:

1. An affectionate and good-humored family who view you as their own.
2. A cast-down member of the elite, bent on reform and self-improvement after a scandal.
3. A community of iridescent snails that keeps the floors and walls spotlessly free of mold and debris.
4. A member of a professional guard, with knowledge of activities criminal and otherwise.
5. A noted musician with connections to the city's great houses, who may be willing to act as a go-between or provide introduction.
6. A trio of shop clerks, indistinguishable from one another, whose gossip may occasionally hold things worth hearing.

1ST-RATE LODGINGS

Your **lodgings** are:

1. Apartments on the waterfront, with a private dock.
2. Decadent rooms above a boisterous pleasure-house frequented by the notable people of the city.
3. The finest rooms in a grand lodging-house in the heart of the city.
4. A large and well-maintained house on the edge of town.
5. Marvelous and strange rooms once inhabited by a wizard, with twisting stairways and doors that open on nothing.
6. A suite of status in a temple.

Their **appointments** are:

1. Connecting private walkways above the common streets.
2. Imposing gates and guards to keep them.
3. Marble and golden statuary in well-tended gardens.
4. A private library well-stocked with texts both common and rare.
5. Rich tapestries and soft rugs in blues, greens, and purples.
6. A tower of city-wide renown, with commanding views of both city and sea, and room for study and entertaining in comfort.

You **share** them with:

1. An animal gifted with human speech, who can act as your messenger and spy.
2. An artist or scholar whose work shows much promise, who will increase your name and reputation.
3. A person interesting and in all ways delightful, your equal in intelligence and spirit.
4. Silent and discreet servants who attend scrupulously to your needs.
5. A steady flow of adoring devotees.
6. Your benefactor, fond and indulgent, now in dotage.

5. PAYING OFF YOUR DEBTS OR SAVING AHEAD

If you have debts, you can't save ahead, but you pay them off. Erase the mark.

If you have no debts, you save ahead. Mark that you've saved ahead.

If you've already saved ahead, you can't save more. Make a different choice.

6. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Mark 1 segment toward adding +1 to a stat or 1 toward gaining a new skill.

When you mark the third, completing the circle, either:

- Add +1 to a stat of your choice, to a maximum of +3.
- Add a new skill of your choice to your character.

7. HIGH LIVING

Until the next time you examine treasure, you can, whenever you like:

- Buy frivolous presents.
- Buy your way into the presense of anyone you choose to name.
- Give exorbitant tips to those who serve you.
- Make offerings of startling sums to temples or charitable associations.
- Order the finest the house has to offer.
- Move to new lodgings, rated the same as your current lodgings.
- Treat your friends to whatever they choose.

You cannot buy anything lasting to add to your character or another player's.

8. FURTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

If you've passed through the jasminite gates, see "Through the Jasminite Gates."

If you're leading a war-band, see "Banners of War."

If you've seized a city-state, see "City-States of Venus."

If you've learned the skill WIZARDRY, see "The Grimoire: the Work of Wizardry."

If you've founded your seclusion, see "A Wizard's Seclusion in All its Phases."

If you've founded or seized a criminal or mercantile enterprise, see "Enterprises Criminal & Mercantile."

All to come.

THE GM

THE OBJECT OF THE GAME

For the players, the object of the game is to mark as many good experiences as they can and want.

For you, the object of the game is not to stop them, but instead, to make them mark as many bad experiences along the way as you can and find entertaining.

YOUR DUTIES

- Make life on Venus vivid.
- Make life on Venus concrete.
- Play to see what will happen.
- Do your duty to the game you're playing:
 - For *HAND TO MOUTH IN THE CITY OF NEPHTHYS*, create jobs.
 - For *FREEBOOTING VENUS*, create trouble.
 - For *THROUGH THE JASMINITE GATES*, follow the characters' fates.
 - For *BANNERS OF WAR*, create rival war-bands and battles.
 - For *THE GRIMOIRE*, respond to the wizard's endeavors.
 - For *A WIZARD'S SECLUSIUM*, develop the seclusium's phases.
 - For *ENTERPRISES*, create rivals, challenges, and opportunities.

HITTING THE NOTES

- Always tell the players the truth.
- Always make good on the rules' demands.
- Whenever you don't have anything prepped, play the dirty trick.
- Pretend that you're observing, remembering, and considering, not making it up.
- Take a second to describe an architectural, natural, conventional, or sartorial feature.
- Give NPCs straightforward concerns and direct impulses to act upon.
- Whatever you create, make it fitting, then distinguish it.

THE DIRTY TRICK

Improvise, but pretend that you've prepped.

It's fine if no one believes you.

Later you can retroactively prep, creating justification for what you improvised in the moment and drawing connections between it and what else you've created.

FITTING & DISTINGUISHED

When you create something, especially when you improvise it, create it both to be naturally a part of the world around it, and also to distinguish itself from expectation or from others of its kind.

Use the word "but."

(For more on this topic, for now, see my essay "Coherence and Contradictions" in *Unframed: The Art of Improvisation for Game Masters*, published by Engine Publishing.)

TROUBLE

Or turmoil, or tumult, or problems.

To create trouble, have a powerful person make a thoughtless or malicious decision and follow through on it, to bad effect on people less powerful.

- Create trouble that you personally find entertaining.
- Create trouble that gives the PCs practical, not moral, difficulties.
- Create trouble that expands, doesn't constrict, your collective view of life on Venus.

Creating trouble is the backbone of your job as GM. Create it all the time.

AN OPENING SITUATION

To set the opening situation, roll three dice. Assign one to their location, one to their enemy, and one to who is also present or who is about to appear.

Their **location** is:

1. In the alleys of the city's worst quarter.
2. In the country estate of a prince[ss] of the city.
3. In the kitchen garden of a house of luxury, where the great come to drink, dine and divert themselves.
4. In the sweltering crypts underneath a temple of healing, now corrupted.
5. On the dizzy heights of one of the city's tall towers.
6. Under a bridge, where one of the city's wide avenues narrows to pass over one of the city's wide rivers.

Their **enemy** is:

1. A creature offspawned by a wizard's careless endeavors.
2. A flesh-eating creature summoned to life by a corrupt priest[ess].
3. The ruthless enforcer of a city underlord.
4. A terran creature, a terrible gigantic predatory lizard-bird, somehow free from the menagerie in which it had been imprisoned for display.
5. An unruly ghost who has stolen a succession of human forms.
6. A wizard who subjects the impoverished unwillingly to her experimentation.

Also present, or about to appear, is:

1. An imperious personage of wealth and dignity, and their bodyguard.
2. A necromancer drawn to the carnage.
3. An opportunistic rival, whose methods are more cruel than theirs.
4. A small group of giddy thrill-seekers.
5. Their enemy's accomplice, heretofore unrevealed.
6. Their guide, who has suddenly become terrified or otherwise transfixed.

Choose a number of the following questions to ask them. Choose as many as you like, only the ones that seem best-suited, in any order.

- One of you is taking point. Who?
- One of you is in a place distant from the others, in a position from which you can see what's happening. Who?
- You've just taken a prisoner, and one of you is trying to control them. Who?
- One of you is wounded and bleeding. Who? Go ahead and mark it as a bad experience.
- One of you is taking this more personally than the rest. Who?
- One of you has been separated from the rest, and is just now rejoining them. Who?
- One of you has undertaken this enmity only to fulfill a promise to someone. Who?

As the characters resolve this opening situation, retroactively create the trouble—the powerful person who made a thoughtless or malicious decision—that caused it.

AN EXAMPLE

You've rolled, by pure chance, 1 1 1. You say:

"Okay! Let's start play. [Location:] The three of you are in the alleys of the city's worst quarter. [Improvising details:] This city is built on two hills side by side; the worst quarter is the low region between them, deeply overshadowed. [Enemy, improvising details:] Your enemy is a creature, human or humanoid or formally human or something. It has long stilty arms and legs, and a hyena's face. This creature has killed and eaten several people of your acquaintance and you have chased it here. One of you is taking point. Who? Ah, good. Also, one of you is wounded and bleeding. Who? I see. Now, one of you is [improvising details:] on a rooftop overlooking this alley, is it you as well? Or you? Aha, with your crossbow, of course. [Giving the creature a straightforward impulse:] Now, this creature, it's tasted your blood, and it bursts out suddenly from between two buildings, laughing wildly and licking its muzzle, quite intent upon you. What do you all do?"

ACRID CLOUDS

You fill the air with clouds of stinging, acrid, invasive particles. They fill an area 10 meters in diameter, making it intolerable to all living things. They corrode metal, stain glass, abrade wood and plant matter, and pit stone. They hang suspended and catch every stir, swell, and eddy of air, drifting and clustering together perversely. There is no controlling them. They continue to exist for half an hour and then precipitate into a greasy, innocuous film. Any breathing thing exposed to them suffers 1 Harm, ignoring any armor. No breathing thing will enter willingly into the affected area.

Except...

1. They fill an area only 5 meters in diameter.
 2. They continue to exist for hours or days before precipitating away.
 3. They are violently flammable. Any spark will cause them to erupt in an explosion of billowing flame.
 4. They are possessed of a subtle, enticing, evocative odor, which will draw the unwary into contact with them.
 5. You are able to control their movement, by making suggestive motions with your hands.
 6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.
-

COMPANION CREATURE

You summon a violent creature to pace your heels and follow your commands. Choose 1: a burnished jackal, a chanting hyena, or a stilt-leg bat. It will attack at your signal and relent at your command, but it won't reliably fetch or carry and it avidly dislikes being disciplined. It cannot be killed. Wounds can drive it away, but it always returns whole after 7–12 hours. It persists in your service until it has confronted 3 enemies at your side.

Except...

1. It's not the creature you chose. Instead, it's a hunting dyad of flocking jills from Terra.
 2. It persists until it has defeated and killed 3 enemies, not merely until it has confronted 3.
 3. It will attack, relent, fetch, carry, and submit to discipline, all with an excessive and pathetic obsequiousness.
 4. It can be killed by its wounds, not just driven away.
 5. It can speak in clear human language, though of course its concerns and interests are not human.
 6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.
-

PLASMIC VISION

You open your plasmic eyes and can see invisible things. The spell lasts until you have seen 3 invisible things. By default, this allows you to see only material things that have become somehow invisible, but at your choice you can expand your vision to include lines or fields of invisible force, auras, ghosts, plasmids, the images in someone else's imagination, or the air.

Except...

1. The spell lasts until you have seen 5 invisible things, not 3.
 2. While the spell lasts, it also allows you to hear inaudible things.
 3. While the spell lasts, it also allows unseeing things to see you.
 4. While the spell lasts, those around you can also see the invisible things that you see.
 5. The spell colors the invisible things that you see so brightly and confusingly that it is an excruciating and disorienting ordeal, requiring your concentration to endure.
 6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.
-

SCREECHING STONE DARTS

You fill the air with screeching stone darts. They swirl above you and strike targets as you direct. They attack or fight with Violent +1; you roll and spend on their behalf. They inflict 2 Harm. They persist until you have directed them to make two attacks.

Except...

1. They attack the people present at random, not as you direct, and do not spare you. Roll dice to determine who they strike.
 2. They persist until you've directed them to make three attacks, not two.
 3. They attack or fight with Violent +2.
 4. They are made of dry clay, not stone. They inflict only 1 Harm, and survive only long enough to make a single attack.
 5. They don't screech at all, but are instead perfectly silent.
 6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.
-

TRANSFER WOUNDS

Indicate one person as your patient, and another person as your target. The wounds utterly disappear from the body of your patient, and reappear exactly as they were upon the body of your target. Both your patient and your target must be within your sight.

Except...

1. The wounds remain upon your patient's body after all, and are duplicated upon your target's.
 2. Indicate a second target within your sight. The wounds reappear upon both of your targets' bodies.
 3. The wounds reappear upon someone's body at random, not necessarily your target's, conceivably yours. Roll dice to determine whose.
 4. The wounds disappear from your patient's body, healing perfectly, but do not reappear upon your target's after all.
 5. Your target need not be within your sight, but may be anyone whose name you speak.
 6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.
-

THE WIZARD'S CANDLE

You open a vent between this world and a world of endless fire. Flame licks through the vent. It is flame only like a candle's, no more, but it is steady, bright, and hot. You can use it for illumination or to set flammable things alight. You hold the vent in your cupped hand, and can pass it from hand to hand, but you cannot leave it behind or move it otherwise. The vent remains open until you close it, at which the flame winks out.

Except...

1. The vent floats in the air nearby, not in your cupped hand. You can cause it to move wherever you like, by gesturing.
2. Some minor denizen of that fiery world squeezes through the vent into this world. Ask the GM how it appears and what it does next.
3. The vent opens into the wrong world, a world of howling chill. Instead of flame, a viciously and dangerously cold wind jets out.
4. The longer you hold the vent open, the wider it tears. At first it admits flame like a candle's, then like a torch's, then like a cookfire's, then a bonfire's, then a house fire's, then a forest fire's, then...
5. The vent you open is incomplete. It allows to pass through either the light of the flame but not the heat, or the heat of the flame but not the light; you choose which.
6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.

BECOMING MINISCULE

You diminish in size until you are 30 centimeters in height. Your immediate belongings diminish with you, proportionately. This transformation lasts until you end it with an act of will, at which you and your belongings return to normal.

Except...

1. In addition to yourself and your immediate belongings, you can by touching them also diminish another person and their immediate belongings.
2. Instead of diminishing, you enlarge to 5 meters in height, and your belongings proportionately.
3. Nothing diminishes with you, only you yourself, naked.
4. You cannot end the transformation at will. Instead, it ends when the sun next rises or next sets.
5. You diminish to only 10 centimeters in height, and your belongings proportionately.
6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.

AN IMAGE OF NIGHTMARISH MENACE

You summon up from your imagination a terrifying creature. Describe it. It does not behave as you direct, but as you imagine that it would behave, so describe that as well. Ask the GM to tell you its Violent, the Harm of its attacks, and its armor. When it fights or attacks, the GM rolls and spends on its behalf, but should follow your descriptions. It persists here until, by chance or intention, no living person can see it, at which moment it evaporates and is gone. Meanwhile it is to all onlookers evidently real and present, but the results of any harm it inflicts evaporates when it does. Any whom it has apparently killed, return to their senses. It can *seem* to destroy, lift, throw, move, hold, and otherwise manipulate the things around it, but it cannot practically do so.

Except...

1. It is actually real, though only temporarily. It can meaningfully manipulate the things around it and any harm it inflicts is real and lasting.
2. It persists here even when no living person can see it, until it is dispelled somehow. Failing that, indefinitely.
3. It sees you as the author of all its monstrousness and misery, and turns on you with an all-overriding hatred and violence.
4. It worships you as its creator, fawns before you, and obeys you in every particular.
5. You summon not one terrifying creature, but three, each different.
6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.

AN IRRESISTABLE SLUMBER

Indicate a target. They fall at once into a deep trance, sleeplike, but from which no noise or disturbance will awaken them. The trance lasts for an hour, after which it becomes natural sleep, from which they might awaken or be awoken normally.

Except...

1. After their hour in trance, they do not fall into natural sleep, but instead die.
2. In trance, they are not insensible, only held rigid and unable in any way to move.
3. Indicate any number of targets. The spell affects them all.
4. Instead of affecting the target you indicate, the spell affects a random person present, perhaps you. Roll dice to see whom.
5. Their unwakeable trance lasts only a few moments, not an hour.
6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.

A JAVELIN OF LETHAL FORCE

You cast a javelin of luminous, resounding energy at your target. It strikes with terrible force, +2 Violent, inflicting 2 harm, ignoring any armor your target may have.

Except...

1. After striking your target, the javelin rebounds and strikes another target at random, perhaps you. Roll dice to see whom.
2. In addition to the harm to your target, the discharge of energy warps, melts, combusts, or otherwise destroys most of your target's clothing, armor, and belongings.
3. The javelin draws a measure of its force from your own life's energy. You suffer 1 harm as well, ignoring any armor you wear. No matter who chooses your target's bad experience, you choose your own.
4. The javelin is weak and flickering, only +1 Violent, inflicting only 1 harm, though still ignoring your target's armor.
5. The javelin makes a terrifying anguished howling noise, as though the living fabric of this world were being rent by an alien violence, deafening and disturbing all present.
6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.

A MARVELOUS BLADE

You summon to your hand a marvelous sword, long, light, and incredibly sharp, of an unknown metal shining and supple. You've stolen it by magic from the personal armory of one of the war-crowns on the planet Mars. It was a great treasure on Mars, and it is beyond the making of any swordsmith who has ever lived here on Venus. It inflicts 4 Harm, and with it in a fight, spend 1 more than your roll gives you.

The sword survives here until you have struck three blows with it, at which it groans, twists, and cracks, becoming a ruined bar of useless slag.

Except...

1. Holding the sword, as you do, makes you a legitimate claimant to the throne of one of the ancient war-houses on Mars. Should you make your way there with the sword intact, you might be able to seize crown, kingdom, and rule.
2. The sword survives only until you strike the first blow with it, at which it shatters into a thousand slivers of jagged razor.
3. The sword survives until you strike five blows with it, instead of three.
4. You steal it not from the war-crown's armory, but from their very hand on the battlefield. Thus they are lost, slain in battle or taken, imprisoned or executed, and their kingdom falls.
5. The war-crown from whose armory you steal it is able to send a warrior to Venus after it, whose mission is to retrieve it before it is ruined.
6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.

A PRODIGIOUS LEAP

Indicate a subject with a gesture, yourself if you choose. Your subject leaps a spectacular distance, vertically up to the top of a high tower, or down from it; horizontally to clear a great canyon. They are able to judge the distance and their arc of travel precisely, and land just as they intend, lightly, undiscommoded.

Except...

1. Everyone present is compelled to leap in sympathy, all at once, at the moment your subject leaps. They leap toward the same destination as your subject, but with only their own physical strength to propel them.
2. If the leap was to be spectacular, it is catastrophic. Your subject leaps into the upper sky and lands up to a kilometer away, in a random direction.
3. They do not choose the destination of their leap, you do. Nor can they decline, but must leap at your signal. (If you are the spell's subject, this makes no difference.)
4. They land hard, suffering 2 harm minus their armor. They choose their bad experience, if any.
5. Your subject is able to make a second leap, then a third, not just the one.
6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.

THE WIZARD'S TEAPOT

You create a liter of boiling water. It appears in the air nearby, and floats there, stationary, uncontained but holding globular shape. It persists until it has boiled away, which takes half an hour or so. With a dipper or any other vessel, you can draw water from it; it is in all respects natural water, freshly boiled.

Except...

- 1. It's not boiling water, but boiling lead, at 1,750 degrees. It does not simply boil itself dry, as the water would, but instead creates around itself a cloud of explosive scalding steam, and below itself a precipitation, a rain, of molten lead. This too lasts for half an hour or so, while all the lead in the mass rains itself out onto whatever is below it.*
- 2. The mass of boiling water isn't stationary, but moves, scattering scalding droplets, wherever you indicate.*
- 3. The mass of boiling water doesn't hold its shape, but leaks for a few moments and then pours suddenly out, still boiling.*
- 4. The water doesn't maintain its boil, but begins losing its heat immediately. Within the same half an hour or so it is lukewarm. It remains in place, though, until it's drawn out or it evaporates.*
- 5. You create 6 liters of boiling water instead of 1.*
- 6. The spell returns to its native plasmic world unsettled.*

Create a pillar of swirling flame.

Erase your image from the world.

Fill the air with flying nails.

Hold another spell in suspense, awaiting release.

Isolate a measure of the world's atmosphere.

Preserve yourself from some harm or discommodation.

Put queries to something incommunicative or lifeless.

Render another motionless, bound, and suffocating.

Summon 4 winged beasts.

Summon fantastical transportation.

Summon a guardian creature.

Summon an impossible servant.

Toss something prodigiously aloft.

Transport something from one place, to another like place.

ANIMATE STATUE

Animate statues are normally placid and tractable, but neglect or mistreatment might turn them sullen.

A stonemason's chisel and mallet inflicts 4 Harm against animate statues, but is difficult to bring to bear as a weapon. In a fight, you must spend 1 to do so.

Violent: 0, +2 if enraged. **Bonus to Spend:** 0. **Harm:** 2. **Armor:** 3.

1-2 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *You have its full attention.*

3-5 Harm

- *It's enraged.*
- *It's taken aback.*

6+ Harm

- *It's wounded, and flees.*
- *It's wounded, but presses on.*
- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

BEGGAR-BAT

Beggar-bats are flightless scavenging bats the size of raccoons.

Violent: 0. **Bonus to Spend:** 0. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 1.

1 Harm

- *You have its full attention*
- *It's taken aback.*
- *It's wounded, and flees.*

2 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *It's enraged.*
- *It's wounded, but presses on.*

3+ Harm

- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

BITING IVY

Biting ivy injects a nerve-numbing toxin, making its prey slow-moving, then entangles and slowly digests it.

It is unharmed by weapons, but must be rooted out with vine-hooks, spades, and fire, which inflict 3 Harm.

It inflicts a special bad experience: "I was numbed and entangled." Thus entangled, you must make a difficult Patient save to carefully untangle yourself and pick your way free, before you can take any other action. On a miss, it inflicts 1 harm, ignoring your armor.

Violent: 0. **Bonus to Spend:** 0. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1-4 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *You have its full attention.*
- *It's enraged.*

5 Harm

- *It's taken aback.*
- *It's wounded, but presses on.*

6+ Harm

- *It's killed outright.*

BLUFF-BEAR

Bluff-bears are cliff-dwelling bears, long-limbed, shorter than a human being but much more powerfully built.

Violent: +2. **Bonus to Spend:** 0, 2 when brooding. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 1.

1 Harm

- *You have its full attention.*

2-4 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *It's enraged.*
- *It's taken aback.*
- *It's wounded, but presses on.*

5+ Harm

- *It's wounded, and flees*
- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

BURNISHED JACKAL

Burnished jackals use their glinting, shimmering, light-catching coat to signal one another and to distract their prey.

Violent: +2. **Bonus to Spend:** 1. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1 Harm

- *You have its full attention.*
- *It's enraged.*
- *It's taken aback.*

4+ Harm

- *It's wounded, but presses on.*
- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

2-3 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *It's wounded, and flees.*

CHANTING HYENA

Chanting hyenas are social creatures, and suffer terribly from loneliness when isolated.

Violent: +1. **Bonus to Spend:** 1. **Harm:** 2. **Armor:** 1.

1-2 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *It's enraged.*
- *You have its full attention.*

3 Harm

- *It's taken aback.*

4+ Harm

- *It's wounded, and flees.*
- *It's wounded, but presses on.*
- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

FLEA-BAT

Flea-bats, though much larger than their namesakes, are still tiny. They swarm in hundreds and carry a fever that causes light-headedness, euphoria, and pleasurable hallucinations.

They're unharmed by weapons, but must be assaulted as a swarm, with nets, smoke, and loud noises, which inflict 2 Harm.

They inflict a special bad experience: "I was afflicted with a fever of giddiness." While you are afflicted, you suffer -1 to your Patient.

Violent: +1. **Bonus to Spend:** 1. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1-2 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *It's enraged.*

3-4 Harm

- *You have its full attention.*
- *It's taken aback.*
- *It's wounded, but presses on.*

5+ Harm

- *It's wounded, and flees*
- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

FLOCKING JILL

Flocking jills are small feathered predators from Terra, *bambiraptor feinbergi*. They're only a meter and a half long, and weigh only five kilograms, but are smart, fast-moving, and ferocious. They hunt in dyads and triads, and can be trained, if they're somehow taken from Terra and brought to Venus when they're very young.

Violent: +1. **Bonus to Spend:** 1. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1 Harm

- *You have its full attention.*
- *It's enraged.*

2 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *It's taken aback.*
- *It's wounded, but presses on.*

3+ Harm

- *It's wounded, and flees*
- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

GHOUL

A ghoulish human being animated by a terrible appetite, which it has somehow come to possess in place of a soul.

A ghoulish Harm and Armor depend upon the armaments it carries.

Violent: +3. **Bonus to Spend:** 1. **Harm:** 0–2. **Armor:** 0–2.

1 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *You have its full attention*
- *It's enraged.*

3+ Harm

- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

2 Harm

- *It's taken aback.*
 - *It's wounded, and flees.*
 - *It's wounded, but presses on.*
-

HOWLER-BAT

Howler-bats are big, territorial, loud, and tenacious.

Violent: +1. **Bonus to Spend:** 0. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *You have its full attention.*
- *It's enraged.*

3+ Harm

- *It's wounded, and flees*
- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

2 Harm

- *It's taken aback.*
 - *It's wounded, but presses on.*
-

HUMAN BEING

Including children, concerned neighborhooders, extortionists, hired brutes, Martian warriors-errant, moon-barkers, overseers (traitorous or otherwise), persons hardworking and sober, persons too sick to work or stir, plague-carriers, press-gang slavers, saboteurs, smoke-drinkers, squatters (rightful or otherwise), thief-takers (discriminating or otherwise), thugs, and warrior-slaves.

A human being's Violent, Bonus to Spend, Harm, and Armor depend upon their personal nature and skills, and the armaments they carry.

Violent: -1–+3. **Bonus to Spend:** 0–1. **Harm:** 0–2. **Armor:** 0–2.

1 Harm

- *They're annoyed.*
- *You have their full attention*
- *They're enraged.*

3+ Harm

- *They're fatally wounded, and flee.*
- *They're killed outright.*

2 Harm

- *They're taken aback.*
 - *They're wounded, and flee.*
 - *They're wounded, but press on.*
-

INCENDIARY BOOBY TRAP

You can't fight with a booby trap. You might be able to notice its presence with a Patient save, or by SIZING A SITUATION UP, but if you can't, or on a miss, it ATTACKS EVERYONE NEARBY, HELPLESS.

It inflicts a special bad experience: "I was spattered with flaming naphtha."

Violent: +1. **Harm:** 3.

HUMMING-FERN

Probably requires no entry in the bestiary, as it is a plant whose fronds merely vibrate together to produce tones.

LANCET-GRASS

Lancet-grass, the naturalists assure us, is not a plant, but an animal indistinguishable from a plant in almost every way. What they hope we will profit by this assurance, however, remains mysterious.

Lancet-grass is unharmed by weapons, but must be hewn down with machetes and uprooted with spades, which inflicts 2 harm.

Violent: 0. **Bonus to Spend:** 0. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1–3 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *It's enraged.*

4+ Harm

- *It's killed outright.*
-

MILK SALAMANDER

Salamanders on Venus grow to great size. Milk salamanders are, when fully grown, 4–5 meters long. They are called milk salamanders because they secrete an opaque white fluid onto their skin, a potent toxin, which they spray in droplets by shaking themselves.

They inflict a special bad experience: "I was doused in milk salamander toxin."

Violent: 0. **Bonus to Spend:** 2. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1–2 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *It's taken aback.*

6+ Harm

- *It's wounded, but presses on.*
- *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
- *It's killed outright.*

3–5 Harm

- *You have its full attention.*
 - *It's enraged.*
 - *It's wounded, and flees*
-

MOURNING GHOST

Mourning ghosts, like all ghosts, are unharmed by weapons, only by necromancy.

Mourning ghosts inflict a special bad experience: "I was overcome with mesmeric grief." Until you recover from this grief, you must howl, weep, sob, lament, and cry curses upon the sky, the sun, mortality, and all nature.

Violent: +1. **Bonus to Spend:** 1. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1–2 Psychic Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *You have its full attention.*
- *It's enraged.*
- *It's taken aback.*

3+ Psychic Harm

- *It's driven through the jasmine gate.*
 - *It's compelled to obey you.*
-

PLASMIC STAGNATION

Including malignant fluxes.

PLASMID

Including the denizens of elemental worlds, libertine intelligences, plasmids, and whisps.

Some plasmids are unharmed by weapons, but can be harmed only by psychic will or by substances inimical to their nature, as drowning in water a creature native to a world of elemental fire. Few plasmids can be killed, though all can be driven to retreat back to their native worlds.

Many plasmids inflict special bad experiences, depending upon their nature, such as:

“I was driven wild with rage by voices only I could hear.”

“I was terribly burned by elemental fire.”

“I was forced to improbable actions by an alien will.”

“I was led into peril by a beautiful beckoning figure.”

“I was beaten terribly by a squadron of animated withes.”

Violent: 0–+3. **Bonus to Spend:** 0. **Harm:** 0–3. **Armor:** 0–3.

1 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *You have its full attention*
- *It's enraged.*

3+ Harm

- *It's driven back to its own world.*
- *It's compelled to obey you.*

2 Harm

- *It's taken aback.*
 - *It's discommoded, and flees.*
 - *It's discommoded, but presses on.*
-

PRIEST-BAT

Famously uses its flower-shaped nose to attract fish and frogs.

SOULLESS SLAVE

Of an ancient ghost, a plasmic intelligence, a sorcerous cult, etc.

Soulless slaves are normally peaceful, happy, calm, and hard working, willingly giving up all their wealth and labor to the ghost, plasm, cult, or sorcerer they serve. Still, if pressed to fight, they do so without mercy or human compassion.

Their Harm and Armor depends upon the armaments they carry.

Violent: +2. **Bonus to Spend:** 0. **Harm:** 0–2. **Armor:** 0–2.

1 Harm

- *They're annoyed.*
- *You have their full attention*
- *They're enraged.*

3+ Harm

- *They're fatally wounded, and flee.*
- *They're killed outright.*

2 Harm

- *They're taken aback.*
 - *They're wounded, and flee.*
 - *They're wounded, but press on.*
-

STILT-LEG BAT

Stilt-leg bats are long-legged wading bats, careful, quiet, and fast-moving.

Violent: +1. **Bonus to Spend:** 0. **Harm:** 1. **Armor:** 0.

1 Harm

- *It's annoyed.*
- *You have its full attention.*
- *It's taken aback.*

3+ Harm

- *It's wounded, but presses on.*
 - *It's fatally wounded, and flees.*
 - *It's killed outright.*
-

2 Harm

- *It's enraged.*
- *It's wounded, and flees*

TERRAN GIANT LIZARD-BIRD

Is it a dinosaur or a pterosaur?

TUSKED GAZELLE

A smallish herding antelope, curious and calm, harmless except in must.

WHISTLING BAT

Venus' equivalent to songbirds.

EXCERPTS: IDEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, & SCIENCE

EVOLUTION

By all evidence, evolution, when allowed its course, runs in certain channels. On a world with the requisite spark and resource, human beings—along with any number of other families of animal—are likely to eventually appear. So it is on Venus. So it is, those of us who can travel thence reveal to us, on many worlds throughout the universe.

BATS

Birds never developed on Venus. Instead, wherever on Terra you might find a bird, on Venus you might find a bat. Nocturnal, diurnal, crepuscular; meat-eating, nut-eating, fruit-eating, fish-eating, scavenger; flightless, flightless, swimming, wading.

There exist a few species of “singing bats,” whose calls sound like music, but instead of Terra’s songbirds, Venus has “chanting bats.” Their calls sound like, for instance, “gaaan tun tun door gaaan tun tun tun fly gaaan tun tun door gaaan tun tun tun fly.”

Because of this, there is a saying, “devout as a bat,” meaning devoted to the gods beyond any sense or reason, stopping to pray even when it is silly or fruitless to do so.

Some priests give sermons: “when someone calls you ‘devout as a bat,’ it is no insult! Say it back with pride: ‘I *am* devout as a bat, and so also should you be.’” There is a bat called a priest-bat. Its nose is shaped like a succulent water flower. When frogs or fish, attracted by the flower, swim close, it eats them. It is so named because it preys upon the easily misled.

CATS

There is only one kind of cat on Venus, a slim little creature of malice and violence, native to one of the southern continents. It is a killer of smaller beings more cruel than the most venomous snake, and less tame.

When the text mentions “half-tame ruffled cats, self-sufficient and occasionally overheard to be discussing matters of philosophy,” it is not altogether clear what creature this might be.

“RACE”

It’s well-known that like all living things, when isolated in a place, human beings will change themselves to suit the place where they live. Where the sun is weakest, human beings become pale. Where it is cold, they become stout. Where food is scarce, they become small. This is a matter of generations.

However, where human beings are not isolated, they exchange and blend their traits freely, as they mingle. It would be exorbitantly foolish to measure individual human merit by these coincidences of nature.

DEATH

JASMINITE

Jasminite is a greenish-white stone, possessed of certain resonances that make it suitable for cultic purpose and memorials to the dead.

LAW & WARFARE

GODS & CULTS

Some cults are self-serving, ambitious, and grasping. They beguile and tithe all who come within their sway. Their priests and priestesses, cynical, rise to power in the society of the city, with great wealth and armies of servants.

Some cults are altruistic, humanistic, and compassionate. They struggle to feed the hungry, comfort the miserable, and uplift the downtrodden. Their priests and priestesses labor in the streets alongside those they serve.

In neither case are the gods demonstrably appeased.

PLASMIDS

TERRA

Terra is visible as a luminous blue star in the sky, our closest neighbor past our moon.

It is at a further remove from the sun than Venus is, and so is the colder world. On it, evolution is more sluggish, and takes a more meandering route. Reptiles have put on feathers against the cold, and human beings have not yet even appeared.

DEATH ON TERRA

It’s said that on Terra an abominable psychic wind always blows, so that when you die there, your ghost is torn from the world and flung away into oblivion forever. This may be true. Certainly there are few or none who claim to have died on Terra and have returned to refute it.

A great many creatures are born on Terra every moment, however; no fewer there than here on Venus. If it is true that the ghosts of the dead do not survive there, where do the souls of these newly born creatures come from? Or is it that most creatures on Terra have no souls?

MARS

On Mars, colder and more distant still, there is no native life beyond some simple, lethargic, fungal grubs. There is, however, a civilization displaced from elsewhere, human beings who evolved in some far-distant place and came to Mars in unknowable antiquity. They are always at war with themselves; war is their most treasured virtue.

When the sluggish fungus-grubs native to Mars are brought to Venus, where resources are plenty and the world is warm, they grow rapidly, over generations few and quick, into voracious predators. Their evolved ability to exploit the resources around them so fully, and to protect themselves from such environmental hostility, make them far more fearsome than we.