



AGON

JOHN HARPER SEAN NITTNER

An Evil Hat Productions Publication
www.evilhathat.com • feedback@evilhathat.com
@EvilHatOfficial on Twitter
facebook.com/EvilHatProductions

In association with One Seven Design
www.onesevendesign.com • oneseven@gmail.com
@john_harper on Twitter

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CREDITS

JOHN HARPER

*Game Design, Writing,
Graphic Design, Layout,
and Illustration*

SEAN NITTNER

*Game Design, Writing,
Developmental Editing,
Director of Projects for Evil Hat*

ALLISON ARTH, ANDI CARRISON, JOHN LEBOEUF-LITTLE, KAREN TWELVES, NADJA OTIKOR, STRAS ACIMOVIC

Primary Playtesters and Development Consultants

JASON MORNINGSTAR

Consulting Designer

KAREN TWELVES

Editing

RITA TATUM

Indexing

JAMES MENDEZ HODES & JOHN STAVROPOULOS

Sensitivity Readers and Cultural Consultants

FRED HICKS

President of Evil Hat

TOM LOMMEL

Marketing Manager

ADDITIONAL PLAYTESTERS

Alice Grizzle, Amber Dean, Andy Munich, Arturo Rubio, Aryana Wills, Ash McAllan, Banana Chan, Ben Scerri, Blake Hutchins, Brit Weisman, Caroline Hobbs, Christian Griffen, Clayton Grey, Colin Jessup, Daniel Wood, David Gallo, DC, Doug Bartlett, Dylan Green, ET, Gabriel Ricardo Freeman, Isaac Thummell, James Mendez Hodes, James Ritter, Jeeyon Shim, Jenn Martin, Jerry Ozbun, Josh Neel, Kaitlyn Fox, Ken Davidson, Kimberley Lam, Laura Fredriksen, Luke Jordan, Matthew Gagan, Misha Bushyager, Morgan Ellis, Noella Handley, Patrick Brannick, Paul Riddle, Philip LaRose, Ross Cowman, Sage LaTorra, Sam Ashwell, Sam Day, Sandy Jacobs-Tolle, Shannon Riddle, Skylar Wall, Sophie Lagacé, Tara Hynson, Tomer Gurantz, Tony Dowler, Tracy O'Brien, Van Magnan, Venn White, Yoshi Creelman, and many unsung heroes from Conlorado, KublaCon, Gen Con, Origins, Go Play Northwest, The Game Academy, and Secret Orbit Game Nights.

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Agon was first inspired by Jonathan Walton's game concept *Argonauts*. Specifically, the Fate track that measures the lifetime of a hero was a core idea that sparked the original *Agon* design.

The original playtesters for the first edition also contributed ideas and support that helped the game get off the ground. They were Brandon Amancio, Scott Dierdorf, Tony Dowler, Wilhelm Fitzpatrick, Philip LaRose, Ed Ouellette, and Cara Tyler.

The gaming technique "ask questions and build on the answers" was taken from *Apocalypse World* by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker.

The experience of playing the epic, wandering heroes of *Trollbabe*, by Ron Edwards, was a big inspiration for *Agon*. *Trollbabe* also introduced us to the idea of portraying aspects of nature (the sea, a mountain) as characters in the game.

The idea of using increasing die sizes to represent the potency of character traits was inspired by *Savage Worlds* by Shane Lacy Hensley and *In A Wicked Age...* by D. Vincent Baker.

The battle sheet design was inspired by the range map in *3:16 Carnage Amongst the Stars*, by Gregor Hutton.

The Pathos mechanic was initially inspired by the exhaustion system in *Don't Rest Your Head* by Fred Hicks.

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THESIS

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HEROES OF LEGEND

In the mists of ancient time, a poet sings of great deeds wrought by mighty heroes—of monsters slain and justice restored, of wise counsel and devious strategies, of courage, valor, and daring—defiant of the gods themselves. In AGON, you create these heroes, crafting their epic tale into an immortal legend.

On their way back home from war, a band of heroes become lost among strange islands populated by mythical creatures, dangerous villains, legendary kingdoms, and desperate people—each entangled in strife, at the mercy of the capricious gods.

It falls to you as the epic heroes of your age to seize this opportunity for greatness—to set things right in these lost lands, overcome the trials of gods, monsters, and mortals, prove the glory of your name, and win your way back home.

PASSION AND PROWESS

Heroes in AGON are defined by an essential duality: the human and the transcendent. They are powerful figures capable of epic feats, but they're also people—they can be hurt, exhausted, and heartbroken.

To reflect this, the heroes have two key resources at their disposal: **Divine Favor** and **Pathos**.

Divine Favor represents the capacity for superhuman achievement. By calling upon the *Precision* of Artemis, the *Insight* of Hekate, the *Cunning* of Hera (and others), a hero may reach beyond their limits. Divine Favor is powerful, but unreliable—the favor of the gods is not assured.

Pathos represents the inner fire of perseverance that a hero draws upon to endure hardships. Where a lesser person would fall, a hero stands strong, driven by their passion. Pathos is not infinite, however. When it burns out, the hero enters agony, and slips closer to their fate.

By empowering the heroes with Divine Favor and Pathos, the game highlights the essential duality of the characters. They are passionate people striving for glory against the strife of the world, blessed by the gods to set things right.

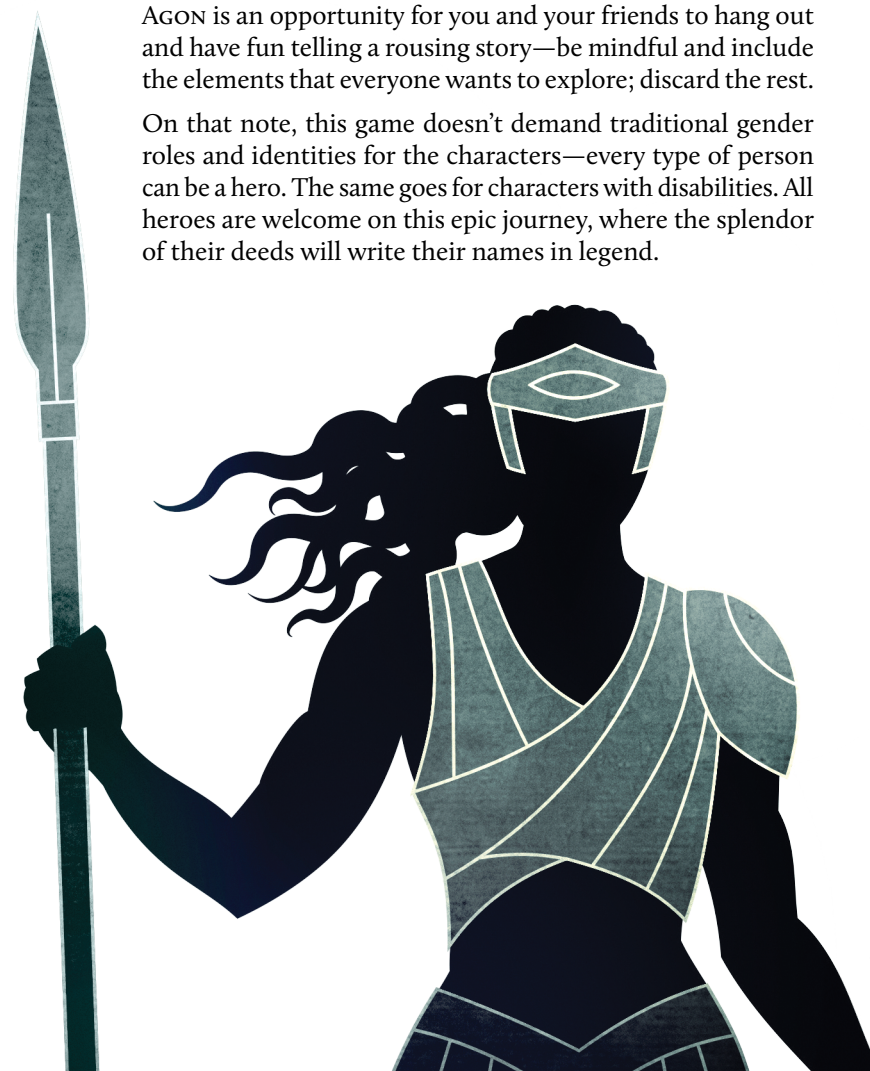
YOUR MYTHIC WORLD

Though AGON is inspired by ancient Greek myths and legends, the action of the game takes place within a strange, mist-shrouded sea, hiding uncharted islands not found in the Mediterranean. This is a fantasy world for you to explore, not a historical one—building on the enchanting Greek myths to forge your own legends.

Think of your favorite “swords and sandals” media—*Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Clash of the Titans*, or the scenes on Themyscira in *Wonder Woman*. It's a simpler world—where the strength of your arm and the fire of your spirit make a difference—but modern sensibilities are fully welcome in play. If you want to base your characters on current epic heroes like Letty, Dom, and Hobbs from *The Fast and the Furious* movies, go for it!

The racism, sexism, ableism, and other bigotries of the past can be confronted head on or set aside as you see fit. A game of AGON is an opportunity for you and your friends to hang out and have fun telling a rousing story—be mindful and include the elements that everyone wants to explore; discard the rest.

On that note, this game doesn't demand traditional gender roles and identities for the characters—every type of person can be a hero. The same goes for characters with disabilities. All heroes are welcome on this epic journey, where the splendor of their deeds will write their names in legend.



THE GAME

AGON is a fast-paced tabletop roleplaying game of heroic adventure, suitable for newcomers and veterans alike. The rules are designed to be simple to learn and easy to use, focusing on the epic actions of the heroes against the strife afflicting the world.

SIMPLE CHARACTERS AND MECHANICS

Characters in the game are simple, with only a few traits, so they're quick to create and easy to play. Players don't need to digest a lot of rules before they jump in to the game. Each mechanic can be learned as it comes up in play, with system mastery developing naturally over time.

BRIEF LOCATION-BASED ADVENTURES

Each session of the game covers an adventure in a dangerous place—namely a lost island suffering from strife. A collection of islands is provided in this book, so very little preparation is required to play. Just choose an island and you're off and running—everything you need to play is included in the island materials. An adventure can be completed in a single session of two to three hours.

ONE-ROLL RESOLUTION

Each scene in the game revolves around a **trial**—a conflict between the heroes and their opponents. To resolve a conflict, everyone rolls dice together in a single **contest**. The results of the contest determine all the outcomes at once—which side gets their way, who is best, and who suffers.

The result of a contest is final—the situation is resolved and a new circumstance arises, leading to a new trial and contest to overcome it. In AGON, you don't linger over things—you face the challenge and then move on, win or lose.

One-roll resolution gets everyone involved in the action and keeps the pace of the game high. As soon as trouble arises, the group meets it head-on. They either defeat it or succumb, with either outcome immediately leading into a new scene of adventure.

THE PLAYERS

AGON is a game for three to six players (four is ideal). One of you takes the role of the **Strife Player**—you present the islands and trials to the heroes. The rest of you are **Hero Players**—you each portray a hero who faces the challenges of the islands to earn Glory, appease the gods, and make progress toward home.

THE HERO PLAYERS

When you're a Hero Player, you create and portray a hero on their quest for a glorious homecoming. Your job is to make your hero larger-than-life—a memorable character worthy of an epic tale. You face danger and overcome strife to appease the gods, competing with your fellow heroes to earn the greatest share of Glory and forge your legend.

The Hero Players are kind of like the members of a sports team. You're all working together toward a common goal against the opposition, but each of you wants to be the star of the team.

THE STRIFE PLAYER

When you're the Strife Player, you don't play a hero. Instead, you present a dangerous island to the other players so their heroes can contend with its challenges. You portray the gods, monsters, and people that the heroes encounter, and describe the places they visit. A collection of islands are included in this book—with locations, characters, and trials for you to use.

The Strife Player is like a guide and a referee. You point out the interesting and challenging features that the heroes come across, then help adjudicate contests to find out what happens when the heroes clash with the trials of the island.

You might be the Strife Player for one island and then a Hero Player for the next. Or you might decide to be the Strife Player for several islands in a row. It's up to you and the other players to decide which roles to take on.

For more about being the Strife Player, see page 66.

CYCLE OF PLAY

AGON is played in a number of phases, starting with the **origin** of the heroes. Then each game session includes the **trials** of an island and a period of **respite**. After a number of islands have been visited, heroes end their tales and forge their **legends**.

ORIGIN

Players create their heroes, giving them Epithets, Names, and other advantageous **traits**. They establish **Bonds** with one another and the first **leader** of the companions is chosen.

TRIALS

Game play begins when the heroes arrive at an island afflicted by **strife**. Each island provides an immediate **contest** upon arrival that establishes the situation and demands heroic action—like the opening teaser for a thrilling TV show.

After the initial conflict, the heroes explore the island, befriend allies, confront enemies, and attempt to overcome the trials that strife has placed in their path.

Finally, the heroes face a **battle** to determine the ultimate destiny of the island—whether it is pulled out of despair or slips further into misery.

RESPITE

When the heroes leave an island, their **Great Deeds** and **virtues** are recorded in the ongoing epic tale. Once they depart, there's no going back—the island's destiny is set by their actions and it recedes into the mists, lost to the heroes forever.

The heroes spend time together during the Voyage to rest and recover, make sacrifices to the gods, and choose a leader for the group. When the voyage is done, the heroes once again find themselves at an island plagued by strife, and the cycle starts anew.

LEGEND

When a hero's tale comes to an end—whether by a glorious **homecoming** or meeting their **Fate**—their player takes the measure of their name, deeds, and virtues to forge their **legend**.

THE DICE

Five kinds of dice are used in the game: **d4s** (four-sided dice), **d6s** (six-sided), **d8s** (eight-sided), **d10s** (ten-sided), and **d12s** (twelve-sided).

Each Hero Player needs at least one die of each size, but it's best if each player has **1d4**, **3d6**, **3d8**, **2d10**, and **1d12**. The Strife Player should have multiples of each die size to use for foes as well as for bonus dice when the players need them.

Key traits of the heroes and their opponents are rated with dice. Your hero might have a Name of d6 and Blood & Valor of d8. An opponent might have a Name die of d10 or the Epithet "Stone-Handed" rated at d8. The bigger the die size, the more powerful the trait.

TOUCHSTONES

To get a feel for the style of AGON, we recommend these media:

- ◆ *Xena: Warrior Princess* — TV series by John Schulian, Robert Tapert, Sam Raimi, Lucy Lawless, et al.
- ◆ *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* — Epic poems by Homer. The translation of *The Odyssey* by Emily Wilson is especially recommended.
- ◆ *Song of Achilles* and *Circe* — Novels by Madeline Miller.
- ◆ *Clash of the Titans* — 1981 movie by Desmond Davis, Beverly Cross, et al.
- ◆ *Jason and the Argonauts* — Movie by Don Chaffey, et al.
- ◆ *Wonder Woman* — Movie by Patty Jenkins, et al.
- ◆ *The 7th Voyage of Sindbad*, *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* — Movies by Nathan H. Juran, Gordon Hessler, Sam Wanamaker, et al.
- ◆ *Fast & Furious* — Movie franchise by Gary Scott Thompson, Rob Cohen, John Singleton, Justin Lin, James Wan, F. Gary Gray, David Leitch, Vin Diesel, Paul Walker, Michele Rodriguez, Dwayne Johnson, et al.
- ◆ *Apotheon* — Video game by Alientrap.
- ◆ *Assassin's Creed: Odyssey* — Video game by Ubisoft.
- ◆ *Hades* — Video game by Supergiant.



ORIGIN

CREATING A HERO

CREATING A HERO

To create your hero, you'll choose a heroic Epithet, create a Name for your hero, determine your lineage and favored Domain, choose your honored god, and record Divine Favor. You'll also record your hero's style—their look, armor, and favored weapon. Finally, you'll establish your starting Bonds.

You might want to have a copy of the **hero sheet** to refer to while you read this section (available for download at <http://agon-rpg.com> and printed at the end of this book). An example completed sheet is on page 21.

EPITHET

When we play AGON, we're crafting the stories of great heroes memorialized in epic poems. To distinguish themselves in the narrative, each hero has an heroic **Epithet**—a short, evocative phrase that describes the key feature that boosts that hero in conflicts. Perhaps your hero is *Silver-Tongued*, *Pure-Hearted*, or *Strong-Limbed*. Each hero has a unique Epithet all their own. **Your hero's Epithet die begins at d6.**

Choose an Epithet from the list or create one.

<i>Bloody-Minded</i>	<i>Great-Hunter</i>	<i>Lithe-Limbed</i>	<i>Silver-Tongued</i>
<i>Clear-Voiced</i>	<i>Eagle-Eyed</i>	<i>Loud-Roaring</i>	<i>Strong-Limbed</i>
<i>Clever-Eyed</i>	<i>Hot-Headed</i>	<i>Many-Wayed</i>	<i>Swift-Footed</i>
<i>Far-Sighted</i>	<i>Iron-Minded</i>	<i>Pure-Hearted</i>	<i>War-Leader</i>
<i>Forge-Master</i>	<i>Lion-Hearted</i>	<i>Shadow-Wise</i>	<i>Well-Learned</i>

NAME

Your hero's name is a crucial part of who they are. It will live far beyond their mortal life, ringing out in legend down through the ages. Every contest roll in the game involves your hero's Name die—it is essential to their heroic identity.

Your hero's Name die begins at d6. It grows in potency as you accumulate Glory in play (see page 48).

For a list of ancient names, see page 143.

Nadja creates her hero, starting with an Epithet and Name: Clever-Eyed Hagne.

LINEAGE & DOMAINS

Your **lineage** is the name of your significant parent, ancestor, or people. You are their scion. You may choose to have a god as an ancestor, making you a demigod.

Your lineage follows after your hero's Name. Next to your lineage, record the pronouns used for your hero.


Next, choose a favored **Domain** that reflects your hero's lineage. Each contest in the game falls into one of the four Domains: Arts & Oration, Blood & Valor, Craft & Reason, or Resolve & Spirit. **Your favored Domain begins at d8.** The other three begin at d6.

Nadja decides that Hagne is a demigod—granddaughter of Athena. She is now Clever-Eyed Hagne, scion of Athena. Hagne's pronouns are she/her. Because Hagne is descended from the goddess of wisdom, she chooses Craft & Reason as her favored Domain.

HONORED GOD & DIVINE FAVOR

Next, you'll choose the primary god from which your hero draws **Divine Favor**. This may change during play, but for now, decide which god your hero is devoted to.

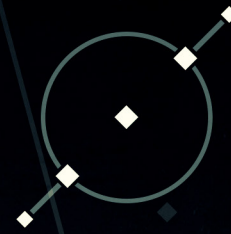
Nadja chooses Artemis as her hero's honored god—the great huntress is clever and favors a bow, just like Hagne. Her strength is Precision, which Hagne may call upon by using Divine Favor.

Your hero begins with two marks of Divine Favor with their honored god. You may also distribute three more marks of Divine Favor among the other gods. To indicate a mark of Divine Favor on your hero sheet, put a slash through the diamond next to the god's name, like this: 

If you want your hero to honor a god that isn't listed among the 12 in the pantheon, you may choose a different one. Work with the other players to create a strength that reflects that god's nature and write it in the space on your hero sheet.

For more about Divine Favor, see page 59. For more about the constellations of the gods and the Vault of Heaven, see page 44.

The gods of the ancient Greek pantheon are described on the following pages, along with the strengths granted by Divine Favor.



APOLLO

God of the Sun and Healing

KNOWLEDGE

Intellect, memory,
and education

APHRODITE

Goddess of Love and Beauty

BEAUTY

Grace, charm, and
seductiveness

ARES

God of War

FEROCITY

Fury, aggression,
and brutality

HEKATE

Goddess of Magic

INSIGHT

Arcane insight, lore,
and power

HERA

Queen of the Gods

CUNNING

Subtlety, deviousness,
and cleverness

POSEIDON

God of the Sea

FORTITUDE

Tenacity, toughness,
and stamina

ARTEMIS

Goddess of the Hunt

PRECISION

Focus, accuracy,
and finesse

ATHENA

Goddess of Wisdom and War

WISDOM

Foresight, discernment,
and prudence

DEMETER

Goddess of Harvest and Law

CONVICTION

Confidence, credibility,
and sincerity

HEPHAISTOS

God of Fire and Crafting

INGENUITY

Creativity, intellect,
and imagination

HERMES

God of Athletes and Thieves

DARING

Boldness, audacity,
and recklessness

ZEUS

King of the Gods

AUTHORITY

Nobility, dominance,
and command

If your group wants to use a different pantheon of deities, discuss the gods you'd like to incorporate into your tales, and use the special blank hero sheet with space to record new gods and strengths.

STYLE

Next, develop an image of your hero—both their physical appearance and their outward demeanor. Focus on a few key features—how can we recognize your hero at a distance? Each hero brings an array of weapons and armor on their journeys, but for now select a few that your hero especially favors.

For a list of style suggestions, see page 143.

Clever-Eyed Hagne, scion of Athena—known at a distance by her dark braided hair, hunter's hood, ritual dagger, and shining bow that gleams with the moonlight of Artemis.

BONDS

Once everyone is finished, introduce your hero to the other players. Tell them your Epithet, Name, lineage and pronouns, the deity you favor, and the features by which they know you.

Write the other heroes' names in the Bonds section of your hero sheet.

- ◆ **Demigod heroes** record 1 Bond with each other hero and 1 Bond with their divine ancestor.
- ◆ **Mortal heroes** record 2 Bonds with each other hero.

For details about the use of Bonds, see page 56.

LEADERSHIP

Finally, determine the first **leader** of the heroes. This is done with a **contest**, pitting the heroes against a crisis created by the Strife Player during the Voyage to the first island. The sailors and ship are in danger, and the heroes must rally together to overcome the problem. The details of this contest are described on page 43.

The hero who is best earns the right to name the leader for the next island. The leader is responsible for interpreting the signs of the gods and has the final say over how the band of heroes faces the trials of the island.

Leadership changes during the **Voyage** in the Respite phase of play. See page 42 for more.

AGON

EPITHET		CLEVER-EYED	D 6
NAME		HAGNE	D 6
LINEAGE / PRONOUNS		SCION OF ATHENA	SHE/HER
HONORED GOD		ARTEMIS	PRECISION STRENGTH
DIVINE FAVOR	AUTHORITY ZEUS	BEAUTY APHRODITE	CONVICTION DEMETER
	DARING HERMES	FEROCITY ARES	FORTITUDE POSEIDON
	INSIGHT HEKATE	KNOWLEDGE APOLLO	PRECISION ARTEMIS
		CUNNING HERA	INGENUITY HEPHAISTOS
		WISDOM ATHENA	
STYLE & NOTES DARK BRAIDED HAIR, HUNTER'S HOOD, RITUAL DAGGER, AND SHINING BOW THAT GLEAMS WITH THE MOONLIGHT OF ARTEMIS.			

MORE EXAMPLE HEROES

Shadow-Wise Xentropa, scion of Certā (she/her). Favored Domain: Resolve & Spirit. Honors Hekate. Dark eyes and flowing hair; a helm marked with an arcane third eye; wielding a sacred spear.

War-Leader Maarika, scion of Zeus (she/her). Favored Domain: Blood & Valor. Honors Hera. A grim countenance; fights with paired swords.

Empty-Handed Pallas, scion of the Autumn Delta (they/them). Favored Domain: Blood & Valor. Honors Ares. Muscled and scarred, with close-cropped hair; hands wrapped in leather cords.



TRIALS

CONTESTS

BATTLES

CONTESTS

The action of the game always drives toward conflict—because each island is plagued by strife, the efforts of the heroes inevitably bring them into confrontations with dangerous opponents. To resolve a conflict, we engage in a **contest**.

A contest has four steps:

1. Face your opponent

3. Test your fortune

2. Speak your name

4. Recite your deeds

FACE YOUR OPPONENT

When the heroes are tested against a worthy opponent, a contest is triggered. The contest might be initiated by the actions of the heroes or by the efforts of the foe—either way, the contest resolves which side is victorious and gets what they want. *Usually, the heroes act together as a single team, but sometimes they might split up into pairs, or a hero might face an opponent alone. The procedure is the same regardless.*

In AGON, almost anything can be an opponent. A contest can occur against a raging storm, a giant boar, a bandit army, a devious king, or the enchanting song of a siren. As long as the opponent is worthy, hold a contest to resolve the outcome.

Anyone can call for a contest, but the Strife Player has the responsibility to be vigilant and identify when the heroes come into conflict against a foe. When the contest is called, the Hero Players may confer with each other, then they declare their **opposition** to the foe by stating their **approach** and **goal**.

Their **approach** describes the overall method by which they're contending against the foe (by winning them over with songs and drink, by assaulting them with weapons, by sneaking quietly past, etc.). Their **goal** is what they hope to achieve if they win.

The Strife Player does the same for the opponent, saying how they oppose the heroes and what they are fighting for.

If there's no worthy opponent in a situation, the heroes simply accomplish what they're trying to do—it's an automatic success, not deserving of dice rolls or Glory.

CHOOSE THE DOMAIN OF CONFLICT

The Strife Player determines which of the four Domains of conflict will resolve the contest at hand.

Arts & Oration includes all forms of affective expression, including music, poetry, dance, and storytelling. This Domain resolves contests of culture, artistry, and persuasiveness.



Blood & Valor represents bold action, including wrestling, running, skirmishing, and outright warfare. This Domain resolves contests of violence, bravado, and athletic prowess.



Craft & Reason concerns matters of intellect, including academics, tactics, healing arts, intrigue, and trickery. This Domain resolves contests of scholarship, vocations, and subterfuge.



Resolve & Spirit represents the strength of the will and soul, including tenacity, inspiration, and mystic arts. This Domain resolves contests of perseverance, passion, and intuition.



The choice of Domain depends on the details of the situation and the actions of the characters involved. If the heroes initiate the action, focus on their approach and goals when choosing the Domain. If the heroes resist an opponent, the Domain should reflect the opponent's action.

At the funeral feast, Maarika shouts "Let us sing laments for the fallen and bare our hearts, one to the other!" The heroes want to show the king that they care more about the prince's death than the queen does. Sounds like a contest of Arts & Oration against Queen Naia.

The monstrous Serpent of Nimos emerges from the shadows of the cave-sanctum of the Serpent Cult, lured by a thrashing victim bound to their profane altar. The massive creature will surely consume the helpless soul unless the heroes can intervene and drive the foul beast back into its lair. A contest of Blood & Valor will determine their fate.

ASSEMBLE THE OPPONENT'S DICE POOL

The Strife Player announces the opponent by **Name** along with any of their **Epithets** that apply to the contest. Grab the dice for their Name and Epithet(s) as well as any **bonus dice** (see below).

"You face the Monstrous Serpent of Nimos in a contest of Blood & Valor!"

The Strife Player grabs 1d10 for the serpent's "Monstrous" Epithet and 1d10 for its Name die.

Not every Epithet will apply to every type of contest—usually just one, though some especially potent foes may roll several at once.

BONUS DICE

There are two types of bonus dice that may apply to a roll, depending on the situation. They don't apply for every contest.

- ♦ **Advantage dice** are a way for specific fictional details to impact a contest, such as having superior numbers or striking where a foe is weakest. Some opponents have **special abilities** that grant Advantage dice. The value of an Advantage die depends on how well it applies to the situation, from d6 up to d10. Both heroes and opponents may use Advantage dice. Advantages are explained in more detail on page 57.
- ♦ **Wrath dice** represent the interference of the vengeful gods in a contest, adding a bonus die to the opponent's pool depending on the level of Wrath (d8, d10, or d12). Only the Strife Player uses Wrath dice. Wrath is tracked by the Strife Player, changing as a result of the actions of the heroes on an island.

The Serpent of Nimos has the special ability SCINTILLATING SCALES, which grants a 1d10 Advantage die in this contest because its color-shifting body makes it almost impossible to see in the dark sea caves where it makes its lair.

Apollo is watching over the isle of Nimos—including the fate of the terrible serpent—and his Wrath is manifest as a brilliant lance of light from the sky, cascading through the sea caves, dazzling the eyes of the heroes. Apollo's Wrath die of d8 is included in the opponent's dice pool.

THE STRIFE PLAYER ROLLS

The Strife Player rolls before any actions are narrated. This roll establishes the **target number** for the Hero Players and the amount of Glory the contest is worth.

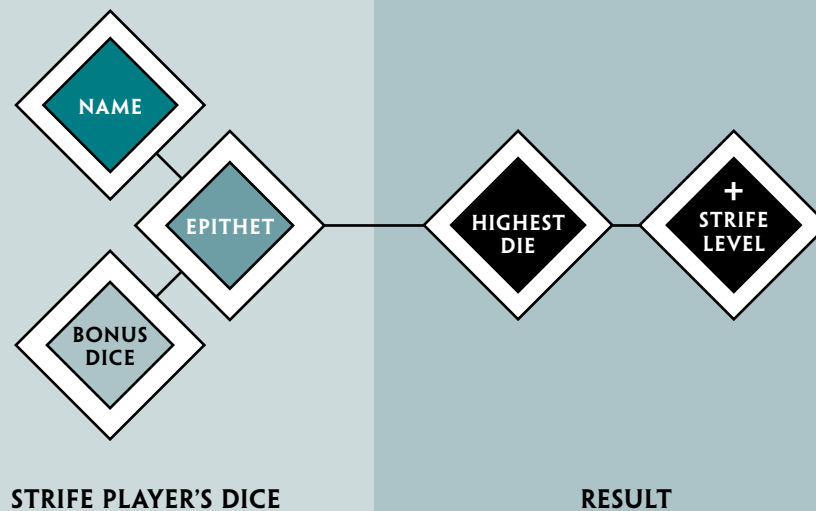
Roll all the dice in the Strife Player's pool. Keep the **single highest die** and **add the current Strife Level**. Strife Level is usually +5 (but may be reduced to +4 or increased to +6 due to occurrences on the island).

Announce the total as the **target number** for the contest.

The Strife Player rolls 1d8, 3d10 and gets 2, 6, 7, 7. Adding the Strife Level of +5 to their highest die gives a target number of 12.

If there are **multiple opponents**, roll all of their dice together, keep the single highest, and add the Strife Level. *The Strife Player never counts more than one die on a roll.*

The Strife Player doesn't yet describe the actions of the opponent. All the narrations of action happens in the fourth step of the contest, "Recite Your Deeds"—after the Strife Player and all the Hero Players have rolled and the outcomes are known—who suffers, who prevails, and who is best.



SPEAK YOUR NAME

After the Strife Player rolls and announces the target number, they ask, “Who among you will face this contest?”

Each Hero Player indicates their participation by **speaking their name**. Take turns, starting with the leader. On your turn, recite your hero’s identity and grab dice as you go: If your **Epithet** applies to the contest, grab that die. Then add your **Name** die and the **Domain** die for the contest when you say your Name and lineage.

- ◆ You may mark **Pathos** (○) to include the die from a second Domain in your dice pool.
- ◆ You may invoke **Divine Favor** by calling on the strength of a god—if you do, add +1d4 to your pool and spend ◇.
- ◆ If you spend a **Bond**, ask that player to give you a copy of their Name die. (They still get to use their Name for their own roll.)
- ◆ If you have an **Advantage** die, include it in your dice pool.

“I will face this contest! I am Shadow-Wise Xentropa, scion of Certa! I call on the Insight of Hekate to aid me.”

Allison grabs 1d6 for Xentropa’s Epithet (she knows arcane lore about the serpent), 1d6 for her Name, 1d8 for Blood & Valor, and 1d4 for Hekate’s Insight (spending a mark of Divine Favor).

TEST YOUR FORTUNE

Once everyone has spoken their names, roll your hero’s dice pool and sum your **two highest**, not counting d4s. Then **add the number on the d4** (if you have one) to your two highest dice to get your hero’s final result.

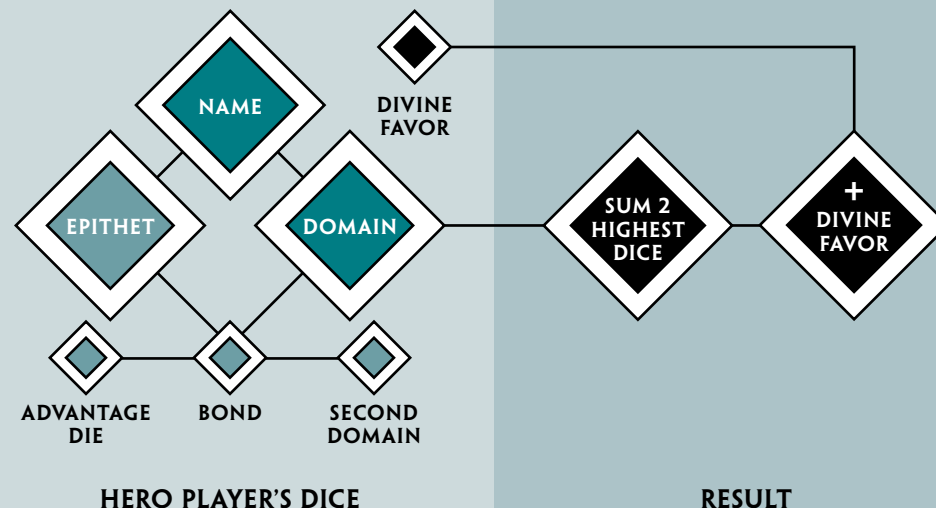
Allison rolls 1d8, 2d6 for Xentropa and gets 6, 5, 3. Her two highest dice sum to 11. Her 1d4 from Divine Favor rolls a 3, which is added to the total, so her final result is 14.

OUTCOMES

To determine your hero’s fortune in the contest, compare your hero’s result to the Strife Player’s target number:

- ◆ **Equal to or greater:** Your hero **prevails**. Their action goes well and they overcome the challenge. The prevailing hero with the highest total is **best**. (Roll Name dice to break a tie.)
- ◆ **Less than:** Your hero **suffers**. Their action goes awry or they have to endure hardship to persevere.

If all the heroes suffer, **the opponent wins** the contest.



RECITE YOUR DEEDS

After the rolls, the Hero Players take turns narrating their heroes’ actions and effect on the contest, starting with the heroes who suffer, then the heroes who prevail, then the hero who is best. Use your outcome to guide your narration, including your Epithet, Pathos, or Divine Favor (if you used them) as details. *The hero sheet has a set of cues to help you add details to your recitation of deeds.*

During the recitation of deeds, the Strife Player responds with the actions of the opponent, either overcoming a hero or being thwarted, depending on the outcome.

Each Hero Player compares their result to the target number of 12.

Nadja has 10, so Hagne suffers—she leaps bravely to protect a victim, but is smashed aside by the serpent’s bulk.

Karen has 13—Maarika prevails and stops the cultists’ arcane chanting. She added Arts & Oration with Pathos, so she recites how Maarika’s booming voice drowns out the cult.

Allison has 14, so Xentropa is best—she thrusts her spear through a weak spot in the creature’s mouth, wounding it badly enough to drive it off for now.

REWARDS

A contest always results in **Glory** for the heroes. The prevailing hero with the highest result is **best**, and earns **Glory equal to the target number**. The other heroes that **prevail** each earn **half** that amount (round up). Each hero that **suffers** earns **1 Glory**, and may take **harm**. To break a tie, each hero rolls their Name die until a clear winner is established.

Xentropa was best, so she earns 11 Glory. Maarika prevailed, so she earns 6 Glory. Hagne suffered, so she earns 1 Glory.

Divine Favor may also be awarded after a contest, if the heroes have honored or impressed a god with their efforts. See page 59.

SUPPORT

A hero may choose to sit out of a contest to provide **support**. They pass a copy of their Domain die to the Hero Player of their choosing (who includes it in their dice pool). The supporting hero gains **1 Bond** with the hero they support and earns **1 Glory**. If your hero is supported in a contest, invite the supporting Hero Player to contribute a brief moment of action to portray their aid when you recite your deeds.



HARM

The Strife Player may inflict **harm** on the heroes as a result of an opponent's traits or the nature of the situation. Some opponents have harmful traits indicated next to their Name die or an Epithet die, so that type of harm is threatened whenever they roll those dice. The types of harm are:

- ◆ **Epic:** Mark Pathos (○) to enter a contest against an *Epic* foe.
- ◆ **Mythic:** Spend Divine Favor (⌘) to enter a contest against a *Mythic* foe.
- ◆ **Perilous:** Mark Pathos (○) if you suffer against a *Perilous* foe.
- ◆ **Sacred:** Spend Divine Favor (⌘) if you suffer against a *Sacred* foe.

See Pathos, page 57, and Divine Favor, page 59.

You may spend a **Bond** to ask that character to block harm for you. They say how they defend you and neither of you suffer the harm.

A **hero may choose to die** (or otherwise leave play) to prevail in a contest, regardless of their roll.

The Serpent of Nimos has the Epithet "Monstrous," which is Perilous, so any who suffer against it must mark Pathos. Nadja marks Pathos on Hagne's hero sheet as she describes how Hagne endures the crushing blow from the serpent's monstrous body, but is not yet broken. She rises, wiping blood from her face, ready to face the next trial.

TRYING AGAIN

A contest cannot be attempted again unless the situation changes in significant ways—different time or place, different approach and goal, and/or different characters involved.

For a flowchart summary of a contest, see page 144.

BATTLES

By winning a contest, the heroes overcome an obstacle to achieve an immediate goal. But to defeat an opponent once and for all, the heroes must engage in **battle**.

A battle is a series of linked contests, arranged in three phases:

1. Clash: The heroes and the opponent make their opening moves, maneuvering for a superior position. The winner earns a 1d10 Advantage die, which they may use once during the battle.

2. Threat: The opponent lashes out, threatening disasters. In this phase, each hero chooses to either **Defend** against a disaster or **Seize** control of the battle. The winner of the Seize contest chooses the Domain and stakes of the Finale and the ultimate fate of the opponent.

3. Finale: A concluding contest to determine the victor.

CLASH

The Strife Player describes the circumstances of the battle and any details that might be used to gain an Advantage. The Hero Players declare how their heroes are joining the battle—what maneuver they attempt to gain an edge against the opponent before battle is joined. Then the **Clash** contest is rolled.

Unlike a normal contest, **each Hero Player may choose the Domain they roll for the Clash**, based on the action their hero is taking to seize an Advantage.

The winner of the Clash contest (the Strife Player or best Hero Player) earns a 1d10 Advantage die for any roll in the battle. It may be given to another Hero Player in exchange for a Bond.

Heroes earn Glory as normal in this contest—and all battle contests.

The heroes stalk the legendary labyrinth of the Bull of Tymisos. In the darkness of the twisting passages, will they become lost—easy prey for the mighty creature? Or will they turn the tables and ambush the beast?

THREAT

During the **Threat** phase, the heroes and the opponent collide. The opponent lashes out, menacing the world, while the heroes stand in defense or strive to take control. There are two contests during the Threat phase, and each hero may only participate in one or the other.

First, the Strife Player announces the **disasters** that will happen unless a hero thwarts them. An opponent will usually make two or three disastrous moves—often one against all the unnamed citizens of the island, one against a single named character, and sometimes one against the heroes or the island itself.

Then each Hero Player chooses whether their hero will participate in the contest to **Defend** against the disasters or join the contest to **Seize** control of the battle and set the Domain and stakes of the **Finale**.

Start with the contest to Defend. Follow the normal contest procedure (but allow each Hero Player to roll the Domain most appropriate to the disaster they're opposing—they don't all have to roll the same one). **Each hero who prevails may stop one disaster from happening.** Any remaining disasters come to pass.

Thesekyra invokes the power of the Pillar of Storms and summons a lightning bolt to sink the heroes' ship. Her pirates corner Ionestes, the priest of Hera, and force him overboard to drown in the storming sea. Hagne's player rolls Craft & Reason to steer the ship away from the lightning and avoid that disaster. Maarika's player rolls Blood & Valor to defend Ionestes from the pirates.

Then resolve the contest to Seize control of the battle. Follow the normal contest procedure. If the heroes win, **they decide what's at stake for the opponent** in the Finale. They may choose death, imprisonment, exile, a change of heart, eternal grief and torment—anything that suits the battle and is within their ability to impose.

In addition, **the winner of the Seize contest determines the Domain of the Finale contest.**

If the opponent wins the contest to Seize control, they get to determine their own fate in the Finale—they may avoid the full consequences of the battle even if they lose.



FINALE

The conclusion of the battle is the **Finale** contest. The winner of this contest is the victor in the battle—their foe is defeated and they are triumphant. Because a battle is often conducted to resolve the strife of an island, the Finale determines its destiny—whether it is saved from a dark fate or descends further into suffering.

Resolve the Finale using the normal contest procedure. The final outcome of the battle is then judged by considering both the result of the Seize contest and the Finale contest together.

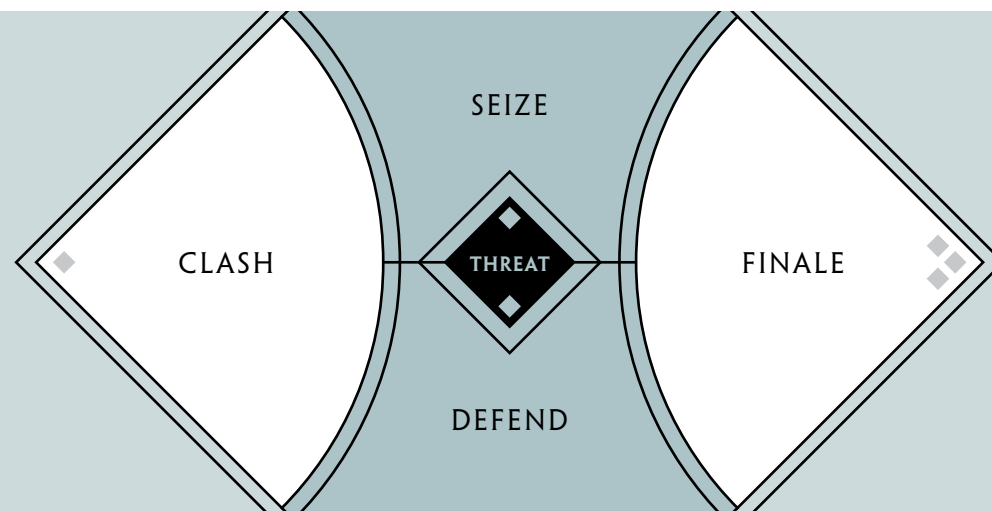
- ◆ **The heroes lose the Finale:** The opponent is the victor and they avoid punishment or trouble from the battle. Strife is ascendant and the island slips into misery and woe. The heroes have fallen short.
- ◆ **The heroes win the Finale, but lose the Seize contest:** Strife is beaten back and the island is set on a path toward recovery, but it will not be easy. The heroes are victorious, but their enemy is not brought to account as they wished—the opponent remains as a diminished source of trouble for the island.
- ◆ **The heroes win the Finale and win the Seize contest:** Strife is overcome and the island's destiny is bright. The heroes win the day and their opponent suffers the fate the heroes chose for them.

Lost Finale: Thesekyra nods her head respectfully. "Well met, heroes, perhaps if not for the Pillar of Storms you would have caught me. Perhaps..." With that she lets loose her sails and leaves you stranded on the broken remains of your ship.

Won Finale, lost Seize: Maarika drives her twin swords into the eyes of the Serpent of Nimos. Blinded, it flees underground to nurse its wounds. The people of Nimos abandon their strange alchemy, but without the serpent's venom, they cannot make a cure for those already afflicted.

Won both: For seven days and seven nights the heroes labor to hold the giant Orta under a waterfall to turn him back into the earth from which he was made. Pallas, who lured him into their nets, declares that the people of Ion will own their own land, and sell their agricultural bounty to Soros at prices they see fit.

Use the battle sheet provided in the Player Kit to track progress through the battle phases and indicate which Threat contest each hero chooses (you can use tokens or a d4 for each hero).



A VARIETY OF BATTLES

To learn the system, let the first battle you try be one of weapons, which is the easiest sort of conflict to understand and adjudicate.

After everyone is familiar with how battles work, always be on the lookout for interesting variations—battles of music, dance, rhetoric, the occult, subterfuge, scholarship (and many others) can be just as fun as martial confrontations. For example:

- ◆ **Arts & Oration:** A dance competition, music performance, poetry recitation, court trial, rhetorical debate.
- ◆ **Blood & Valor:** A desperate race against an exploding volcano, a series of athletic games—running, wrestling, javelin throwing.
- ◆ **Craft & Reason:** Rebuilding a sacred site to appease an angry god, a naval engagement, a devious scheme to infiltrate an enemy stronghold and free their prisoners.
- ◆ **Resolve & Spirit:** An arcane ritual to send spirits back to the underworld, a long-term test of endurance, restoring lost hope and overcoming grief and despair.



RESPITE

EXODUS
VOYAGE
HOMECOMING

EXODUS

When the heroes leave an island, resolve the four phases of the **Exodus**:

1. Destiny of the island

3. Virtues

2. Great Deeds

4. Reflection

DESTINY OF THE ISLAND

Based on the actions of the heroes and the outcome of the contests and battle, the Strife Player determines the destiny of the island. Record its future in the roster of islands in the Strife Player's booklet.

In defiance of Hera, the heroes broke the the Pillar of Storms and set the imprisoned harpy free to join her sisters. Though Kryos will never have the magical protections it once did, the people are emboldened to trust in their own hard work and Meletia's stewardship rather than the whims of the gods. The Strife Player writes "Pillar destroyed, Hera angered, harpy freed, Meletia left in charge" on the roster of islands.

GREAT DEEDS

Each Hero Player records a **Great Deed** for which their hero will be remembered or a trophy they seized in the adventure.

Pallas, who bested the greatest warrior of Nimos, takes the title "Champion of Nimos" as a Great Deed on their sheet.

Hagne took command of the Ketos, a ship peopled by deadly sailors from all corners of the world. She claims the ship as a trophy!

Great Deeds and trophies can be used as an Advantage die later on, if they apply to a contest. Like all Advantages, their value is based on how potent they are given the situation. Once the Great Deed or trophy is used this way, check the box beside it on the hero sheet. It's still a part of the hero's history, but it will not sway the outcome of future challenges. If a hero wants to call upon it again in the future, they can propose a contest to make the deed or trophy relevant again and uncheck the box.

It has been a long time since Pallas claimed the title of Champion of Nimos and the title has already come to their aid. Pallas regales the audience with their story and wins a contest of Arts & Oration, reminding the islanders of their greatness and making the Great Deed usable once more.

VIRTUES

Each Hero Player records **virtues** for their hero—**Acumen**, **Courage**, **Grace**, and **Passion**—to assess the nature of their actions on the island. Virtues are used to judge the hero's character when they reach the end of their tale (see page 50).

- ◆ **Acumen:** Display of knowledge, wisdom, cunning, or wit.
- ◆ **Courage:** Display of bravery, daring, bravado, or vigor.
- ◆ **Grace:** Display of finesse, patience, compassion, or care.
- ◆ **Passion:** Display of love, devotion, fervor, or zeal.

On your turn, ask the other players which virtue your hero most embodied on the island, and why. Each player gives you a mark in a virtue (so if there are three other players, you'll get three virtue marks). The players don't have to agree on a single virtue—they each have a free choice of which virtue to give.

"Let's do Maarika first. This is an easy one. You battled that harpy in the air all by yourself. Courage for sure!"

"Yeah, that was cool, but I liked how she proved that the priest was plotting against the king. Acumen from me."

"Oh, she saved my ass by jumping in the water while our boats were moving at full clip. It's Courage from me."

Maarika's player records 2 Courage and 1 Acumen, and the players begin recounting the virtues of the next hero.

REFLECTION

If a player decides that their hero's Epithet no longer applies, they may replace it with one that better reflects their character's nature.

After her vengeful showdown with the harpies, "Clever-Eyed" doesn't seem to reflect Hagne any more. Nadja reflects on her hero and decides to create a new Epithet, "Fiery-Eyed," to indicate Hagne's change of character.

VOYAGE

While following the stars to a new island, the heroes rest and recover. Complete the four stages of the **Voyage**:

1. Fellowship

3. Leadership

2. Sacrifice

4. The Vault of Heaven

FELLOWSHIP

The heroes relax and enjoy each other's company. Taking turns, each Hero Player asks one question to another hero. That player answers, then both heroes take a **Bond** with each other. Then the next Hero Player takes their own turn, strengthening Bonds and asking a question of a player who has not yet been asked. Some example questions are below, but feel free to create your own.

What's one of your best memories of home?

What did you think of that land we're now leaving?

What do you yearn for (or fear)?

What drives you?

What do you think of the gods?

When the fellowship is completed, each hero removes all of their marks of Pathos.

SACRIFICE

The hero with the greatest current Glory leads a **sacrifice** to the gods to seek guidance and favor in their next trials.

Each god has their own preferred oblations, but in general, burning incense, leaving foods such as fruit, olives, figs, dates, and spiced cakes, or spilling libations such as wine, milk, or frankincense oil are all common practices.

Heroes may also perform for the gods, recounting their greatness with story and song. Or they may offer up some trophy in the god's honor, perhaps obtained during their adventure on the island. They may also make promises to the gods to perform acts in their service.

BLOOD OFFERINGS

Oxen, cattle, goats, sheep, and swine were also offerings made in the temples of Greece. Specific gods had favored animals as well; for instance, Poseidon favored the sacrifice of horses. Before introducing sacrifices of living creatures into your game, however, ask the players if they're all comfortable with it.

To resolve the sacrifice, **each hero rolls in a contest of Resolve & Spirit**. The Strife Player rolls 2d6 and keeps the highest die (there is no Strife Level). Heroes earn Glory as usual. The best hero also earns **1 Bond** with a deity.

Win or lose, each hero marks **2 Divine Favor** (☒☒) with the god or gods of their choice.

If all the heroes suffer, the sacrifice is not well received by the gods—who can say what appeases their fickle appetites? The Strife Player marks **Wrath** with the honored god of the hero who lead the sacrifice. See page 44.

Maarika leads a sacrifice in Hera's honor. She recounts the tale of rebuilding the temple on Kryos and in doing so restoring the people's faith in Hera. The other heroes join in, making sacrifices of their own. All of the heroes mark 2 Divine Favor with their honored gods. Hagne is best and so she also takes 1 Bond with Artemis.

LEADERSHIP

During the Voyage, the Strife Player describes a challenge that the ship of sailors and the heroes must overcome. The Strife Player rolls 2d6 and keeps the highest die (there is no Strife Level). The best hero chooses which among the band will be the leader for the next island. The leader has final say over how the band deals with the strife of the island as well as carrying the responsibility to interpret the signs of the gods (see page 84).

If the Strife Player wins the contest, leadership remains unchanged.

Lost in an unknown sea, surrounded by mists, the heroes catch sight of scintillating fish that leap into the air beside the ship. Adrastos quickly strips down to his loincloth and prepares to dive into the water. "These fish were sent by the gods. Whoever catches the largest should lead us." The other heroes agree and the Strife Player calls for a contest of Craft & Reason to catch the largest fish.

THE VAULT OF HEAVEN

Based on the actions of the heroes on the island, the Strife Player marks progress on the Vault of Heaven sheet.

Mark a star (◇) if the heroes honored or pleased that deity while on the island (mark two stars if the heroes greatly pleased them).

- ◆ For each star marked, each hero receives a mark of **Divine Favor** (◇) with that deity. If the constellation is already filled, each hero may take 1 Divine Favor with that deity anyway.
- ◆ For every three stars marked, each hero earns a **boon**, increasing their capabilities (see page 49).
- ◆ When a constellation is completely filled, each hero records a **Bond** with that deity.

Mark **Wrath** (▽) if the heroes dishonored or displeased that deity while on the island (see page 26 for the effect of Wrath).

Determine divine pleasure or Wrath based on the leader's interpretation of the **signs of the gods** for this island—did the heroes follow through on what they believed to be the will of the gods, or did they fall short?

If any additional gods were invoked or included in the situation on the island, mark their stars or Wrath as well.

When the heroes please a god (gaining favor with them), that god's anger *may* subside (reducing Wrath)—however, that isn't guaranteed. Gods are fickle and may hold onto grudges. If a hero really wants to make amends, they might seek to appease the god during an adventure—perhaps making a contest *Mythic* by doing it in the god's honor or otherwise supplicating their vicious whims.

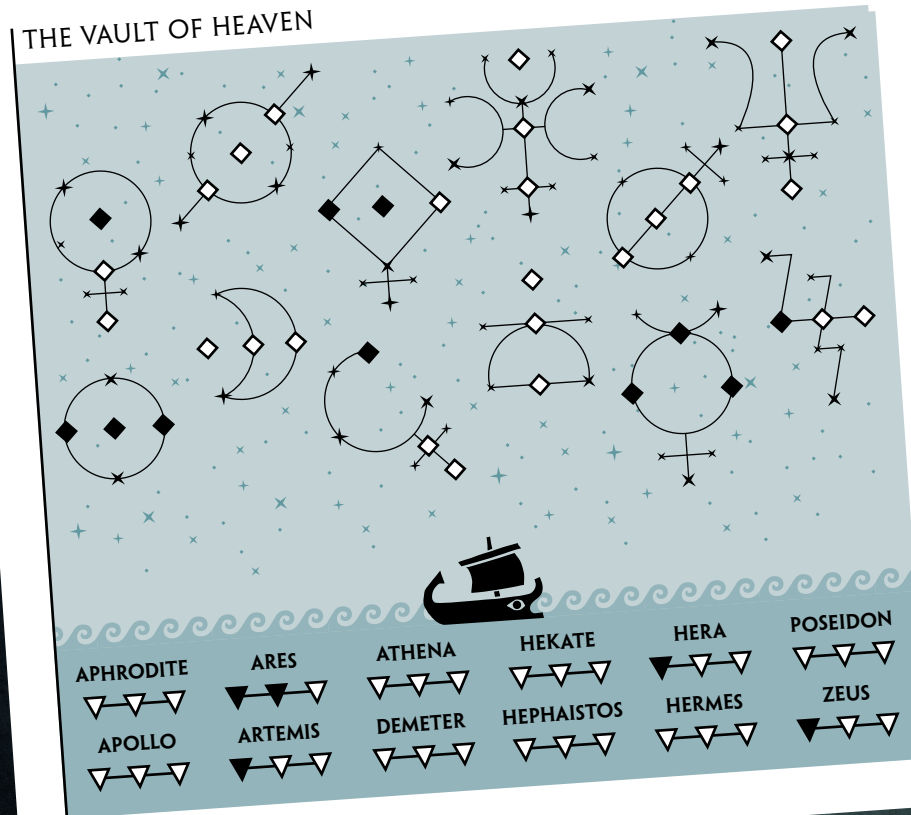
HOME COMING

Through trials and danger, the heroes may earn mercy from the gods and release from their wanderings.

When enough constellations are completed in the Vault of Heaven, the heroes finally make it back to their hearth and home. The campaign ends and the players earn the right to recount the legacy of their heroes. See page 50 for details about how to determine your hero's **legend**.

- ◆ For a shorter game, fill three constellations to return home.
- ◆ For a longer game, fill five constellations to return home.

THE VAULT OF HEAVEN



EVER CLOSER TO HOME

The heroes have appeased Apollo and Hermes many times in their trials—their constellations are filled, marking the first two stages of the voyage home. Because the players want a shorter campaign, they need only one more completed constellation (perhaps Athena's) to reach their Homecoming.

The heroes have also accumulated a fair amount of Wrath, particularly with Ares—the ferocious war god will make their lives very difficult before they see home again.



LEGEND

GLORY

AGONY

FATE

BOONS

A HERO'S END

GLORY

Glory is the measure of epic greatness—it's what sets heroes apart from those who are lost to history. By bringing Glory to their Name, a hero earns their place in legend.

EARNING GLORY

Every time a hero participates in a contest, they earn Glory, which is tracked on the hero sheet. The hero who is **best** in the contest earns an amount of **Glory equal to the target number**. Each other hero who **prevails** earns **half** that amount (rounded up). Heroes who **support** or **suffer** in the contest each earn **1 Glory**.

Hagne and Pallas both prevail in a contest but Hagne is best. The Strife Player's result was a 9. Pallas gains 5 Glory for prevailing and Hagne gains 9 for being best.

ADVANCING YOUR NAME DIE

On the Glory track on your hero sheet, there are special markers for certain Glory amounts (at 80, 120, and 240). When you hit a marker, you **advance your Name die** to the indicated level (d8, d10, d12), then **reset your Glory back to zero**.

When your hero reaches the end of their tale, the size of their Name die determines the strength of their **legend** (see page 52).

AGONY

When a hero marks their last box of Pathos, they enter **agony**—they can no longer press on against hardship without serious cost.

- ◆ When you enter agony, mark **Fate**. Each mark is permanent and brings your hero closer to their end.
- ◆ When you would suffer Pathos while in agony, mark Fate instead.

RECOVERING FROM AGONY

You cannot recover from agony while you're on an island. During the Voyage, your hero rests and recuperates, removing all marks of Pathos and escaping agony. See page 42.

FATE

Every hero must meet their fate—glorious death in battle, peaceful old age by their hearth, or a tragic end filled with sorrow. One thing is certain: Fate is inexorable and cannot be resisted.

In play, the span of a hero's tale is measured with the **Fate track** on the hero sheet. You mark off a box of Fate:

- ◆ When you enter **agony** by marking your last Pathos box.
- ◆ When you suffer Pathos while already in agony.
- ◆ When you're required to spend Divine Favor, but have none.

When a Hero Player marks ☐ on the Fate track, they earn a **boon** (see below). When your final Fate box is checked, your hero's story has ended. You'll discover their heroic **legend** and describe their epilogue. See page 50.

BOONS

Heroes grow in power by receiving **boons** as their Fate increases and when they make progress towards home.

There are three benchmarks on the Fate scale, at 1, 4, and 8, indicated by ☐. When you mark ☐, you earn a boon.

Every hero also earns one boon for **every three stars filled** in the **Vault of Heaven**. See page 44.

When you earn a boon, mark one of the boxes on your hero sheet and permanently gain that benefit. Choose your first five boons from the initial set, below:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advance a d8 Domain die to d10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Advance your Epithet die to d8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advance a d6 Domain die to d8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Add another Epithet |

If both your Epithets apply to a contest, you may roll two Epithet dice.

When you've marked all five of the initial boons, you may select from these options when you earn a boon:

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> When you support or bolster, the die you give counts as one size larger. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> When you mark Pathos for an extra Domain, take two dice instead of one. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> When you spend Divine Favor, roll +2d4 and keep the highest. |

A HERO'S END

When you've marked all your Fate boxes, your hero's tale is almost at an end. Your hero may finish the current island (any further Fate they suffer is ignored) and then they retire from the game. Your hero's story also comes to an end if you choose to die in a contest (page 31) or if you return home (page 44).

LEGEND

At the end of a session in which any heroes have met their end, their players determine the **legend** for each hero by assessing their Name, Great Deeds, and virtues. Your hero's legend represents how they are remembered in song and epic poetry, so you may use a heavy dose of dramatic license as needed to properly embody their legacy.

Writing your hero's legend also completes their Name. While they were on their adventures, they were known by their Epithet, Name, and lineage. Now they will also be called by the titles they earned, and the Great Deeds they performed.

During the game, Allison's character was known as Shadow-Wise Xentropa, scion of Certa.

Nadja played Clever-Eyed Hagne, scion of Athena.

If you run out of time at the end of the session or if you want more time to think about your hero's legend, you can hold off and reveal it at the start of the next session, instead.

YOUR LEGENDARY TITLE

Look to your two highest virtues and choose one of the titles from the appropriate list to discover what your hero is called by the people who remember them:

- ◆ **Acumen & Courage:** Conqueror, Warlord, Vanquisher
- ◆ **Acumen & Grace:** Arbiter, Conjuror, Healer
- ◆ **Acumen & Passion:** Architect, Seer, Visionary
- ◆ **Courage & Grace:** Crusader, Savior, Vindicator
- ◆ **Courage & Passion:** Champion, Guardian, Slayer
- ◆ **Grace & Passion:** Liberator, Peacemaker, Prophet

Xentropa's greatest virtues were Acumen and Grace. She claims the title Conjuror.

Hagne's greatest virtues were Courage and Passion. She takes the title of Slayer.

If none of the titles appeal to you, feel free to create your own. The list is there to help spark ideas, not limit your options.

YOUR GREATEST DEED

Look over your list of Great Deeds and find the one that was the most meaningful to you. If there are a few deeds that stand out, that's okay, you can blend them together in your epilogue.

Xentropa was the defender of the people of Kryos and Nimos. She's going to focus on her legend among the people she protected and be called Defender of the Lost Islands.

Hagne had many victories, but the one she prizes the most was destroying those harpies. She is known as Slayer of Harpies.

THE VAULT OF HEAVEN

Did you appease the gods and return home? Will you be remembered as a hero of your people, or a myth like the monsters you bested?

If the Vault of Heaven is complete (three or five constellations filled) and your band returns home, answer one of the following and add it to your epilogue:

- ◆ What boon do the gods grant to your people?
- ◆ What curse or burden befalls your people because of the ire you earned with one of the gods?
- ◆ What monuments are built in your honor, and what virtue of yours do people aspire to achieve?

If you did not return, answer one of these questions instead:

- ◆ What mythical properties are ascribed to your hero in the songs sung about them?
- ◆ Who still waits for you to their dying days in hopes that you will return home?
- ◆ How do the gods torment you as you wander, never able to return home?

Xentropa did not make it home. The poets sing of how she was made into a shade by Hades, only able to speak in whispers to those who know the secret to summon her.

Hagne earned the delight of Hermes for defying the other gods' authority. Her family is blessed with bold children, always testing the bounds of their fortune.

THE GLORY OF YOUR NAME

The final factor in your hero's epilogue is the size of their Name die. The larger the die size, the more epic the hero's epilogue should be. Consider the following guidelines:

- ◆ **d6: A notable character.** You were a stalwart companion to the greatest of the heroes. You will be remembered by your family and companions and their children.
- ◆ **d8: A great hero.** You will be remembered for generations and your tales will be sung in songs.
- ◆ **d10: A legendary hero.** Civilization will forever use your name to instruct those seeking virtue.
- ◆ **d12: An epic hero.** You shall never be forgotten. Your glory is writ in the stars for eternity.

Both Hagne and Xentropa raised their Name die to d8. They will be remembered for generations. Many will boast that they are as clever as Hagne as they sing the songs of her deeds. Many others will secretly pray for the shade of Xentropa to visit them and grant them wisdom.

YOUR NAME, YOUR LEGEND

Put all of the elements of your epilogue together to complete your hero's name and create your legend.

Shadow-Wise Xentropa, scion of Certā, Defender of the Lost Islands, cursed by Hades to walk as a shade, remembered for generations.

Clever-Eyed Hagne, scion of Athena, Slayer of Harpies, blessed by Hermes with bold and adventurous descendants, remembered for generations.

MAKING A NEW HERO

If your hero's tale ends before the band makes it back home, you may create a new hero and join in the journey. Follow the same process to create your new hero as you did to create your first one. Then choose one of the following:

A wandering hero: Your new hero is a wanderer who does not seek to return to their own home. You crave adventure and are happy to join with this band of heroes until they find home, but you will not return with them.

A new ally: Your new hero is a character met by the heroes on one of the islands. Perhaps you were a friend who decided to leave their home and travel with the heroes, or perhaps you were an enemy that was won over and became an ally.

A companion: Your new hero has been a member of the heroes' loyal crew all along, now given a name and raised to heroic status.

You may advance your Fate track as far as you like and take the boons now to represent your previous experience.

Describe how your hero appears in the band.

Allison elects to create a new hero, Kythia, who has been with the band all along, a member of the heroes' loyal crew. She describes how Kythia throws back her hood and takes hold of the ship's wheel during the voyage, bracing for impact as the waves crash down. She's ready to join the band for their adventure on the next island.

Allison advances Kythia's Fate to 4, gaining two boons as a result. She chooses to advance Kythia's Epithet die to d8 as well as advancing her Arts & Oration from d8 to d10.



GRACE

BONDS
ADVANTAGES
PATHOS
DIVINE FAVOR

BONDS

During their trials, the heroes lend aid to each other and expect their companions to do so in kind. The loose currency of oaths, favors, and gratitude are recorded on the hero sheet as **Bonds**.

GAINING BONDS

- ◆ In character creation, a demigod gets 1 Bond with each hero and 1 Bond with their divine ancestor. Mortals get 2 Bonds with each hero.
- ◆ In a contest, a hero may sit out to provide **support** for another hero. They pass their Domain die to the Hero Player of their choosing (who includes it in their dice pool). The supporting player earns 1 Bond with the hero they support plus 1 Glory.
- ◆ In a battle, the Hero Player who earns the **Advantage** die from the Clash phase may give it to another Hero Player in exchange for a Bond with them.
- ◆ During the Voyage between islands, the heroes have **fellowship** with each other and create new Bonds. See page 42.

SPENDING A BOND

When you spend a Bond, ask for one of the following:

- ◆ **Bolster you:** Your companion describes how they assist your action in a contest and gives you a copy of their Name die.
- ◆ **Block harm for you:** They say how they defend you and the harm is avoided (they don't suffer it either).
- ◆ **Follow your lead:** Spend a Bond with the leader of the group to sway them to your idea or plan.

You may spend more than one Bond in a contest roll.

GOD BONDS

When you call on a Bond with a god, it works like a Bond with a mortal, except their Name die is 1d12. Bonds with other powerful entities are also possible (the Four Winds, the Furies, etc.).

Temmend the Lesser, scion of the sea monster Charybdis, calls upon a Bond with the creature while chasing the Pirate Queen, Thesekyra. Temmend's player adds 1d12 to their dice pool in the contest to catch her, calling out to Charybdis to seize her ship in a whirlpool.

ADVANTAGES

A character can seize an **Advantage** when circumstances favor them—usually by winning a contest, but the Strife Player may grant an Advantage without a contest if the situation calls for it.

The Strife Player assigns a die size to an Advantage based on how well it applies to the situation. The more applicable the Advantage, the larger the die. If the Advantage is moderate, make it d6. If it's strong, assign a d8. If it's extreme, assign a d10.

The Advantage die from the **Clash** in a battle is always a d10.

Before trying to sway Commander Kyla to turn on her father the king, the heroes secured the support of her grandmother, Thalia. Because Nadja's hero was best in the contest to win Thalia's support, the Strife Player gives her a 1d10 Advantage die to use in the contest against Kyla.

PATHOS

In their trials, heroes endure pain, despair, and exhaustion. A normal person would succumb to these hardships, but heroes possess an inner fire that lets them press on, known as **Pathos**.

MARKING PATHOS

Mark a Pathos circle (○) on your hero sheet to push yourself in a contest and include the die from a second Domain in your pool. *In an Arts & Oration contest, you might mark Pathos and include your Craft & Reason die (in addition to your Arts & Oration die) because your hero is employing trickery in their speech-making.*

You also mark Pathos to endure **harm** (see page 31):

- ◆ When you suffer in a contest against a *Perilous* opponent.
- ◆ When you enter a contest against an *Epic* opponent.

Pathos is a useful resource, but be warned: when you run out of Pathos, you enter **agony** (page 48), which pushes your hero closer to their ultimate fate and the end of their tale.

REMOVING PATHOS


During the **fellowship** stage of the Voyage, the heroes remove all their marks of Pathos. See page 42.



DIVINE FAVOR

The heroes of our tale are capable of great feats, beyond those of most mortals. It's said that they're favored by the gods, and may manifest their divine strengths to overcome the most dire trials.

EARNING DIVINE FAVOR

Divine Favor is earned in three ways: during character creation, in contests that gain the gods' attention, and during the Voyage between islands. When you earn Divine Favor, you mark a diamond on the hero sheet with a slash, like this: . *Once all of a god's diamonds are marked, a hero can't earn more Divine Favor with that deity.*

In character creation, each hero gains two marks of Divine Favor with their honored god. They also may distribute three more marks of favor among any of the other gods.

During an adventure on an island, the Strife Player may judge that a god is watching a contest (often when the heroes are competing over something that pertains to their nature) and award a mark of Divine Favor to each hero for their efforts.

During the Voyage between islands, the heroes make a sacrifice to the gods to earn Divine Favor. See page 42.

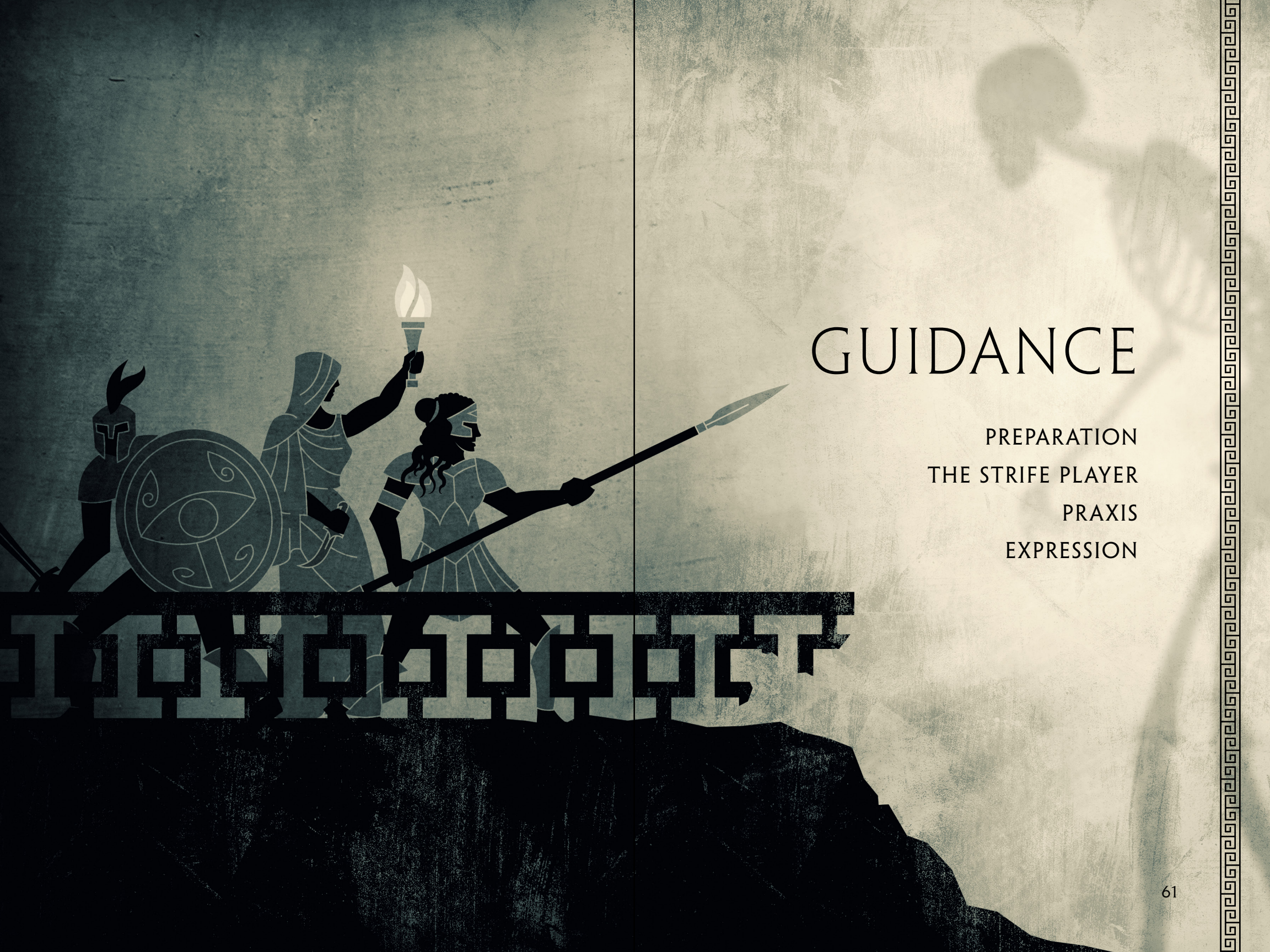
SPENDING DIVINE FAVOR

Before dice are rolled in a contest, a hero may erase a mark of Divine Favor to add +1d4 to their roll. The result on this die is added to their final result instead of being part of the dice pool (see page 28). *If a hero uses multiple marks of Divine Favor on one roll, count the highest single d4.*

During the recitation of deeds, whether they suffer or prevail, the Hero Player describes how the strength of that god manifests.

Clever-Eyed Hagne takes aim at the dreadful harpies as they come shrieking from the skies. She calls upon the Precision of Artemis to guide her bow—and as she looses the first shaft, it shines bright with the sacred moonlight of the goddess, lancing the harpy's breast in a blinding flash.

Marks of Divine Favor may also be lost as a result of **harm**, when the heroes face *Mythic* or *Sacred* foes. See page 31.



GUIDANCE

PREPARATION
THE STRIFE PLAYER
PRAXIS
EXPRESSION

PREPARATION

As tabletop roleplaying games go, AGON is fairly simple and straightforward, but there's still some work to do to get it up and running.

BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

Maybe you plan to gather at someone's house and play at the table or maybe you'll meet up online. Either way, you need to assemble a group of players.

Here's the basic pitch for the game, which you may remember from the opening passage of the book:

In the mists of ancient time, a poet sings of great deeds wrought by mighty heroes—of monsters slain and justice restored, of wise council and devious strategies, of courage, valor, and daring—defiant of the gods themselves. In AGON, you create these heroes, crafting their epic tale into an immortal legend.

On their way back home from war, a band of heroes become lost among strange islands populated by mythical creatures, dangerous villains, legendary kingdoms, and desperate people—each entangled in strife, at the mercy of the capricious gods.

It falls to you as the epic heroes of your age to seize this opportunity for greatness—to set things right in these lost lands, overcome the trials of gods, monsters, and mortals, prove the glory of your name, and win your way back home.

You can send that pitch to potential players who might be interested, to help sell the concept to them. It's also included in the Player Kit, which you can grab at our website for free—so send them a link to that if you want to.

It's a good idea to mention a few touchstones—other media that they've heard of—to help get them excited about playing the game. Saying, "It's basically Xena: Warrior Princess" is a nice shortcut approach. There's a list of touchstones on page 13.

tone

The game book and materials are styled to convey a fairly serious tone. This is by design, to give you a baseline to work from. It's not meant to be stifling, though. Get as wacky and weird as you want when you play AGON. Be anachronistic and irreverent, just like Xena. Read that game pitch text with a bit of bombastic movie-trailer-guy gravitas to let the other players know that it's all in good fun.

SAFETY TOOLS

Think about which **safety tools** you want to discuss with the group at the first session—X-Card, Lines/Veils, Script Change, etc. If you're unfamiliar with these tools, there are resources online to help you out.

GROUP SIZE

Four or five total players (including the Strife Player) is a good group size. Games with three players (a Strife Player and two heroes) will be more intimate and the heroes will need to depend on each other to overcome their trials. You can do six players if you must, but that's pushing what the game is meant to handle—it'll bulge at the seams a bit.

THE STRIFE PLAYER

Someone needs to be the Strife Player. Because you have this book, it's a good idea for you to be the Strife Player first. Read the guidance for that role in the next section, page 66.

GAME MATERIALS TO PREPARE

Download the **Agon Player Kit** from <http://agon-rpg.com>.

- ◆ Print a copy of the **character creation sheet** and **hero sheet** for each player.
- ◆ Print the **Strife Player booklet** and the **battle sheet**.
- ◆ Print an **island** that looks like fun to you. Each island also has a trials sheet in the Player Kit that you can put on the table to help guide the players.
- ◆ Have a bunch of **dice** on hand for everyone, or ask the players to bring their own. Some players like a color-themed dice set for their hero—this is highly encouraged. (Also see page 13.)
- ◆ Have some snacks and drinks handy. Gaming is a social engagement, after all.

THE FIRST SESSION

First, drinks and snacks. Chat and break the ice. When everyone's ready, run through the pitch to refresh everyone's memory.

Discuss which **safety tools** you want to use.

Create heroes, then run through the **leadership** phase of the Voyage to determine the leader for the first island.

Maybe take a short break at this point so people can refill their drinks and such. Then jump in to the arrival of the island and the first contests. Proceed to the trials and then wrap it all up with a final battle.

Run through the Exodus and Voyage if you have time, otherwise those can wait until the beginning of session two.

SESSION TWO AND BEYOND

Because the game is episodic, the structure of each session will be pretty similar each time after that. The heroes face the trials of an island presented by the Strife Player. They address the divine commands (or abandon them), deal with the strife, and move on to the next.

Once everyone is familiar with the game, you can complete an island in one session of play—roughly two to three hours.

As you play through the islands, some heroes will meet their Fate before they make it home. Those players can make new heroes and join the group in the ongoing journey. You might also think about changing the Strife Player at that point, so a former Hero Player becomes the Strife Player for a while, and vice versa. Or you might want to change up the Strife Player after each island. It's up to the group.

Eventually, after many adventures, the heroes return home, establish their heroic legends, and this campaign of AGON ends. Bask in the glory of the epic tales you've created!

ONE SHOTS

AGON is a pretty simple and quick-playing game, appropriate for one shots and convention slots. Because long-term advancement isn't relevant, you can focus on the **Great Deeds** of the heroes to reward the players. See page 40.



THE STRIFE PLAYER

The Strife Player has a special role in this game. Unlike the Hero Players, you don't have to concern yourself with Glory or Fate, or becoming legendary by your deeds—instead, you're the guide who leads the heroes through their trials.

First, pick an island from the book that looks interesting to you. Look over the elements of the island and spend a few minutes imagining the place and characters. Make some notes if this sparks any ideas—maybe you imagine that the queen has shining silver hair or that the pathway up the cliffs is marked with memorial stones for those that died there. It's good to daydream a bit about the imaginary place so it's more familiar to you when you share it with the Hero Players.

When the group is ready to play, read the island description, signs of the gods, and the arrival out loud to establish where the heroes are and what they first encounter. This introduces the key problem on the island—its strife—which the heroes may overcome to win the aid of the gods for their journey home.

For more guidance on presenting the islands, see page 84.

After the intro, game play begins. Each arrival section lists a few contests for the heroes to tackle right away. You can use those or create your own.

After that, the Hero Players decide what to do about the strife on the island and face trials to address it. Each island has a set of trials the heroes may face—they'll explore, make discoveries, contend with villains, and make tough choices. To do this, they need you, the Strife Player, to guide them along the way.

Follow these three steps:

Reveal the situation to the Hero Players.

Ask questions and build on the answers to drive the game forward through the trials.

Judge contests and resolve the outcomes into new situations.

After a contest, the situation changes, so you'll go back to the top and **reveal**, then **ask**, then **judge** again. Going through that loop several times leads to a resolution of the strife on the island (for good or ill) and game play on that island is complete.

Here's what it looks like...

"The king and queen greet you with all the ceremonies of respect, but the tattooed high priest smiles a little too broadly and his eyes dart nervously toward the funeral bier of the prince. He's trying to steer you away from viewing the body, citing the queen's wishes and local custom. Will you defy tradition and the queen's authority, or play along for now?"

— THE HEROES DEFY TRADITION —

"Okay, so you've chosen to defy local tradition. The people look aghast at your breach of etiquette. A contest of Arts & Oration might sway the royal court to allow you, as outsiders and heroes, special permission in this case."

— THE HEROES LOSE THE CONTEST —

"The queen is offended and rescinds her hospitality. The palace guards advance with their spears. Will you stand and fight, withdraw back to your ship, or try another way?"

— THE HEROES WITHDRAW —

"As you descend from the palace, the funeral games are about to begin. Combatants wrap their fists with leather cords and stand in ranks to be matched for their bouts. Several fighters are masked and heavily tattooed, their muscles bulging strangely as they stand drooling a dark mucus, swaying on their feet as if drugged. Weird! Will any of you dare to join the games and seek the champion's boon from the palace, or will you return to the dock as ordered and form a new strategy?"

— TWO HEROES JOIN THE GAMES. THE OTHER TWO
SLIP AWAY TO THE FIGHTERS' CAMPS TO DISCOVER THE
SOURCE OF THE STRANGE DRUGGED WARRIORS —

...and so on, with each new question, answer, and contest leading to a new situation to be revealed, with new questions, answers, and contests.

Guidance for each step follows.

REVEAL

Reveal the situation by telling the players what their heroes **know** and what they might **suspect**. Each island begins with an introductory passage you can use as the first reveal upon arrival, to get the ball rolling.

Reveal what the heroes know by describing what they see and hear (and other senses, as you like). Consider these elements:

- ◆ **Where** are they? What's this place like?
- ◆ **Who** else is there? What are those characters like?
- ◆ **What** is happening right now?

Reveal what the heroes suspect by describing the overall impression they get, including insights they might have. Consider these elements:

- ◆ **Impression:** Is the situation desperate, cheerful, forlorn, threatening, peaceful, strained, weird, etc.?
- ◆ **Insights:** Is there an apparent danger or opportunity? Who seems like an enemy? Who seems like an ally? What's about to happen if the heroes don't act?

Keep it simple. Start with basic information in a few brief sentences—just enough to establish the situation for the Hero Players. They'll ask questions if they need you to clarify something or add more details.

"The caves are twisty and dark, half-flooded with sea water, echoing with strange sounds. Thessia's eyes flash as she raises her torch. 'Beware! The beast is surely near.' You feel the waters shift and surge around your legs, as if something large is moving this way..."

When a Hero Player asks a question about the situation, either:

- ◆ Reveal the answer if it's something they know or suspect.
- ◆ Propose a contest to see if the hero can overcome an obstacle to discover the answer.

"How did the prince die?"

"You can't tell because the high priest insists that no one may see the body. A contest of Arts & Oration could convince the king to overrule him, or will you try another way?"

Be honest and direct. Don't try to deceive the Hero Players. It's your job to reveal the situation to the players, not obscure things—even when an enemy character is trying to mislead the heroes. When that happens, reveal that the character is being deceptive and ask the Hero Players what they'll do about it.

"The priest's deceptions are beguiling enough to fool any mere mortal. Can anyone see through his schemes and confront him with his lies, or will you remain in the dark?"

"The Great Serpent knows these caves well and waits in ambush. Can anyone spot its attack before it surprises you and seizes the advantage?"

Reveal the situation in motion. Consider the strife of the island and how it threatens everything. When you reveal things to the Hero Players, you're not only helping them imagine the scene in their minds, you're inviting them to take action.

"As the queen finishes her speech and the combatants take their places in the fighting rings, the priests secure the temple doors and begin the funeral rituals in secret. Will you join the games or intercede with the priests?"

If you don't know what to say, try these:

- ◆ **Say what's obvious to you.** Sometimes you get stuck because you're trying to be too clever or stylish. Just say what seems obvious to you about the situation. "It's a temple, you know, pillars, high ceiling, big statue."
- ◆ **Summarize what a character says** or does instead of trying to find the perfect words. You can just say, "The king tries to tell you about his son, but is overcome with emotion," or "She leaps at you, swords flashing."
- ◆ **Ask the group for help.** The other players can help you come up with something cool.

"I want the Great Serpent to look special in some way, but I can't think of anything good..."

"Ooh! What if its scales scintillated in different patterns—like shimmering with light and shadow and color in a kind of hypnotic effect..."

ASK

To drive the game forward, ask leading questions and then build on the answers to provoke contests and establish a new situation to reveal.

Ask leading questions by imagining a way for the heroes to address the situation, then asking if they'll commit to that approach, or try something else. You're essentially suggesting a course of action in the form of a question. This gives the Hero Players something to work with and respond to. If there's...

- ◆ ...an **obstacle** to their goal, how will they overcome it?
- ◆ ...a dangerous **threat**, how will they contend with it?
- ◆ ...a **mystery**, how will they uncover the truth?
- ◆ ...a **character** in need, how will the heroes help them?

A good leading question implies **something is at stake**. An Advantage is up for grabs. A foe could be defeated. A friend will be harmed. The situation is about to change based on the answer and what follows from it.

The question is a **challenge** to the heroes. Are they great enough to face this trial? Can any overcome it? Who is greatest?

"The great wave towers over your ship, about to crash down and send you to the depths. Will you hold steadfast and try to match its power, or will you maneuver to avoid it?"

"Thesekyra leaps from line to line in the rigging, dodging the javelins of your crew. Each time she finds her footing, she looses death from her bow and sailors fall, clutching at feathered shafts in their hearts. Can you bring her down with your own arrows, or will you face her another way?"

"The lost ones are on the verge of death from fatigue. They beg you for aid. Will you stop to care for them and save who you can, or will you press on to stop Kasibios before he can make more progress on his terrible creation?"

Remind the Hero Players that they can try other options. This gives them freedom to implement their own ideas. Your questions serve as a suggestion for the other players, not a script to follow.

Build on the Hero Players' answers by restating the situation and response as a description of action everyone can imagine together. This knits the question-and-answer conversation back together into a cohesive narrative.

Implicit in your question was a challenge with something at stake. The challenge and stakes frame the foundation of a **contest**. The Hero Players' answer establishes their course of action and by building on their answer, you lead the game into the contest.

"You try to rally the crew to hold steadfast and turn your ship directly into the crashing wave. Let's roll a contest of Resolve & Spirit to see how that goes."

"Okay, so you're attacking the pirate queen to stop her from killing any more of your crew. A contest of Blood & Valor will decide which crew suffers the worst of it, yours or hers."

USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK

- ◆ "There are many trials here, which will you attempt first?"
- ◆ "Is this a worthy contest, or will you strive for something more glorious?"
- ◆ "What contest (or battle) might determine the fate of the island now?"
- ◆ "Will you go along with the leader, or use a Bond to take control?"
- ◆ "Will you invoke a god by name to draw their attention to this trial?" (Make the contest *Mythic*, earn a Bond with that god if you win.)
- ◆ "The priest's hold on the king and queen are strong. Will you call upon the Divine Favor of Hera to match his cunning?"
- ◆ "As the scion of the Autumn Delta, your strength is in Blood & Valor—will you dig deep and suffer Pathos to call upon your lineage in this contest of Craft & Reason?"

JUDGE

Most of the game play in AGON is about contests. Contests are the source of Glory for the heroes and create decisive outcomes to resolve the situation on the island. As the Strife Player, it's your job to **propose** contests, determine the **Domain** a contest falls under, and (along with the Hero Players) describe its **outcome** after the dice rolls determine who wins and loses.

Propose a contest when the heroes come into conflict with a worthy opponent. This will happen a lot—the heroes' efforts naturally conflict with the island's strife. Each island has a list of trials, characters to use as opponents and allies, and dangerous locations that may oppose the heroes by their perilous nature.

The Hero Players will usually have the option to decline your proposal for a given contest, changing their action to try something else instead.

"Sounds like some skulduggery on your part to slip undetected through the fighters' camps to spy on their preparations. A contest of Craft & Reason will decide it."

"Oh, no I think we want to openly confront one of the 'trainers' and demand that they spill their secrets."

"Ah, gotcha. More like Arts & Oration then."

Sometimes, though, a contest represents an impending threat that the heroes can't simply ignore. In this case, the heroes must win the contest or suffer the threat at hand.

"As you approach the cave that is the Great Serpent's lair, a miasma of choking vapor issues forth. The poisonous breath of the creature boils all around you, hissing with steam where it touches the rocks. A contest of Resolve & Spirit will see you through and into battle with the serpent!"

Determine the Domain of a contest by matching the heroes' chosen course of action to one of the four options.

- ◆ **Arts & Oration**—Culture, artistry, and persuasiveness.
- ◆ **Blood & Valor**—Violence, bravado, and athletic prowess.
- ◆ **Craft & Reason**—Academics, vocations, and subterfuge.
- ◆ **Resolve & Spirit**—Perseverance, passion, and intuition.

The Domain is usually obvious, but if it's not, take a moment to talk to the Hero Players and figure out what seems right for the group.

"I think tending to the sick and injured would normally fall under Craft & Reason. But in this case, you're also trying to rally their spirits and give them hope to hang on a little longer. More like Resolve & Spirit? What do you think?"

Describe the outcome of a contest by resolving what was at stake. Something was about to happen before the contest—how did that turn out? The Hero Players narrate their actions first, starting with the heroes who suffer, then the heroes who prevail, and finally the hero who is best. Describe how the opponent responds to the heroes' actions and their fate in the contest, then wrap up by saying how the situation is now changed.

— THE HEROES LOSE THE CONTEST —

"Try as you might, the laborers are too far gone for your aid. Only a few will live, and of those, none will ever regain their full strength. The hope they held in you as great heroes fades from their eyes."

— THE HEROES WIN THE CONTEST —

"Xentropa tears her cloak into strips to bind wounds, removes her armor and breaks her weapons to serve as crutches and splints. My finery will serve them better than me."

"Your ministrations soothe their wounds and rouse their broken spirits. Those on the verge of death are saved."

The outcome of any given contest is final. Neither the heroes or their opponent can merely "try again." The matter is resolved.

As the Strife Player, it's your job to make the outcome final and then **move on** to the next thing. The purpose of adventure on an island is not to play until the heroes win—it's to *play to find out what happens*. They triumph or suffer, persevere or give up, always moving forward toward the final showdown and Exodus.

Full details on contests start on page 24.

THE FINAL SAY

As the Strife Player, you have the final say when it comes to judging a contest, but that doesn't mean every idea has to come from you. If a Hero Player has an idea for a contest using a particular Domain that they're excited about, listen to them. You can reveal a situation in conflict to suit a contest within that Domain, making the Hero Player happy while moving the action forward.

Maarika does not favor subtlety. She shouts to the guards of Soros, "You want to fight someone, fight me!" It sounds like this might be a contest of Blood & Valor, but Karen proposes a contest of Resolve & Spirit; she intends to scare the guards off rather than really fight them.

THINGS TO AVOID

- ◆ **Don't try to tell a story** to the other players. Stick to your three steps as Strife Player and let a story emerge naturally.
- ◆ **Don't worry about anyone else's fun.** They're the Hero Players and you're the Strife Player. They're entertaining you, and vice versa. The whole outcome of the session isn't on your shoulders.
- ◆ **Don't pull your punches.** Heroes are defined by adversity. If harpies attack the people and the heroes fail to defend them, then many are slaughtered. It's dark, but that's what was at stake. Follow through on the threats of the opponents.

THINGS TO TRY OUT

- ◆ **Character details.** It's easy to lose track of characters in a roleplaying game, where you don't have any visual reference for the characters you meet. Try to mention a notable feature or two to help everyone remember a character. Instead of "a villager," they're "the short villager with the broken arm."
- ◆ **Pacing.** By default, the loop of *Reveal—Ask—Judge* results in a pretty fast-paced game. If you want to slow down, take a little more time revealing the situation. Describe some establishing shots, like in a movie. Ask a few contemplative questions like, "Does anything here remind you of home?"

STRIFE LEVEL

Every island visited by the heroes is plagued by misery, woe, and danger, known as **strife**.

In a contest, the strife of the island manifests as a bonus to the Strife Player's dice roll—this is called the **Strife Level**.

The bonus provided by the Strife Level can be +4, +5, or +6. **By default, the Strife Level is +5.** The majority of contests and battles should use a +5 Strife Level. A lower and higher level is provided to reflect changes in the situation on an island.

Some islands include specific events that may raise or lower the Strife Level, but in general, follow these guidelines:

RAISE THE STRIFE LEVEL

- ◆ When the heroes enter a **larger scale** of conflict. Raise the Strife Level for that contest only, then reduce it back to its previous level. *For instance, if the heroes decide to go into battle against a horde of centaur warriors, raise the Strife Level for that battle.*
- ◆ When the heroes **fail to stop an opponent** that makes the situation on the island worse. When this happens, leave the Strife Level at the new higher bonus until the heroes do something to reduce it. *For example, King Vlakas might order all of the Ionian refugees to be rounded up and forced from the city—if the heroes fail to stop that, advance the Strife Level.*

LOWER THE STRIFE LEVEL

- ◆ When the heroes **remove a source of strife** on the island. *For instance, if the heroes manage to convince the people of Nimos that the Serpent Cult is their enemy, the cultists could no longer shelter among the people, reducing the Strife Level on the island.*

The Strife Level never goes below +4 or above +6.

GIVE ADVANTAGE OR RAISE THE STRIFE LEVEL?

When an opponent has a specific edge in a contest, give them an **Advantage** die. When the situation at large has gotten worse for the island and/or the heroes, increase the Strife Level.

PRAXIS

VALIDITY

When is a given trait valid in the game? Does a hero's Epithet apply to the action at hand? Does an opponent's special ability come into play, or is it irrelevant in this situation?

In general, the group of players as a whole should discuss these things and come to consensus. If you need explicit permissions, however, here's a guide to which player has final say:

- ◆ The Strife Player has final say regarding the validity of an opponent's **special ability** in a contest.
- ◆ The Hero Player has final say regarding the validity of their hero's **Epithet** in a contest (they attest its validity when they recite their deeds, not before the roll).
- ◆ The Hero Player has final say regarding how an **additional Domain** applies when they mark Pathos to add one.
- ◆ The Hero Player has final say regarding how a **god's strength** manifests when they use Divine Favor to invoke one.
- ◆ The Hero Player has final say regarding what happens to their character when their hero **suffers harm**.

DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

What happens if a hero dies—as a result of the stakes of a contest or battle—before they run out of Fate? This is up to the players to decide. You have several options:

- ◆ The hero is dead and gone. The other heroes mourn them and memorialize them during the Voyage. The Hero Player determines their **legend** and makes a new hero as normal.
- ◆ The hero dies and their shade descends into the underworld. The other Hero Players can journey to the realms of Hades as their next “island” in an attempt to rescue their companion and return them once again to the land of the living. *See the island Akoros (page 113) as a possible entry point for such a quest.*
- ◆ The hero is left for dead, but survives somehow. They find themselves in some new dire circumstance—they must face an immediate contest alone, while the other heroes face their own contest to rejoin their fallen comrade.

What if the heroes lose their ship and crew? Are they lost forever? No. They wash up on the shore of the next island, and now, in addition to dealing with strife, they need to secure a new vessel and recruit sailors. Handle it with a couple of contests and move on with play—perhaps give an Advantage die to the Strife Player for the first few contests involving the new ship and crew, as they're learning to work together.

SCALE AND SCOPE

By default, the scale of action in AGON hovers just beyond the reach of normal humans—encompassing the epic feats of legendary heroes. But what are the limits of our heroes? When do they overreach themselves and contend at the level of the gods? This is something that each game group will establish as they play, but here's a set of guidelines to help you out:

- ◆ A hero may accomplish anything the greatest mortal could achieve in a Domain, and even outdo them by invoking their Epithet or Divine Favor.
- ◆ A hero may compete against a god or other supreme supernatural being, so long as that being chooses to stoop to contend in the mortal realm. A hero cannot shoot the sun from the sky, but if the sun god decides to manifest himself to oppose the heroes as an embodied person, then they may challenge him like any other foe.
- ◆ A hero may gain the temporary ability to accomplish extreme deeds by seizing divine weapons or tools, such as one of Zeus's thunderbolts or winged shoes from Hermes. These boons may not be kept for long, however, or the wrath of the gods will surely follow.
- ◆ If there's a question of whether a hero is overreaching their capabilities, they might insist by marking Fate to push themselves beyond their limits.
- ◆ As long as they have Fate remaining, a hero may endure any hardship or injury and persevere.

Note: an island might be specifically designed to “break the rules” in some way, allowing a hero to restore lost Fate, retrieve a fallen companion from the underworld, or even revisit an island to attempt to resolve its strife again.

EXPRESSION

An example of play on Nimos (pages 93-95) with Nadja's hero, Clever-Eyed **Hagne** (she/her); Andi's hero, Empty-Handed **Pallas** (they/them); and Allison's hero, Shadow-Wise **Xentropa** (she/her).

THE HEROES FACE A CONTEST

The prince's death makes the heroes suspicious of the priest, Harkon. After a discussion about what to do, Hagne (as the leader) recalls the signs of the gods—her honored goddess, Artemis, gave the sign of a headless serpent. The snake tattoos on the priest and his acolytes are all she needs to set her course of action. She demands that Harkon speak truth and be judged! Only royalty may command here, though, so the heroes must contest Queen Naia for control of the court.

The Strife Player establishes the contest:

"You face the Sly and Unnaturally Youthful Queen Naia in a contest of Arts & Oration!"

I'll take 1d8 for her "Sly" Epithet, and 1d6 for her 'Unnaturally Youthful' Epithet—since that has everything to do with the secret practices you're questioning. She gets 1d8 for her Name. Also, the queen has the RULER special ability, which grants her Advantage at her court—I think it's 1d10 since you're challenging her authority directly."

The Strife Player rolls 3, 3, 5, 6. Adding the +5 Strife Level to their highest die results in a target number of 11.

"Who among you will face this contest?"

"Clever-Eyed Hagne, scion of Athena, shall face it!" Nadja takes 1d6 for her Epithet, 1d6 for her Name, and 1d6 for her Arts & Oration Domain.

"Shadow-Wise Xentropa, scion of Certā, faces it as well!" Allison grabs 1d6 for her Epithet, 1d6 for her Name, and 1d8 for her Arts & Oration Domain.

"Pallas, scion of the Autumn Delta, shall also face you!" Andi grabs a 1d6 Name die and 1d6 for Arts & Oration. Pretty words aren't Pallas's preference, though—Andi marks one Pathos and adds their 1d8 Blood & Valor to their dice pool.

The Hero Players roll their dice pools, and each sums their two highest dice, comparing the result to the Strife Player's total of 11.

Xentropa falls short with a total of 9—she suffers. Pallas prevails with a total of 11. Hagne has a total of 12—she prevails and is best.

The Hero Players recite their deeds in the contest, starting with Xentropa, who suffered. Allison includes Xentropa's "Shadow-Wise" Epithet in her narration.

"Xentropa recognizes arcane practices when she sees them, and immediately blurts out that the priest is meddling with profane powers and offending the gods—but she goes too far, and several members of the court gasp at her impudence."

The Strife Player responds with actions by the opponent:

"The queen cries out, 'Do not dare blaspheme the blessings of medicine given to us by Apollo! Hold your tongue!'"

Andi recites the deeds of her hero, Pallas, describing how they prevail in the contest.

"I'm expressing Blood & Valor. I glare at all assembled, sizing them up for a fight. My piercing gaze is enough to dissuade the court from further outbursts to support the queen."

The Strife Player responds:

"Priest Harkon sees the effect Pallas has, noting your strong physique and toughened hands of a warrior. His eyes narrow."

Finally, Nadja describes the deeds of Hagne, who is best.

"Clever-Eyed Hagne notices that the king hasn't spoken—you said he's white-bearded and melancholy, right? He's not part of this serpent cult stuff. Hagne says, 'This is your court as well, noble king. Would you have the truth spoken of your son's death, to bring those responsible to justice?'"

The Strife Player responds:

"The king raises his withered hand and speaks, 'The gods have sent their wisdom through you, scion of Athena. We shall hear the truth at once. Guards, seize Priest Harkon!'"

Xentropa earns 1 Glory for suffering in the contest. Pallas earns 6 Glory for prevailing (half the Strife Player's result, rounded up). For being best, Hagne earns 11 Glory (equal to the Strife Player's result).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ◆ If the heroes had been more respectful of the queen's authority, would her Advantage die have been smaller (1d8 or 1d6)? Could the heroes have entreated the king for aid in the contest before it began? Maybe they could have earned an Advantage die if he was on their side. Would this cancel out Queen Naia's Advantage die, so neither had one?
- ◆ Harkon must speak truth to the court—what does he say? This is a perfect chance for the Strife Player to reveal their version of the island's mysteries. It's also a chance for devious Harkon to twist the situation to his favor. Perhaps he dares the heroes to fight in the games as a trial by combat to prove that the alchemically enhanced fighters are ordained by the gods?
- ◆ What if Hagne, as the leader, chose to interpret the sign of Apollo favorably rather than Artemis's? Apollo's sign suggests that the alchemical experiments on Nimos might be a good thing. The whole contest might have been different. Will Hagne's choice to support Artemis result in Apollo's Wrath?

THE HEROES DO BATTLE

After several trials, the heroes come to a final battle. They will fulfill Artemis's desire and slay the Serpent of Nimos.

The Strife Player sets the scene for the Clash phase:

"You slip through the secret door the cultist told you about and make your way through torch-lit tunnels toward the serpent temple. You can hear scales sliding against stone as the great creature slithers through nearby passages. Can you ambush the monster, or will it get the drop on you?"

The players conduct the contest for the Clash phase and the Strife Player wins! The serpent gains a 1d10 Advantage die.

"As you enter the temple itself and approach the profane altar, it suddenly moves! It's not stonework, but the creature itself, uncoiling in a sudden strike like lightning!"

Because the Serpent used its "Monstrous" Epithet, it is *Perilous*—each hero marks Pathos from suffering in the contest.

Next, the Strife Player establishes the Threat phase, by first describing the disasters which the opponent threatens:

"As you do battle, the thrashing bulk of the huge serpent shakes the earth, toppling buildings and killing citizens. Thessia the healer is crushed by falling debris. The surviving serpent cultists cry out to the people, saying that these disasters are your fault—you'll be remembered here as bringers of destruction."

There are three disasters threatened: the death of citizens, the death of Thessia, and the defamation of the heroes' legacy. Xentropa and Pallas choose to Defend, and they both prevail in the contest. Xentropa saves Thessia's life and Pallas chooses to save the citizens, so the remaining disaster comes to pass—the history written here will portray the heroes as villains.

Because Xentropa and Pallas chose to Defend, Hagne alone faces the contest to Seize control of the battle. She does not prevail against the serpent. She suffers and marks Pathos again because of its *Perilous* harm. As the winner, the Strife Player sets the Domain and stakes of the Finale phase:

"The serpent bursts from the tunnels, slithering through the streets. It coils atop the acropolis of Apollo, scales scintillating in the sun, where all may see its magnificence. You face the Monstrous Serpent of Nimos in a contest of Resolve & Spirit! Can you defeat its hold over the people, or will they forever be in awe and devoted to its power?"

The heroes win the Finale contest, freeing the people of Nimos from the insidious grip of the serpent and its cult. But because they didn't Seize control of the battle and set the Finale stakes, they cannot slay the creature or drive it away for good. It will remain hidden in the dark places beneath the island, tempting those foolish enough to seek it out to continue the dangerous alchemy work with its venom.

The heroes leave Nimos better than they found it, but with trouble still brewing for the future.



ISLANDS

LANDS OF STRIFE

ISLAND GUIDE

KRYOS

NIMOS

SOROS & ION

TYMISOS

VRACHOI

FENIOS

AKOROS

GULF OF KARIS

SPEIRA

CHORDIA

ENU

KYKONIA

CREATING AN ISLAND

LANDS OF STRIFE

This section contains the islands the heroes may encounter during their odyssey. As the Strife Player, you'll present these islands to the Hero Players as their heroes journey to reach home again. They can encounter them in any order—it's up to you to choose which island appears next.

An island adventure has a central problem—its strife—which entangles the heroes. They'll have to decide for themselves how they want to address the situation to appease the gods, help the people, and ultimately resolve the situation.

PREPARATION

Pick an island that sounds fun to you and read it before the game session. You might want to make some notes of any ideas that occur to you while you're reading it. Each island has questions to consider, which help you customize it to your taste. It's useful to print out the island (or have the PDF on a device) to consult at the table when you play.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

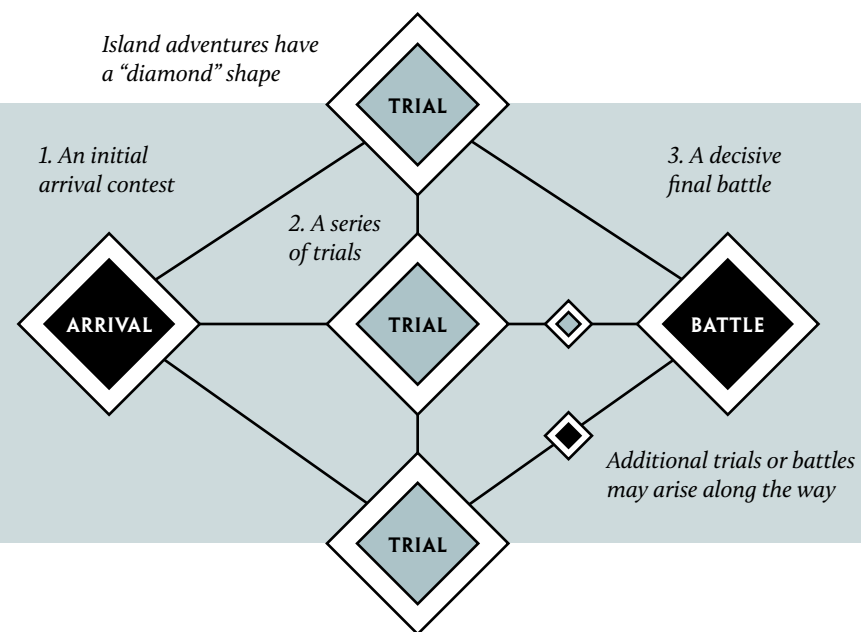
Each island includes several oracular portents to represent the wishes of the gods. You can ask the leader of the heroes to read them aloud to the group. During the course of play, the leader interprets the signs to understand how to appease the gods here and earn their Divine Favor.

On the island of Kryos, the leader considers the sign given by Hera: her sacred peacock, leading the pious to restore what is lost. Later, the leader interprets this as a desire for the heroes to recover the Pillar of Storms and return it to Hera's temple.

ARRIVAL

The arrival presents a challenging situation on the island that propels the heroes into an initial contest or two. This gets the action going and entangles the heroes in the specific problems of the island's strife. Read the arrival contests aloud or paraphrase them, adding any important details that sprang to mind when you were reading the island during preparation.

Island adventures have a "diamond" shape



ISLAND GUIDE

STARTER ISLANDS

Any of these islands make a good choice for a first session, though they're also suited for later play.

KRYOS

Thesekyra the Pirate Queen stole the Pillar of Storms and without it, the people of Kryos are defenseless against the harpies. An island of swordplay and naval pursuit!

NIMOS

The people of Nimos seek knowledge above all else, including above the life of their beloved prince. An island of intrigue, temptation, and monstrosity.

SOROS & ION

Once a single people, the King of Soros has barred his gates and profits from the laborers of Ion. Orta the giant was tricked into smashing open the gates and chaos ensues. An island of justice and redemption.

TYMISOS

The heroes must navigate a deadly labyrinth surrounding the resting place of long-forgotten heroes, home to a siren and her bull-warrior guardian. An island of deprivations and memories.

VRACHOI

Two great leaders have come to make an accord, but neither can accept less than total victory. Ares has sent his own agent to assure the accords end in violence. An island of bitter rivalry and impossible demands.

FENIOS

With the aid of the legendary Golden Boar, a usurper has claimed the throne of Fenios. A small band of rebels defy her. An island of prophecy, family, and betrayal.

FURTHER ISLANDS

These islands work best after the heroes have a few adventures under their belts.

AKOROS

The blue flame of Orphne was stolen by the Sorcerer Erastos, who now plumbs the realm of Hades for its wealth. While he keeps the portal open, shades of the dead escape to the earth. Akoros is well suited to a band of heroes who have lost someone they love.

GULF OF KARIS

Poseidon's wrath has trapped the heroes at sea alongside other doomed souls. A lonely monster watches over the people who fight among themselves. Karis is well suited to a band of heroes who have angered the gods, particularly Poseidon.

SPEIRA

The legendary craftsman Kasibios has created a drill that will bore down deep beneath the earth. Unchecked, he and his mechanisms will crack the gates of Tartaros.

CHORDIA

The mythical Shears of Atropos have been stolen and without them she cannot cut the strands of fate. Death no longer holds and the natural order is broken. Best for a band who has visited many islands and suffered defeats.

ENU

Haunted by an eternal slumber, the sole waking inhabitant of Enu needs the heroes to keep her awake through the night with stories of their incredible adventures. Enu presents an opportunity to learn about our heroes' past.

KYKONIA

Cut off from the gods, the heroes must decide whether to restore the connection between the people and the Olympian deities, or leave them without divine aid (and interference).



KRYOS

Kryos is a cold and rocky isle, fabled for its gold mines. Legend says that the island is protected by a ring of everlasting storm clouds that keep the land's riches safe from marauders.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Hera: Queen of the Gods. Her sign is her sacred peacock, leading the pious to restore what is lost.

Zeus: Lord of the Sky. His sign is ruin—the works of man brought low, pillars of stone dashed into the sea.

Hermes: God of Thieves. His sign is a raven atop a bounty of riches—spoils to those who deserve them.

ARRIVAL

When you arrive at the mining settlement on the island, the infamous storm clouds are nowhere to be seen. All is in turmoil—people rush to and fro, wailing in panic. “It’s gone!” they cry. “The pirate queen has stolen the Pillar of Storms! We are defenseless! The harpies shall slay us!”

The two leaders of the land recognize you as great heroes and each entreats you to hear their words.

Meletia the mining chief wants to be rid of magic and the whims of the gods—she says that it’s good the Pillar of Storms is gone. Now the people must learn to defend themselves.

Ionestes, priest of Hera knows that without the blessing of Hera, the island is doomed. The temple and its sacred pillar must be restored—even improved!—to show the greatest piety.

TURMOIL

- ♦ *Will you command Meletia to use the island’s gold to restore the ruined temple of Hera and receive divine protection?* **Arts & Oration vs. Meletia.**
- ♦ *Or will you command Ionestes to cease speaking false promises of divine aid and instead support the construction of practical defenses?* **Arts & Oration vs. Ionestes.**

TRIALS

THE PIRATE QUEEN

Thesekyra's swift ship runs far on the high seas, giving her time to master the power of the Pillar of Storms. *Can you catch her?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **Thesekyra**. Give Thesekyra an Advantage die if the heroes have delayed at all in the pursuit (the longer the delay, the bigger the die).

THE HARPIES

Can you drive them off and give the people some temporary safety, or will their attacks continue unabated? **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Harpies**. If the heroes leave the people undefended, they'll be slaughtered (advance the Strife Level).

THE TRUTH

How will you discover the source of the harpies' vengeful anger and the true will of the gods in this place? How did Thesekyra steal the pillar?

THE PILLAR

Will you cast the pillar into the sea, return it to Kryos, or keep it as spoils for your trouble? The pillar is a thing of ancient magic, subverting the power of Zeus. **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **The Pillar of Storms** (2d10 *Mythic*) to contend with its power.

BATTLE

- ♦ *Will you go into battle with Thesekyra and her crew?* If the heroes succeed in catching her quickly, they may go into battle as normal. If not, the heroes must face her with the power of the Pillar of Storms at her command (d10 Advantage die). **Threats:** Thesekyra's vicious pirate crew slaughters your sailors. Thesekyra's counterattack with flaming arrows sinks your ship.
- ♦ *Or will you seek to outwit the Pirate Queen?* Perhaps the pillar can be stolen back? Or perhaps the Pirate Queen will listen to a tempting offer?
- ♦ *Will you eradicate the harpies?* **Threats:** Several harpies fly past you and slaughter most of the people of Kryos while you're engaged in the battle. Meletia dies defending Kryos.

CHARACTERS

Meletia, Mining Chief (d6). Stoic (d8), Strong-Armed (d6).

Ionestes, Priest of Hera (d6). Zealous (d6), Reckless (d6).

Thesekyra, the Pirate Queen (d8). Swift-Shooting (d8 *Perilous*), Cunning (d6). **BATTLE-HARDENED CREW** (In combat, with her crew at her side, Thesekyra is *Epic*).

The Harpies (d10). Razor-Clawed (d8 *Perilous*), Hate-Filled (d8 *Sacred*). **SKY BORN** (The Harpies are *Epic* in any contest against them in which they can freely strike from the air).

PLACES

Snowy mountains. Gold mines. Furnaces for smelting ore. Brightly painted clay and plaster homes of the people.

The Temple of Hera: A dilapidated structure, fallen into disrepair from lack of offerings. One of its pillars—the Pillar of Storms, long taken for granted by the people—is missing.

The Sky Caves: To the south, rocky spires jut like jagged teeth from the sea. At the tops, high above the clouds, the harpies make their lairs in dark caves clawed from the stone.

SPECIAL REWARDS

The Pillar of Storms: An ancient artifact that may be used to control the weather.

MYSTERIES

The pillar was stolen from Hera's temple with Ionestes's help. *Is he a false priest in league with the pirates for profit? Is he a devout believer who wants to use the panic to revitalize the people's faith?*

The harpies hate Kryos because of the Pillar of Storms. *Is it because it's an affront to the power of Zeus, whom the harpies love? Is it because the pillar stole their mastery of the four winds? Is it because the pillar itself was once a harpy before Hera turned the creature to stone for consorting with her husband?*



NIMOS

Nimos is an island of bright beaches and rocky cliffs, known for its study of medicine, as well as a devotion to ancient traditions.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Apollo: God of Medicine—and secret knowledge. His sign is a blazing torch, the light of knowledge in a dark world.

Artemis: Goddess of the Hunt—slayer of monsters. Her sign is a headless serpent, still venomous even in death.

ARRIVAL

When you arrive at the white-pillared palace, the funeral for the son of the king is underway, accompanied by ceremonial games of hand-to-hand combat. You are greeted as heroes and invited to join in the games, but you are not allowed to pay respects to the body of the prince. The tattooed high priest cites ancient custom, but as you are lead from the palace down to the fighting arenas, you notice a shadow in the king's eyes. Something is not right here.

THE FUNERAL

- ♦ *Will you confront the court and demand to know what has happened to the prince?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **Queen Naia**. If she wins, she exiles the heroes for their impudence. They might restore honor by winning in **The Games** trial. If she loses, the heroes win the court's favor and are allowed to see the body.
- ♦ *Or will you attempt skulduggery to divine the truth?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **Priest Harkon**. If he wins, he catches the heroes skulking about and has them thrown in the dungeon. If he loses, the heroes discover venom on the lips of the prince and notice the serpent tattoos on the priests at court—not Apollo's symbol, but something more ancient and sinister.
- ♦ *Or will you show respect and kindness toward the king's grief and win him over as an ally?* **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **King Telmarios**. If he wins, the king loses all hope and grants an Advantage to Priest Harkon. If he loses, the king's despair is lifted and he sees the heroes as true friends, granting each winner a Bond as his ally.

TRIALS

THE GAMES

Will you join in the brutal combat? Fighters here imbibe strange elixirs, twisting their bodies and their minds to savagery. **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Fighters of Nimos**. The best hero faces **Sersaios, Champion of Nimos**, in **Blood & Valor** (alone) for the title.

Or will you investigate the source and true nature of the alchemical mixtures? **Craft & Reason** vs. **Thessia, Scholar of Alchemy**. If the heroes win, they might confront Thessia directly about the alchemy. If they lose, Thessia suspects foul play and bars the temple under royal guard, securing all its knowledge against interlopers.

THE SERPENT CULT

At the first opportunity, the Serpent Cult attacks from hiding with poisoned darts to subdue the heroes for ritual sacrifice. *Can you avoid poisoning and capture?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **Priest Harkon & the Serpent Cult**.

THE POISONED LAND

Toxic runoff from alchemical experiments poisons the island. While the people enjoy longer lives and healing elixirs, nature suffers. Rivers are thick with sludge, animals are sick, and choking fumes befoul the air. *Will you brave the poisons to cleanse the land?* **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **The Poisoned Land** (2d8 *Perilous*). Probably followed by **Craft & Reason** to enact a solution.

BATTLE

- ♦ *Will you slay the Great Serpent, destroying the source of alchemy and the cult's power?* **Threat:** The serpent thrashes, toppling buildings, killing many citizens. Thessia is killed. Harkon's cult besmirches your names and you are remembered as the heroes who brought ruin to Nimos.
- ♦ *Or will you destroy Harkon and the cultists, leaving the scholars of Apollo to continue their dangerous work?* **Threat:** Secret cultists spring from hiding, killing the king and many citizens to seize power. A member of the cult escapes to continue their legacy in the future.

CHARACTERS

King Telmarios (d6). Melancholy (d8), White-Bearded (d6).

Queen Naia (d8). Sly (d8), Unnaturally Youthful (d6). **RULER** (Grants Advantage at her court and her guards make combat *Perilous*).

Priest Harkon & the Serpent Cult (d8). Devious (d6), Shadow-Striking (d8 *Perilous*), Serpent-Tattooed (d8 *Sacred*).

Thessia, Scholar of Alchemy (d6). Sharp (d8), Healer (d8).

Fighters of Nimos (d6). Elixir-Drinking (d6 *Perilous*), Bold (d6).

Sersaios, Champion of Nimos (d8). Fast-Striking (d8 *Perilous*), Venom-Blooded (d8).

The Serpent of Nimos (d10). Monstrous (d10 *Perilous*), Cunning (d6). **COLD** (Arts & Oration has no effect), **SCINTILLATING SCALES** (Grants Advantage by camouflaging the serpent or hypnotizing onlookers).

PLACES

Rocky cliffs. Sea caves. The royal palace and white-pillared city. Sanctuaries of healing. Rivers choked with toxic runoff.

The Acropolis of Apollo: A huge pillared structure containing a trove of alchemical knowledge—hard won from many sacrifices.

The Serpent Temple: A torch-lit hidden lair connected to the palace and acropolis by secret passageways.

SPECIAL REWARDS

The Elixir of Immortality: A single dose of a magical potion that may restore life to the dead or grant eternal youth.

MYSTERIES

The prince's death. *Was he a cultist who sought adept status and failed? Was he killed because he discovered the cult? Did he drink the experimental Elixir of Immortality before it was successfully made?*

The source of alchemy is the raw venom of the serpent, which grants insight to those few who survive it—and is vital to every alchemical mixture. *Do the scholars of alchemy know the source of the venom, or is it given to them secretly? Is the Queen allied with the serpent cult, or is she using them to grant her immortality?*



SOROS & ION

The twin islands of Soros and Ion are connected by a narrow land bridge. Ion is a land of golden fields and vast vineyards. Soros boasts the gleaming white pillars of an affluent city-state.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Demeter: Goddess of the Harvest. Her sign is a cornucopia—bounty for those that labor and serve.

Zeus: King of the Gods. His sign is a soaring eagle—the majesty of rightful rulership.

ARRIVAL

As you arrive at the port of Soros, you see that the guardhouse that blocks the land bridge has its gates smashed open. Frightened Ionians, clutching a few belongings, stream through. In the distance of Ion, you hear a titanic shout, as from a man the size of a mountain. The earth trembles beneath your feet.

Thalia of the golden hair, the Ionian matriarch, leads her panicked people into Soros, but in their terror, many are separated and rush blindly into the city, surely to be lost without guidance.

Commander Kyla (who bears a striking resemblance to the elder Thalia) orders her guards at the gate to stand down, though it is against the king's orders. Her own troops are sure to turn on her for this dereliction.

CHAOS AT THE GUARDHOUSE

- ♦ *Will you step in to support Kyla and keep the guards at bay while the remaining Ionians make it across the land bridge?* **Arts & Oration** or **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Soldiers of Soros**. The best hero gains a Bond with Kyla.
- ♦ *Can you find a place of refuge for the Ionians so they may safely gather and not become separated as they rush into the city? (A dock warehouse, a temple, a manor house, etc.)* **Craft & Reason** vs. **The Soldiers of Soros**. The best hero gains a Bond with Thalia.

TRIALS

THE COURT-MARTIAL

For her dereliction of duty at the guardhouse, Kyla will be sentenced to death by her father, King Vlakas. *Will you argue her case?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **King Vlakas**.

LEARN THE HISTORY

Prove your compassion to Thalia and she may share with you the shameful history of this place. **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **Thalia of Ion**. Otherwise, she says only that her son, the king, is not fit to rule and she prays to Zeus to bring him low.

THE WRATH OF ORTA

Enraged by his people fleeing Ion, Orta hurls massive boulders across the narrow channel, to come crashing down in the streets of Soros. Homes are destroyed; people are killed. *How can you protect the city?*

DISCORD IN THE STREETS

The people of Soros blame the people of Ion for threatening their survival. The two peoples are fighting in the streets. If the soldiers of Soros are deployed to keep the peace, it will be a massacre. *Will you attempt to soothe the people's distress?* **Arts & Oration** or **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **Fear and Distrust** (3d6). *Or will you take more drastic steps?* If the heroes make peace between the peoples, reduce the Strife Level.

BATTLE

- ♦ *Will you confront King Vlakas to resolve the fate of the people? Will you try to depose him and promote a new leader? What do you propose as a way forward?* **Threats:** The king pronounces the heroes traitors, to be imprisoned in the dungeons, as well as Kyla and Thalia. The people of Ion are forced to return to labor under Orta's command.
- ♦ *Will you dare to end Orta's reign of terror?* The giant is the size of a mountain and cannot be overcome by mortal means. How can you oppose such a creature? **Threats:** When confronted in battle, Orta's rage reaches its peak—shaking the earth and sea, destroying homes on Soros and Ion, killing many citizens, as well as Thalia and King Vlakas.

CHARACTERS

King Vlakas (d8). Proudful (d8), Ruthless (d8 *Perilous*), Righteous (d6 *Sacred*).

Commander Kyla of Soros (d6). Steel-Eyed (d8 *Perilous*), Princess (d6), Young (d6).

The Soldiers of Soros (d6). Dedicated (d8), Violent (d6 *Perilous*).

Thalia of Ion (d8). Great Weaver (d8), Grandmother (d6). **REVERED** (if Thalia is harmed, mark Demeter's Wrath).

Orta, son of Demeter (d10). Mountainous (d8 *Sacred*), Loyal (d8 *Mythic*), Raging (d10 *Epic, Perilous*). **TITANIC** (Orta cannot be harmed by mortal weapons). **BELOVED** (d12 Advantage die while Orta is favored by Demeter).

PLACES

Soros: Artist colonies perched on cliffs over the sea. Theaters dedicated to poetry and drama. Manors to house the idle elite.

Ion: Fields of corn, wheat, and barley. Simple clay homes. The massive hall of the giant, Orta, and its shrine to Demeter.

SPECIAL REWARDS

The Seed of Verdant Bounty: A sacred seed of Demeter, which may be cast into soil or sea to produce a thriving, lush land. Prized possession of Orta, kept in a locket around his neck.

MYSTERIES

King Vlakas struck a deal with Orta long ago to divide his kingdom—half his people for Ion, to labor in the fields of Orta to produce a bounty to honor Demeter, while the other half lives in leisure on Soros, sustained by the crops of Ion. *Did Vlakas do this out of fear of the giant or for his own gain? Did his mother Thalia go willingly to Ion out of shame for her son's actions?*

Commander Kyla let the Ionians through the gate because Thalia is her grandmother—and Kyla has long lamented the separation of the people. *Is she loyal to her father even so?*

Thalia tricked Orta to smash the gate on the land bridge, knowing that her granddaughter would grant them passage. *What magic in her weaving tricked the giant? Did she have divine aid?*



TYMISOS

Towering walls of polished obsidian delineate the canals of the labyrinth-isle of Tymisos. Many vessels carrying stout-hearted adventurers have entered its maze-like channels, but none have escaped. It is a tomb-land, heaped with the bones of past legends.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Apollo: God of Truth. His sign is a light blazing over the horizon—beware a light that shines brighter than your own.

Athena: Goddess of Wisdom. Her sign is mouldering bread, thrown overboard—knowing when to accept losses.

Demeter: Goddess of Customs. Her sign is a ragged cloak in the rigging, as if a mourning cloth—remembrance of those lost.

ARRIVAL

As your vessel navigates narrow channels between towering walls of sheer obsidian, you quickly lose your bearings and are lost. The sailors guess at the correct path through the maze, but after a few turnings, it's obvious that the mist that stymies your travel at sea has followed you here, ever pressing behind, making retreat impossible. The only escape must be at the heart of the labyrinth from whence a strange song emanates, seeming to taunt you in an ancient, unknown tongue.

NAVIGATING THE LABYRINTH

- ♦ *Will you seek a path through the maze with careful navigation or a cunning stratagem?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **The Labyrinth**. This is a *Sacred* contest—the curse of this place extracts a toll on the mind and spirit if one is not resolute.
- ♦ *Do you dare to scale the sheer walls and survey the route from above?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Labyrinth**. This is a *Perilous* contest—the sheer walls are extremely challenging to climb, and deadly if you slip.

If the heroes win the contest to navigate the labyrinth, give them a 1d10 Advantage die on the trial to **enforce the rations** (see the next page). If the heroes lose, give the Strife Player the Advantage die for that trial.

TRIALS

ENFORCING THE RATIONS

The route through the maze is interminable—days slip away, becoming weeks as you draw toward the center. Your ship runs dangerously low on supplies. You must enforce strict rationing among the crew, or else slip into want and privations. **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **The Labyrinth**. *If the heroes lose, all contests here become Epic—each hero pays Pathos to enter contests due to hunger and thirst. Or, they may sacrifice their crew to keep the best rations for themselves, and stay strong.*

REMEMBRANCE OF THE FORGOTTEN

As you try to mark your progress through the obsidian labyrinth, you find faint scratches left on the walls. These were once the epitaphs of the heroes lost here long ago, written in a lost tongue—but someone has chiseled them away nearly to nothing. *Will you try to divine their names and restore them to memory?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **The Siren**.

BATTLE

At the center of the labyrinth is a broad arena of stone platforms. Upon the highest, the Siren, golden-haired and shining—source of the taunting song you have heard echoing in the labyrinth. Below prowls a massive warrior, the subject of the heroic song, clad in armor of bones, with a horned-skull helmet—this is the Bull of Tymisos. In one hand, he clutches a great warhammer; in the other, a tangle of adamantine chains that lead through a ring high above, holding aloft the very walls of the labyrinth.

- ♦ *Will you enter combat with the Bull, to overcome him and release the chains to free your vessel?* **Threat:** During the struggle, the adamantine chains jerk to and fro, rumbling the labyrinth walls, raining razor-sharp debris upon you—inflicting 2 Pathos on each hero and killing any remaining sailors.
- ♦ *Will you attempt subterfuge or guile to release the chains from the Bull's grasp and free yourselves from the labyrinth?* **Threat:** The Siren's song worms its way into your minds, consuming you all with obsession—take two Bonds with the Siren. When you spend a Siren Bond, give her Name die to the Strife Player to roll against you. You may not use other Bonds or Advantage dice until you use both Siren Bonds—purging her music from your mind.

CHARACTERS

The Labyrinth (d8). Twisting (d8), Sheer-Walled (d8 *Perilous*), Ancient (d6). **COLD** (Arts & Oration has no effect).

The Siren (d8). Eternal (d8), Clarion-Voiced (d10), Selfish (d6). **THE SONG OF THE LONE HERO** (While the Siren's song rings out, fueling the Bull's pride above all forgotten heroes, the Bull gains a 1d8 Advantage die to all of its rolls).

The Bull of Tymisos (d10). Massive (d8), Horn-Helmed (d8), Stone-Fisted (d8 *Perilous*), Vigilant (d6). **GUARDIAN** (None may interfere with the Siren without contesting the Bull first). **ARMOR OF BONES** (While the Bull wears the armor made from the bones of forgotten heroes, Blood & Valor contests against him are *Mythic*).

PLACES

The Labyrinth Canals. Shallow waterways filled with fetid seawater and the decayed carcasses of creatures who became trapped here.

The Arena. A broad plaza of stone blocks at the center of the labyrinth, arrayed with platforms of various heights—seemingly the site of some ancient temple or holy place.

SPECIAL REWARDS

Adamantine Chains: Gigantic, unbreakable chains, which may be used to capture and hold anything—even a god.

MYSTERIES

The Siren adores the Bull above all others. *Were they once lovers? Did the Bull perform a great labor for the Siren and earn her adoration? Did the Siren lure heroes here just to prove the Bull's superiority? Why did the Siren scratch away the record of all the fallen heroes? Does she fear the vengeance of their shades if they're ever remembered?*

The Armor of Bones is a defilement of heroes from ages past. *What happens if their remains are given proper respect? Will their shades find rest, or seek vengeance on those who wronged them?*



VRACHOI

Vrachoi is a miserable cluster of unforgiving rocks. It's said to be sacred to Ares, an embodiment of his wrath and favor. High cliffs are crowned with brilliant green plants and a single towering oak.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Ares: God of War. His sign is the broken shield—defeat of a worthy foe.

Artemis: Goddess of the Hunt. Her sign is the fallen stag crowned with arrow shafts.

Aphrodite: Goddess of Forbidden Love. Her sign is the caged dove beating at its shackles.

ARRIVAL

The waters here are choppy and rough, cold spray splashes over the hull of your ship. Vrachoi has only one small beach and you must sail through a narrow pass filled with jagged rocks to get there. Two magnificent warships patrol just off the shore, blocking your entrance.

The Golden Galleon, a tall warship adorned with gleaming brass fittings and rune-inscribed cannons belching white fire. The crew shouts, "Our captain Aketa commands that we destroy any ship that dares interfere with the negotiations. Soon, they will free our king!"

The Kêtos, each of its three hulls made in the likeness of a blue-scaled sea serpent, sails swiftly in a figure eight pattern, ready to drive your ship against the jagged rocks. They boast, "Lies! Our leader, Elise, will prevail. Soon your lands will be ours!"

RACING TO SHORE

- ◆ *Will you speed directly to port and risk the cannon fire of Aketa's Golden Galleon? **Blood & Valor** vs. **Aketa**.*
- ◆ *Will you risk crashing into the rocks to outmaneuver Elise's Kêtos? **Craft & Reason** vs. **Elise**.*
- ◆ *Or will you challenge Ares and dare to find another way through the teeth of the Vrachoi? **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **Vrachoi**.*

If the heroes do not prevail in their arrival challenge, they are delivered to the respective camps as captives!

TRIALS

BITTER RIVALRY

Aketa and Elise are here for peace, but their feud is palpable. They will not speak of it, but their crew may have looser lips. **Arts & Oration** vs. **The Sailors** (2d6). If the heroes prevail, the sailors reveal that this treaty is doomed: King Medon, recently captured by Elise, would sooner die than allow his general, Aketa, to accept a treaty.

PANKRATION

In their camp, Aketa plants a brilliant spear into the sand and challenges your band to a day of *pankration*, a brutal mixture of wrestling and boxing. *Can you defeat them in this blood sport and earn their respect?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **Aketa**.

BOASTING AT NIGHTFALL

As the sun sets, Vrachoi brings terrible wind and rain. Feeble fires are not enough to shield you from the cold. Elise welcomes you to her camp to drink wine and boast of your great deeds. **Arts & Oration** vs. **Elise**.

PROTECTING THE CAPTIVE

King Medon is kept in Elise's tent—none besides her generals are allowed entry. In the dead of night, torchlight reveals the silhouette of a figure inside the tent with a knife raised. *Will you prevent the assassin from murdering the captured king?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **Philosta**.

If the heroes save Medon, he commends their bravery. *In payment for his debt to you, perhaps the king will reconsider his impossible demands of Aketa.*

BATTLE

- ♦ *Will you seek to reconcile the feud between Elise and Aketa?* They each respect—maybe even love—the other, but their past is impossible to forget. **Threats:** Ares, displeased with your peace efforts, casts boulders down from the mountain to crush both encampments (add 1d12 to the Defend contest). Elise steels herself against weakness—she will never tell Aketa of her love.
- ♦ *Or will you call for a trial of Ares's favor and race to Vrachoi's peak?* **Threats:** Vrachoi thunders and quakes, casting Aketa to their death on the rocks below. If he is still alive, Medon breaks free of his bonds and commands Aketa's fleet to destroy the Kêtos and all the sailors on it.

CHARACTERS

Elise of Sekara (d8). Daring (d10 *Perilous*), Compassionate (d6), Scion of the Four Winds (d8 *Sacred*).

Aketa of Prisos (d8). War-Trained (d10 *Perilous*), Aloof (d6), Storm-Rider (d8).

Medon, Captured King of Prisos (d8). Well-Learned (d8), Disapproving (d8).

Philosta, Priestess (d6). Vengeful (d8 *Perilous*), Guised as Elise's General (d8). **DIVINE FAVOR OF ARES** (Grants Advantage when inciting violence).

Vrachoi (d10). Jagged (d10 *Perilous*), Hungry (d10 *Epic*). **VOICE OF ARES** (Contests of Arts & Oration are *Mythic* and if the heroes do not prevail, mark Ares's Wrath).

PLACES

Encampments. Aketa's camp sports red pavilions and a sparring circle. Elise's has hanging braziers producing sweet-smelling smoke.

Twin Paths to the Cliff Top. Narrow trails, powerful winds, and shifting rocks threaten climbers.

The Peak. Covered in purple flowers, anyone who stands at the peak can shout and be heard by all on the island.

SPECIAL REWARDS

Cloak of Ares: If the heroes prevail, Ares reveals himself and grants the victor his cloak, which cannot be pierced by mortal blades.

MYSTERIES

Elise loves Aketa but is terrified of admitting her feelings. *Would Aketa use this against her if they knew? Do they feel the same way?*

King Medon taunts his general, Aketa, from within his bonds. He rightfully blames them for his capture, and the guilt torments them. *Is there any victory that Aketa could achieve that would earn the king's praise? Does he secretly support Elise?*

Philosta received a vision from Ares: Prisos and Sekara in ruins, conquered by outsiders. She believes her home will be safe if Elise and Aketa sharpen their blades against each other so they are prepared when the threat arrives. *Did Ares grant her a foresight into the future, or is he merely playing a game with his pawns?*



FENIOS

Filled with thick forest, natural springs, and hidden caves, the island of Fenios is known for its yearly hunt of the legendary Golden Boar.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Hera: Goddess of Vengeance. Her sign is a fire pit, and the guilty roasting on a spit above it.

Poseidon: God of Earthquakes. Through the mists you see a towering building crumbling to the ground.

Athena: Goddess of Civilization. A gust of wind nearly capsizes your ship, but for your sturdy rigging and coordinated efforts of the sailors, who claim they were guided by her unseen hand.

ARRIVAL

On the shore, you hear shouts of panic, feel the ground shake, and see the fabled **Golden Boar of Fenios**—taller than a house—rampaging through the streets. Its powerful tusks sunder anything, or anyone, that stands in its path. The boar's body is prickled with arrows and cuts, but it's undeterred by these wounds. It wears a mask affixed with chains. Behind it, you see golden eyes filled with hate.

Ahead of you, inside the city, is a marble statue of Queen Isadora circled by a ring of people holding hands. As if sensing their determination to protect the monument, the Golden Boar turns its attention to them and charges.

Their leader, a young woman who bears a striking resemblance to the statue, commands the others to hold fast, "Kapra the Usurper took my mother's throne. She will not take her memory!"

PROTECTING THE PROTECTORS

- ♦ *Will you convince the people to flee the charging beast and save themselves?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **Nassia**.
- ♦ *Or will you aid the people and fend off the mighty boar?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **Golden Boar**. If the heroes prevail, they gain a Bond with **Nassia**. If the boar prevails, the statue is destroyed and many of Nassia's followers perish.

TRIALS

NASSIA'S CONFIDENCE

Nassia plans to take her mother's throne back by force but her small band of hunters is no match for the Golden Boar and Kapra's guards. Betrayed once, she is not trusting of strangers. *Will you offer her aid?* **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **Nassia** to prove your honest intentions or **Blood & Valor** vs. **Nassia** (*Mythic*) to show that you have the favor of Artemis.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Despite fighting for her honor, Nassia is not speaking to her mother Isadora. Though she keeps her thoughts private, Nassia believes Isadora a coward for accepting exile. *Can you help them talk to each other again?*

HALLS OF ANO STENI

While rampaging, the Golden Boar is unassailable. It rests, however, in the halls of Ano Steni, where Golden-Masked Kapra issues her commands. *Can you sneak into the palace or convince the guards you seek an audience with the "rightful" queen?* **Craft & Reason** or **Arts & Oration** vs. **Kapra's Guards** (3d6).

If the guards prevail, the heroes are presented to Kapra in chains. If the heroes prevail, they gain a moment of privacy with either the Golden Boar or Kapra. *Will you divine what force controls the boar? Will you beseech Kapra to learn her story and claim to the throne?*

THE TRUE PROPHECY

The prophecy of the Golden Boar sounds like something the queen contrived to further her own ambitions. *Can you convince Isadora to tell you what the goddess of the hunt truly told her?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **Isadora**.

BATTLE

- ♦ *Will you slay the Golden Boar and place who you see fit on the throne?* **Threats:** The Golden Boar's rampage topples the halls of Ano Steni, killing hundreds within. Nassia is slain by the boar.
- ♦ *Or will you break Kapra's hold on the beast?* **Threats:** Word of Isadora's lies surface and the people's faith is broken. Isadora is slain.

CHARACTERS

Isadora, Exiled Queen (d8). **Adamant** (d8), **Shrewd** (d8), **Protective** of Nassia (d8 *Perilous*).

Nassia, Exiled Princess (d6). **Vengeful** (d8 *Perilous*), **Bold** (d8), **Distrusting** (d6). **INSPIRING** (Grants Advantage when her followers bolster her).

Kapra, the Usurper (d8). **Loyal** (d8), **Determined** (d8 *Perilous*), **Golden-Masked** (d8 *Sacred*). **RITUAL OF BINDING** (The Golden Boar provides 1d10 support).

Golden Boar (d10). **Rampaging** (d10 *Perilous*), **Great-Tusked** (d8 *Epic*), **Masked** (d8 *Sacred*). **SHACKLED** (While bound to Kapra, Arts & Oration has no effect).

PLACES

Dense forest filled with fir and chestnut trees. Narrow paths used by animals and hunters. Rivers and underground springs.

Ano Steni: The high-walled palace. Now controlled by Kapra.

Nassia's Camp: This quickly assembled camp of tents, surrounded by low palisades, is home to Nassia, her loyal hunters, and the dethroned Isadora.

SPECIAL REWARDS

Masks of the Beast. When worn by mortal and beast, they can speak with each other over any distance.

MYSTERIES

When Nassia was born, Queen Isadora received a prophecy from Artemis that one day the Golden Boar would take her. The queen told her people a lie—Artemis commanded them to hunt the boar. She offered her throne to the first hunter who returned with its tusks!

For years, the Huntmaster Kapra saw the boar slay all who faced it and begged the queen to call off the hunt, to no avail. Just before this year's hunt, Kapra entered the palace atop the Golden Boar and told Isadora she could give up the throne, or be killed on it. *Did Kapra turn on the queen because she learned the true prophecy? Or because her own child died in a hunt? Does she love the boar?*

Nassia grew up idolizing Kapra and this year planned to join the hunt. *Does she fight now to restore her mother's honor? Or because Kapra broke her heart?*



AKOROS

Akoros is an isle from myth and legend, said to be the pleasure garden of the nymph Orphne, the torchbearer of Hades. It possesses only a single dwelling atop a forested hill, with strange lights flickering all about in the darkness.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Hekate: Goddess of Witchcraft. Her sign is darkness—every light snuffed out, every sentry blinded.

Hermes: God of Travel. His sign is a shining beacon in the distance, guiding the lost back home.

ARRIVAL

As your ship approaches, you realize that the sunrise has bathed you in its dull red glow for far too long—the sun is stopped in the sky just below the horizon, the world trapped in twilight. As you disembark, you see that the strange lights atop the hill are ghostly blue flames, covering the manor house atop the hill like a veil. From deep within, mournful weeping can be faintly heard.

All around the hill, scores of shadowy, translucent figures wander—desolate shades of the dead, somehow freed from their toil in the underworld. The sailors quail and lose heart. This is a haunted place!

THE UNQUIET DEAD

- ♦ *Will you attempt to rush past the spirits to the manor house? **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Dead**. Or will you make the appropriate offerings of blood and prayers to appease them while you pass? **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **The Dead**.*

THE HOUSE OF BLUE FLAME

- ♦ *Will you stride brazenly through the veil of fire? **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **Phobos, the Blue Flame**. Or will you find a clever way to circumvent it and enter the house? **Craft & Reason** vs. **Erastos**.*

OVERWHELMING DREAD

- ♦ *The sailors cannot bear the dread from the wandering shades and darkness. Left alone without assurances from the heroes, they will flee with the ship and become lost in the mists forever. **Arts & Oration** vs. **The Dead**. Heroes who prevail also earn a Bond with the sailors.*

TRIALS

THE SANCTUM OF ERASTOS

The manor house is dark and ominous, echoing with strange sounds—whenever you look away, the doors and hallways shift and change, receding as if in a dream. *Can you make your way through the dark, ever-shifting corridors of the manor house to find the source of the weeping?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **Erastos**.

DISCERN THE TRUTH

The nymph Orphne, the torchbearer of Hades, is trapped in the manor house, held fast by the baleful blue flames of Phobos, somehow let loose from her torch. Orphne is overwhelmed by sorrow, but soothing words may lead her to tell you the truth of what has happened here. **Arts & Oration** vs. **Orphne**.

THE PORTAL

The portal to the underworld issues forth foul vapors and the cries of the dead.

- ◆ **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Dead** to find Erastos in the underworld and force him back to earth.
- ◆ **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **Erastos** to seal the rift. *Will you seal it with the dead still free in the living world?*

BATTLE

- ◆ *Will you bring Erastos to judgment?* He is a powerful magician and will oppose you with arcane forces. **Threats:** Erastos removes the safeguards from his magic, causing the manor to twist and destroy itself, plunging the heroes, himself, Orphne, and the shades into the depths of Tartaros.
- ◆ *Will you return the dead to the underworld?* The longer they are free, the more they remember their lives and seek to stay in the world of mortals. **Threat:** The spirit of Artesia, the legendary poet and oracle, escapes the island. The spirit of Kalabos, blood-thirsty war-leader, escapes the island. Orphne is stripped of her status by Hades for failing in her duties.

CHARACTERS

Orphne, Torchbearer of Hades (d10). Dutiful (d8 *Sacred*), Distant (d8 *Sacred*), Sad (d6).

Erastos, Magician (d8). Well-Learned (d8 *Perilous*), Defiant (d8), Obsessed (d10). **NECROMANCER** (Erastos may wield Phobos's Name die as an Advantage die in contests. When he does, the contest is *Mythic*).

The Dead (d8). Despairing (d8), Vengeful (d8 *Perilous*), Lost (d6). **GHOSTLY** (Mortal weapons and tools have no effect).

Phobos, the Blue Flame (d10). Dreadful (d8 *Mythic*), Agonizing (d8 *Epic*). **COLD** (Arts & Oration has no effect). **GHOSTLY** (Mortal weapons and tools have no effect).

PLACES

The Sanctum of Erastos: A grand manor house, enchanted to become a labyrinthine prison for the nymph Orphne.

The Portal: A ritual site in the central courtyard of the manor, arrayed with occult instruments that were used to tear a rift in the world so that Erastos could plumb the depths of the underworld.

SPECIAL REWARDS

The Blue Flame: A sacred fire contained in a torch which may pierce through illusions and control the spirits of the underworld.

MYSTERIES

Erastos seeks knowledge and power in the underworld. *Why does he crave this power? Is he jealous of the gods? Did he lose someone important to him, and now seeks to overcome the sting of death? Will he attempt to dethrone Hades himself?*

Orphne was tricked by Erastos, who used the blue flame of her torch to trap her on earth while he explores the underworld unseen. *Is she ashamed because she failed in her duty? Does she seek vengeance against Erastos, or does she understand his reasons? Does she fear reprisal from Hades? If her torch is never relit, and the rift unsealed, what becomes of the shades of the dead? Will they all wander unseen from the underworld, back into the eternal twilight of the earth?*

An illustration of the Gulf of Karis. At the top center is a large, bright, textured sun or moon with rays extending outwards. Below it, two sailing ships with black sails are shown on a teal, wavy sea. At the bottom, a large, dark silhouette of a multi-limbed creature, resembling a giant crab or a sea monster, rises from the water. The entire scene is framed by a decorative border on the right side.

GULF OF KARIS

A glistening and inescapable expanse of sea. The center is calm and placid. Any who try to leave, however, are met with staggering winds and powerful waves that push them back.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Poseidon: Lord of the Sea. His sign is the sunken crown—humanity brought low by arrogance.

Aphrodite: Goddess of Beauty. Her sign is the abalone shell—covered in barnacles on the surface, gleaming iridescent inside.

Hermes: God of Travelers. His sign is a rousing morning song from the sailors—fearlessly greeting this new day.

ARRIVAL

As the fog parts, you see the gods have delivered you to a stretch of sea that is empty except for another lone ship trapped just as you are. The sailors aboard it are in the middle of a fierce debate. “Chara should be thrown overboard, she brought us here.”

Chara’s brother Zenakos responds even louder “No! It is Marinos we should drown. He offended Poseidon with his failed sacrifice and only if we punish him will the lord of the oceans forgive us!” In their anger, the sailors do not notice the mournful thrumming coming from the waters below, like lamentations of a lost lover. The brilliant colored, spear-like claws of the Karis rise from the water to sunder their ship in a drowning embrace.

SINKING SHIP

- ♦ *Will you outmatch their shouts to make the strangers listen to you and board your ship before they are drowned?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **Zenakos**, who shouts loudest of all.
- ♦ *Will you dive into the water to pry the monstrous claws loose and give the ship a chance to escape?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **Karis**.
- ♦ *Will you try to lure the Karis away with the promise of tastier prey?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **Karis** (*Perilous, Mythic*). The best hero gains a Bond with **Marinos**.

TRIALS

FIGUREHEAD LOST

The figurehead of Chara's boat, a beautifully carved image of the sea nymph Amphitrite, broke free during Marinós's sacrifice and sank into the waters below, waking the Karis. *Can you swim to the sandy ocean floor, sneak past Karis, and recover it?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **Karis**.

ZENAKOS'S ANGER

Zenakos stares into the sea with hateful eyes "This is a cursed place! We'll only be free of it once we slay the beast and prove our might to the gods." *Will you declare the Karis another victim of Poseidon's cruelty and placate Zenakos's rage?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **Zenakos**. *Or will you stop him with force?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **Zenakos**. If Zenakos is undeterred, he and many of Chara's sailors will die, his spear alone inflicting a grievous wound on the Karis.

PEACE BETWEEN CHARA AND MARINOS

Chara's people are torn. Some wish they had never left their island, some that they could appease the sea god and move on. At the heart of their differences are Chara and Marinós, who are no longer speaking.

- ♦ Marinós holds that Chara overreached and displeased the gods by asking for too much. He wants to return home.
- ♦ Chara believes this is but another test. A land of gold and nectar await if they are brave enough to overcome it.

Can you bring either one to understand the other? **Arts & Oration** vs. **Chara** or **Marinós**.

BATTLE

- ♦ *Will you steel yourselves and face the torrential storms and the Waves of Poseidon that surround the gulf?* If the heroes have not recovered the Figurehead of Amphitrite, each contest against the Waves of Poseidon are *Sacred*. **Threat**: The ocean's long arm reaches over Chara's ship and drags it to the bottom of the sea, trapping Chara and her people for eternity.
- ♦ *Or will you appease the Karis and beckon it to carry you away from this lonesome place?* **Threat**: In an outburst of loneliness and rage, the Karis sinks one of the ships. In despair, it claims Marinós.

CHARACTERS

Chara, Aspiring Leader (d8). Young (d6), Dreamer (d8), Proud (d8).

Marinós, Devotee of Poseidon (d6). Cursed (d10 *Sacred*), Deep-Eyed (d8).

Zenakos, Chara's Brother (d6). Loud (d8), Protective (d8), Impetuous (d8 *Perilous*).

Karis (d10). Spear-Clawed (d10 *Perilous*), Lonely (d8), Brilliant-Colored (d6). **DESOLATE** (Heroes must present a gift that reminds the Karis of home before a contest of Arts & Oration).

Waves of Poseidon (d10). Wrathful (d12 *Mythic*), Massive (d10 *Epic*), Cruel (d10 *Perilous*). **COLD** (Arts & Oration has no effect). **INVULNERABLE** (Blood & Valor has no effect).

PLACES

Endless placid warm sea, bobbing driftwood and debris. Ships full of languid sailors, baking in the sun.

The Gulf Edge: Just at the edge where the calm gulf meets the raging sea, signs of the outside world sometimes appear, tossed inward by the great waves.

Cabin of Marinós: A shrine to all of the gods, including carved wooden statues of each Olympian.

SPECIAL REWARDS

Gift of Karis: The smallest of its barbed claws shed as a gift makes a hefty spear. Any who carry it may speak with sea life.

MYSTERIES

Poseidon's wrath: *Was it Chara's desire or Marinós's clumsiness that brought on the sea god's wrath? Or simply his cruel whims?*

Karis is a titanic crustacean with a segmented carapace, multi-pupiled eyes, and claws that spear any prey that enters its reach. *Is Karis trapped here? Did it come from the depths of the sea or was it once a man who angered Poseidon himself?*

Chara was expected to lead her people and follow the traditions they had for generations. *What event spurred her to find a new home? What vows did she break by leaving the island?*



SPEIRA

The island of Speira is a towering volcanic rock rising from the sea, ever wreathed in ash and fire, dark skies thundering with storms.

The legendary craftsman Kasibios calls this foreboding place home. Rusting metal hulks of his discarded prototype inventions decorate the slopes of the volcano, their wondrous gears and steam pipes glistening in the orange light of flowing lava.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Hephaistos: God of Crafting. While repairing the ship, a sailor's hammer slips from her hand, shattering a clay effigy of Zeus.

Zeus: Lord of the Sky. Through the mists ahead, you see the silhouette of the peaks of Speira, bombarded by a shower of thunderbolts from the sky.

ARRIVAL

As your vessel emerges from the mists and you behold the burning peaks of Speira, you are suddenly assailed by a barrage of flying metal—hundreds of harpoons pierce your ship (and some of your crew), each trailing a glittering metallic cable, pulled taut to massive winches embedded in the mountainside. Your ship is seized from the waters and pulled at great speed up the mountain slope, drawn into a maw of whirling gears to be sundered to pieces!

THE SUNDERING MAW

- ♦ *Will you rally your overwhelmed crew to abandon ship and save their lives before it's too late? **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **The Mechanisms**. If the heroes fail, most of their sailors perish as the harpoons and metal cables pierce every part of the ship.*
- ♦ *Can you free your vessel from the harpoons before it's utterly destroyed? **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Mechanisms**. If the heroes fail, their vessel is torn asunder—its pieces carried away into the depths of the volcano. They'll have to find a way to restore it or secure another vessel in order to leave this place.*

TRIALS

THE SCRAP HEAP

Within the mountain, great machines whirl endlessly, grinding salvage into scrap, which is carried by spider-like clockwork mechanisms through trap doors and chutes to a workshop sitting atop a titanic drill far below, digging in the depths of the volcano. *Will you evade the notice of the mechanisms and attempt to salvage or repair your ship?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **The Mechanisms**.

THE LOST

Amidst the wreckage are people marooned here by the scavenging mechanisms, many close to death. Among them is **Aradus**, who was once Kasibios's partner, and helped build the drill that now drives to crack open the gates of Tartaros itself, freeing the titan Kronos, who will surely ascend to Olympus to slay Zeus. Aradus begs you to turn the drill so it instead breaks the chains of Prometheus, the titan who gave fire to humankind, now unjustly imprisoned in the underworld.

Will you give aid to the Lost and try to save those closest to death? **Craft & Reason** vs. **Deprivations** (3d6).

Will you dare to descend into the super-heated bore shaft of the drill, down to the workshop dome, to confront its maker? **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Mechanisms**.

BATTLE

- ♦ *Will you stop the drill?* It has no controls with which to halt its progress. Kasibios (with his mechanisms) opposes you. If the heroes threaten to destroy the drill in the process, Aradus will aid Kasibios, granting a 1d8 Advantage die. **Threats:** Tampering with the drill causes it to shear through the rock and bring down the mountain, killing the Lost. As the mountain falls, it cracks the gates of Tartaros.
- ♦ *Will you turn the drill to free Prometheus?* Kasibios and the mechanisms oppose you, while Aradus gives you a 1d8 Advantage die. *Will you keep it on course to release Kronos?* Aradus opposes you, while Kasibios gives you a 1d8 Advantage die. **Threats:** Tampering with the drill causes it to shear through the rock and bring down the mountain, killing the Lost. Zeus sees what you do and is enraged (fill Zeus's Wrath to 3).

CHARACTERS

Kasibios (d8). Brilliant (d8 *Epic*), Proudful (d8), Reckless (d8).

Aradus, Priest of Hephaistos (d8). Dedicated (d8), Wild (d8), Resourceful (d6).

The Lost (d6). Sickly (d6), Desperate (d8), Afraid (d6).

The Mechanisms (d8). Spidery-Clockwork (d8 *Perilous*).

ENDLESS (So long as Kasibios has his workshop, they cannot be permanently defeated, even in a battle). **LEARNING MACHINES** (Add 1d8 to their pool for each previous contest they've had against a foe).

PLACES

Black-rocked mountain slopes under a rain of ash and embers, littered with strange machinery and other remnants of manufacture. The lava-lit inner chambers of the volcano.

The Bore Shaft. A super-heated vertical tunnel of partially molten rock in the wake of the drill, thousands of feet deep.

The Workshop. An obsidian dome sitting atop a titanic drill, grinding ever downward to the depths of Tartaros.

SPECIAL REWARDS

Star Metal: The drill is made from pieces of legendary star metal, which, when crafted into a weapon, may even harm a god.

MYSTERIES

Kasibios drives his great drill ever downward to Tartaros. *What drives him to such effort? Did the gods take away someone precious to him? Does he intend to free Kronos to destroy the gods? Will he attempt to steal their power somehow with his mechanisms—perhaps freeing humankind from dependence on the gods, ushering in an age of technology?*

Aradus wants to free Prometheus. *Does he do this simply because he believes it's right to free the being who gave fire to humanity? Does he expect a reward from the titan? If Aradus prevails and the drill frees Prometheus, what will that mean for gods and men?*



CHORDIA

This legendary isle is home to the Moirai, three sister goddesses who allot, weave, and cut the strands of fate. On rolling green hills and in small villages live devout mortals who shear fleece, spin wool into yarn, maintain the loom, and sharpen the scissors in service of the gods.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Ares: Lord of War. His sign is the splintered shield—what is broken should be discarded and forgotten.

Hephaistos: Crafter of the Gods. His sign is the empty forge—without bellows, the coals of his furnace cool.

ARRIVAL

When you arrive on this mythical island, you find a village in disrepair. Stacks of dirty fleece lie abandoned on wool-washing tables, half-shorn sheep wander through the streets, and woodworking projects lie abandoned.

The people—renowned for their devoted service to the Moirai—are throwing rotten fruit at an elderly man as they shout insults. Leading the mob, **Euphemia the herder** entreats you to punish the villain **Kellos the knife grinder**, who stole from the gods. The man seems pitiful and repentant, not the villain Euphemia claims.

THE CRIME

- ◆ *Will you convince Kellos to reveal the secret he has withheld?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **Kellos**. If he wins, Kellos cries out, “If I wronged the gods, let me be judged by them!” As he speaks the words, the heroes and Kellos are transported to the loom factory of the Moirai! If he loses, Kellos tells his tale. He stole the shears of Atropos and cast them into the Forgotten Gorge. Either way, **one of your fates are now entangled with Kellos**.
- ◆ *Or will you admonish Euphemia for her cruelty?* **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **Euphemia**. If she wins, a member of the mob is so incited by her passion that they throw a stone instead of rotted fruit and strike Kellos dead. If she loses, the crowd is mollified, and Euphemia reveals that she blames Kellos for robbing her of her victory over Spyridon, who she rightfully bested! Either way, **one of your fates are now entangled with Euphemia**.

TRIALS

UNBRIDLED LOOM

As the goddesses debate over who is to blame, their loom continues to weave and the knot of fate grows. *Can you convince Lachesis to pause the allotment of her yarn and prevent more fates from becoming entangled?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **Lachesis**. If the heroes prevail, the best gains a Bond with **Atropos** and the loom of fate stops.

ENTANGLED FATES

Their fates entangled, one of the heroes glimpses an impending disaster about to befall **Kellos** or **Euphemia**. *Will you race to protect them?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **Disaster** (1d8, 1d10 *Perilous*). If the heroes do not save them, the islander and the hero whose fate is entangled suffers a grievous wound, killing the islander and inflicting Pathos on the hero.

WAYWARD SPYRIDON

Spyridon woke this morning on earth instead of in the underworld. He stretched his old bones and now rejoices on the hilltop, tending to his sheep. *Will you convince him to return and face his fate?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **Spyridon**. *Or will you capture him instead?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **Spyridon**. If Spyridon does not accept his fate before he dies, his shade will haunt the heroes.

PLUCK AT THE STRANDS OF FATE

Drawn in wefts on the loom are your recent triumphs and defeats. *Will you steal the bobbin from Klotho and weave a different history?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **Klotho**.

BATTLE

- ♦ *Will you delve into the Forgotten Gorge to recover the Shears of Atropos?* **Threats**: The gorge reveals paths the heroes could have followed. The leader glimpses a life where they returned home and brought ruin with them. They gain a new Epithet, “The Wanderer,” and will never return home. Spyridon enters the cave and is mesmerized; he will never leave.
- ♦ *Or will you convince the Moirai they need to find another way to cleave the strands?* **Threats**: Lachesis shortens the thread she has allocated for the leader and they mark two boxes of Fate. Kellos, no longer needed if there are no shears, is exiled—his hatred for you is everlasting.

CHARACTERS

Spyridon, Herder (d6). Carefree (d8), Blessed (d10), Spry (d6).

FORTUNE (The first contest with Spyridon is *Epic*. The heroes describe how they suffer misfortune and must try again).

Euphemia, Herder (d6). Envious (d8 *Perilous*), Righteous (d8), Hardworking (d6).

Kellos, the Knife Grinder (d6). Honor-Bound (d10), Wild (d6).

The Moirai (2d12 *Mythic*). **Lachesis** the Alloter (Impatient d8).

Atropos the Unturning (Unyielding d8). **Klotho** the Spinner (Inscrutable d8).

Forgotten Gorge (d10). Vast (d10 *Perilous*), Revealing (d10), Haunted (d10 *Mythic*). **COLD** (Arts & Oration has no effect).

PLACES

Bizarre happenings. Rain of fish, homes without walls, sudden landslides, blown glass floating like bubbles.

Hall of the Moirai: Gigantic proportions. Lined with tapestries depicting great and terrible acts, including those of the heroes.

Forgotten Gorge: Where unused strands of fate are discarded. Filled with lost dreams. Leads to the River Lethe.

SPECIAL REWARDS

Loom of Fate: If the heroes reweave the weft of fate, they may change the outcome of one of their deeds, forever changing their past (and removing one mark of Fate).

MYSTERIES

Kellos stole the Shears of Atropos to save Spyridon. *Was it because Spyridon saved him once long ago? Did he know Spyridon was the only one gifted enough to make yarn for the Moirai? Or does he love Spyridon so much that he cannot suffer a world without him?*

Euphemia killed Spyridon out of envy. For years she produced the finest yarn—yet the Moirai chose Spyridon’s instead. *Did she best him in fair combat as she says? Or did she murder him in the night?*

Deathless island. Until the shears are returned, death does not hold in Chordia. When Apollo’s sun rises, any who have perished wake restored. Hades is denied his rightful claim. *What will happen to those who died on the island if the shears are returned?*



ENU

The isle of Enu is remarkable for a large ring of standing stones that encircle its harbor. Beyond them lies a dense forest that devours any light that enters it. Legend tells of a magical poppy that grows in a protected glade deep in the forest, which grants an imbiber their dreams come true.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

As the mists recede, the gods reveal their desires through signs...

Apollo: God of Music and Healing. His sign is the last ember of a setting sun, promising to rise again.

Hekate: Keeper of Lore. Her signs are ghost stories told by the sailors, each more grim than the last.

ARRIVAL

It is late at night when the fog clears. In the harbor village, a fire has broken out and is leaping from one building to another as you arrive.

Despite the size of the village, there is only one person in the streets, trying in vain to contain the blaze. She seems terribly weary, as if she is already pushed beyond her limits, yet still staggers forward. Everyone else lies upon the ground, fast asleep, trapped in an eternal dream.

Sorcha, torchbearer of Apollo, is the last one on the island to fight off the infectious slumber. In her attempts to rouse the others, she accidentally started this fire.

FIRES

- ♦ *Will you aid Sorcha in extinguishing the fires before they spread further?* **Craft & Reason** vs. **Fires** (2d8 *Perilous*).
- ♦ *Will you charge into the houses and pull the sleeping bodies from them before they are consumed in the flames?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **Fires** (1d8, 1d10 *Epic*).

TRIALS

THE LONG NIGHT AHEAD

Sorcha, her torch burning low, entreats you, “Please help me, great heroes. I must make it through the night! Should I fall asleep before the sun rises, I will never wake. Who among you has a tale of such greatness and glory to be my shield against the slumber of Morpheus?”

The greater the story told, the brighter her torch will blaze.

- ♦ *What glorious challenge will you recount for Sorcha to keep her from Morpheus’s grasp?*

In order determined by the leader, each hero recalls a worthy challenge the band faced together before they were lost at sea. A tale of strife in your homeland, combat in the war, or some other trying time. Each tale is resolved as a contest.

The Hero Player announces the Domain and the Strife Player reveals the challenge the group faced (3d6 for a moderate challenge or 3d8 for a tougher one). Together, the group recalls the story, resolving the contest to learn how the heroes fared.

The outcomes of the contests—including Bonds, Pathos, marking Divine Favor, and gaining Glory—apply normally. The memory of these stories—told with such passion—evoke the triumph and suffering. Additionally, if the heroes prevail in a challenge, the best hero gains a Bond with Sorcha.

BATTLE

- ♦ *At dawn—protected by Apollo’s light—will you let Sorcha guide you into Perbanter’s dream, wake him, and break the spell?* **Threats:** Sorcha is consumed by the dreams, never to wake. Morpheus claims a dozen of the island’s sleepers as his vassals; new Oneiroi are born.
- ♦ *Or will you go to the edge of the forest, fight off the Oneiroi, and restore the Ring of Stones that once protected the people of Enu from these nightmares?* **Threats:** Oneiroi, the baleful dreams, escape the forest to haunt the people of Enu. Perbanter, still inside the forest, becomes one of the Oneiroi, a nightmare of self-loathing that visits the heroes in their dreams.

CHARACTERS

Sorcha (d8). Exhausted (d6), Steadfast Torchbearer (d8 *Sacred*).

Perbanter, the Waking (d6). Handsome (d6), Vain (d6), Restless (d6).

Perbanter, the Dreamer (d10). Resplendent (d10 *Epic*), Vain (d10 *Perilous*), Restless (d6).

Oneiroi (d10 *Sacred*). Alluring (d8), Black-Winged (d8). **ISOLATING** (Heroes cannot support each other in conflicts).

PLACES

Honey and wine in amphoras—signs of a sacrifice made to Apollo. Games, stages set for performances, and other distractions, all surrounded by slumbering citizens.

Ring of Stones: Erected as a ward against the magic from within the forest, one of these massive stones has recently been toppled. Ropes, levers, and broken tools indicate the ousting took several attempts.

The Living Dream: A version of Enu filled with everyone who has fallen asleep. The games of Apollo are starting, but the sun is muted in the sky. Perbanter is the victor in every contest and is showered with adulations from his mother and father.

Forest of Eternal Slumber: Densely packed fir trees protect a glade within, where a field of red poppies grow. Haunted by the Oneiroi.

SPECIAL REWARDS

The Poppy of Peaceful Slumber: Ingesting a single seed from this poppy will grant a night of peaceful sleep.

MYSTERIES

Perbanter struck a bargain with the Oneiroi. They pledged to make his dreams come true in exchange for Perbanter toppling the stone ward. *Is he a petulant man unable to accept his own mediocrity? Is this dream his only chance to reunite with his deceased parents?*

Any who sleep at night are trapped in the living dream of the Oneiroi. If Sorcha’s torch is extinguished, they will claim domain over the island. *Do they serve Hekate, wroth that the people of Enu praise Apollo for the day, but not her mother Nyx for the night?*



KYKONIA

A primeval place, unknown to human memory.

SIGNS OF THE GODS

The gods give no signs here.

ARRIVAL

As your ship emerges from the mists, you behold an impossible sight—you sail no longer upon the wine-dark sea, but upon a sea of clouds, far above the earth, higher even than the Vault of Heaven. Stars twinkle dimly below. In the far distance, a shimmering mountaintop pierces the clouds—surely that is Olympos, home of the gods. Ahead, an even greater peak rises, a green and lovely mountainside dotted with spotless white buildings, and at the summit, a massive crystal basin that catches a waterfall flowing from the firmament.

The people, all young and radiant in the sun's light, greet you with joyous celebration. They lead you into their acropolis, where you are served a bountiful feast. Dozens of artists set to work composing songs of your glory, carving heroic statues in your image, and engraving your deeds upon plaques of gold.

The festive day seems endless in songs, arts, and feasting. But eventually, the sun sets, prompting the people to their beds.

You've barely fallen asleep when you're roused by sounds of destruction and baleful howls shattering the night's stillness.

All through the settlement, savage beast-folk, covered in bristling fur, with slathering jaws and razor claws, stalk about—tearing down tapestries, rending engravings asunder, toppling statues—destroying all evidence of the day's artwork.

The people are nowhere to be seen. When a group of beasts catches your scent, they spring upon you, jaws snapping at your throats!

SAVAGERY BY MOONLIGHT

♦ *Can you stand against the bloody fury of these inhuman monsters?* **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Primordials**.

Note: The heroes are beyond the sight of the gods here, and **may not invoke Divine Favor** until they find a way to attract the gods' attention.

TRIALS

THE MIRROR OF THE MOON

Every night, the moon glows brightly here, reflecting off a huge mirror on the mountainside above the settlement. Everywhere its light falls, plants flourish wildly, overgrowing buildings—roots bursting through foundations, ivy covering walls. The cold, pale light also seems to drive the savage beasts to their frenzy. *Will you attempt to break the mirror? Shards from its outer edge detach and form into a guardian creature, who slays any who come near.* **Blood & Valor** vs. **The Mirror Guardian**. If the mirror is broken, the beast-creatures return to human form.

THE ATTENTION OF THE GODS

Distant Olympus is mostly hidden by clouds, far below the heights of Kykonian. *How will you attract the attention of the gods so you might once again benefit from their Divine Favor?*

THE MIRROR OF THE SUN

When the sun rises, the mirror reflects its light (re-forming if it was broken). Everywhere it touches, the overgrowth of the night turns to dust, the works of civilization are restored, and the beasts return to human form, oblivious to the events of the night. They resume praising and feasting you, creating artworks anew. *Will you speak to them of the beasts and destruction? Can you make them understand?* **Arts & Oration** vs. **The Primordials**.

DECIPHERING THE CLUES

Can you understand what's happening here? Perhaps you can investigate the art and writings of the primordials (before they're once again destroyed by the beasts)? **Craft & Reason** vs. **The Primordials**. *Perhaps you can commune with nature under the moonlight (or even soothe the beasts and understand their plight)?* **Resolve & Spirit** vs. **The Primordials**.

BATTLE

- ◆ *Do you dare upset the balance of creation and unleash Khaos?* Then face **The Gods** (4d12 Epic, Sacred). **Threat**: Petty Zeus hurls a thunderbolt toward each of the heroes' homelands.
- ◆ *Or will you slip away from this place by riding the waterfall of the firmament, evading the notice of Khaos and leaving the balance undisturbed?* **Threat**: Khaos follows you (add Khaos to the Vault of Hevean and mark its Wrath).

CHARACTERS

The Primordials (d8). Eternal (d8), Pure (d6), Cursed (d6).

SUN-BLESSED (During the day, they are *Sacred* and gain Advantage for contests of Arts & Oration and Craft & Reason).

MOON-TOUCHED (During the night, they are *Perilous* and gain Advantage for contests of Blood & Valor and Resolve & Spirit). **UNDYING** (Primordials who die in the night return at dawn, and vice versa).

The Mirror Guardian (d10). Shifting (d8), Blinding (d8).

UNDYING (If destroyed, both the mirror and guardian will re-form under the light of the sun or the moon).

Khaos, the origin of all things (2d12 Epic, *Perilous*). Infinity-Shifting (d10).

PLACES

The feast halls of the primordials, their decorated homes and plazas, public baths, and sculpture gardens. The wild mountainside; its forests, lakes, waterfalls, and fields.

SPECIAL REWARDS

The Waters of the Firmament: These magical waters glow with a pale light. A sip is enough to sustain life under any conditions for a day—without the need for any sustenance, protection from the elements, or even breath.

MYSTERIES

Khaos, the origin of all things, has brought you to this place.

Khaos exists as the void created when the cosmos loses its primordial unity. The cycle of human expression and natural growth in this place holds the balance for all of creation. What is upset here will tip the balance across the cosmos, allowing Khaos to expand once again. New life, new lands, even new gods may come into being. *If the heroes stop the cycle somehow, can they be free of their wanderings in the mists? Can they return home? Or can they set sail into chaos itself, charting a course to strange new lands beyond their imagining?*

If any of the primordials understand what's happening to them, will they want to leave this place? And in what form? Can they leave at all?

CREATING AN ISLAND

CONCEPT

Start with a general concept in a couple short phrases. What's the cool thing that this island is about? The concept will help you get started, but it's also great as a summary you can share with other AGON players so they can include it in their list of places to explore.

A good concept is **exciting**. AGON islands are locations for *adventure*. Your concept should get you thinking about exciting moments of action. Think about the four Domains. Is this a good place for contests of Arts & Oration? Blood & Valor? Craft & Reason? Resolve & Spirit? A good concept should connect to at least two Domains, but all four is better.

Consider which two or three gods might take interest in this concept and what signs they would use to convey their desires.

CHARACTERS

Imagine a few characters (three to five) that embody the concept of the island. How does the concept manifest among the leaders? Among the people? In the natural and supernatural worlds? Is there a monster that causes the strife (or was caused by it)?

A good character is **simple**. They want something concrete and will conflict with those who oppose them. Don't try to make complex people with a myriad of traits. Simplify each character into their singular desire and two to three qualities to remember them by.

Some of the characters will be obvious opponents for the heroes and some will be obvious allies. After you've made the characters, consider ways in which an opponent might become an ally, and vice versa. This will help you create conflicts and feed into the questions of customization (the final element).

For more details on creating characters, see page 138.

CONFLICTS

How are the characters in conflict? This forms the basis for the strife of the island. Strife is the core trouble that keeps the island in a state of woe. As long as it persists, no goodness can prosper here. Once you've established the strife, create three or four

trials that address its *symptoms*—how can the heroes diminish the harm being done? A trial does not solve the root problem.

A good trial is **consequential**. The outcome changes the situation dramatically. People's lives are saved (or lost), secrets are revealed, minds are changed, the status quo is destroyed.

The most important trial is the arrival. What's the first problem that confronts the heroes when they land on the island?

A good arrival is **revealing**. It's an exciting and consequential trial, but it also establishes *what's wrong* on the island. After the arrival, the heroes must propel themselves into action, so reveal the bigger problems with the first contest.

The trials lead to a final battle, in which the heroes can remove the strife once and for all.

A good battle is **decisive**. Strife persists or the heroes bring it to an end. It's okay to have more than one battle on an island, but one of them should be obviously *final*. After this battle, the action on the island comes to a close and its fate is decided.

MYSTERIES

What questions do the characters and trials raise? Highlight a few for the Strife Player to answer in play. In an island write-up, we call these questions **mysteries**.

A good mystery is a **loaded question**. Include a partial answer with the question, and ask if maybe it's true. Infuse the questions with a strong point of view to help the Strife Player form their own thoughts—either supporting your hypothesis or rejecting it with their own ideas. It's easier to customize when you have something to work with.

SPECIAL REWARDS

Consider what unique and remarkable reward the heroes might gain from helping the people, defying the gods, overcoming great challenges, or uncovering mysteries.

A special reward may be a trophy taken from the island that grants the heroes an Advantage die in future contests. Or it might impart unique abilities such as speaking to animals, restoring life, or even gaining immortality. The reward should match the source it comes from, which may include the cause of strife on the island, an aspect of the natural world, or the manifested power of a god.

CREATING CHARACTERS

A minor character doesn't need to be written up in detail—if they're a worthy challenge in play, simply assign dice on the fly (usually 2d6 is good). For the notable characters of an island, though, determine their **Name** and **Epithet** dice as well as their **special abilities** and **threats**.

NAME AND EPITHET DICE

Name dice range from d6 to d10 for most characters, representing their experience and renown. Only the gods (and the greatest heroes) can wield d12 Name dice.

- ♦ **d6 Name:** Common. Soldiers, laborers, artisans.
- ♦ **d8 Name:** Illustrious. Wise rulers, potent warriors, infamous scoundrels, dangerous places, devout priests.
- ♦ **d10 Name:** Legendary. Monsters, mythic places, demigods.

Rare opponents may have **two Name dice** to represent their potency—they seldom fail to challenge even the greatest of heroes.

Epithet ratings range from d6 to d10.

- ♦ **d6 Epithet:** The quality is mundane, but noteworthy.
- ♦ **d8 Epithet:** The quality is exceptional.
- ♦ **d10 Epithet:** The quality is unrivaled—the stuff of legend.

*Red-Banner Champion (d8). Relentless (d8), Towering (d6).
Eris, Goddess of Discord (2d12). Chaos-Bringer (d10).*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Beyond their die ratings, granting characters special abilities allows the Strife Player to create even more formidable foes.

- ♦ **Harmful traits:** Assign *Epic*, *Mythic*, *Perilous*, or *Sacred* to an Epithet to reflect a more dangerous foe. Assign a harmful trait to a character's Name if they're especially threatening in all forms of contests. See *Harm*, page 31.

The priest Makis requires the heroes to prove their favor from the gods before he'll listen to them—he has the Epithet "Pious" (d8 Mythic).

- ♦ **Advantage dice:** A magic spell, powerful item, loyal follower, divine blessing, or other gift can be reflected as an Advantage die (page 57)—until the heroes find a way to circumvent it.
- ♦ **Immunity:** Some opponents (like beasts, aspects of nature, or machines) can't be affected by certain Domains.

The Serpent of Nimos is COLD—the heroes cannot engage in a contest of Arts & Oration with it.

- ♦ **Numbers:** Characters that outnumber or overwhelm the heroes may prevent them from spending Bonds or supporting each other.

An army of skeletons rise up from the earth to pull the heroes apart from each other.

- ♦ **Requirements:** Some foes—legendary creatures, spirits, or even the gods themselves—may have special requirements that restrict the way the heroes can face them. Finding a way to contend with such foes can be a trial in and of itself.

A shade might become corporeal only during the night under a full moon.

The heroes must evade the gorgon's petrifying gaze—a contest of Craft & Reason—before attacking her directly.

THREATS

The most dangerous opponents on an island pose a threat to the people and the heroes. Consider the disasters they might inflict if their threat is not prevented:

- ♦ Many unnamed characters suffer or perish. Death, famine, exile, heartbreak, sickness, or hopelessness might be the end of them.
- ♦ The heroes' possessions, their ship, or features of the island may all be threatened by collateral damage. Items and places may be lost, broken, stolen, or destroyed.
- ♦ Named characters—especially those who would naturally ally with the heroes—may be defeated. They might be imprisoned, turned against the heroes, lost at sea, or slain.
- ♦ The reputation or legend of the heroes is besmirched, accursed or otherwise ruined.

To get started with island creation, use these tables to generate ideas.

ENVIRONS

- 1 Rocky, volcanic hills and twisted black trees
- 2 Tall, snow-capped mountains, clear streams and lakes
- 3 Bright, sandy beaches and rolling golden fields
- 4 Huge, ancient forests and winding, dark rivers
- 5 Sheer cliffs, sea caves, and jagged reefs
- 6 Sun-dappled forests and lush green grasslands
- 7 Burning sands and red stone canyons
- 8 Mist-shrouded swamps and storm-lashed hills
- 9 Dense jungles and tree-covered mountains
- 10 Scrub-brush plains and dusty plateaus
- 11 Deep, winding valleys and rocky bluffs
- 12 Jagged rocks, pitted with caves and twisting passages

PEOPLE

- 1 Cultured city-state with a university and amphitheaters
- 2 Secretive cultists of rival sects
- 3 Small fishing village
- 4 Warrior city-state with disciplined martial traditions
- 5 Prosperous trading port, a mix of many cultures
- 6 Nomadic hunters and foragers
- 7 Devout worshipers with immaculate temples and shrines
- 8 Miners, quarry workers, stone masons, and sculptors
- 9 Close-knit farming community
- 10 A collection of feuding factions (bloodlines, religious, etc.)
- 11 Crumbling city-state on the brink of desolation
- 12 A ghost town where only remnants of the people remain

EVENTS

- 1 Athletic games
- 2 Harvest festival
- 3 Preparations for war with another island
- 4 Marriage celebration
- 5 Occupied by an army from another island
- 6 Plagued by an angry god (disease, famine, etc.)
- 7 Recovering from natural disaster
- 8 Funeral for a great hero or ruler
- 9 Bizarre nature (always day, fiery rain, water turns to blood)
- 10 Holy pilgrimage from shrine to shrine
- 11 Construction of a great monument or temple
- 12 Peace agreement between warring groups

UNEARTHLY

- 1 Strange beast (silver horse, bronze bull, glass falcon, etc.)
- 2 Chimera (conglomeration of two or more animals)
- 3 Gorgons (serpent-haired creatures with petrifying gaze)
- 4 Centaurs (or other half-human/half-animals)
- 5 Phoenix (a bird of burning flames)
- 6 Cyclops (one-eyed giant)
- 7 Hydra (multi-headed serpent with venomous blood)
- 8 Shades (ghosts, phantoms, demons)
- 9 Living statue (stone or metal automaton)
- 10 Cruel element (roaming whirlpool, wailing cyclone, etc.)
- 11 Sirens (alluring creatures with hypnotic songs)
- 12 Furies (embodiments of vengeance sent by the gods)

COMPENDIUM

HERO CREATION

1. Record your hero's **Epithet** (see list below, or create your own). Your Epithet die is d6.
2. Record your hero's **Name** (see suggestions at right). Your Name die is d6.
3. Record your **lineage** (name a mortal ancestor or choose a god for a parent). Choose a **Domain** that suits your lineage and give it a d8. Your other Domains are d6.
4. Choose your hero's current **Honored God** and record 2 Divine Favor with them: $\diamond\diamond$. You may choose a non-Olympian god as your Honored God if you wish. Record 3 Divine Favor among the gods: $\diamond\diamond\diamond$.
5. Record your hero's **style**: look, armor, and favored weapon.
6. When everyone is ready, introduce your heroes. Write the other heroes' names in the Bonds section of your hero sheet. Demigod heroes record 1 **Bond** with each other hero and 1 **Bond** with their divine ancestor. Mortal heroes record 2 **Bonds** with each other Hero.
7. Resolve the leadership contest of the Voyage phase before starting the first island.

EPITHETS

<i>Bloody-Minded</i>	<i>Hot-Headed</i>	<i>Shadow-Wise</i>
<i>Clear-Voiced</i>	<i>Iron-Minded</i>	<i>Silver-Tongued</i>
<i>Clever-Eyed</i>	<i>Lion-Hearted</i>	<i>Strong-Limbed</i>
<i>Far-Sighted</i>	<i>Lithe-Limbed</i>	<i>Swift-Footed</i>
<i>Forge-Master</i>	<i>Loud-Roaring</i>	<i>War-Leader</i>
<i>Great-Hunter</i>	<i>Many-Wayed</i>	<i>Well-Learned</i>
<i>Eagle-Eyed</i>	<i>Pure-Hearted</i>	

NAMES

Customize a name by changing the ending: Adrasta/Adrastos/Adrastor. Demetria/Demetrion/Demetrios. Etc.

Adrasta	Demetria	Kyriakos	Sophia
Agathon	Diothos	Kyrina	Straton
Aimia	Domon	Kythia	Sythia
Aklios	Draos	Leontios	Thais
Alexios	Eionon	Lykos	Thenas
Alkaios	Eirenaios	Meloton	Theodora
Anthys	Eklaios	Menodorra	Theoton
Antiochos	Hathor	Metrophanes	Thrasyllus
Archaleos	Helene	Mythekia	Timaio
Aristeides	Heraios	Nassas	Tryphania
Aristos	Hesperos	Nemaio	Tychon
Arkadios	Iocaste	Nikanor	Xanthe
Armaios	Isidora	Pantheras	Xanthos
Arras	Kalantha	Pelon	Xenon
Artemisia	Kallias	Phaidros	Zendra
Chenaio	Kassander	Pharos	Zenobia
Chiona	Kleon	Sithas	Zephyros

STYLE

Animal Aspects: Bear, Bull, Eagle, Elephant, Fawn, Gazelle, Goat, Hawk, Horse, Hound, Lion, Panther, Ram, Raven, Rhino, Serpent, Shark, Stag, Tiger, Wolf -like.

Eyes: Bright, Calm, Clear, Cold, Dark, Deep, Gentle, Hard, Hollow, Kind, Narrow, One, Pale, Piercing, Quick, Sad, Searching, Sharp, Shining, Soft, Weary.

Form: Athletic, Battered, Big, Brawny, Chubby, Compact, Curvy, Gaunt, Graceful, Heavy, Huge, Muscular, Plump, Lanky, Rugged, Scarred, Slender, Stout, Sturdy, Thick, Wiry.

Hair: Bald, Bright, Braided, Bun, Cropped, Curls, Dark, Dyed, Fair, Flowing, Kinky, Long, Natural, Oiled, Ponytail, Ringlets, Shaggy, Shaved, Short, Spiky, Wavy, Wild.

Armor: Battered, Bright, Bronze, Dark, Decorated, Golden, Minimal, None, Ornate, Piecemeal, Rich, Shining, Silver.

Favored weapon: Bow, Chain, Club, Fighting Pet (Falcon, Wolf, Panther, etc.), Fists & Feet, Hammer, Javelin, Sling, Spear & Shield, Sword, Paired Swords, Staff, Trident.

CONTEST SUMMARY

The Hero Players declare their opposition to the foe—stating their **approach** and **goal**.

The Strife Player chooses the **Domain**.



The Strife Player rolls for opponent—keep the **single highest die** and add the **Strife Level** (4/5/6) to set the **target number**.

If the opponent is *Epic* or *Mythic*, heroes suffer **harm** to enter the contest.

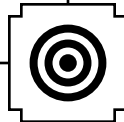
The Hero Players **speak their Names**. Roll dice for your **Epithet** (if it applies), **Name**, and **Domain**. Sum your **two highest**.

Call on a **Bond** to add their Name die to your pool. Mark **Pathos** ○ to roll an additional Domain. Spend **Divine Favor** ✦ to add +1d4 to your total result.

Each Hero Player compares their total to the target number.

Take turns reciting your deeds, starting with heroes who suffer, then heroes who prevail, then the hero who is best. The Strife Player responds with the actions of the opponent.

HIGHEST
The hero is best
EQUAL OR GREATER
The hero prevails
LOWER
The hero suffers



To break a tie, roll Name dice until a winner is established.

If all the heroes suffer, the opponent wins the contest. Heroes who suffer take **harm** if the opponent is *Perilous* or *Sacred*.

The best hero earns **Glory equal to the target number**. Heroes who prevail earn **half** that amount (round up). Heroes who suffer each earn **1 Glory**.

BATTLE SUMMARY

The Strife Player establishes the circumstances of the battle and any details that might be used for Advantage.

CLASH

Each Hero Player chooses their **Domain** for the Clash.



The winner of the contest earns a 1d10 Advantage die for use during the battle.

Strife Player announces the (two to three) **disasters** that the opponent is threatening.

THREAT

Each Hero Player chooses one:

DEFEND

Each prevailing hero may stop a disaster.

SEIZE

If the heroes win, they choose the Domain and decide what's at stake in the Finale.

The winner of the Finale is victorious in the battle.

FINALE

- ♦ **The heroes lose the Finale:** The opponent is the victor and they avoid punishment or trouble from the battle. Strife is ascendant and the island slips into misery and woe. The heroes have fallen short.
- ♦ **The heroes win the Finale, but lose the Seize contest:** Strife is beaten back and the island is set on a path toward recovery, but it will not be easy. The heroes are victorious, but their enemy is not brought to account as they wished—the opponent remains as a diminished source of trouble for the island.
- ♦ **The heroes win the Finale and win the Seize contest:** Strife is overcome and the island's destiny is bright. The heroes win the day and their opponent suffers the fate the heroes chose for them.

LEXICON

Advantage: When a character gains the upper hand, like springing an ambush or discovering a foe's weakness, their player may claim a bonus die when they roll in a **contest**.

Arts & Oration: The **Domain** of **contests** involving culture, artistry, and persuasiveness.

Battle: A series of connected **contests** to defeat a foe. A battle can represent physical combat, a sporting event, expressions of art and culture, an argument, or any other sort of extended challenge.

Blood & Valor: The **Domain** of **contests** involving violence, bravado, and athletic prowess.

Bonds: Favors and oaths traded among the **heroes** in exchange for support and aid in **contests**.

Contest: A conflict between the heroes and a worthy opponent. Each player rolls dice in a contest to represent the efforts of their characters and the highest roller overcomes their foe. Heroes earn **Glory** when they participate in contests.

Craft & Reason: The **Domain** of **contests** involving academics, vocations, and subterfuge.

Divine Favor: The **heroes** can perform great feats by calling upon the strengths of the gods. Each hero is bestowed with marks of Divine Favor from the gods they honor and appease, which may be spent to boost their dice rolls in a **contest**.

Domain: Each **contest** in the game falls into one of the four Domains of conflict: Arts & Oration, Blood & Valor, Craft & Reason, or Resolve & Spirit. Heroes possess a **rating** in each of the four Domains, from d6 (good) to d10 (legendary).

Fate: Heroes in AGON cannot die because of the roll of a die, but they each have a limited amount of Fate to expend in their journeys. When a hero runs out of Fate, their tale comes to an end.

Glory: The heroes compete with each other in every **contest** to determine who among them is best—that hero receives the greatest share of the Glory, a measure of epic greatness. As your Glory grows, so does the strength of your **Name**.

Heroes: The protagonists of the epic tale crafted by the players. We play to find out how they deal with the **strife** of the world and what they make of their ultimate legends.

Hero Players: The players responsible for creating **heroes** and deciding how to overcome **opponents** presented by the **Strife Player**.

Islands: Lost lands in a misty sea plagued by **strife**, each crying out for aid from the **heroes**.

Name: Your hero's Name is their most important **trait**. You roll your Name die in every contest. As your **Glory** grows, the **rating** of your Name die advances.

Opponents: Foes who are the cause of **strife** in the world. The heroes overcome opponents by winning **contests**.

Pathos: A reserve of inner strength that a hero may expend to press on past harm and adversity.

Rating: Traits are rated by die size, from d6 to d12. Opponents may have multiple dice in a single rating, such as 2d8 or 3d6. These dice are counted separately, not summed.

Resolve & Spirit: The **Domain** of **contests** involving perseverance, passion, and intuition.

Strength: Each deity in the pantheon has an associated strength (*Ferocity*, *Precision*, etc.), which a hero may call upon to boost their power in a **contest**, using **Divine Favor** from that god.

Strife: The source of suffering in the world. Each island is plagued by strife, which the heroes may root out and overcome.

Strife Player: The player responsible for presenting each island to the Hero Players by revealing the situation, asking leading questions, and judging contests.

Trait: A trait is a quality measured by the game system. **Epithets**, **Names**, and **Domains** are traits, as are **Glory**, **Pathos**, and **Fate**. Traits are capitalized in the text.

Trials: To overcome the **strife** of an island, the heroes face a series of trials—challenges that pit the heroes against worthy **opponents**. Each island contains a set of trials the **Strife Player** can present to the **Hero Players** (or they may create their own).

Virtues: Measures of each hero's exemplary qualities, determined by their actions on the islands. Virtues inform a hero's legend.

Voyage: The phase of play in which the heroes rest and recuperate while they travel to a new island, guided by the stars in the Vault of Heaven.

CULTURAL PRIMER

by James Mendez Hodes

AGON AND IDENTITY

By default, AGON's fantastical setting sets aside the systemic oppression that plagued the ancient and modern worlds. Heroes' disabilities, neuroatypicality, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and body type need not limit their legendary exploits. If it interests you, you might draw on mythology to inspire some of these adaptations. For example, myth tells us the disabled god Hephaistos fashioned canes, automaton servitors, and wheeled conveyances to help him move and work. He might gift a clockwork wheelchair or ornate prosthesis to a devoted worshipper. However, it is equally fitting to elide such concerns.

If a player wishes to opt into identity-based challenges in their backstory or during the game, they may do so with the other players' consent; but such obstacles only loom large in Agon if players volunteer for them. Let your hero be as you imagine them, and let realism and authenticity worry mere mortals. All heroes are welcome on this epic journey, where the splendor of their deeds will write their names in legend.

GREEK MYTHOLOGY

The legends of ancient Greece (eighth century BCE through sixth century CE) inspire the characters, storytelling, and themes of AGON. If myth provides most of your contact with Greek topics, it can be surreal to consider that real people live, work, and play roleplaying games in places like Athens and Sparta. Thousands of real islands in the Mediterranean are part of Greece; Greek mythology posits the existence of many more, or creates mythological versions of existing islands with fantastical characters and attributes. Greece has had a strong maritime tradition throughout its history, such that Greek culture influenced other cultures around the Mediterranean basin and beyond, and was in turn influenced by them.

SWORDS AND SANDALS

Greek folklore has inspired a modern media genre as well. The mid-twentieth century saw a boom in films set in loosely adapted mythological settings, not only Greek but also Middle Eastern. The American, Italian, and Indian film and television industries all produced many examples. They tend to be action-adventure films with epic scopes, extreme and exotic gender roles, strange and revealing costumes, and now-unconvincing special effects. As the twentieth century waned, so waned the swords and sandals genre. Nevertheless, the television series *Xena: Warrior Princess* is a representative example from the turn of the century.

Swords and sandals stories may be captivating, but their depictions of Greece and the Levant should not be confused with real history or people. They often conflate unrelated real cultures from the past and present; or take minor cultural expressions and spin them out into elaborate and inaccurate fictions. Sometimes such things are harmless, but other times they eclipse the truth of the experience of people from those regions.

IF YOU'RE AN EXPERT...

...then this is absolutely a game for you. We hope that you find it evocative of the things you've studied. That said, games with strong connections to canons of fiction or history come with risks. Players with previous connections to the material, because they're fans or students thereof, get on board quicker. Players without previous connections, though, sometimes struggle to keep up, even in games (like AGON) that are inspired by, but not limited by, such canons.

AGON supplies you with enough material to engage with the genre without extensive knowledge of the mythology. However, a potential point of friction is not the game itself, but overzealous players whose knowledge becomes a frustrating exercise in gatekeeping for players less familiar with the source material. Fortunately, it's easy enough to avoid bad habits, and to make previous experience a ramp rather than a gate for others.

GOOD WAYS TO EXPRESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- ◆ Ask for consent before offering. (“Would you like me tell you more about the origins of that myth?”)
- ◆ Create characters inspired by your favorite myths.
- ◆ Design islands with characters and themes from mythology.
- ◆ Style your narration after your favorite translators.
- ◆ Pronounce difficult words correctly.
- ◆ Suggest favorite translations or retellings for other players to explore on their own.

BAD WAYS

- ◆ Make fun of other people’s pronunciation.
- ◆ Use Greek vocabulary for which other players have no context.
- ◆ Make references to Greek mythology that don’t make sense without foreknowledge.
- ◆ Correct other players unprompted.

There is, of course, a reward for your virtue: the other players will like you better.

IF YOU DON’T KNOW AS MUCH...

...then this is absolutely the game for you. We like to think AGON is a great way to get interested in Greek topics. Moreover, even if you happen to be playing at a table full of Greek myth mavens, the probability that they all have the same intellectual touchstones for ancient Greece is relatively low. A fan of classic peplum films and television, a scholar who minored in classics in college, a Greek American who learned language and folklore from their family, and an AGON veteran who’s been playing the game since its first edition may all profess to be avid enthusiasts in the genre, but turn out to have extremely different bodies of knowledge about Greek action-adventure. You can help keep them honest and make sure that all players know what each other are talking about if you do the following:

- ◆ Ask questions about terms and references you don’t understand.
- ◆ Ask players what their touchstones are.
- ◆ Check in with your fellow players if they seem confused.
- ◆ Remind people to speak slowly and review rules when necessary.

STEREOTYPES

Genre tropes can be fun, but Greek language, mythology, and identity are associated with a number of harmful stereotypes regularly used to deride real living Greeks. Greeks who lived through genocide, fascist invasions, riots, and occupation which continues to this day.

The Great Recession’s devastating effects on the Greek economy renewed tired misconceptions about Greek (and especially immigrant Greek) poverty and criminality. Misunderstandings of ancient Greek male/male relationships propagate distorted equations of Greek identity with homosexuality, which is unfair to both identities. These traits, in addition to clichés about sexual or alcoholic debauchery, provide fodder for cheap jokes passed off as “just telling it like it is about Greek culture.”

That same rationale sometimes drives the exaltation and exotification of Greek athleticism, wisdom, or physique—especially in pop culture depictions. Simultaneously idealized and sensationalized, these fabricated versions overwrite the experience of the Greeks who live in the still-extant cities of Sparta, Athens, Thebes, and others. Greek civilization was certainly influential in the development of European culture and religion, but that civilization itself was cosmopolitan and diverse in the manner of all Mediterranean peoples, with significant African and Asian presence.

When you create strengths and weaknesses for your heroes, whether they are the players’ protagonists or the GM’s characters, it’s acceptable to create figures who are bad with money, who drink too much wine, or who excel in beauty, intellect, or physical graces; but take care to represent these attributes as traits of individuals rather than national destinies. Avoid those traits you hear about in jokes, idealizations, or aphorisms about “Greeks bearing gifts” or the like.

Think of it this way—if a Greek player joined your game, would they feel safe and respected, or would you have to change your behavior?

Remember that Greeks were, and are, real people. Your heroes are not, and their attributes may be larger than life. Reflect on the way your depiction of them influences the way you or others feel about Greece and Greeks, whether actively or in the realm of unconscious bias.

BEYOND GREECE

It is entirely appropriate to incorporate the folklore or mythology of other cultures beyond Greece into your AGON game. Many other cultures have pantheons of deities who involve themselves in the affairs of mortals. Several religions, especially Semitic and Egyptian traditions, interacted regularly with ancient Greeks in the Mediterranean sphere. Alexander the Great's Asian conquests, and their subsequent recapture in his wake, gave rise to syncretic Greco-Indian kingdoms in what is now Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northeastern India. Greece adapted Eastern mythologies' fantastical creatures into manticores and gryphons. In turn, Greek aesthetics fascinated Indian artists; indeed, depictions of the Greek hero Herakles influenced Vajrapāṇi and other Buddhist guardian gods' thew physiques. In the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*, the sage-king Sahadeva subjugates Greece and Rome. This exploit occupies about half a line of verse, essentially a postscript that ends an extremely long list of states Sahadeva invades for complicated ritual reasons. Greek culture had impact and reach far beyond Europe, and was impacted and reached by other cultures just as far-flung.

The easiest way to incorporate such inspirations is to build an AGON hero who comes from just such a region. For example, the aforementioned Sahadeva has Epithets including "Law-Minded," "Tiger-Like," and "Master of Warriors." His lineage might refer to his home kingdom, Hastinapur; or to his father Dasra, the physician-god. Likewise, as suggested on page 17, Sahadeva's player could write in a new figure as his honored god: perhaps the Pāṇḍavas's godly ally Lord Kṛṣṇa, with the strength of *Compassion*. While he sojourns among the islands of AGON, Sahadeva might also honor Zeus, a god with connections to Sahadeva's divine tutor Bṛhaspati.

If, however, your entire group wants to take AGON to new waters, you could change the list of deities, as suggested on page 20. A group of heroes lost among the Caribbean islands might vie for the favor of the Yorùbá òrìṣàs.

AUTHORITY
ODÛDUWÀ

BEAUTY
ÒŞUN

CONVICTION
MỌRÈMI AJASORO

CUNNING
ÈŞÙ ELÈGBARÁ

DARING
ỌYA IYANSAN

FEROCITY
ŞÀNGÓ

FORTITUDE
SỌNPỌNNA

INGENUITY
ÒGÚN

INSIGHT
ÒRÚNMÌLÀ

KNOWLEDGE
QBÀTÁLÁ

PRECISION
ỌŞỌỌŞÌ

WISDOM
ỌSANYÌN

Renaming the characters on the existing islands is simple enough; but you might also create new islands based on stories from far-ranging mythologies. On Negros, among the 7,000 Philippine islands, the great stratovolcano Kanlaon once housed a colossal seven-headed dragon that devoured a peasant girl as tribute every year, until a demigod with the power to speak with animals came from afar and enlisted the help of ants, bees, and eagles to confound the dragon so he could behead it with his sword. On Marinduque, the beautiful witch-queen Maria Malindig ruled with an iron fist. Only the sailor-kings Pangikog, Mannga, and Laki were brave enough to seek her hand in a contest, which brought down the wrath of Bathala and the Tagalog deities.

There are many vibrant mythologies to draw from for use in games of AGON. But remember to treat the material with respect and care—lest your conquering heroes become colonizers.

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CONTESTS

The Strife Player chooses the **Domain** and rolls first. They ask, "Who will face this contest?"

Each Hero Player indicates their participation in the contest by **speaking their name**. Start with the leader and go around the table. On your turn, recite your hero's name and grab dice as you go: If your **Epithet** applies, grab that die. Then add your **Name** die and the **Domain** die for the contest when you say your **lineage**.

- ◆ You may mark **Pathos** (○) to include the die from a second Domain in your pool.
- ◆ You may invoke **Divine Favor** by calling on the strength of a god—if you do, add **+1d4** to your pool and spend a mark of Divine Favor (◇).
- ◆ If you use a **Bond**, ask that player to give you a copy of their Name die to include in your pool.

Each Hero Player rolls their dice and **sums the highest two** (not counting the d4). Then, **add the result of the +1d4** to the total.

Each hero compares their result to the Strife Player:

- ◆ **Equal to or greater than:** You prevail.
- ◆ **Less than:** You suffer. *If the opponent is Perilous or Sacred, you take harm (see below).*

The prevailing hero with the highest result is **best**, and earns Glory equal to the Strife Player's result. The other heroes who **prevail** each earn half that amount. Heroes who **suffer** each earn 1 Glory.

Do any gods watch over this contest? Award 1 Divine Favor to heroes who strive in their honor.

HARM

Epic: Mark Pathos (○) to contest an *Epic* foe.

Mythic: Spend ◇ to contest a *Mythic* foe.

Perilous: Mark ○ if you suffer.

Sacred: Spend ◇ if you suffer.

Also, a hero may choose to die in a contest in order to prevail in it, regardless of their roll.

BONDS

When you use a Bond, ask that character to:

- ◆ **Bolster you:** They give you a copy of their Name die to roll. *A god has a d12 Name.*
- ◆ **Block harm for you:** They say how they defend you and neither of you take harm.
- ◆ **Follow your lead:** They endorse your plan.

SUPPORT

A Hero Player may choose to not roll in a contest and instead provide **support**. They pass their Domain die to the Hero Player of their choosing (who includes it in their dice pool). The supporting hero earns **1 Bond** with the hero they support plus **1 Glory**.

AGONY & THE THREAD OF FATE

When a hero enters **agony**, mark **Fate**. When you suffer Pathos in agony, mark Fate. When a Hero Player marks □, they choose a **boon**.

EXODUS

When the heroes leave the island, complete the four stages of Exodus:

- 1 The Strife Player determines the island's **destiny**.
- 2 Each Hero Player may record a **Great Deed** their hero accomplished on the island.
- 3 Each hero receives a **virtue** from every player.
- 4 A Hero Player may **change their Epithet** if they wish, to reflect a transformation in their hero.

VOYAGE

While following the stars to a new island, the heroes recover. Complete the stages of the Voyage:

1 Fellowship: The heroes relax and enjoy time with each other. Taking turns, each Hero Player asks a question to another hero. That player answers, then both players take a Bond with each other's heroes. Then the next Hero Player takes their turn, strengthening Bonds and asking a question of a player that has not yet been asked.

At the end of this stage, all heroes clear their **Pathos**.

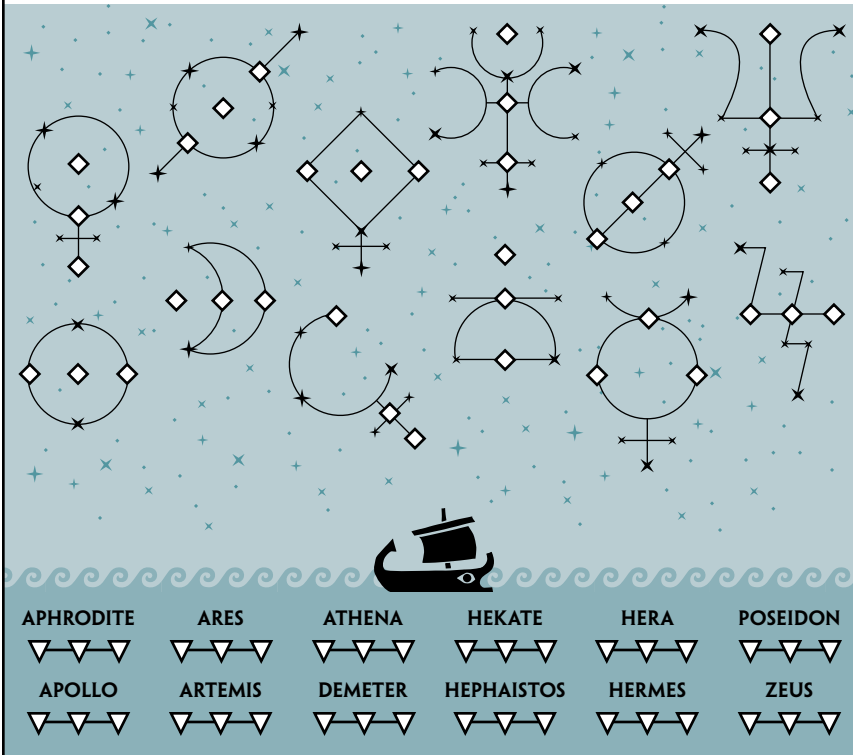
2 Sacrifice: The hero with the most Glory leads a sacrifice to the gods to seek guidance and favor. Each hero rolls in a contest of Resolve & Spirit. **The Strife Player rolls 2d6** and keeps the highest die (there is no Strife Level). Winners earn Glory as usual. The best hero also earns a Bond with the deity. Each hero marks **2 Divine Favor** with the god or gods of their choice.

3 Leadership: During the voyage, the ship and sailors face a challenge that the heroes must overcome. **The Strife Player rolls 2d6** and keeps the highest die (there is no Strife Level). The best hero chooses the **leader** for the next island—who also interprets the will of the gods.

4 The Vault of Heaven: The Strife Player marks progress on the Vault of Heaven. Mark a star (◇) if the heroes honored or pleased that deity while on the island (mark two stars if the heroes greatly pleased that god). Mark Wrath (▽) if the heroes dishonored or displeased that deity.

For each star marked, each hero receives **Divine Favor** (◇) with that deity. For every **three stars** marked, each hero earns a **boon**. When a constellation is filled, each hero records a **Bond** with that deity.

THE VAULT OF HEAVEN



OPPONENT	DIVINE WRATH	HIGHEST DIE
NAME, EPITHET(S), BONUS DICE	▽ D8 ▽ D10 ▽ D12	
ADVANTAGES		PLUS STRIFE LEVEL
		+4 +5 +6

THE STRIFE PLAYER'S ROLL

Roll the **Name**, **Epithet(s)**, and **bonus** dice of the opponent.

Keep the single highest die and add the current Strife Level to get a final result.

If any heroes equal or exceed the Strife Player's result, the heroes win. Each Hero Player recites their hero's deeds in the contest and their outcome, starting with the heroes who **suffer**, then the heroes who **prevailed**, then the **best** hero. If all the heroes fall short, they lose the contest and the opponent gets their way. The Strife Player describes the outcome.

STRIFE PLAYER PROCESS

- ◆ **Reveal** the situation to the Hero Players. Reveal what the heroes **know** and what they **suspect**. Be honest and direct.
- ◆ **Ask** questions and build on the answers to drive the game forward. Ask about **obstacles, threats, mysteries**, and **characters**. Think about what's at **stake**.
- ◆ **Judge** contests. Propose a contest when the heroes come into conflict with a **worthy opponent**. Determine the **Domain**.

After a contest, reveal the new situation, then ask, then judge, and so on.

