FINAL HOUR
OF A
STORIED AGE
A ROLEPLAYING GAME OF EPIC FANTASY

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REV 0.71

Changes to Rev 0.71

Changed "Starting a New Chapter" to "Starting Chapters"
Changed "Playing Out a Chapter" to "Playing Chapters"
Formatting and layout changes
Minor text changes (mechanics unaffected)

Changes to Rev 0.70

Added *influences* and *crossings* terminology to star charts
Added mechanic to tweak dice results on viewpoint/adversity rolls
Added examples to character creation

Changes to Rev 0.68

Clarified: viewpoint dice → story dice, adversity dice → story dice
Clarified: story dice and active traits don't cross chapters
Added examples to playing out an exchange
Added examples to spending story dice
Added rules summary to Starting a New Chapter
Added rules summary to Playing out a Chapter
Expanded play advice section

Introduction

Final Hour of a Storied Age is a roleplaying game of Epic Fantasy. Using these rules, some dice, and pencil and paper, you and some friends can experience a story like those found in your favorite epic fantasy novels: stories of heroes struggling against adversity in the face of world-changing events. This game combines ideas and techniques that fantasy authors use when crafting their stories with elements that fantasy readers enjoy when reading them. By channeling the creative, collaborative energy of the entire group this game produces a story for you all to enjoy.

Why Fantasy?

Why play a fantasy game? Because fantasy is awesome. But more than that, it's important. Don't just take my word for it, though: In the denouement of the brilliant *Hogfather* by Terry Pratchett, Susan and Death (who speaks LIKE THIS) have a conversation about believing in the Hogfather, the Discworld equivalent of Santa Claus:

> "All right," said Susan. "I'm not stupid. You're saying that humans need... fantasies in order to make life bearable."
>
> REALLY? AS IF IT WAS SOME KIND OF PINK PILL? NO. HUMANS NEED FANTASY TO BE HUMAN. TO BE THE PLACE WHERE THE FALLING ANGEL MEETS THE RISING APE.
>
> "Tooth fairies? Hogfathers? Little—"
>
> YES. AS PRACTICE. YOU HAVE TO START OUT LEARNING TO BELIEVE THE *LITTLE* LIES.
>
> "So we can believe the big ones?"
>
> YES. JUSTICE. MERCY. DUTY. THAT SORT OF THING.
>
> "They're not the same at all!"
>
> YOU THINK SO? THEN TAKE THE UNIVERSE AND GRIND IT DOWN TO THE FINEST POWDER AND SIEVE IT THROUGH THE FINEST SIEVE AND THEN *SHOW* ME ONE ATOM OF JUSTICE, ONE MOLECULE OF MERCY. AND YET— Death waved a hand. AND YET YOU ACT AS IF THERE IS SOME IDEAL ORDER IN THE WORLD, AS IF THERE IS SOME... *RIGHTNESS* IN THE UNIVERSE BY WHICH IT MAY BE JUDGED.
>
> "Yes, but people have *got* to believe that, or what's the *point*—"
>
> MY POINT EXACTLY.

Fantasy helps us believe in important, real things – things that we might feel hokey about expressing in our modern, cynical world, but things which are nonetheless vital to us. Fantasy is a way of looking at ideas, ideals, themes, and philosophies that are all-too-easy to believe don't fit in our everyday lives.

Why *Epic* Fantasy?

Nailing down what makes epic fantasy special is harder since the genre isn't well defined, but *The Lord of the Rings* clearly qualifies and this dialog from *The Two Towers* movie starts to explain it:

Frodo: I can't do this, Sam.

Sam: I know. It's all wrong. By rights we shouldn't even be here. But we are. It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo; the ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger, they were. And sometimes you didn't want to know the end... because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was, when so much bad had happened? But in the end, it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the sun shines, it will shine out the clearer. Those were the stories that stayed with you, that meant something, even if you were too small to understand why. But I think, Mr. Frodo, I do understand. I know now. Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back, only they didn't. They kept going... because they were holding onto something.

Frodo: What are we holding on to, Sam?

Sam: That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo. And it's worth fighting for.

A key feature of epic fantasy is the scope of the action. The core of an epic fantasy story is a protagonist defending what is good about the world (for some definition of "the world") from forces that would tear it down – it's about linking personal action and personal virtue to bigger and broader things, things worth saving.
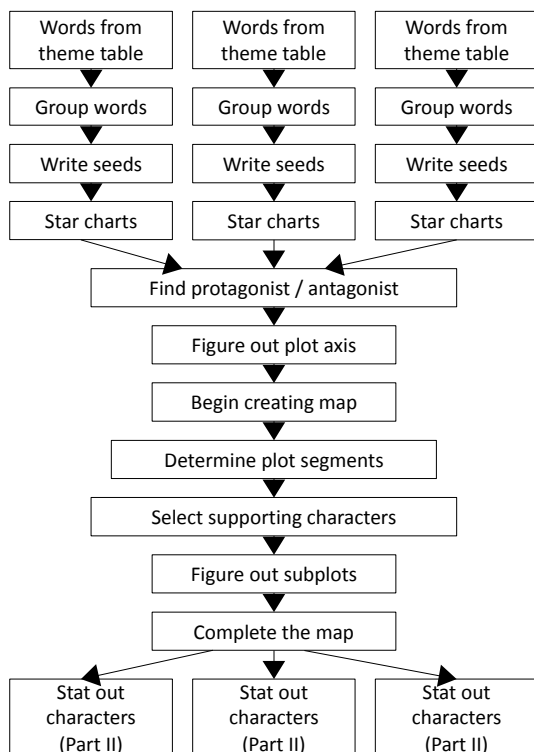
In the cynical world we live in there is constant pressure to be small-minded, hopeless, and complacent. Dishonest politician? *They're all like that.* Your boss wants you to cut corners to hit a deadline? *No one will know.* A festering problem could be solved with a conversation? *Best avoid the conflict...* Epic fantasy heroes don't give in to that mindset: they stand against the tide of evil. The stories don't tell us it's *easy* to do that, because it usually isn't, but they tell us it's *right* to do that, and it's nice to be reminded.

Fantasy lets us practice believing in difficult ideas, and the idea that epic fantasy asks us to believe is that individual virtues matter, that doing the right thing matters. Sam Gamgee saved a world by being a good friend. It was a fantasy world and not a real one, but Tolkien made it *real enough* for us to see the truth of that idea. Forces in the world want us to believe that everything is going downhill and none of us can do anything about it. Epic Fantasy is out there, confronting that idea, shouting "You shall not pass!" and reminding us that we all have the capacity to stand alongside it.

Plus, there's wizards and magic and sword fights and a bunch of other awesome stuff.

Part I: Creating the Plot

Although epic fantasy novels sometimes read like the history of a pre-existing world they are rarely created that way. Instead, the world, events, and characters are all created to serve a story that speaks to eternal themes like duty, love, or truth. A *Storied Age* story starts with individual creativity, each player working through the first few steps in parallel. Then the individual contributions are collaboratively put together to create a story that no one player would have come up with on their own.

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┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐
│ Words from  │  │ Words from  │  │ Words from  │
│ theme table │  │ theme table │  │ theme table │
└─────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └─────────────┘
       ▼                ▼                ▼
┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐
│ Group words │  │ Group words │  │ Group words │
└─────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └─────────────┘
       ▼                ▼                ▼
┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐
│ Write seeds │  │ Write seeds │  │ Write seeds │
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       ▼                ▼                ▼
┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐
│ Star charts │  │ Star charts │  │ Star charts │
└─────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └─────────────┘
          ┌──────────────────────────────┐
          │ Find protagonist / antagonist │
          └──────────────────────────────┘
                        ▼
              ┌────────────────────┐
              │ Figure out plot axis │
              └────────────────────┘
                        ▼
              ┌────────────────────┐
              │ Begin creating map  │
              └────────────────────┘
                        ▼
          ┌──────────────────────────┐
          │ Determine plot segments   │
          └──────────────────────────┘
                        ▼
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │ Select supporting characters  │
        └──────────────────────────────┘
                        ▼
              ┌────────────────────┐
              │ Figure out subplots │
              └────────────────────┘
                        ▼
              ┌────────────────────┐
              │  Complete the map   │
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   ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐
   │ Stat out │    │ Stat out │    │ Stat out │
   │characters│    │characters│    │characters│
   │(Part II) │    │(Part II) │    │(Part II) │
   └──────────┘    └──────────┘    └──────────┘
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Generating a List of Words

When you sit down with your friends to begin a new *Storied Age* story, each player starts by independently creating some seeds from which the story will grow. To begin creating the seeds, roll two d12's, add them together, and find the corresponding entry on a theme table such as the one to the right. Note down the word on a piece of scratch paper (note down the number, too, since it will make later steps easier). Roll the dice again and count down the table that many spaces from the first word, wrapping around to the beginning if you step off the end. Note this word and number as well. Keep going like this until you land on one of the words already on your list (don't add the duplicate onto the list).

Susan rolls a 23 on her dice and writes Division (23) on her scratch paper. She rolls again, getting a 9. She counts 9 entries down from 23 and adds Throne (32) to her list. Rolling a 10 steps her off the end of the table, so she wraps around to the beginning and writes Responsibility (2) on her list. She rolls a 5 and adds Farm (7). She rolls an 11 and adds Fire (18). She rolls an 18 and adds Sea (36) to the list. She rolls a 7, wraps around again, and writes Power (3) on the list. She rolls 13 and adds Old (16). She rolls another 13 and adds Hate (29). She rolls a 7, which would give her Sea, but that is already on her list so she stops rolling.

Theme Table

1. Noble
2. Responsibility
3. Power
4. Greed
5. Rich
6. Poor
7. Farm
8. Inherit
9. Small
10. Large
11. Male
12. Female
13. Corruption
14. Prophecy
15. Learning
16. Old
17. New
18. Fire
19. Ice
20. Duty
21. Ambition
22. Family
23. Division
24. Return
25. Truth
26. Lies
27. Belief
28. Love
29. Hate
30. Sword
31. Ring
32. Throne
33. Crown
34. Mountain
35. Forest
36. Sea
37. Underground
38. Gold
39. Star
40. Blood

Break The List of Words into Groups

It's possible to generate a lot of words in the previous step, so you may need to break your list down into manageable groups. No group can have more than eight words. If you have nine or more words on your list, use the first six for your first group. If you still have nine or more, use the next six to create a second group. Keep creating groups like this until you have eight or less words on your list, and put those in your final group.

Susan has nine words on her list, so puts the first six in one group: Division Throne Responsibility Farm Fire Sea. She puts her final three words in a second group: Power Old Hate.

Transform Groups of Words into Seeds

For each group of words you have, arrange the words in an order that inspires a sentence or two that describes a character (and possibly a situation that the character is involved in), a fact about the world, or a fact about magic. Phrase these sentences in either the past or present tense. While these sentences should be evocative, be careful not to invest too much emotion into what you think each sentence means yet – future steps in the world creation process might lead you to interpret them in a different way than you originally intended. You don't have to use the words exactly as they appear in the list, but someone who reads your sentence along with your list of words should be able to say, "Yeah, I can see how that sentence came from those words." For each group, write down the ordered words and the corresponding sentence on a seed sheet.

Susan looks at her first group of words: Division Throne Responsibility Farm Fire Sea. She likes the idea of a division of responsibility, so she decides to group those two words together. She likes the way Sea and Farm fit together, too, since it conjures the idea of fishermen in her mind, since they harvest food from the sea. She's not sure exactly what a Throne of Fire is, but it sounds like an evocative fantasy idea to her, so she decides to include that, too. She orders her words as Division Responsibility Farm Sea Throne Fire and writes a sentence: "Two twins have divided responsibilities: one must harvest food from the sea while the other seeks the Throne of Fire."

She looks at her second group of words: Power Old Hate. She decides to arrange them as Hate Old Power to inspire the sentence: "Civilized society shuns the wielders of ancient mystical powers."

Cast the Star Charts

Each seed sheet has a circle with the numbers from 1 to 40 evenly spaced around it. These numbers correspond to the numbers from the theme table. For each seed, take the ordered list of words and draw a straight line from the number that corresponds to the first word to the number that corresponds to the second word, from there to the third word, and so on, and finish with a line from the number that corresponds to the last word back to the first word (this will sometimes create a star shape).

Use each shape that you've drawn to calculate two numbers: *influences* and *crossings*. The number of times the shape touches the edge of the chart gives you the influences (this is the same as the number of words used to generate the chart). The number intersections between line segment gives you the crossings (if one segment intersects with two others, that's two crosses). Record the number of influences and crossings for each star chart.

Susan's first ordered list is Division (23) Responsibility (2) Farm (7) Sea (36) Throne (32) Fire (18). She casts the star chart and gets six influences and two crossings.
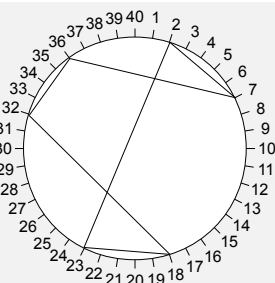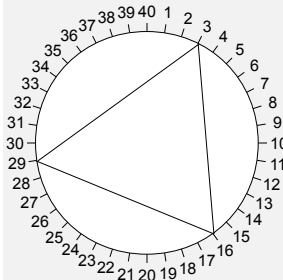
Her second ordered list is Hate (29) Old (16) Power (3). She casts the star chart and gets three influences and zero crossings.

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Protagonist Seed and Antagonist Seed

Once the star charts have been drawn, the process of combining them together to form a story outline can begin. First, identify a protagonist seed and an antagonist seed by comparing the number of crossings on the star charts for each seed:

- The seed with the *most crossings* determines the protagonist
- The seed with the *next highest number of crossings* determines the antagonist
- If there are multiple seeds with the same number of crossings, use the number of influences to break the tie. If it's still tied, use dice to break the tie
- If the same player created both the protagonist and antagonist seeds, one must be handed off to a different player

Protagonists and antagonists will have particular roles in the story, but becoming the protagonist or antagonist doesn't translate to winning or losing this part of the game. There are pros and cons to being the protagonist, antagonist, or other character in the story: they're different from each other, but not better or worse.

While Susan has been working on the seeds "Two twins have divided responsibilities: one must harvest food from the sea while the other seeks the Throne of Fire" with two crossings and "Civilized society shuns the wielders of ancient mystical powers." with no crossings, her friends Fred, Annie, and Peter have been working on seeds of their own. Fred's first seed of "A greedy, cold-blooded man foments division among the mountain people" has five crossings on its star chart. His second seed of "A prophecy foretells that the king will welcome the blackening of the sea" has one crossing. Annie's seed "A man from an old bloodline has taken the throne of a declining kingdom and hopes to master his ancestral ice sword" has twelve crossings. Peter's seed "Women past childbearing age are expected to take vows of poverty" has one crossing.

Since Annie's seed has the most crossings it is the protagonist seed. Fred's first seed is next in number of crossings, so that is the antagonist seed.
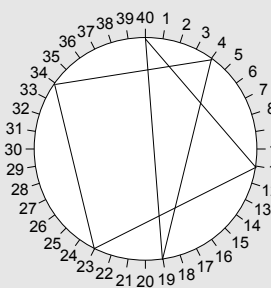
Words: Greed Ice Blood Male Division Mountain
4 19 40 11 23 34

Sentence:
A greedy, cold-blooded man foments
division among the mountain people.
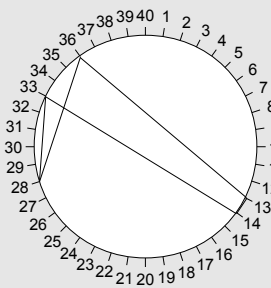
Words: Prophecy Crown Love Sea Corruption
14 33 28 36 13

Sentence:
A prophecy foretells that the king will
welcome the blackening of the sea.
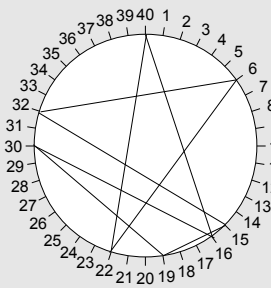
Words: Old Blood Family Poor Throne Learning Ice Sword
16 40 22 6 32 15 19 30

Sentence:
A man from an old bloodline has taken the
throne of a declining kingdom and hopes to
master his ancestral ice sword.
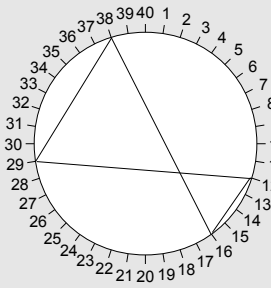
Words: Old Female Hate Gold
16 12 29 38

Sentence:
Women past childbearing age are expected
to take vows of poverty.

Generate the Plot Axis

Once you have the protagonist and antagonist seeds you can figure out the plot axis, the central conflict around which the story will turn. This is a collaborative process that every player should participate in. In an epic fantasy story, a *community* is threatened with a *change in the world* and the story follows the protagonist as he or she tries to thwart that change (sometimes effecting a positive change for the world instead).

Use the protagonist seed to identify a protagonist character and a community that he or she represents. The community is the frame of reference through which the rest of the fantasy world can be understood (in *The Lord of the Rings*, this community is The Shire). In *Storied Age*, the protagonist must *represent* that community. That doesn't mean that the protagonist must be a completely typical member of the community (Frodo Baggins was an uncommonly adventurous hobbit, for example), but it does mean that he or she should not be an outcast or outsider. He or she may not think the community is perfect, but should feel that the community is fundamentally worth protecting. Positive change in the community might happen as part of a *Storied Age* story, but the protagonist is focused on preventing the negative change that will occur if the antagonist is not stopped.

When the story opens, the antagonist is endeavoring to cause the world to change in a way that is negative for the community (think: destroy, conquer, enslave, exterminate, etc.). The antagonist will either think this change is positive (such as bringing order to a chaotic world) or be unconcerned about the negative repercussions or side-effects of his or her true goals.

As a group, use the protagonist and antagonist seeds as the main guidelines to figure out who the protagonist is, where he or she comes from, who the antagonist is, and what he or she is doing that will threaten that community (although this is a collaborative process, give some deference to the players that created the protagonist and antagonist seeds since they will need to roleplay the characters). Sometimes the sentences from the two seeds will seem to fit together perfectly – that's great! Sometimes a sentence from another seed will help serve as a "bridge" between the protagonist and antagonist seeds. Sometimes you'll need to use some creative interpretation to get them to fit together (remember that good collaboration happens when you keep an open mind to the perspective and suggestions of others). If necessary, you can add factors that go beyond the sentences written on the seed sheets as long as you don't negate anything that's written there – the seed sheet may say that "a man" is doing something, and that will still be true if you add the detail that the man is a powerful sorcerer.

> The group discusses the seeds, and they decide that Annie's kingdom in decline is a good community, and the new king mentioned in the seed will be a good protagonist to represent that community. They notice some interesting counterpoints between the king's sword of ice and Susan's Throne of Fire, and that both mountains and the sea are mentioned on seeds. They think that's pretty close to the classic elements of earth, air, fire, and water, and that the corruption of the sea could be a symptom of a larger problem. It also sounds to them like there are multiple kingdoms, and that the meddling with the mountain people might just be a part of the cold-blooded antagonist's larger plan. They decide that the antagonist is fomenting chaos in a balkanized region of small kingdoms and tribal holdings, each with dominion over one of the four elements, which will lead to a breakdown in the delicate elemental balance, causing disaster across the whole region.

Begin Drawing a Map

Many seeds will include geographic features, like cities, kingdoms, mountains, deserts, etc. If you have seeds like this, draw them on a piece of paper to represent the geography of the story. If there are any geographical features necessary for the plot axis to work, add them, too. Geography isn't important to every story so you can skip this step if it doesn't seem relevant (and you can revisit it later if you change your minds). If geography of the world *is* important to the story, as it often is in epic fantasy, developing a map in tandem with the plot outline can be helpful.

Detail the Plot Threads

With the characters identified and the major plot axis determined, the protagonist and antagonist need to outline the competing plot threads that each of them will go through. Each plot thread has three segments, and each segment should lead up to a significant turning point in the story. It's usually easiest to figure out the Antagonist's plot first, since it is largely determined by the plot axis – you just need to flesh out the details of *how* the antagonist will cause the change that threatens the community. The protagonist's plot determines how he or she will stop the Antagonist. It is tempting to think about simply standing in the way at every step of that antagonist's plan, but that's not how an epic fantasy story works. The protagonist's plot should either be an "end run" around the antagonist to defeat him or her in an unexpected way, or a long preparation for a climactic showdown.

Even though the overall plot threads of the protagonist and antagonist are in conflict, be careful not to make the first two segments of either thread contingent on the other player's progress. You can't know ahead of time how fast either player will progress through their segments, so don't make events in one plot thread dependent on events in the other. Since the story ends if either player completes their third segment it is fine to make these a direct conflict (say, one wants to perform a magical ritual with an artifact that the other wants to destroy) because only one can be completed before the story ends.

Identifying individual plot segments provides guidance for how to play out the moment-to-moment events of the story. Each segment has three phases, and each phase is chronicled through one or more chapters (See **Part IV: Playing Out Chapters**). Breaking the plot down into segments and breaking the segments down into phases allows the story to proceed at the proper pace. By looking at a character's overall segment goal,

and the number of completed phases within that segment, players will be able to create appropriate challenges for the character to face in each chapter.

Record the protagonist's and antagonist's plot segments on the plot track area of their character sheets.

Susan, Fred, Peter, and Annie continue to flesh out their story, expanding on their "element balance" arc. Since Annie's character was only recently elevated to the throne, she suggests that eliminating her predecessor could have been the first step in the antagonist's plan, leaving three other elements for Fred's character to deal with in his three plot segments. Fred likes that, and also suggests that driving the king of the sea kingdom mad could be an element of his plan, inspired by the seed about a king welcoming a blackening sea. Susan suggests that seizing the throne of fire could be a good segment for Fred's character, too, building on her seed. Fred likes that suggestion, realizing that he's been concentrating on disruption and confusion with respect to the other elements, so seizing control of one of them fits well with the "upset the elemental balance" idea. Fred sets up his plot segments as "Break the sacred stone of the mountain people," "Drive the sea king insane," and "Seize the Throne of Fire."

Annie's protagonist seed mentions mastering an ice sword, so she thinks that will be a good plot segment for her, although it doesn't seem to directly address how to stop Fred's character's plan. They go back and forth for a bit, thinking that the straightforward way to go would be to destroy the Throne of Fire with the ice sword. Then the antagonist won't be able to gain power, even if he succeeds in disrupting the earth and water elements. Peter proposes that Annie's character could do a "seek out the wise" quest to learn what she needs to do, suggesting that it could be the same person who foretold the prophecy in Fred's second seed. Annie likes that and takes "Master the ice sword," "Find the prophet," and "Destroy the Throne of Fire" as her segments.

Some suggestions for individual plot segments

Travel. Epic Fantasies are often world-spanning adventures. Are there huge mountains, dark forests, or trackless deserts to cross?

Get the Artifact. Is there a magic sword? Maybe an ancient scroll with a spell that will strip the villain's power? Searching for an important object is a well-loved part of many epic fantasy stories.

Search out the Wise. Is there some person with the secret knowledge needed to defeat the antagonist? A prophetic crone in a cave? A reclusive wizard? One of his old foes now in hiding?

Escape the Chaos. Sometimes the hero must be spurred to action by seeing how the world will change if the antagonist gets his way. Maybe the protagonist must escape from the antagonist's army, or from the undermined and corrupted normal order of society.

Alliances. There are often powerful forces in the world who, once moved to action, can help take part in world-shaking events (make sure you don't make *them* the main character, though).

Gather forces. Sometimes an antagonist needs to gather lieutenants and armies before putting a world-shaking plan into effect.

Direct Assault. Sometimes the direct approach is the best approach. Probably best to keep this for the final segment...

Destroy the Artifact. Maybe the key to the antagonist's power is like... a magic ring. And you can destroy it by... throwing it into a volcano? That would probably work as part of an epic fantasy plot.

Massive Battle. World-shaking events often include wars, and massive fantasy battles add excellent spice to stories.

Unlocking your potential. Fantasy characters often have untapped power or potential that they never knew about until the dramatic events of the story bring it forth. Developing that potential into a tool that can help solve the problems that the character faces is a great way to learn about both the character and the world.

Identify Supporting Characters

The rest of the players should use their seeds to find supporting characters to play (generally these characters will be sympathetic to the goals of the protagonist, but that isn't required). Supporting characters are important characters with critical roles to play in the story. If the *Lord of the Rings* was played as a *Storied Age* game, Gandalf and Aragorn would be supporting characters. Unlike the multi-segment plot threads of the protagonist or antagonist, supporting characters get a single-segment subplot. If completed, it must either complicate or simplify one or two of the protagonist's or antagonist's plot segments. These subplots should be related to the segment they target but shouldn't be interdependent or contingent on each other since you can't predict the order in which segments will be completed.

Record each supporting character's subplot in the plot track's first segment on the character sheet. For the other two segments, choose *complication* or *support* and identify corresponding segments from the protagonist or antagonist's plot track (two different segments or the same one twice). Complication segments make the protagonist or antagonist face harder challenges in that part of their plot, support segments help them overcome challenges.

In addition to their impact on the protagonist or antagonist's plot, completing a subplot may give the supporting character player some influence on the conclusion of the overall story. During the game, supporting characters have an opportunity to build relationships with either the protagonist or antagonist. If a supporting character completes his or her subplot, and the protagonist or antagonist they align with completes *their* plot thread, the supporting player will have a role in deciding the story's conclusion. See **Part V: Ending the Game** for more details.

Susan and Peter look at their seeds to find supporting characters to play. Peter thinks the most interesting character he can derive from his "Women past childbearing age are expected to take vows of poverty" seed would be an aging, wealthy woman who doesn't want to take the expected vow. Since that character sounds to him like someone who wants to overturn the established order, his first impulse is to support the antagonist, who also wants to change things. He is also interested in exploring a character who has something to do with the sea. He decides that his character will be the matriarch of a trading clan who, rather than taking vows of poverty, wishes to become a pirate queen. He writes down "Become the pirate queen" as his subplot, and makes his second segment a support segments for Fred's "Drive the sea king insane". He considers taking a second support segment for the same one, but doesn't want to put all his eggs in one basket, and asks Annie if she thinks she would need to explore the sea to find her prophet. Annie thinks that would be cool, so Peter makes his third segment into a complication segment for Annie's "Find the prophet".

Susan has been listening to Peter and Annie talk about the prophet who lives near the sea, and is tempted to use her "ancient mystical powers" seed to make a sea witch character to fill that role. She decides that character would work better as an NPC, however, since she wouldn't want to be too geographically bound. Furthermore, putting that aside lets her refocus on the idea she had originally of playing one of the twins. She decides that it would be fun to have a third character interested in the Throne of Fire, so she settles on that twin, with an obvious subplot of "Find the Throne of Fire". She wants to support the protagonist, and thinks that her subplot dovetails quite nicely with a support segment for Annie's "Destroy the Throne of Fire" and a complication segment for Fred's "Seize the Throne of Fire". Susan's ideas about the sea witch aren't wasted, though: Everyone thought she sounded like a very interesting character, so odds are someone will eventually create her as an NPC.

Complete the Map

Now that the story is more fleshed out, there may be more details to add to the map (and if you chose not to make a map earlier this is a good point to double check that decision). If you're making a map, make sure that each player contributes at least one geographic feature. Give the geographic features names. Whenever you can, try to name these features evocatively – "The Swamp of the Dead" instead of just "swamp". Don't worry about figuring out too many details about these locations, save that for when you visit them during the story.

Record Initial Dice on Plot Tracks

As in a novel, different characters will be focused on at different times based on their role in the story. In *Storied Age*, this is accomplished by having different viewpoint dice for each character at different phases of their plot thread or subplot. **Part III: Starting Chapters** will explain how these dice are rolled and interpreted in more detail, but the plot track determines which dice you roll. At most, a player will roll a single d20, a single d12, and a single d10 for their viewpoint dice, and will often not roll all of them. The character sheet contains a grid indicating whether to roll the d20, d12, or d10 for each plot phase the character is progressing through. At the start of the game each player has only a single die per phase, but it is possible to earn more dice through play.

On the protagonist's character sheet, mark the d20 available for the first six phases and the d10 for the final three. On the antagonist's sheet, mark the d12 for all nine phases. Mark the d10 available for the three phases of each supporting character's subplot and for the six phases of their support or complication segments.

Record Adversity Dice

In a novel, we get to know characters by watching them overcome adversity. Sometimes this adversity is outright antagonism from an enemy, sometimes it is a complicated situation introduced by a well-intentioned friend, sometimes the character's own emotions and limitations must be overcome, and sometimes the adversity comes from the environment. In *Storied Age*, players will take turns providing adversity for the other players' characters. Providing good adversity is an important task in *Storied Age*, because heroes and villains can only prove they are worthy of the name by overcoming adversity.

Your adversity dice are based on your character's role in the story. The protagonist gets two d10s for adversity dice. The antagonist gets three d12s. Each supporting character gets a d20 and a d10.

Record Influences and Crossings

Record the number of influences and crossings from the star chart you used to create your character. The way these numbers can be used in play will be explained in **Part III: Starting Chapters**.

Another Plot and World Creation Example

Fred, Annie, Peter, and Susan have all gathered together to play *Final Hour of a Storied Age*. They all start rolling their d12s and begin consulting the theme table to generate their list of words.

Fred rolls up his list of words: Corruption, Truth, Underground, Small, Fire, and Throne. He sees "small" and "underground" and immediately thinks of dwarves – small guys that live underground. He figures he can add in "throne" by talking about the king of the dwarves. He thinks that Corruption and Truth link together well, too, since that implies some sort of deception. And that leaves Fire, which is presumably the thing that the deception is about. He decides that a volcano could easily be the kind of "fire" that dwarves care about. So he arranges his words as Small, Underground, Throne, Corruption, Truth, Fire. He writes down the sentence: "The king of the dwarves has deceived his people about the true threat of a volcano". He casts the star chart, getting two crossings.

Annie goes through a similar process. She has two groups of words. She decides to arrange Old Throne Inherit Lies Gold Corruption as Gold Corruption Throne Inherit Old Lies for the sentence: "A man who bought his way onto the throne must face the consequences of the lies and deceptions of the previous king". She casts the star chart and gets five crossings.

Annie's second group of words is Hate Noble Female. She arranges them as Female Noble Hate to justify the sentence "Female nobles are agitating for war." She casts the star chart and gets zero crossings.

Peter rolls up a group of eight: Ambition Truth Power Prophecy Lies Noble Old Crown. He decides to arrange them as Noble Ambition Truth Power Lies Prophecy Old Crown to justify the sentence: "A nobleman seeking the power of Truespeaking has lied about the prophecy of the Old Crown". The star chart gives eight crossings.

Susan has rolled up seventeen words total, and will need to make three seeds to take care of them all. Her first group is Ice Lies Sea Star New Underground. She arranges them as New Star Lies Underground Sea Ice to justify: "A fallen star lies buried underground across the Sea of Ice". This has two crossings.

Susan's second group is Farm Hate Rich Return Greed Male. She arranges them as Male Return Farm Hate Greed Rich and writes: "A politician has returned to the simplicity of his farm, having been disillusioned by the greed and selfishness of the ruling class". This gives her two crossings.

Susan's third group is Division Sword Inherit Family Blood. She arranges them as Inherit Sword Family Blood Division and writes: "A man has inherited a sword, thrusting him into the middle of an ancient family's blood feud". The star chart yields five crossings.

[Peter looks around the table at the completed star charts]

Peter: So, it looks like I'm the Protagonist.

Annie: And I'm the Antagonist.

Peter: And if I say that I'm the nobleman who lied about the prophecy, that can hook into your thing about the previous king having lied and deceived.

Annie: So you're the old king?

Peter: Well, since I'm seeking the Power of Truespeaking, that feels more like I'm a young person, so maybe I'm the son of the old king, or a brother or something.

Annie: OK. And I can be the guy who bought his way onto the throne.

Fred: Do we want to tie in mine? I've got a lying king, too.

Peter: Sure, if we put everything into a dwarven kingdom you can be the displaced king, I can be your son, and Annie can be the usurper.

Annie: That makes sense. So it looks like we've got our community, right? The dwarven kingdom?

Peter: Yeah, I like that.

Fred: So is this, like, an above-ground kingdom or are we going hardcore Moria style?

Peter: Moria!

Annie: Definitely! If I'm going to be usurping a kingdom, it's got to be a cool one.

Susan: So how are you threatening the community?

Annie: Well, we've got this volcano thing going on, it feels like it ought to have something to do with that.

Peter: And Fred and I have been lying about it, presumably we've got a good reason for that. It's got some kind of forbidden power that we don't want people to use.

Annie: OK, I think the volcano is the forge of our dwarf god, and I want to seize control of it, which will let me do something cool.

Susan: Like make some kind of super-weapon or something?

Fred: Hey, don't think small. If it's where the dwarf-god works, it's probably where he forged the dwarves themselves, right? So Annie can reforge dwarves to be the way she wants.

Annie: Ooh, I like it!

Peter: OK, that seems like a pretty strong threat to the community.

Susan: Let's start working on this map. We've got a volcano, this dwarven mining kingdom, a sea of ice, some farmland...

[they draw a map]

Annie: OK, let's work out the plot segments. It seems like I've only recently seized power, so I probably need to consolidate that first. Then I'm thinking that I've got to find this forge, like it's some secret chamber inside the volcano. Is that cool with everybody?

Peter: Yeah, makes sense to me.

Annie: OK, then I think there's some ritual I need to perform once I've taken control of the forge.

Peter: My seed says I'm seeking the Power of Truespeaking, which I assume is some kind of magic. I think I want my first segment to be about unlocking that power. Hmmm... What next... Let me take a look at the list of suggestions and see if that sparks anything. How about Seeking Out the Wise, like I need to find somebody who will tell me how to stop you?

Annie: Sounds good to me.

Peter: Then how do I actually stop you?

Annie: Hmm, do you want to just have our characters fight?

Peter: No, this seems like it ought to be a bit more mythic. Like I need to end the power of the god's forge.

Susan: You haven't done anything with your Prophecy of the Old Crown yet. We can combine that with my fallen star thing, and say that the crown of the dwarf god fell to earth, and if you get it you'll be able to control the power of the forge.

Peter: That's cool. So my final segment will be to get the crown.

Fred: Cool.

Susan: So, Fred's the displaced dwarf king? I guess I'm the last one to pick a character. I've got a few to choose from here. I think I like this farmer guy, since we've established that we've got issues with people buying their way to political power.

Annie: OK, Fred and Susan have character, what are the subplots?

Fred: I want to reclaim my throne.

Peter: That kind of undermines Annie, though. If you reclaim the throne, how could she consolidate her power?

Fred: Oh, yeah. Let's see, maybe I can work with the female warmongers to set up an opposition to Annie's rule.

Annie: So the war they're agitating for is a civil war?

Fred: Heh. Yeah.

Annie: OK, cool. Is that complicating my "consolidate power"?

Fred: Right. And your "find the forge", too, since consolidating your power doesn't mean that you wipe out the opposition. They'll still be a thorn in your side.

Annie: Makes sense. Susan, what's your subplot?

Susan: I was thinking I could be the wise person that Peter is seeking out. Is that cool with you, Peter?

Peter: Sure.

Susan: OK, so I think my guy is more like a philosopher or sage, and he's kind of disillusioned with the current state of dwarf society. So I want to rediscover the true teachings of our dwarf god, something like that.

Annie: That's cool, we can do some great stuff with that. Are you complicating or supporting?

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Susan: I think I should have a support segment for Peter's seeking out the wise. Once I get the philosophy settled it should be easier for him to find me. And then I can also complicate Annie's ritual, since it should be harder to steal the dwarf god's forge from him if we start following him properly.

Annie: Sounds good to me.

Peter: Yeah, I like it.

Fred: Cool. Is there anything else we need to add to our map? And let's make sure we record our plot stuff on our character sheets...

Part II: Characters

There are two different kinds of characters in *Storied Age*: player characters and non-player characters. Player characters (called PCs) are the protagonist, antagonist, or supporting characters that the players control directly. These will be the most important characters in the story, and their actions are always under the control of the player that they belong to. Even when someone else is narrating the action, they are not allowed to describe your character feeling, thinking, or doing something that is contrary to your vision of the character. Other characters in the story, from bit parts to important secondary characters, are non-player characters (called NPCs). These characters have many similarities to PCs, but they don't have a specific connection to any particular player.

Characters have a *name*, four *traits*, and an *alignment track*.

Name

The way that your characters are named can have an important impact on the "feel" of your world. Name your own character, but work with the group so that the names are harmonious, especially for characters that are supposed to come from the same culture.

Annie is creating an antagonist character for a story set in a dwarven civilization. Since most of the other players' characters are dwarves, too, she asks them if they have opinions about what kinds of names they want to use. Susan and Peter advocate for lots of K's, V's, Z's, and M's in the names, while Fred is thinking more along the line of naming people after stones, minerals, or common dwarf professions. Since the story involves different classes within the society, Annie proposes using both ideas by having the aristocracy use "old dwarven" names of the kind that Susan and Peter are thinking, while most dwarves use simpler "down to earth" names related to things in their environment like Fred is thinking. Everyone thinks this is a great idea that adds some depth to their setting. Since Annie's character is an upstart who is replacing the traditional monarch she thinks it's more appropriate to give her character a "common" name. She decides on Copper Trackmender.

Traits

Traits are *things a character is*, *things a character has*, or *things a character knows*. They are the way your character solves problems. They may be personality traits, special skills, signature weapons, loyal subordinates, or anything else that make the character unique. Traits should be broad enough to be useful in many adventurous situations. If it takes you more than a few seconds to think of a situation in which you'll be able to use the trait, it's probably too narrow.

Be careful not to over-specialize – if all of the traits are about how the character fights, will the character be able to deal with adversity like climbing a mountain or crossing a desert?

The traits should be relatively brief. "Master Swordsman" is fine. "Trained at the Royal Academy of Fencing, specializing in sabers but also proficient with rapiers" is too much.

Be true to the character, but also keep in mind that these traits need to be useful in an adventurous epic fantasy tale. If the character is a farmer, it's probably better to give him a trait like "level headed" rather than "encyclopedic knowledge of potatoes". They're both things that might be true about a farmer, but one is much more relevant to the kind of story you're going to tell. That doesn't mean that these other minor details aren't true about a character, just that they generally aren't central to the way he overcomes adversity in the story

Don't be afraid to make characters that are broad archetypes – epic fantasy literature frequently features characters like that.

During plot creation, Annie and the others established that her character Copper Trackmender is a manipulator who often uses money to get his way, and someone who has rather grandiose ambitions. She decides to give him the traits *Deal-maker* and *Gold*

by the cartload to represent his wealthy, manipulative side, and *Iron will* to represent his single-minded determination. She thinks about how he'd deal with some more physical challenges and decides that Copper Trackmender isn't someone who'd want to get his hands dirty when he can pay someone to do it, so she gives him the trait *Mercenary Thugs* to represent the hired goons he surrounds himself with.

Alignment Track

Supporting characters and NPCs use the alignment track to indicate where their loyalties lie. Characters can be personally aligned with the protagonist, ideologically aligned with the protagonist, neutral, ideologically aligned with the antagonist, or personally aligned with the antagonist.
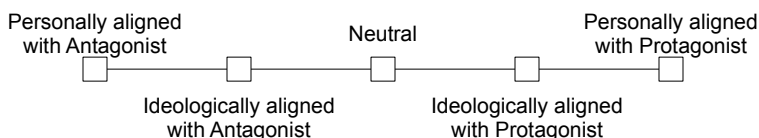
Being personally aligned indicates a friendship or alliance between characters. Being ideologically aligned indicates that the characters generally agree about whether they would prefer the protagonist or antagonist to succeed in their plot. For example, a character's family member is probably personally aligned with them, unless there is some established rift between them in the fiction. A character who opposes the antagonist but who has not yet met the protagonist is likely ideologically aligned. A troll menacing the countryside is probably ideologically aligned with the antagonist (since he wants to make life difficult for the protagonist) but probably isn't personally aligned.

Supporting characters and NPCs can have the their alignment track positions changed when they are involved in the action of a chapter. See **Narrative Special Effects** in **Part IV: Playing out Chapters** for more details. An NPC's initial alignment track position should be set when the NPC is created, at whatever value the group feels is most appropriate (default to neutral if there is no strong reason for them to favor one side or the other). Since the thoughts and feelings of PCs are determined by the players controlling them, supporting characters' alignment tracks work differently from NPCs. Rather than tracking an

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internal emotional state, supporting characters use the alignment track to show how well their friendship or alliance has been demonstrated in the story. Supporting characters start at neutral on the track. A supporting character's alignment with the protagonist or antagonist helps determine how much that player contributes to the overall ending of the story. See **Part V: Ending the Game** for more details.

Part III: Starting Chapters

Just like a novel, *Storied Age* plays out in a series of chapters. Each chapter focuses on one PC as the viewpoint character. That character, possibly with help from friends and allies, faces challenges to overcome adversity and make progress in the plot.

Selecting a Viewpoint Character

To determine which character to focus on, each player with an unfinished plot phase rolls a set of viewpoint dice based on their individual plot track (supporting characters who have finished their subplot do not roll for viewpoint). Whoever rolls the die with the highest number showing becomes the viewpoint player (also see **Resolving Ties** below). If you win, leave the dice you rolled undisturbed on the table – winning viewpoint dice become story dice for the viewpoint player and the numbers showing on them are important when you play out the chapter.

Peter, Annie, and Susan are in the middle of a game. Peter has completed 7 plot phases. Annie has completed 5. Susan has only completed a single plot phase.

Peter		Annie		Susan	
Story Role	Adversity Dice	Story Role	Adversity Dice	Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☒ d10 d10		Protagonist ☐ d10 d10		Protagonist ☐ d10 d10	
Antagonist ☐ d12 d12 d12		Antagonist ☒ d12 d12 d12		Antagonist ☐ d12 d12 d12	
Supporting ☐ d20 d10		Supporting ☐ d20 d10		Supporting ☒ d20 d10	

Peter		Annie		Susan	
Plot ☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☐☐		Plot ☒☒☒☒☒☐☐☐☐		Plot ☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	
d20 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☐☐☐		d20 ☐☐☐☐☒☐☐☐☐		d20 ☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	
d12 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☒☒☐		d12 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒		d12 ☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	
d10 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☒☒☒		d10 ☐☒☐☐☒☒☐☐☐		d10 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☐	

Peter looks at his plot track and sees that for his first unfinished segment he has a d10 available. Annie has a d12. Susan has all three dice available on hers: a d20, a d12, and a d10. They roll: Peter gets a 7, Annie gets a 12, and Susan gets a 16, a 5, and a 1. Susan's 16 is the highest, so her character is the viewpoint character, and she'll be able to use her 16, 5, and 1 as story dice.

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Selecting an Adversity Player

Next, the adversity player is determined. Every player except the viewpoint player rolls their adversity dice. The die with the highest number showing determines the winner (also see **Resolving Ties** below), who becomes the adversity player. If you win, leave the dice you rolled undisturbed on the table – winning adversity dice become story dice for the adversity player and the numbers on them are important when you play out the chapter.

> With Susan playing viewpoint, Peter and Annie must roll for adversity. Peter, as the protagonist, rolls two d10s for his adversity dice. Annie, as the antagonist, rolls three d12s. Peter gets a 10 and a 4. Annie gets an 8, a 7, and a 1. Peter's 10 is the highest, so he's the adversity player, and his 10 and 4 become his story dice.

Resolving Ties

If there is a tie on highest die in the viewpoint or adversity roll, compare the next highest die to break the tie, and then the next, etc. If one player doesn't *have* a next highest die to compare then the player *with* a die wins. If all of the dice are exactly equal, the player that has gone the longest since winning that type of roll wins. If that still doesn't break the tie, the protagonist wins, followed by the antagonist. If there's *still* a tie, use some fair method like a dice-off to break it.

> Late in the game, Peter, Annie, and Susan have all managed to earn all three dice for the plot phases each of them are working on. They roll for viewpoint: Peter gets a 15, a 9, and a 5. Annie gets a 13, a 12, and a 3. Susan gets a 15, a 10, and a 1. Peter and Susan's 15s are the highest numbers showing, so one of them will be the viewpoint player, but they need to consult their next highest dice to figure out which one. Susan's 10 is higher than Peter's 9, so it's Susan!
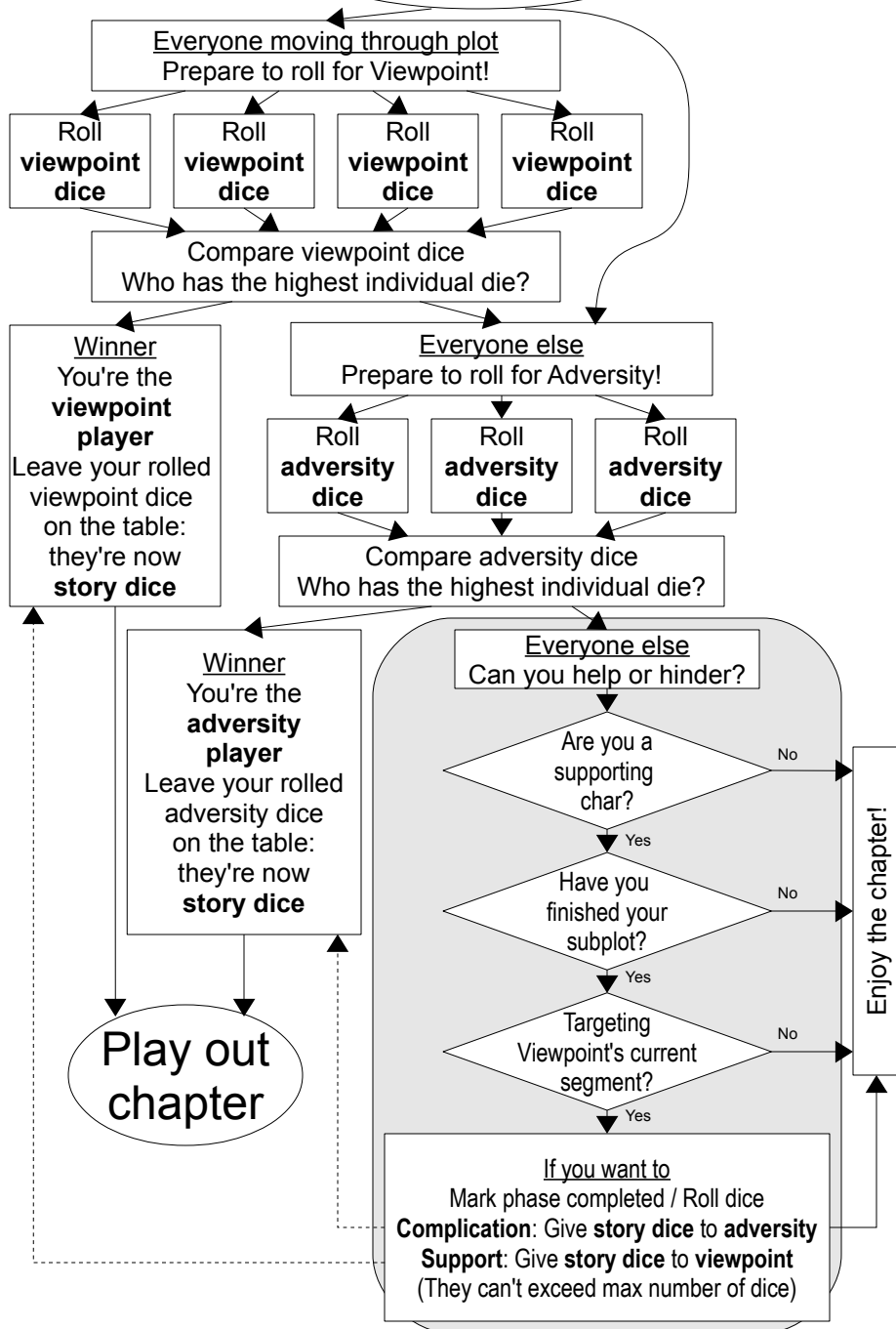
Support and Complications

After completing a subplot, supporting character players no longer roll for viewpoint (their characters can still be involved in chapters, just not as the viewpoint character). Instead, the dice from the last six phases of their plot tracks can be used to aid or hinder the protagonist or antagonist in their viewpoint chapters.

If the viewpoint character of a chapter is moving through a plot segment targeted by a complication or support segment of a supporting character with a completed subplot, then the supporting character's player may choose to roll the dice from an available phase of that support or complication segment to modify the story dice available in the chapter. A support segment allows the supporting character player to give story dice to a viewpoint player and a complication segment allows the supporting character player to give story dice to the adversity player. Giving dice like this can't be used to give either player more than the maximum dice they could theoretically roll (three dice for the viewpoint character, two or three dice for the adversity player depending on their story role), but it can be used to bring a player up to the maximum or swap out dice with low numbers showing for higher ones.

The supporting player marks the phase complete when these dice are rolled regardless of whether any dice are actually given.

> Peter, as protagonist, wins the viewpoint roll with a 17 and 3. Annie, the antagonist, wins the adversity roll with a 12, 12, and 11. Susan, playing a supporting character with a completed subplot, has a d10, a d12, and a d20 available to support the phase Peter's working on. She decides that Peter could use some help so she rolls her dice. She gets a 13, 10, and 2. She gives her 13 to Peter directly, and then replaces his 3 with her 10. Peter now has a 17, a 13, and a 10 to use as story dice once the action of the chapter begins. Susan marks her phase complete, and hopes that Peter makes good use of her dice.

New Chapter

Everyone moving through plot
Prepare to roll for Viewpoint!

Roll **viewpoint dice**

Roll **viewpoint dice**

Roll **viewpoint dice**

Roll **viewpoint dice**

Compare viewpoint dice
Who has the highest individual die?

Winner
You're the **viewpoint player**
Leave your rolled viewpoint dice on the table: they're now **story dice**

Everyone else
Prepare to roll for Adversity!

Roll **adversity dice**

Roll **adversity dice**

Roll **adversity dice**

Compare adversity dice
Who has the highest individual die?

Winner
You're the **adversity player**
Leave your rolled adversity dice on the table: they're now **story dice**

Everyone else
Can you help or hinder?

Are you a supporting char? — No

Yes

Have you finished your subplot? — No

Yes

Targeting Viewpoint's current segment? — No

Yes

If you want to
Mark phase completed / Roll dice
Complication: Give **story dice** to **adversity**
Support: Give **story dice** to **viewpoint**
(They can't exceed max number of dice)

Enjoy the chapter!

Play out chapter

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An Option to Tweak the Dice

If you're unhappy with your dice results on your viewpoint or adversity roll, you have a limited ability to use the numbers derived from your character's star chart to tweak dice results. Once per plot segment or subplot, you can add your number of influences to a d10 or d12 and subtract your number of crossings from a d20 or d12. You have to do both the addition and subtraction when you employ this option, and can't add and subtract from the same die (but if you didn't roll any dice of the appropriate size you can use this option by acting as if you did roll a die of an appropriate size but got a zero result on it). These modifications take place before the viewpoint or adversity player are determined so this option can be useful for players who are eager to take on the role of viewpoint or adversity player but are having bad luck with their dice. Once you've modified the numbers on the dice with the addition or subtraction, treat them as if you had rolled them that way from the beginning (it is probably simplest to rotate or swap out the dice so you can just look at them rather than doing the math over and over again). Treat a die that is reduced to less than one as if you had never rolled it in the first place.

While your character is actively moving along your plot track you can only use this option once per plot segment or subplot, but you can use it on either a viewpoint or adversity roll. If you're a supporting character player with a completed subplot you can use the two chances that correspond to your support or complication segments whenever you want. This "one use" only counts if you actually win the roll and become the viewpoint or adversity player, so the opportunity isn't wasted if it doesn't actually help you. The dice modification on the viewpoint roll must happen before the adversity roll, and the modification on the adversity roll must happen before any supporting player decides to help or hinder and before the chapter begins.

Susan

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☒	d10 d10
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐	d20 d10
Influences + 6	Crossings - 8

Plot ☒☒☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☐☐☐☐
d12 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☒☒☒
tweak ☐   ☐   ☐

Fred

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☐	d10 d10
Antagonist ☒	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐	d20 d10
Influences + 6	Crossings - 2

Plot ☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒
d10 ☐☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
tweak ☐   ☐   ☐

Annie

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☐	d10 d10
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☒	d20 d10
Influences + 4	Crossings - 1

Plot ☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20 ☐☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12 ☒☒☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒
tweak ☐   ☐   ☐

Susan, Fred, and Annie have been playing for a while, and Fred hasn't been having much luck winning the viewpoint or adversity rolls. It's time for a new chapter so everybody rolls their viewpoint dice. Susan gets an 11 on her d20. Fred gets a 10 on his d12 and a 9 on his d10. Annie gets a 2 on her d20, a 4 on her d12, and a 3 on her d10. They compare dice and Susan's 11 beats Fred's 10,9 and Annie's 4,3,2. Since Fred missed winning the roll so narrowly and really wants to have a chapter about his character he decides to use his option to tweak his dice. He adds his influences of 6 to his d10 (changing it from a 9 to a 15) and subtracts his crossings from his d12 (changing it from a 10 to an 8). Since Fred's revised roll of 15,8 beats Susan's 11 and Annie's 4,3,2 he becomes the viewpoint player and will use his 15 and 8 as story dice. He marks the box on his character sheet to remind himself that he's used his chance to tweak his dice for this segment.

You'll Only Need the Basics to Begin

At the beginning of a *Storied Age* story arc you'll probably only use the basic viewpoint and adversity mechanics, with the more nuanced support/complication segments and dice tweaking mechanics only employed later in the game, if at all.

It is usually quite a few chapters into a game before a supporting character completes a subplot. Depending on how long you play at a time, the support and complication rules might not be used in your first session.

The dice tweaking option is only invoked when a player wants to use it. You don't have to use this choice if you don't want to, and most chapters will go by without anyone using this option. Since manipulating the dice like this makes the procedure slightly more complex many players will choose to ignore this option completely, especially while they're still learning the game.

Starting Chapters Basic Rule Summary

- Roll viewpoint dice. Winner becomes *viewpoint player*.
- Winning viewpoint dice are viewpoint player's *story dice*.
- Roll adversity dice. Winner becomes *adversity player*.
- Winning adversity dice are adversity player's *story dice*.

Part IV: Playing Chapters

Once they have their story dice, the viewpoint and adversity players play out the chapter. The viewpoint player chooses the location in the story's setting where the chapter opens and then the adversity and viewpoint players go through a series of back-and-forth exchanges to tell the part of the story covered by the chapter.

Describe Where the Chapter Begins

Rolling for viewpoint determines which character the chapter will focus on, but where that character is at the start of the chapter is a decision for the viewpoint player to make. Having a good sense of where the chapter takes place, combined with the viewpoint character's current plot segment goal, helps the adversity player think of interesting obstacles for the viewpoint character to face in the chapter.

The Chapter Engine

The game mechanics used to play out a chapter might seem confusing at first, because the individual mechanics work with each other in an interdependent system, functioning like an engine to drive the story. In an internal combustion engine, fuel and air are pushed into a chamber to mix, are ignited by a spark, the resulting explosion drives a piston to turn the shaft, the return stroke of the piston pushes out the the used-up contents of the chamber, and the process repeats. In a *Storied Age* chapter, the fuel and the air are story elements introduced by the viewpoint and adversity players, the dice provide the spark, the story is driven forward, and the dice interpretation mechanics keep the content fresh and full of dramatic potential.

Overview

The events of a chapter are told in a series of exchanges – decision points in the story where there is uncertainty whether the viewpoint character will make progress or face a setback – where a roll of the dice determines which path the story takes. Although there's an element of randomness and uncertainty, the action dice that the players roll to make this decision are based on the details of the story that they narrate, giving them some control over the outcome. Action dice come from traits that describe characters or other story elements, and a player picks up an action die to roll when their description of events in the story includes a concrete demonstration of a trait that has had a die associated with it. These story elements and their traits get tied to action dice when players spend story dice to introduce the elements into the chapter.

- Spend **story dice** to introduce **story elements**
- Each **story element** has one or more **traits**
- Narrate **traits** into the story to get **action dice**
- Roll **action dice** to win an **exchange**

Although both the viewpoint and adversity players have similar mechanical choices in terms of spending story dice, narrating traits into the story, and picking up action dice to roll against their opponent, there is a structure to play that prevents it from being a chaotic free-for-all. Every exchange begins with the adversity player presenting adversity, possibly spending story dice to introduce new characters or story elements as the source of that adversity. Once the adversity player has described the obstacles, the viewpoint player responds to that adversity, possibly spending story dice of their own. The players roll the action dice and the winner narrates the result of the exchange. The story continues in another exchange, and then another, until the chapter concludes.

Action Dice

When a trait is brought into a chapter it gets a d4, d6, or d8 action die associated with it, depending on the way it is introduced (see **Spending Story Dice** below). The die size of a trait may also increase when you win an exchange.

Putting Forward Adversity

To begin an exchange, the adversity player puts forward some adversity. You do this by describing the scene in a way that demonstrates traits from story elements contributing to challenges that the viewpoint character needs to overcome to make progress in the plot (see **Spending Story Dice** for more on story elements and traits). The adversity player's narration builds the story to a "crisis point" or "decision point" where it is unclear whether the viewpoint character will overcome the challenge or not. The adversity player can pick up an action die for each trait that contributed to the narration and prepares to roll them. As many active traits as the adversity player wants can be used, as long as they are demonstrated in the fiction.

> Fred is providing adversity for Susan in a chapter set in a swamp. He has already introduced some story elements: *mud* with a d4, and *Drusilla the Swamp Witch* with the traits *Witchcraft* at d8 and *Swamplore* at d6. He says, "Drusilla cackles, moving her hand in a geometric pattern in the air. You feel vines and roots wrapping around your legs, trying to pull you down into the knee-deep muck." He picks up the d8 for *Witchcraft* and the d4 for *mud*.

Responding to the Adversity

After hearing the problem the viewpoint character faces, the viewpoint player describes how the character responds (but not whether the response succeeds – that's what the action dice will decide). The viewpoint player can pick up an action die for each active trait demonstrated in the fiction. As many active traits as the viewpoint player wants can be used, as long as they contributed to the narration (see **Spending Story Dice** for more on story elements and traits).

> Susan's character *Barnabas Blood* has the active traits *Sea Legs* at d8, *Rusty Cutlass* at d6, and *Sea Stories* at d6. She says, "Barnabas has traversed enough tangled rigging that this shouldn't be a problem. He slashes at the thickest vines with his cutlass." She picks up the d8 for *Sea Legs* and the d6 for *Rusty Cutlass*. Deciding to incorporate *Sea Stories* to get the other d6, she adds, "'Har, think you can match me, witch? I've bested sea hags uglier than you!'"

Roll the Action Dice

After the viewpoint player's narration, both players roll their action dice simultaneously to determine whether the viewpoint character overcomes, makes progress against, faces a setback from, or is overcome by the adversity. Whoever has the die with the highest number showing wins the exchange. If the highest die is tied, compare the next highest, and so on. If all the dice tie, the adversity player wins.

If you lose the exchange, count how many of your dice are lower than the winner's lowest die. If you have any, exhaust that many traits from the pool of traits you used in the exchange (an exhausted trait is inactive, but can be re-activated with story dice – see **Spending Story Dice**). Also counts the number of losses in a row – on the third consecutive loss the chapter ends (three strikes and you're out!).

If you win, choose one trait you used in the exchange and increases its die size by one step, to a maximum of d8 (i.e. d4 to d6, d6 to d8). You also narrates the result of the exchange to advance the story, showing your side of the exchange in a positive light, using the traits involved in the exchange (and whether they were exhausted or not) as guidelines for the narration. The content of the narration must stay within the fictional and game-mechanical scope of the chapter (see **Limits on Narration** below for more).

Fred rolls his dice and gets a 5 on his d8 and a 3 on his d4. Susan rolls her dice and a 2 on her d8, a 3 on one d6 and a 4 on the other. Comparing Fred 5,3 to Susan's 4,3,2, they see Fred's 5 is the highest, so he wins. Susan compares her dice to Fred's lowest die, a 3. Her 2 is less than his 3, so she'll have to exhaust one trait, but her 3 and 4 are greater than or equal to 2, so two of her traits will remain active. She decides to exhaust *Sea Stories*. Since he won, Fred can bump up the die size of one of the traits he used. He increases *mud* to d6. As the winner, Fred also gets to narrate. He says, "Barnabas's footwork and steel aren't good enough to escape all the tendrils, and he gets pulled in up to his waist." Taking inspiration from the way Susan incorporated Barnabas's *Sea Stories* into the narration, and the fact that the trait was exhausted, he starts talking in an old crone voice and adds, "'Aye, I've heard of these hags you speak of, and ugly they are, but mere novices when it comes to magic!'"

Must Use Some Traits Each Exchange

Every story element that the adversity player introduces that is still relevant must contribute to each exchange. The adversity player must put forward adversity from at least one trait for each story element with active traits.

The viewpoint player must have at least one trait from the viewpoint character contribute to every exchange. Additionally, if the viewpoint player introduce other characters into the chapter, at least one trait from each of them must contribute if they have any active traits.
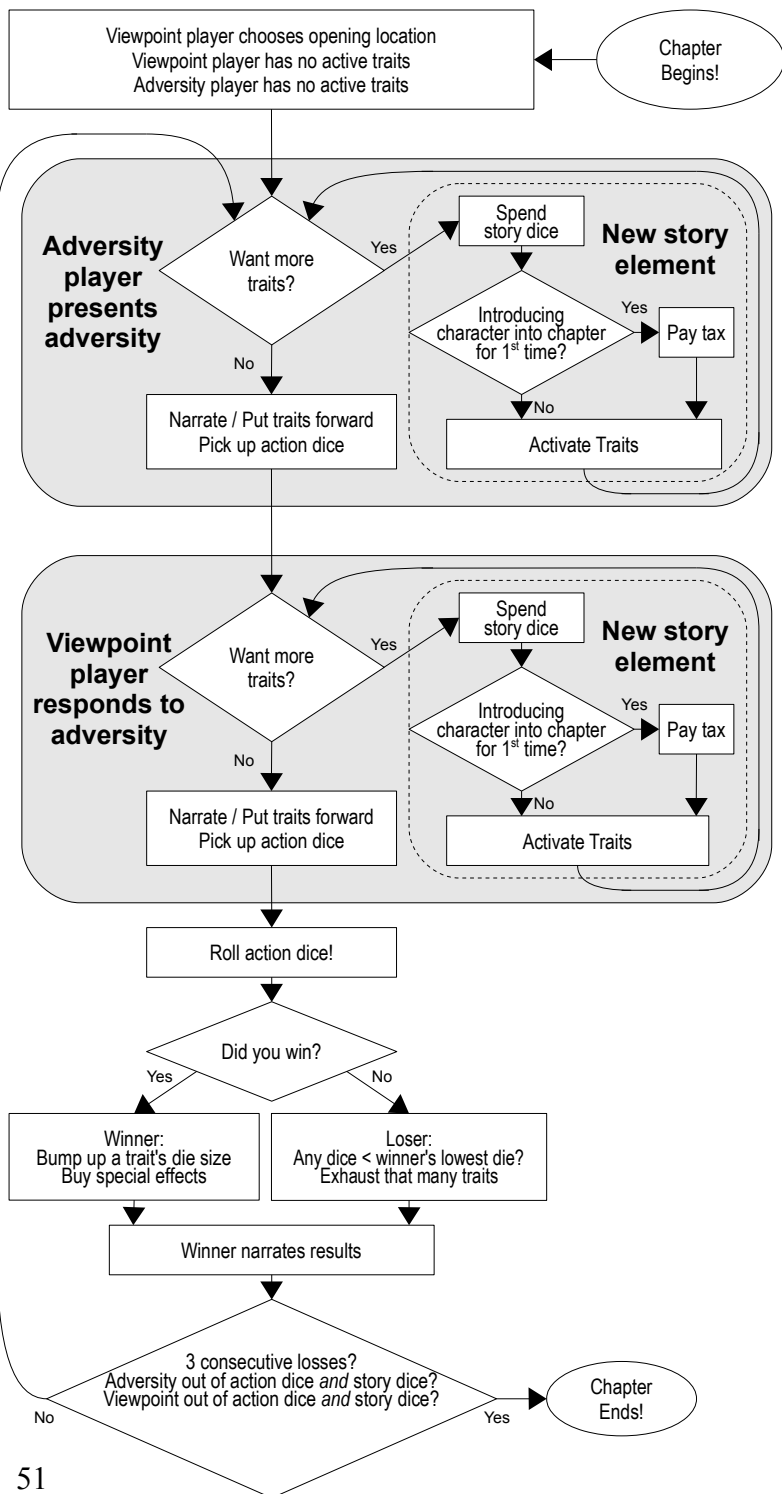
What If I Have No Active Traits?

You need to roll dice for every exchange. If it's your turn to put forward traits in an exchange but you can't meet the minimum requirements for what you need to put forward, spend story dice to get traits you can use. If you don't have any active traits or story dice left you automatically lose the exchange and the chapter.

Spending Story Dice

Story dice are used to introduce story elements – characters or environmental hazards – into a chapter. The viewpoint player may only introduce characters with story dice, but the adversity player can introduce either type. A story die buys different story elements based on the number that was rolled on it before the chapter started. A die showing 15 to 20 can activate up to four traits on a character (see **Using Characters in a Chapter**). A 10 to 14 can activate up to two traits on a character, or introduce an active environmental threat (see **Using Environmental Threats in a Chapter**). A 1 to 9 can activate a single trait on a character, or introduce a passive environmental threat.

1 to 9	Passive Environmental Threat *or* 1 Character Trait
10 to 14	Active Environmental Threat *or* 2 Character Traits
15 to 20	4 Character Traits

Once introduced, an environmental threat or character trait stays active until it is exhausted in an exchange or the chapter ends. You can use story dice to introduce brand new things to the chapter, or reactivate traits that have previously been exhausted.

Viewpoint player chooses opening location
Viewpoint player has no active traits
Adversity player has no active traits

Chapter Begins!

Adversity player presents adversity

Want more traits?

Yes → Spend story dice

New story element

Introducing character into chapter for 1st time? — Yes → Pay tax

No ↓ Activate Traits

No → Narrate / Put traits forward
Pick up action dice

Viewpoint player responds to adversity

Want more traits?

Yes → Spend story dice

New story element

Introducing character into chapter for 1st time? — Yes → Pay tax

No ↓ Activate Traits

No → Narrate / Put traits forward
Pick up action dice

Roll action dice!

Did you win?

Yes → Winner:
Bump up a trait's die size
Buy special effects

No → Loser:
Any dice < winner's lowest die?
Exhaust that many traits

Winner narrates results

3 consecutive losses?
Adversity out of action dice *and* story dice?
Viewpoint out of action dice *and* story dice?

No

Yes → Chapter Ends!

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Using Environmental Threats

The adversity player may introduce problems stemming from the chapter's location or environment. Environmental threats only have a single trait: the threat's name. A *passive* threat (such as a chasm that needs to be crossed, bitterly cold weather, or emotional turmoil) is introduced as a d4 trait. A passive threat is problematic because of its very existence – it wouldn't be a problem if the viewpoint character didn't care about getting past it. An *active* threat (such as nameless monsters that don't warrant being full characters, or a raging windstorm) is introduced as a d6 trait. An active threat has, or seems to have, anthropomorphic properties and the ability to actively work against the viewpoint character. Once introduced, an environmental threat must be included in every exchange until it is exhausted.

| Passive Environmental Threat: **d4** | Active Environmental Threat: **d6** |

Using Characters in a Chapter

Either player can use characters in a chapter (in fact, the viewpoint player *must* use the viewpoint character in every exchange – and introducing PCs costs story dice just like any character). A Character has four traits and each one is independently either *active* or *exhausted*. Only active traits can be used for mechanical effect in the chapter (but exhausted traits can be activated again). The initial die size of a freshly activated trait is determined by the number of traits currently active on a character: If there are none active, the new trait enters play at d8. If there are one or two active, the new trait starts at d6. If there are three active, the new trait enters play at d4. When you activate multiple traits with one story die, activate them one at a time in whatever order you choose (which determines starting die sizes).

1st trait: **d8**	2nd trait: **d6**	3rd trait: **d6**	4th trait: **d4**

Peter spends a story die showing 12 to introduce the *Heinrich the Bandit* and activate two of his traits: *Clever Traps* at d8 and *Crossbow* at d6. On the first exchange, *Clever Traps* gets exhausted. Next exchange, Peter wants to use that trait again, so he spends a story die showing 4 to activate it. Since Heinrich already has one active trait (*Crossbow* at d6), the newly activated *Clever Traps* comes in at d6, giving Peter two d6 traits to use.

The first time that a character is used in a chapter you may not be able to activate as many traits as the story dice normally allow due to the *distance tax*, *plausibility tax*, and *creation tax* (See **Paying Tax** below). You may use multiple story dice to activate traits on a single character, but you may not introduce a character if you can't afford to activate at least one trait after paying the tax. Once introduced, a character must contribute at least one trait to every exchange until all of his or her traits are exhausted. See **Friends and Foes** below for some additional

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factors which restrict which characters may be introduced into a chapter in this way.

Paying Tax

Whenever a character is first introduced into a chapter, whether PC or NPC, there is a possibility that the story die used to introduce the character will not purchase as many active traits as normal. The various taxes are an incentive to maintain continuity in the story – they make it more expensive to introduce characters in ways that don't make sense. That doesn't mean that surprise twists aren't allowed in the game, but it does reward consistency so those twists can have a dramatic impact when they *do* happen. Players who are interested in mechanical strategy will also notice that taxes contribute pros and cons to the their decisions to spend story dice on environmental threats or characters, the decision to introduce a new characters or reuse an existing one, and even the decision of which particular characters to use into a chapter.

Fred wins viewpoint with a roll of 14. Annie wins adversity with a roll of 12, 10, 3. Fred points to a mountain pass on the map and says the chapter will begin there, reminding Annie that his character Olaf is in the second phase of his "find the lost *Sword of Ages*" subplot.

Annie decides to spend her 10 on an active threat: *orcs*. She says, "As you're moving through the pass, you notice some cave entrances. From the depths of one of them you hear the guttural battle cries of an orcish raiding party as they charge out at you!" She picks up a d6 for her active threat.

Fred says, "OK, I'm spending my 14 to activate some traits on Olaf. Let's see if there's any tax, first, though." He checks the charts...

Distance Tax

The distance tax is required whenever a character is introduced into a chapter and was established in a different location in a previous chapter. If the character was previously *nearby*, there is no distance tax. If the character would have needed a *short journey* to get to the current location, activate one less trait than usual. If a *long journey* would have been needed to get to the location, activate two less traits.

Tax	Distance
0	Nearby
1	Short Journey
2	Long Journey

Consulting the map, Fred and Annie agree that the pass is a short journey from from where Olaf was at the end of his last chapter, which means Fred must pay a distance tax of 1.

Plausibility Tax

The plausibility tax is required whenever a character appears in a chapter where you wouldn't normally expect. If it is *reasonable and expected* for the character to appear in this chapter (such as a king in his throne room) there is no plausibility tax. If it is *plausible but unexpected* for the character to appear (such as a king in the woods on a hunting trip), activate one less trait than usual. If it is *possible but surprising* for the character to appear (for example, a king in the dungeon of his worst enemy), activate two less traits. If it would be impossible for the character to appear, they may not be introduced.

Tax	Plausibility
0	Reasonable and expected
1	Plausible but unexpected
2	Possible but surprising

Everyone agrees that it's reasonable and expected for Olaf to be in the pass since it's the most obvious path to the last known location of the ancient relic Olaf is searching for. Since it's reasonable and expected for Olaf to be here there's no plausibility tax.

Creation Tax

The creation tax is required whenever a character is introduced into the story that hasn't previously had traits defined (Since the PCs are all defined before the first chapter, this tax is only paid to create NPCs). When you introduce a new NPC for the first time, define all four traits even if you're not activating all of them. If the new character is *directly mentioned* in a seed then one less trait than usual is activated. If the character isn't mentioned but is *implied by* a seed, or has been mentioned or implied by the story that has been developed so far, then two less traits than usual are activated. For example, if one of the seeds mentions a prince, that *implies* that there is a king. If a character has been facing adversity from a tribe of barbarians, it is *implied* that there is a barbarian chieftain. If the character being introduced is a *dark mirror* of an existing character (See **Dark Mirror** below) activate two less traits than usual. You can also introduce any character you want, without relationship to the established fiction, by activating four less traits than usual.

Tax	Creation
1	Directly mentioned on a seed
2	Implied by a seed or previous fiction
2	Dark Mirror
4	Any character you want

Since Olaf already exists as a character there's no creation tax. Fred spent a 14 to activate traits on Olaf, which would normally give two traits, but one of those goes to pay the distance tax for the short journey from the last place Olaf appeared in the story. Fred activates Olaf's *Mighty Hammer* at d8. He says, "With a battle cry of

his own, Olaf charges at the orcs, swinging his hammer with skull-cracking strength." Fred rolls his d8 and gets a 5. Annie rolls the d6 for her *orcs* and gets a 4. Fred wins! Annie's *orcs* are exhausted. Fred says, "Olaf lays into the orcs, felling them one after the other. As the corpses begin to pile up the rest realize they're no match for Olaf and they retreat back to their cave."

Dark Mirror

A useful technique in fantasy fiction is to explore themes by having characters who are in some ways identical but in other ways are polar opposites. You can achieve this contrast in *Storied Age* by introducing a *dark mirror* character. Dark mirrors aren't doppelgangers or evil twins, they are independent characters that happen to have strong points of comparison and contrast with other characters in the story. To introduce a dark mirror character, select an existing character as a starting point, copy some traits over exactly, and replace one or two traits with thematic opposites.

Annie looks at her remaining story dice of 10 and 3 and thinks about what kind of adversity she can throw at Fred's character Olaf. She'd like to introduce a character, but none of the existing characters feel like a good fit for what she'd like to do, so she decides to create a new NPC. She comes up with the idea of a religious leader for the orcs, and decides to do so by creating a dark mirror of the supporting character Sarena the elven priestess. She looks at Sarena's traits *Priestess*, *Crystal Pendant*, *Wise Beyond Her Years*, and *Elven Grace*. She decides to keep the *Priestess* trait and flip *Elven Grace* to *Orcish Strength*. She thinks about the other two traits and realizes she doesn't like the feel of a character who is either foolish or elderly, so she keeps *Wise Beyond Her Years* the same, too. To create an opposite for *Crystal Pendant* she still wants to keep it in the realm of jewelry that showcases the wearer's personality, but wants something rough and visceral instead of cool and smooth. She settles on *Necklace of Human Ears*. She givers her

NPC the name Griska the orcish priestess. Since this is the first time the character is appearing in a chapter, Annie has to pay tax. Since it's a dark mirror character, the creation tax is 2, but since the character hasn't been in any chapters before there's no distance tax. Everyone agrees that it's reasonable and expected for an orcish priestess to be in a location where other orcs have already been established. Annie's 10 would normally activate two traits and her 3 would normally activate one. She spends both of her dice and, after the tax of two, Annie can activate one trait. She decides to activate *Orcish Strength,* and since the character currently has no active traits it comes in at d8.

Friends and Foes

The viewpoint player may only bring in NPCs that have alignment tracks that are neutral or are aligned with the viewpoint character. The adversity player can only bring in NPCs that are neutral or are aligned against the viewpoint character.

Other PCs may be brought into a chapter, but only if the controlling player consents to it. Note that the restriction on using aligned characters as sources of adversity only applies to NPCs. Using friendly PCs as sources of adversity for the viewpoint character can be a fun way to add texture and nuance to a story. Remember that outright antagonism isn't the only valid source of adversity – the confusing feelings of a budding romance, the demands a mentor places on a student, or a friendly rivalry are all challenges for a character to overcome. Introducing another player's PC into a chapter is often a good opportunity to have that player help contribute to the chapter – see **Deputizing Other Players** for more.

Limits on Narration

Winning an exchange lets you narrate the result, but what you can say is bounded by the scope of the chapter. The narrated results must respect the continued relevance of traits or characters that are mechanically available for future exchanges. For example, you shouldn't describe your character killing all of the orcs that are attacking you if the other player still has an active d6 to roll for the orcs – you can kill *some* of them and look cool doing it, you just can't use narration to undercut something that you or your opponent paid story dice to introduce into the story. By contrast, an environmental threat that is exhausted *isn't* mechanically relevant for future exchanges, so permanently triumphing over it is fair game if you win narration.

Characters have continuing mechanical relevance even when their traits are exhausted. Because characters interact with the tax system, reintroducing an already-established character is mechanically different from bringing in a completely fresh character. It's usually best to use transient, easily-reversed situations when narrating a character trait's exhaustion. For example, you might narrate knocking the sword from a character's hand when his *Swordsman* trait is exhausted, with the understanding that the opposing player will narrate the sword being picked back up if *Swordsman* is reactivated for a later exchange. However, if you manage to exhaust *all* of an opposing character's traits during a chapter, you may wish to incorporate a narrative special effect, as explained below.

Some chapters focus on one time and place, some follow characters to different scenes. Respecting your opponent's dice usually guides this element of narration. If you're the viewpoint player and manage to exhaust all of the adversity player's traits, feel free to narrate the action of the chapter to a new location, although not to one that would cost more than one trait's worth of tax if your character had to be reintroduced there.

Playing Chapters Rules Summary

- One exchange:
  - Adversity player presents adversity, picks up action dice.
  - Viewpoint player responds, picks up action dice.
  - Roll the dice to determine the outcome.
- Get action dice by describing story events that concretely demonstrate active character traits or environmental threats.
- Spend story dice to activate traits or environmental threats.
  - The first time you activate traits on each character in a chapter (PC or NPC) check to see if any taxes apply.
- When you roll the action dice in an exchange, the side that has the die with the highest number showing wins.
  - On ties, compare the next highest die.
  - *Having* a next highest die beats not having one.
  - If you're perfectly tied the adversity player wins.
- Winner bumps up die size of one trait in exchange (max d8).
- Losing player counts number of dice *less than* winner's lowest die and exhausts that many traits. If all of the dice are greater than or equal to winner's lowest die then none get exhausted.
  - If you roll one die it's both your highest *and* lowest.
- Winner narrates results of exchange.
  - The bumped-up and exhausted traits are helpful guides.
- Keep the narration within the scope of the chapter, and respect things that are still mechanically relevant.
- If one side loses three in a row, or one side is completely out of active traits and story dice, the chapter ends.
- Keep doing exchanges until chapter ends
  - All exchanges are the same: adversity player presents, etc.

Narrative Special Effects

If you win an exchange and would like your narration to go beyond what is normally possible according to the "respect the mechanical relevance" rule, you can spend story dice to purchase some special mechanical effects that increase the scope of what is allowed. Each choice explains the cost in story dice, paid at the same rate as character trait activations, as well as the conditions under which it can be used. The narration must concretely demonstrate the in-fiction results of the mechanical effect.

Modify A Character On Your Side

If the opposing player is ever reduced to zero active traits, you may spend story dice equivalent to activating one trait to modify a character with an active trait under your control. You may completely rewrite one trait, apply minor tweaks to several traits, move one step along the alignment track, or modify a "traveling together" relationship.

Modify A Character On Opposing Side

If an opposing character is reduced to zero active traits, you may spend story dice equivalent to activating one trait to modify that character. You may completely rewrite one trait, apply minor tweaks to several traits, move one step along the alignment track, or modify a "traveling together" relationship.

Traveling Together

If two characters are traveling together, whenever one of them is introduced into a chapter, the other may be introduced without paying any distance or plausibility tax. You may choose to stop traveling together whenever you want for free, but must pay to begin traveling together or forcibly break a relationship of this type.

Modifying PCs

You may use narrative special effects to modify NPCs whenever the conditions are satisfied, but you must get the owning player's consent to use any of these options on a PC.

Impeding, Thwarting, or Killing NPCs

In the same situations in which you'd be able to modify an NPC's traits, you can spend spend story dice to make it harder to bring that particular NPC back into the story (i.e. require a higher tax to re-introduce them). For the equivalent of one trait an NPC may be *impeded*. It is automatically considered at least unexpected for an impeded NPC to be re-introduced in this or later chapters. This option can be used for situations such as an NPC being stuck on the wrong side of a collapsed bridge.

For the equivalent of two traits, an NPC may be *thwarted*. It is automatically considered *surprising* for a thwarted NPC to be introduced in a later chapter. This option is useful for scenarios like the NPC appearing to fall into a bottomless chasm, as long as there is enough ambiguity so that it would only be a *surprise* if they came back, not a continuity-killer.

For the equivalent of four traits, an NPC may be killed or permanently defeated. The NPC can't be introduced again.

Cost	Narrative Special Effect
1	Modify a character's trait(s)
1	Modify a character's alignment
1	Start or stop traveling together
1	Impede an NPC (*unexpected* to see again)
2	Thwart an NPC (*surprising* to see again)
4	Kill an NPC (never introduced again)

Quick-Reference Sheet

In order to make finding information during play easier, the quick-reference sheet at the end of the game includes all of the information from the tax and narrative special effects tables on a single page, and also includes the flowcharts that show the **Starting Chapters** and **Playing Chapters** procedures.

Deputizing Other Players

Usually, the viewpoint or adversity players are the only ones actively participating in a chapter. However, whenever either an active threat or a character is brought into a chapter, the introducing player may ask one of the inactive players to take responsibility for that story element. The deputized player is responsible for narrating that story element's contributions to the chapter and for rolling the associated dice. The individual player who rolls the highest wins the exchange for their side, but may only increase the die sizes of traits that they contributed to the exchange. Additionally, any player who would have lost to a player on the opposing side if they had been playing one-on-one (i.e. your highest die is lower than their highest die) must exhaust traits as if they had lost the exchange, even if their side won overall. Regardless of who rolled the die that won the exchange for a side the viewpoint or adversity player should take the lead on narrating the result – the deputies are there to help, not to take over completely.

Peter is the viewpoint player and Annie is the adversity. Annie introduces a *deep chasm* passive threat at d4, and then asks Fred if he wants to play a d6 active threat *band of marauding orcs*. Fred, always eager to employ his orcish battlecry, readily agrees, and the two of them describe the challenge that Peter's character faces as the orcs try to drive him into the chasm. Peter decides to respond with his *Brilliant Tactician* d6 and *Flaming Sword* d8, describing his clever maneuvers and magic-empowered strikes. They roll! Annie gets a 3. Fred gets a 6. Peter gets a 5 and a 4. Fred's 6 wins it for the adversity side, and Fred gets to bump his orcs up to d8. Both of Peter's dice are less than Fred's lowest die of 6, so he must exhaust both of his traits. Annie's 3 is also less than Peter's lowest die of 4, so she must exhaust her trait, too.

The viewpoint player must always play his own viewpoint character and contribute at least one of his traits to each exchange, and the adversity player must always contribute at least one die to each exchange. If either player can't satisfy this requirement on his own (even if he has a deputy that has active traits) then the opposing side wins the chapter.

Annie has no story dice left. Even though Fred's orcs are still active, she is unable to provide adversity so Peter wins the chapter!

Interpreting the dice is slightly more complicated when using this option, so make sure the entire group is comfortable using the standard two-player chapter rules before trying it.

Ending the Chapter

If an exchange ends and the adversity player has no active traits and no story dice to activate more, the viewpoint player wins the chapter and narrates the conclusion. If the adversity player has traits or story dice but the viewpoint player doesn't then the adversity player wins and narrates the conclusion. If either player loses three exchanges in a row then the other player wins and narrates the chapter conclusion. Winning a chapter gives different benefits based on the player's role: Winning as the viewpoint player advances your plot, winning as the adversity player gives you new dice on your plot track.

Advancing a Plot or Subplot

Winning a chapter as viewpoint player lets you advance one phase along your plot track. It takes three phases to complete a plot segment or subplot. If appropriate, include details about completing the segment or subplot when narrating the chapter conclusion. In addition, a player completing a plot segment or subplot can implement a narrative special effect equivalent to two traits worth of story dice to achieve any effects needed to bring the mechanics into line with the plot outline (e.g. thwarting an NPC, performing trait updates on two characters to transfer an important item from one character to another, etc.).

Add Dice to Plot Track

If the adversity player wins the chapter, he or she marks a new die available for an uncompleted plot track phase of his or her choice. For each phase, the d10 must be selected before the d12, and the d12 before the d20.

Clean Slate for the Next Chapter

Unused story dice and active traits don't carry forward to later chapters. Chapters start with a clean slate of dice and traits.

Example Chapters

Peter

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☒	d10 d10
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐	d20 d10

Plot	☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☒☒☒☒☒☐☐☐☐
d12	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☒☒

Praxiteles

Blademaster
Razor's Edge
Steely Gaze
Tender Hearted

Annie

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☐	d10 d10
Antagonist ☒	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐	d20 d10

Plot	☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12	☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒
d10	☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Queen Arachnia

Spider Queen
Cold Beauty
Magical Weavings
Poisonous Lies

Susan

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☐	d10 d10
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☒	d20 d10

Plot	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12	☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10	☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒

Sorcia Moonsinger

Enchanting Song
Elven Grace
Imperious Manner
Lore of her People

Susan: It's time for a new chapter, let's roll for viewpoint.

[Peter rolls 12. Annie rolls 8. Susan rolls 8, 5.]

Peter: OK, it's my chapter. You two roll for adversity.

[Annie rolls 12, 12, 3. Susan rolls 10,2.]

Peter: Annie's the adversity, eh? Well, Praxiteles is working on the "Find the Crown of Ages" plot, and he's heading into the Dreadwood.

Annie: The Dreadwood, eh? Let me think for a minute... So, you start to head into the Dreadwood but you quickly discover that the path is blocked by thick, sticky spiderwebs. I'm spending my 3 to put that in as a passive environment, a d4.

Peter: I'll spend my 12. We were right on the edge of the Dreadwood in the last chapter, so I don't think I need to pay any tax. That gives me two traits. Let's go with Blademaster at d8 and Razor's Edge at d6. A few spiderwebs will be no

match for Praxiteles' razor sharp blade! I've got a d6.

[Peter rolls a 3. Annie rolls a 4.]

Peter: Damn, I've got to exhaust a trait. I only rolled Razor's Edge, so I guess that's the one.

Annie: And I'll advance the webs to d6. You try to slice through the webs, but the sticky gunk starts building up on your sword, gumming up the edge so it can't cut cleanly. If you want to get into the woods, you're going to get past these webs. That's d6.

Peter: Even without a perfect edge, I'm still a master with the weapon. I strike harder, using brute force to cut through. That's my Blademaster at d8.

[Peter rolls 5. Annie rolls 2.]

Annie: Well, that exhausts the webs so I guess you'll be getting through.

Peter: Definitely! With sweat streaming from his brow, Praxiteles breaks through the webs and starts moving toward the heart of the forest. Blademaster is already at d8, so it can't go any higher.

Annie: OK, but I'll spend a 12 to introduce an active threat, Giant Spiders, d6. You hear the swishing and clicking of chitinous legs as the spiders crawl down from the trees toward you. They're not happy about what you did to their webs!

Peter: Praxiteles smiles, happy to have a live target for his blade instead of a mass of sticky gunk. I'm rolling d8.

[Peter rolls 5. Annie rolls 2.]

Annie: Aw man, I had high hopes for those guys...

Peter: Heh heh heh. Praxiteles charges the spiders, slicing off legs, splitting open abdomens and spilling out their guts. That's

two losses for you, now, right?

Annie: Sure, rub it in. Well, I'll spend my last 12 to introduce Queen Arachnia herself. She was over in Cloudkeep the last time we saw her, so I think that's a short journey, and we know that the Dreadwood is one of her places of power, so it's not really unexpected, right?

Peter: Yeah, I fully expected her by this point.

Annie: OK, start with two, reduce by one for the distance tax... that leaves me with only one trait, and I'm going with Spider Queen. She calls out to you, "Foolish man, do you not know that my minions are beyond number?" You hear eight thousand legs scuttling through the forest toward you. I've got a d8.

Peter: Well, I don't scare easily, and I won't pass up this opportunity. You've got one angry blademaster coming at you, sword at the ready. I've got a d8, too. Roll it!

[Peter rolls 3. Annie rolls 2]

Peter: Bam! That'll exhaust your Spider Queen, so... Arachnia stumbles backwards under a rain of blows, barely able to defend herself. She turns and runs into the forest, humiliated, slipping through her minions' webs. Praxiteles, tired from fighting the spiders, stops and stares daggers at her as she disappears out of sight.

Annie: That's three losses in a row for me. Plus, to add insult to injury, I'm out of traits. Either way that's the end of the chapter.

Peter: Sweet. I'll advance my plot.

Peter			Annie			Susan		

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☒	d10 d10
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐	d20 d10

Plot	☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☒☒☒☒☒☒☐☐☐
d12	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10	☐☐☐☐☐☐☒☒☒

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☐	d10 d10
Antagonist ☒	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐	d20 d10

Plot	☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12	☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒
d10	☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☐	d10 d10
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☒	d20 d10

Plot	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12	☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10	☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒

Praxiteles

Blademaster
Razor's Edge
Steely Gaze
Tender Hearted

Queen Arachnia

Spider Queen
Cold Beauty
Magical Weavings
Poisonous Lies

Sorcia Moonsinger

Enchanting Song
Elven Grace
Imperious Manner
Lore of her People

Susan: Is everybody ready to roll viewpoint for the next chapter?

[Peter rolls 19. Annie rolls 2. Susan rolls 9.]

Peter: OK, it's me again. Who's the adversity player?

[Annie rolls 11, 5, 5. Susan rolls 17, 10]

Susan: Looks like it's me.

Peter: All right. I'm still in the Dreadwood, and if I win this chapter that will complete my Find the Crown of Ages segment.

Susan: OK, I'll start off by using that 10 to introduce a group of wood elf hunters, an active environmental threat, d6. In the distance you hear arrows piercing the bodies of the rest of Arachnia's spider minions, and a group of tall elves with tattoo-covered skin enters the clearing with their bows drawn.

Peter: And I use my 19 to activate all four of my traits. I'll put Steely Gaze at d8, Tender Hearted at d6, Razor's Edge at d6, and Blademaster at d4. Being Tender Hearted, I don't want to fight them if I can help it. I'll fix them with my Steely Gaze, hoping to intimidate them.

[Peter rolls 5, 3. Susan rolls 4.]

Susan: You win, but my 4 isn't less than your 3, so no exhaustion.

Peter: They pause, clearly seeing that Praxiteles is a formidable warrior. I'll advance my Tender Hearted to d8.

Susan: They may have paused, but they're still surrounding you with bows drawn. They say, "Your kind are not allowed in these woods." Still a d6.

Peter: I'm still staring them down, but I hold up my sword showing them I mean business. "I don't want to fight you, but I will if I have to." That's d8 from the gaze, and d6 from Razor's Edge.

[Peter rolls 5,2. Susan rolls 2.]

Peter: OK, I win, but I still don't exhaust them. I'll bump Razor's Edge up to d8. They're suitably impressed by my sword and lower their bows, ready to hear me out. That's two wins for me, right? I kick ass in the Dreadwood.

Susan: Is that so? I'll spend my 17 to bring in Luanna the Elven Huntmistress. I think that qualifies as implied by the fiction, right? The leader of these elves?

Peter: Sounds fair to me.

Susan: OK. Let's say she's got the traits Piercing Warcry, Elven Grace, Humble Steward, and Peerless Tracker. With a creation tax of two from the *implied-by*, I've still got two traits to activate. I'll go with Elven Grace at d8 and Humble Steward at d6. You try to step past the hunters, but they part before you and this savage yet beautiful elf woman steps forward from behind them. She says, "We do not wish to fight you if we can avoid it, but caring for the wood is my responsibility, and I won't allow you free rein here." That's her Humble Steward at d6, and the hunting party is still there backing her up at d6.

Peter: OK, Praxiteles is Tender Hearted so he can see that she's clearly just doing her job. I hold up my sword, and say, "I've given you fair warning. Don't try to stop me." That's d8 from Tender Hearted and d8 from Blademaster.

[Peter rolls 5, 2. Susan rolls 6, 5.]

Peter: Ouch. Bye bye, Tender Hearted.

Susan: OK, I'll bump the elves up to d8. "We have guarded these woods for ages beyond memory, human. We shall not back down." Let's see here... She says, "You're not the only one with a weapon, outsider." She flicks her wrist and some sort of vine whip comes at you. She's using her Elven Grace in her attack. That's a d6, and the other elves come at you from the side, d8.

Peter: I say, "I won't be beaten that easily." Never breaking eye contact, I slash out with my sword to cut the whip in half. That's Steely Gaze d8 and Blademaster d4.

[Peter rolls 4, 2. Susan rolls 6, 6]

Susan: Gaze and Blademaster exhausted, huh? Well, you certainly try to slice it, but the whip seems to come at you from every direction as she's moving around you like a dancer, almost faster than you can track, delivering shots you can't predict. The whip wraps around your body, pinning your arms so you can't use your standard moves. I'll bump her Elven Grace up to d8. She moves effortlessly toward you, her body language telling you that you're completely outclassed. Her elves, still eyeing your sword, close in, too. That's her grace and her elves, two d8s.

Peter: Like you said, I've still got Razor's Edge, and I'm trying to cut my way free. I'm rolling d8.

[Peter rolls 5. Susan rolls 6, 2]

Peter: Well, that's three strikes for me.

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Susan: OK, Praxiteles feels a quiver of fear in his stomach, wondering if he's finally met a foe that he can't beat. She smiles confidently, waiting for his next move. And that's how we close the chapter.

Peter: Nice.

Susan: I'll take the d20 viewpoint die for the phase I'm working on.

Peter

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☒	d10 d10
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐	d20 d10

Plot	☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☒☒☒☒☒☒☐☐☐
d12	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☒☒☒

Praxiteles

Blademaster
Razor's Edge
Steely Gaze
Tender Hearted

Annie

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☐	d10 d10
Antagonist ☒	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐	d20 d10

Plot	☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12	☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒
d10	☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Queen Arachnia

Spider Queen
Cold Beauty
Magical Weavings
Poisonous Lies

Susan

Story Role	Adversity Dice
Protagonist ☐	d10 d10
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☒	d20 d10

Plot	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12	☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10	☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒

Sorcia Moonsinger

Enchanting Song
Elven Grace
Imperious Manner
Lore of her People

Annie: OK, new chapter. Everybody roll viewpoint!

[Peter rolls 3. Annie rolls 11. Susan rolls 10, 9, 2.]

Annie: I'm up. Who's adversity?

[Peter rolls 4, 2. Susan rolls 12, 7.]

Susan: I am.

Annie: I'm working on my "Unlock Hidden Power" plot. I was just in the Dreadwood, and that still works for me.

Susan: OK. I'll spend the 7 to introduce the passive threat of your humiliation at the hands of Praxiteles a few chapters back. That's d4. You're still fuming at being so powerless against him.

Annie: I'll spend my 11 to activate Spider Queen at d8 and... Hmm... Let's go with Poisonous Lies at d6. Because she can lie to herself, too. She only lost because she was conserving her power for the task in front of her. I'm rolling d6.

Peter: Heh heh, nice.

[Annie rolls 3. Susan rolls 2]

Susan: The humiliation is exhausted.

Annie: She's convinced herself. I'll raise Poisonous Lies to d8.

Susan: She may have convinced herself, but what about her minions? I'll spend my 12 to bring some spiders in as an active threat. Arachnia sees some spiders that were wounded in the combat. They're dragging themselves along the ground, and she can tell that they're questioning their choice to follow her, d6.

Annie: Their blood paves the way for my ascension! I'm still using Poisonous Lies, so d8.

[Annie rolls 1. Susan rolls 5]

Annie: Well that knocks out my lies.

Susan: I'll bump the spiders up to d8. Some of your spider minions walk out of the forest toward you. In their chittering language, they explain that although they're devoted to you, they fear they don't have the strength to do what you demand of them, as demonstrated by their losses to the elves and the swordsman.

Annie: Their fears are irrelevant! I am the Spider Queen and demand complete obedience! I stare at them, waiting for them to submit to my authority. I'm rolling d8.

[Annie rolls 6. Susan rolls 6.]

Susan: Tie! I win.

Annie: But I'm not exhausted.

Susan: I guess there's a bit of a staredown. Please, Arachnia, let us gather our strength before pressing forward with your plans! I'm still rolling a d8.

Annie: You dare question my decisions? A d8 from Spider Queen.

[Annie rolls 5. Susan rolls 3.]

Annie: They bow before my obvious authority, and I order them to carry me to the center of the forest, basically giving them a really demeaning task as punishment for questioning my will. I'm already at max so I can't increase my trait anymore.

Susan: Yup. But it doesn't matter anyway, because I'm out of stuff to throw at you. You win the chapter.

Annie: Nice. I advance my plot, which finishes off my "Unlock Hidden Power" segment. They take me to the center of the forest, where there's this huge ceremonial fountain, and all of the spiders from the entire forest gather there. They all milk their venom into the fountain and I bathe in it. I'll use my free narrative special effect to rewrite my stats, and change Spider Queen to Spider Goddess.

Peter: Awesome!

Susan: Yeah, that was good. Ready for the next chapter?

Peter			Annie			Susan		
Story Role	**Adversity Dice**		**Story Role**	**Adversity Dice**		**Story Role**	**Adversity Dice**	
Protagonist ☒	d10 d10		Protagonist ☐	d10 d10		Protagonist ☐	d10 d10	
Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12		Antagonist ☒	d12 d12 d12		Antagonist ☐	d12 d12 d12	
Supporting ☐	d20 d10		Supporting ☐	d20 d10		Supporting ☒	d20 d10	

Peter	Annie	Susan
Plot ☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	Plot ☒☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐	Plot ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☐☐☐	d20 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	d20 ☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	d12 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒	d12 ☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☒☒☒	d10 ☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	d10 ☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒☒

Praxiteles	Queen Arachnia	Sorcia Moonsinger
Blademaster	Spider Goddess	Enchanting Song
Razor's Edge	Cold Beauty	Elven Grace
Steely Gaze	Magical Weavings	Imperious Manner
Tender Hearted	Poisonous Lies	Lore of her People

Susan: Roll for viewpoint.

[Peter rolls 5. Annie rolls 11. Susan rolls 11, 10, 3.]

Susan: Woohoo, I get a chapter.

Peter: Let's see who's playing adversity.

[Peter rolls 8, 4. Annie rolls 9, 7, 4.]

Peter: Oh, so close! Annie's up. Where does the chapter start?

Susan: The Dreadwood seems to be where the action is, and there are elves there, so I may as well go there too. I'm working on my "Gather The Elven Army" subplot.

Annie: OK, who was that elf NPC you created earlier? Hand me the sheet you wrote up... All right, I'll use my 7 to activate one of Luanna the Huntmistress's traits. I think I'll go with the Piercing Warcry. You hear a wood elf battle cry as she charges at you, ready to take vengeance for the wrongs she thinks your people have committed against hers. That's d8.

Susan: I'll use my 3 to activate my Imperious Manner, so I can intimidate her into not fighting.

Annie: Wait a second, I think there's some tax here. The last time we saw Sorcia she was way over in the Golden Halls of Highgarden.

Susan: You're right, let's call that a long journey. That's a distance tax of two, so I'll use my 10 to cover the tax and the 3 for the trait.

Peter: Yeah, but the wood elves hate the high elves, so I think it's at least unexpected for her to be here. Maybe even surprising.

Susan: I'm trying to build an army of all elves, not just high elves.

Peter: OK, that makes sense, but I think it's still unexpected that she'd start here rather than with her own kind of elves.

Susan: Yeah, that's fair, let's call it unexpected. I'll hold on to my 3 and spend my 10 and 11, and that will cover the tax for distance and plausibility and still give let me activate Imperious Manner at d8.

Annie: OK, let's roll it.

[Susan rolls 7. Annie rolls 3.]

Susan: Luanna stops short when she sees Sorcia staring at her haughtily.

Annie: Yes, but as she's standing there she's seething with resentment, remembering every time that her people have knuckled under to yours. Eventually her hatred boils over. She cries out, even more savagely than before! I'll spend my 4 to bring her warcry back at d8. She runs toward you, her face twisted in rage as she screams.

Susan: Well that's not good... Hey, Peter, you want to help me out?

Peter: Sure. What did you have in mind?

Susan: I'm thinking I can give you this 3 to activate Praxiteles. The

last time we saw Luanna she was right there with him and they hadn't exactly settled things. I figure that I came in and interrupted that.

Peter: OK. I'll activate Blademaster at d8 and call out to Luanna, "You would fight an unarmed worman? Have you no honor? Face me instead!"

Susan: Great. Let's roll!

[Susan rolls 1. Peter rolls 7. Annie rolls 8.]

Susan: Ouch!

Annie: Oh, wow. I clobbered you both. Luanna uses her vine whip to wrap up your legs and pulls you off your feet, and you go head over heels and land in an undignified lump. Praxiteles, still unarmed from the earlier chapter, can only stand there, powerless to stop it.

Susan: And you win the chapter, since I'm out of traits on Sorcia and I'm out of story dice.

Annie: Cool. Oh, and I've still got this 9 sitting here, so I may as well buy a special effect. Let's change Luanna's alignment. She may not be a spider worshiper, but she certainly hates the humans and high elves, so I think she's ideologically aligned with me. Luanna stands over you, gloating about how easily she bested you. And I win the chapter, so I'll take the d10 for my fourth plot phase

Part V: Ending the Game

When either the protagonist or antagonist completes his or her third plot segment the story is over. In order to narrate the ending, determine the progress that other players made on their plot threads and subplots. A supporting character aligned with the victorious protagonist or antagonist who has a completed subplot may state one positive (from their perspective) change that happens in the world – a minor change if ideologically aligned with the winner, a major change if personally aligned. If the antagonist's plot thread completed, he or she gets to narrate the denouement of the story. If the protagonist's plot thread was completed, he or she gets to narrate the denouement, but the antagonist may get to impose some conditions based on how much progress he or she made on the antagonist's plot thread. If the Antagonist wasn't able to complete any plot segments, it's a happy ending for the protagonist and no concessions are required. If the antagonist successfully completed one plot segment, it's a slightly bittersweet ending: One minor concession regarding either the protagonist or the protagonist's community is required (as an example, the protagonist has been changed by the experience and can no longer be happy in his own community). If the antagonist successfully completed two plot segments it is a bittersweet ending, and either a major concession or two minor concessions are required.

Part VI: Play Advice

All the Procedures Happen at the Table

Some games ask one or more players to do certain things alone before getting the entire group together to play the game, but *Storied Age* doesn't have any procedures like that. The best way to prepare for *Storied Age* is to get yourself in the right frame of mind for fantasy fiction and for collaborating with your friends. For an initial session of a *Storied Age* arc, try to get in the mood by recalling your favorite epic fantasy novels, visualizing examples of your favorite fantasy tropes, or thinking about big fantasy ideas. For later sessions, recounting the events of the story so far can help get your creative juices flowing and build your excitement to see where the story will go.

Collaboration Requires Give and Take

A Storied Age story is created collaboratively at the table by all of the players, especially during the initial plot creation stage of the game. Collaboration usually works best when approached with the mindset of producing multiple ideas with an understanding that not every idea is going to work for the group: the ideas don't have to be perfect before anyone suggests them, and they're all open to be accepted, expanded, changed, or even rejected during the process.

Tell the Beginning of the Story

Most stories are told sequentially, so there's a natural storytelling instinct to take everything that has been said so far and build from there. When dealing with an outlined story like the plot creation procedures in *Storied Age* you sometimes need to remind yourself that the things you talked about in the outlining process haven't actually happened in the story yet. It's

frequently useful to use early phases of a segment to introduce what the segment is about and to ground it in the setting – remember that beginning a quest is also part of completing it, and you'll have multiple chapters to get through each segment.

If at First You Don't Succeed?

After losing a viewpoint chapter, it's possible to have the character face the same kind of obstacles again the next time they win viewpoint, but that's not the only option. Sometimes it's more fun to have the character take a different approach – if the snowy pass was too difficult to get through in one chapter, maybe the next one could feature an alternate route that leads *under* the mountain...

Position The Viewpoint Character

When the viewpoint player is working on the third phase of a segment, winning the chapter will result in completing that segment. Make sure the possibility of achieving the segment goal seems appropriate to the scope of action in chapters like that – if the chapter is very constrained then the concluding narration may need to cover a lot of story ground.

Get Between Viewpoint and Goal

Players familiar with some other games may be tempted to decide up-front what each chapter is "about". *Storied Age* doesn't work that way. Instead, it's the adversity player's job to introduce reasonable obstacles within the constraints of: the viewpoint player's segment goal, the current phase in the segment, the current location, and the story dice available. Once you present an obstacle you can't predict how the action dice will play out: sometimes presenting a swordsman as an obstacle will lead to an epic duel that spans an entire chapter (or more!), sometimes he'll be a minor detail that lasts a single exchange.

Some chapters are intense and focused, others cover multiple scenes in light detail. Let the mechanics guide you, and make your story choices in-the-moment rather than trying to plan out a chapter.

Don't Feel Guilty Presenting Adversity

In this game the dice tell you when you need to present adversity for another player, which means you'll occasionally have to play "against" people who your character is aligned with. You should never feel bad about presenting adversity for the viewpoint character. In *Storied Age*, adversity is a gift you give to the other players: it's an opportunity to demonstrate that their characters are worthy of having a story told about them. Nobody wants to hear a story about a hero coasting to victory or a villain who isn't a genuine threat!

Adversity Isn't Always Adversarial

The most obvious way for a character to provide adversity for another character is with direct, adversarial opposition: arguments, sword fights, etc. This is great, but remember that it isn't the only valid form of adversity that fictional characters face! Does a romantic attraction distract the hero from his quest? Does one of the hero's friends get into trouble he can't handle? This type of adversity can be just as meaningful to a story as direct challenges, so don't forget the option.

Dice Strategy

When you roll a single die it follows a linear probability distribution, i.e. you're just as likely to get a low number as a high one. This means that if you roll multiple dice, you're more likely to get at least one high number. It also means you're more likely to get at least one *low* number. This has consequences for the *Storied Age* dice mechanics: if you roll multiple dice you are

more likely to win an exchange but you're less likely to exhaust many of your opponents traits. If you roll a single die there's a lower probability that you'll win the exchange, but if you *do* win then that die (which has a high enough number to beat all your opponent's dice) is the same die you use to knock out your opponent's traits! Using many or few dice on any particular roll has different risk/reward tradeoffs – while different strategies might make more or less sense in particular situations, there's no universal right or wrong approach. Using multiple dice is more reliable but usually has less impact, while rolling a single die is riskier but can have a bigger payoff. Also remember that when you win you can only increase the die size of a trait involved in the exchange, and you can only increase d4s or d6s – if you only roll d8s then you don't get as much benefit when you win.

Trust Other Players to Understand Your Trait Use and Adversity

There can be a temptation to over-explain things when narrating in this game, but usually things that make sense to you will make sense to the people you play with. If something doesn't get across, another player can just say something like "I don't understand how that is adversity for my character". As long as you're all cool about it, that's no big deal, you just explain it then (or maybe it made more sense inside your head than it did out loud, in which case you can just switch to another idea).

Part VII: Game Term Glossary

action dice – dice that resolve the action of a chapter (d8, d6, d4)

active threat – environmental threat that has, or seems to have, anthropomorphic properties and independent agency

active trait – a trait which can be used to generate an action die when included in the narration of a chapter

adversity dice – dice that determine who provides adversity in a chapter; they become the adversity player's story dice

adversity player – the player that provides adversity in the chapter

alignment track – indicator of where a character's sympathies lie

antagonist – the protagonist's primary opponent in the story

community – the protagonist's home, threatened by the antagonist; lens through which we view the rest of the fantasy world

dark mirror – a character that has strong points of comparison and contrast with another character

environmental threat – story element stemming from the environment where chapter occurs rather than a character

exchange – an individual "decision point" in a chapter where the viewpoint character attempts to overcome trouble

exhausted – a trait which can't be used to generate an action die, can be made active by spending a story die

impede – force an NPC to face a setback large enough to make it unexpected to see them in future chapters

passive threat – environmental threat that is problematic because of its very existence but which wouldn't be a problem if the viewpoint character didn't care about getting past it

plot axis – the main arc around which a *Storied Age* story revolves

plot phase – one third of a plot segment or subplot; the amount of plot that can be completed in one successful chapter

plot segment – a third of a pro- or antagonist's plot thread

plot thread – the individual storyline that the protagonist or antagonist go through over the course of the game

plot track – a matrix which tracks which plot phases are completed and which viewpoint dice to roll for each phase

protagonist – the main character of the story

seed – a sentence or two that's evocative of an epic fantasy character, situation, fact about the world, or fact about magic

viewpoint dice – dice which determine the focus character for a chapter; they become the viewpoint player's story dice

viewpoint player – player that controls a chapter's focus character

star chart – a diagram that helps identify the major story arc

story dice – dice spent to introduce story elements (d20, d12, d10)

story element – an important, identifiable factor in the story; a character or environmental threat

subplot – the part of a *Storied Age* story that focuses on a supporting character

supporting character – an important character that isn't the primary protagonist or antagonist

tax – number of traits you don't get when spending story dice to account for the distance, plausibility, or lack of previous existence that would otherwise prevent a character from appearing in a chapter

theme table – a list of words that inspire epic fantasy concepts

thwart – force an NPC to face a setback large enough to make it surprising to see them in future chapters

trait – an identifying feature of a character, a way a character solves problems

New Chapter

Everyone moving through plot
Prepare to roll for Viewpoint!

Roll **viewpoint dice** | Roll **viewpoint dice** | Roll **viewpoint dice** | Roll **viewpoint dice**

Compare viewpoint dice
Who has the highest individual die?

Winner
You're the **viewpoint player**
Leave your rolled viewpoint dice on the table: they're now **story dice**

Everyone else
Prepare to roll for Adversity!

Roll **adversity dice** | Roll **adversity dice** | Roll **adversity dice**

Compare adversity dice
Who has the highest individual die?

Winner
You're the **adversity player**
Leave your rolled adversity dice on the table: they're now **story dice**

Play out chapter

Everyone else
Can you help or hinder?

Are you a supporting char? — No → Enjoy the chapter!

Yes

Have you finished your subplot? — No → Enjoy the chapter!

Yes

Targeting Viewpoint's current segment? — No → Enjoy the chapter!

Yes

If you want to
Mark phase completed / Roll dice
Complication: Give **story dice** to **adversity**
Support: Give **story dice** to **viewpoint**
(They can't exceed max number of dice)

Chapter Begins!

Viewpoint player chooses opening location
Viewpoint player has no active traits
Adversity player has no active traits

Adversity player presents adversity

Want more traits?

Yes → Spend story dice

New story element

Introducing character into chapter for 1st time?

Yes → Pay tax

No → Activate Traits

No → Narrate / Put traits forward
Pick up action dice

Viewpoint player responds to adversity

Want more traits?

Yes → Spend story dice

New story element

Introducing character into chapter for 1st time?

Yes → Pay tax

No → Activate Traits

No → Narrate / Put traits forward
Pick up action dice

Roll action dice!

Did you win?

Yes → Winner:
Bump up a trait's die size
Buy special effects

No → Loser:
Any dice < winner's lowest die?
Exhaust that many traits

Winner narrates results

3 consecutive losses?
Adversity out of action dice *and* story dice?
Viewpoint out of action dice *and* story dice?

No / Yes

Chapter Ends!

Spend story dice for story elements	
15 to 20	4 char traits
10 to 14	2 char traits *OR* Active threat
1 to 9	1 char trait *OR* Passive threat

Distance Tax	
0	Nearby
1	Short Journey
2	Long Journey

Plausibility Tax	
0	Reasonable and expected
1	Plausible but unexpected
2	Possible but surprising

Creation Tax	
1	Mentioned on seed
2	Implied by seed or fiction
2	Dark Mirror
4	Any character you want

Character trait dice	
# of current active traits	Next activated trait starts at
0	d8
1	d6
2	d6
3	d4

Environmental threat dice	
Passive threat starts at	d4
Active threat starts at	d6

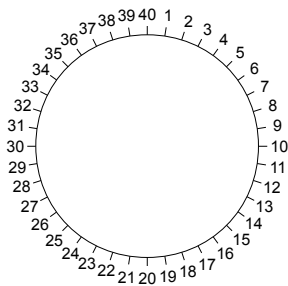| Narrative Special Effects	
1	Modify trait(s)
1	Modify alignment
1	Start/stop traveling together
1	Impede NPC (*unexpected* to see again)
2	Thwart NPC (*surprising* to see again)
4	Kill NPC (never see again)
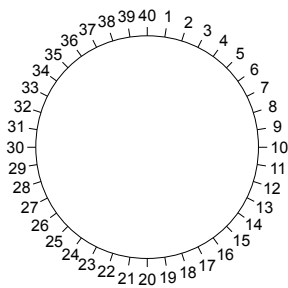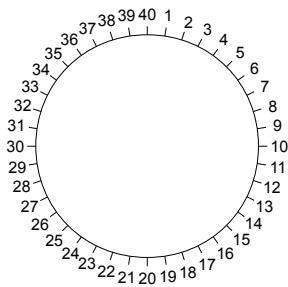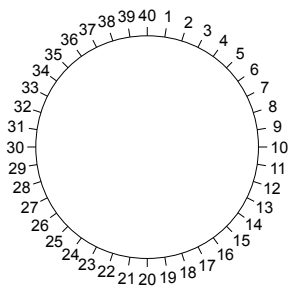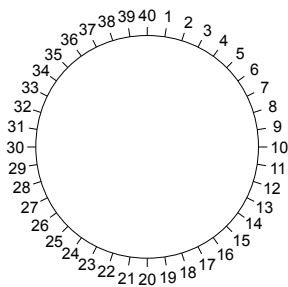
Character Sheets

Player:

Story Role   Adversity Dice

Protagonist ☐ d10 d10
Antagonist ☐ d12 d12 d12
Supporting ☐ d20 d10

Influences +   Crossings -

Plot	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d20	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d12	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
d10	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
tweak	☐ ☐ ☐

Name:

Antagonist ☐—☐—☐ Alignment ☐—☐ Protagonist

Trait	Die

Name:

Antagonist ☐—☐—☐ Alignment ☐—☐ Protagonist

Trait	Die

Name:

Antagonist ☐—☐—☐ Alignment ☐—☐ Protagonist

Trait	Die

Name:

Antagonist ☐—☐—☐ Alignment ☐—☐ Protagonist

Trait	Die

Name:

Antagonist ☐—☐—☐ Alignment ☐—☐ Protagonist

Trait	Die

Name:

Antagonist ☐—☐—☐ Alignment ☐—☐ Protagonist

Trait	Die

Name:

Antagonist ☐—☐—☐ Alignment ☐—☐ Protagonist

Trait	Die