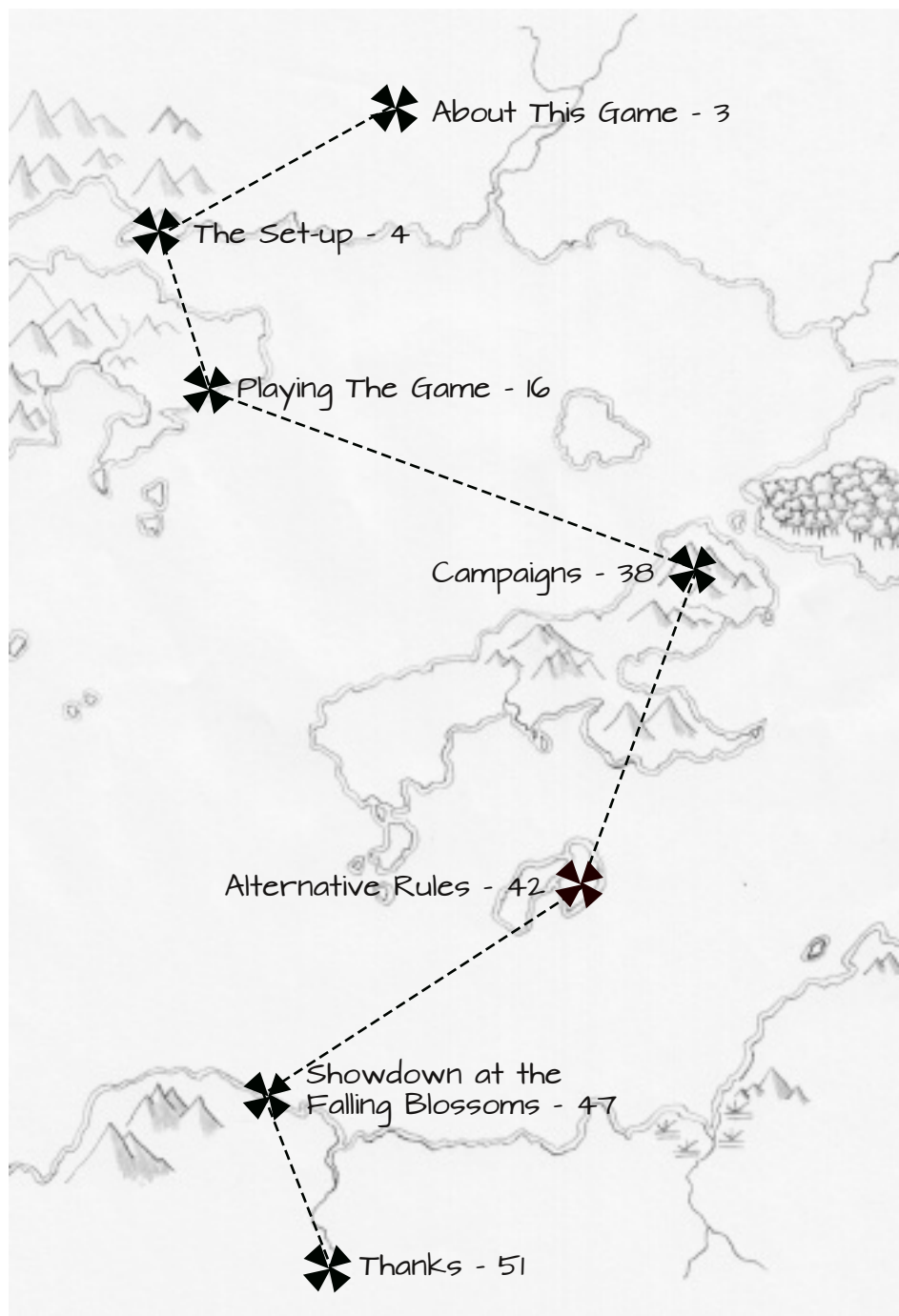


INTREPID

A STORYTELLING ADVENTURE



KIWI
DESIGN



INTREPID

A STORYTELLING ADVENTURE

Intrepid is a game in which you and your friends collaborate to tell the epic stories of characters braving quests filled with glory and adventure.

... An old woman, wise but frail, struggles through the blizzards of Eversnow Peak to find a power stolen from her!

The meat of play sees your characters crashing against mighty obstacles and cruel foes as they pursue their quests. Quests are guaranteed to climax, often in glory but sometimes in misery.

... Desperate to maintain his immortality, a captain in the imperial army ventures deep into the uncharted jungle searching for the fabled Amulet of Blood!

Intrepid is a game of endings as much as beginnings. In a single session of play you can expect several quests to conclude successfully. New quests will bubble up out of the unfolding drama and characters will pick those quests up and pursue them.

... A young water spirit looks on in horror at the smoking ruins that used to be her home, her mind filled with thoughts of death and vengeance!

In this fashion you can string together several sessions of *Intrepid* where characters rise and fall—and rise again!—in layered and intricate stories filled with epic revelation. You can also play the game so that a fistful of quests begin and end in a single session.

In playing *Intrepid* you'll create and explore colourful settings, discovering new things about those worlds as your characters adventure within them.

The rules provided in this book will guide you.

ABOUT THIS GAME

Intrepid plays best with about 3–5 folk. Expect a single session to take about 3 hours to play.

You'll need the following stuff.

- ~ Blank paper, preferably A3-sized.
- ~ Coloured pens or pencils.
- ~ A stack of index cards or Post-it Notes.
- ~ A deck of regular playing cards.

Your typical session will unfold as a series of fun and dramatic scenes where your characters are right at the heart of the action.

Your first session is slightly different: you and your friends will spend the first half hour to an hour engaged in the *set-up*. The set-up is a group activity in which everyone will contribute to:

- ~ Establish a *baseline* for your setting.
- ~ Sketch a *map*.
- ~ Create *themes* to enrich the baseline.
- ~ Create *characters*, *locations* and *factions*.
- ~ Define *quests* for those characters to pursue.

When the set-up concludes, you'll have a map that sketches an engaging setting to explore through role-play. There will be a fistful of interesting quests to pursue, and a cast of colourful characters to inhabit.

Most of your time in a session will be spent role-playing dramatic scenes. These scenes will feature the characters created during the set-up throwing themselves headlong into exciting action and cruel danger in the passionate pursuit of their quests.

A clearing opens up in the jungle and our Captain sees what he has been looking for... the Hunter's Steps, an ancient temple and resting place of the Amulet of Blood! As he advances we find he is not alone... something stirs within the temple and bursts forth with a mighty roar!

THE SET-UP

ESTABLISH THE BASELINE

The baseline is a broad statement about your setting.

- ~ Medieval Europe
- ~ Roman Empire
- ~ Feudal Japan
- ~ Planetary Romance

Those examples are pretty sweeping; that's just what you want for the baseline. Historical periods often make for good baselines.

The idea behind the baseline is to get everyone pulling in the same direction. Your baseline will be embellished throughout the set-up and the role-play, so don't get bogged down in details. The baseline will influence the rest of the game, so it's important everyone is happy with it.

If you're facilitating Intrepid, take the initiative and say out loud a few suggestions for baselines. Gently provoke your fellow players into suggesting baselines of their own. Encourage your friends to talk and share their thoughts and ideas as they are creating characters and setting elements.

You'll also want to suggest and decide on an overall tone for your game: grim, light-hearted, or serious.

To help you understand the set-up, each section in the set-up will conclude with a worked example. Here's the baseline for the worked example.

Baseline

The baseline for the setting will be loosely based on colonial Africa.

Every game of *Intrepid* has at least one map providing a high-level picture of the setting and the characters and locations in that setting. You'll create an initial map of your unique setting during the set-up.

All maps in *Intrepid* are distinct in that they are split in half.

The right half is the *geographical map*. Here is where you'll draw the rough geography of your setting—the borders of a war-torn kingdom, the shoreline of a mist-shrouded island, the crumbling walls of a decaying republic. Later in the set-up you'll also note interesting features such as major cities, magical standing stones, and dungeon entrances.

The left half of each map is the *relationship map*. On this half you'll draw an abstract representation of your characters and the links they have to personages, gods, factions, and other important setting elements.

Grab a sheet of blank paper: A3 is a nice size; if you've got A4- or letter-sized paper to hand, then you might want to push two sheets together to serve as your map.

Draw a nice thick line straight down the middle of your map paper, neatly dividing the sheet in half.

Place the map in the centre of your play area where everyone can see it.

It's good practice to distribute elements evenly on the relationship map: don't bunch them all in one corner. Draw them big enough so everyone can read them, but not so large that you swamp the available space: you'll soon be adding more elements to the relationship map, so leave plenty of room.

Decide as a group on the desired scale of your geographical map. If you're wanting quests where characters range across the warring kingdoms of an entire continent, the scale is continental and the borders are the coastlines or surrounding mountain ranges of the continent.

If you're keen on quests set within a fabulous magical metropolis, then your geographical map will be at the scale of a city and the borders will be the city walls.

In city settings it's often useful to include the immediate outskirts of the city too. For example, the nearby hills are the burial place of long dead kings in ages past, or the swamp that is still home to a tribe of warlike lizard-folk.

If everyone is happy to dive in and have fun with coloured crayons, hand the map around as you progress through the set-up, giving everyone the chance to populate the map.

Alternatively, you could choose one person to be the mapper. The mapper is responsible for drawing everyone's contributions on the map as they are created.

Once you've chosen the area of your setting, scrawl down the rough borders: this might be the walls of a city, the shore of an island, or the twisting outline of an entire continent.

Names play an important part in putting your stamp on the setting, so give your setting a name. If you've opted for a city, what's the city called? If you've chosen to quest in a fantastic undersea kingdom, what's the name of this watery place?

Write the name of your setting at the top of the geographical map.

As you play Intrepid, you'll find it's common to create additional maps at different scales for the ruined dungeon complexes, bustling cities, and planar realms in which your characters are questing.

A theme is a brief statement about an important element of the setting.

- ~ A civil war is brewing.
- ~ Magic has vanished from the world.
- ~ A new religion is spreading from the west.
- ~ A pantheon of gods vie for mortal worshippers.
- ~ Dwarves live alongside humans as a slave race.
- ~ Dragons oppress the people outside the cities.

A theme deepens the broad brush stroke of the baseline, painting it in richer detail. A good theme provokes questions from your friends because they're enthusiastic to discover more about that theme.

Every player must create a theme. When you create a theme, say a few words to sum it up and tell the group about it in a little more detail. Discussion at this point is welcome to ensure everyone is on the same page: all themes must be appropriate to the chosen baseline.

For example, it's enough to say your setting is being torn apart by a civil war. You don't need to add further detail about the civil war such as the causes, the warring sides, or the outcome: leave those kind of juicy details to the role-play.

Everyone adds their theme to the relationship map: write down the theme and enclose it in a fluffy cloud.

Themes

Colonial influences, especially recruitment for foreign armies

Genus Loci, minor gods of the land

Magic vanished a few years ago

Dangerous jungles, make travel hard and life threatening

Characters, locations, and factions are the next elements to be added to your growing map.

- ~ *Characters* are the engaging personalities you'll be role-playing.
- ~ *Locations* are the mysterious, fantastic, or ruined places your characters will explore.
- ~ *Factions* are organisations that characters can ally with or rage against; kingdoms, guilds, sorcerous cabals.

CHARACTERS

Everyone is going to create a character: these are the personalities who will venture forth on fabulous quests, battling against the dangers present in the themes and exploring the setting in detail.

- ~ Agrat the Lame: A jungle guide, old and sly.
- ~ Sir Luther Warren: A foreign explorer of some renown.
- ~ Bizz: A young water spirit, bubbling with energy.

To create a character, grab an index card and write on it the name of the character and a couple of details about them.

Place the completed character card in the middle of the table.

Add each character to the relationship map: write down the name of the character and draw a rectangular box around the name.

Yes, that's it: *Intrepid* doesn't have detailed character sheets bursting with an array of attributes and skills. Less is more, so don't dive into rich histories for these characters right now.

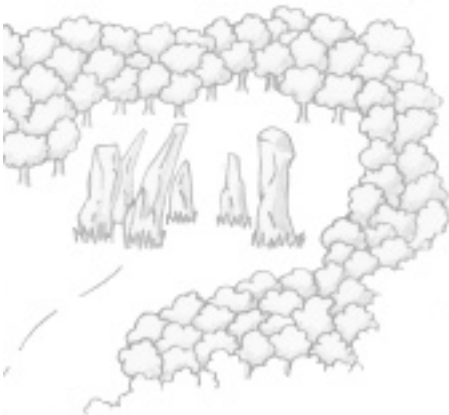
The character you create is not necessarily -your- character. When it comes time to play scenes, you might end up playing any of the characters created during the set-up. Try and create a character that you or any of your friends will find interesting to role-play.

LOCATIONS

Everyone must also create a *location* with some relevance to the character they're creating.

Draw this location on the geographical map and give it a name. Tell everyone about your location as you're adding it to the map.

- ~ Silent Cave: A small village built into a cliff.
- ~ The White Falls: Home to the water gods.
- ~ Pillars of the Earth: A place of pilgrimage.



FACTIONS

Having created a character and a location, everyone must create a *faction* related to their character.

A faction is an organisation, kingdom, or community extant within your setting. Say a few words about your faction, refining your rough vision of the faction with suggestions from other players.

- ~ The Traders Guide: Merchants who know the secret paths through the jungle.
- ~ The Water Conclave: A council of powerful water spirits.
- ~ The Blackened Cabal: Once the empire's greatest heroes, now turned to dark purposes.

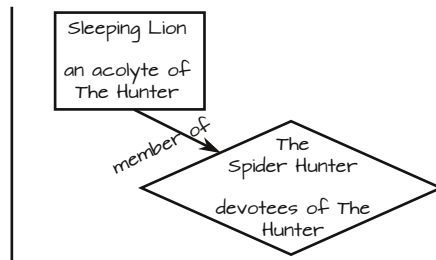
Add each faction to the relationship map: write down the name of the faction and draw a diamond box around the name.

Link the character that you created to their attendant faction by drawing a line between the character and the faction on the relationship map.

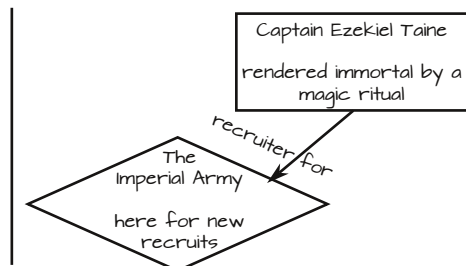
Annotating the link with a brief description of the relationship can be helpful.



Hunter's Steps
a ruined temple



Port Marsham
the Imperial colony's
capital





The Broken Spire
an ancient ruin

Mother Rogan
a wise woman
and a hermit

hiding from

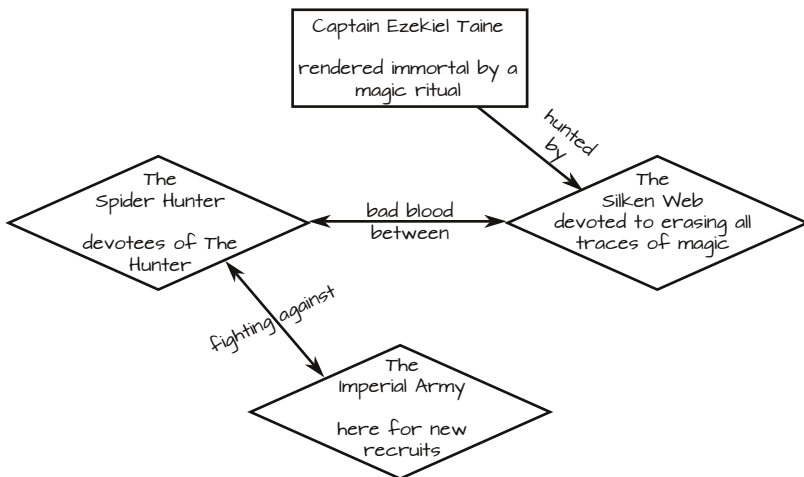
The
Silken Web
devoted to erasing all
traces of magic

EXTRA CONNECTIONS

Everyone must add another link between an element they created and an element they didn't create. You can add links between themes, characters, and factions on the relationship map.

Tell everyone about the nature of the link you're adding, annotating the link with a brief description if necessary.

For example, you might link the character you created with the theme created by someone else, or you might link the character you created with the character created by someone else.



A quest is a brief description of an interesting situation, person, or object.

- ~ The raid at Golden Hollow.
- ~ A mad sorceress, delving into ancient secrets.
- ~ A chest containing the taxes of a rural province.
- ~ Monks who kill any who approach their temple.
- ~ An amulet that turns blood into magical power.

These descriptions are intentionally vague: further details about the nature of the quest and what characters are trying to do will be revealed through play.

Everyone is going to create a quest. Grab another index card—one for each quest—and write the quest description at the top of the card: you'll want to leave plenty of room for details to be added later during play.

Each player must also write their own name somewhere on their own quest card: this is so we know who created the quest.

It's worth noting here that your character cannot initially pursue any quest that you create. The quest that you create is a quest for someone else's character to pursue.

Draw three circles at the bottom right of each quest card. Draw each circle at roughly the size of a British penny or an American nickel, nice and chunky. These circles are called *progress markers*, and are used to track quest progression and will be explained in detail later.

With that done, you've completed the set-up.

Quests

Something ancient on Eversnow peak.
The raid on Golden Hollow wasn't what it seemed.
The Amulet of Blood still holds power.

BASELINE

- ~ Loosely based on colonial Africa.

THEMES

- ~ Colonial influences, especially recruitment for foreign armies.
- ~ Nature spirits have great power.
- ~ Magic vanished a few years ago.
- ~ Dangerous jungles, make travel hard and life threatening.

CHARACTERS

- ~ Sleeping Lion - An acolyte of 'The Hunter', a Genus Loci spirit.
- ~ Captain Ezekiel Taine - Recruiter for an imperial army, rendered immortal by a magic ritual.
- ~ Mother Rogan - A wise woman and a hermit, in hiding from The Silken Web.

FACTIONS

- ~ The Spider Hunter, devotees of The Hunter.
- ~ The Imperial Army, here for new recruits.
- ~ The Silken Web, devoted to erasing all traces of magic.

LOCATIONS

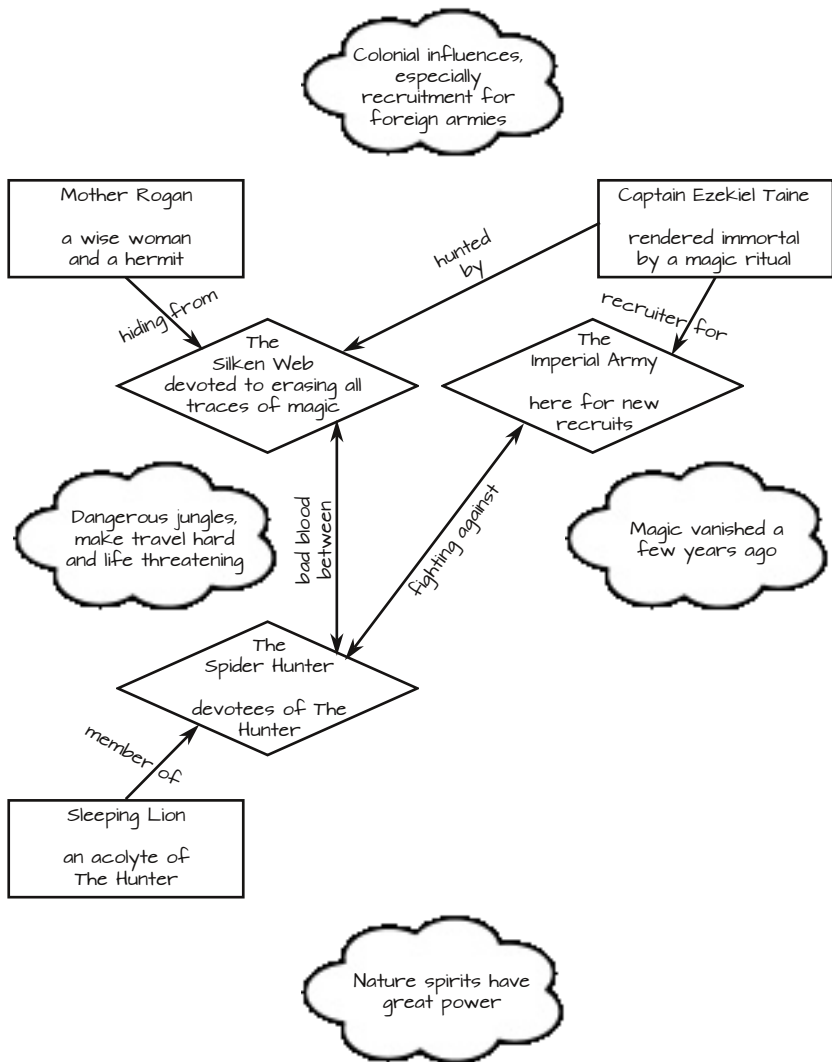
- ~ Hunter's Steps, a ruined temple.
- ~ Port Marsham, the imperial colony's capital.
- ~ The Broken Spire, an ancient ruin and Mother Rogan's home.

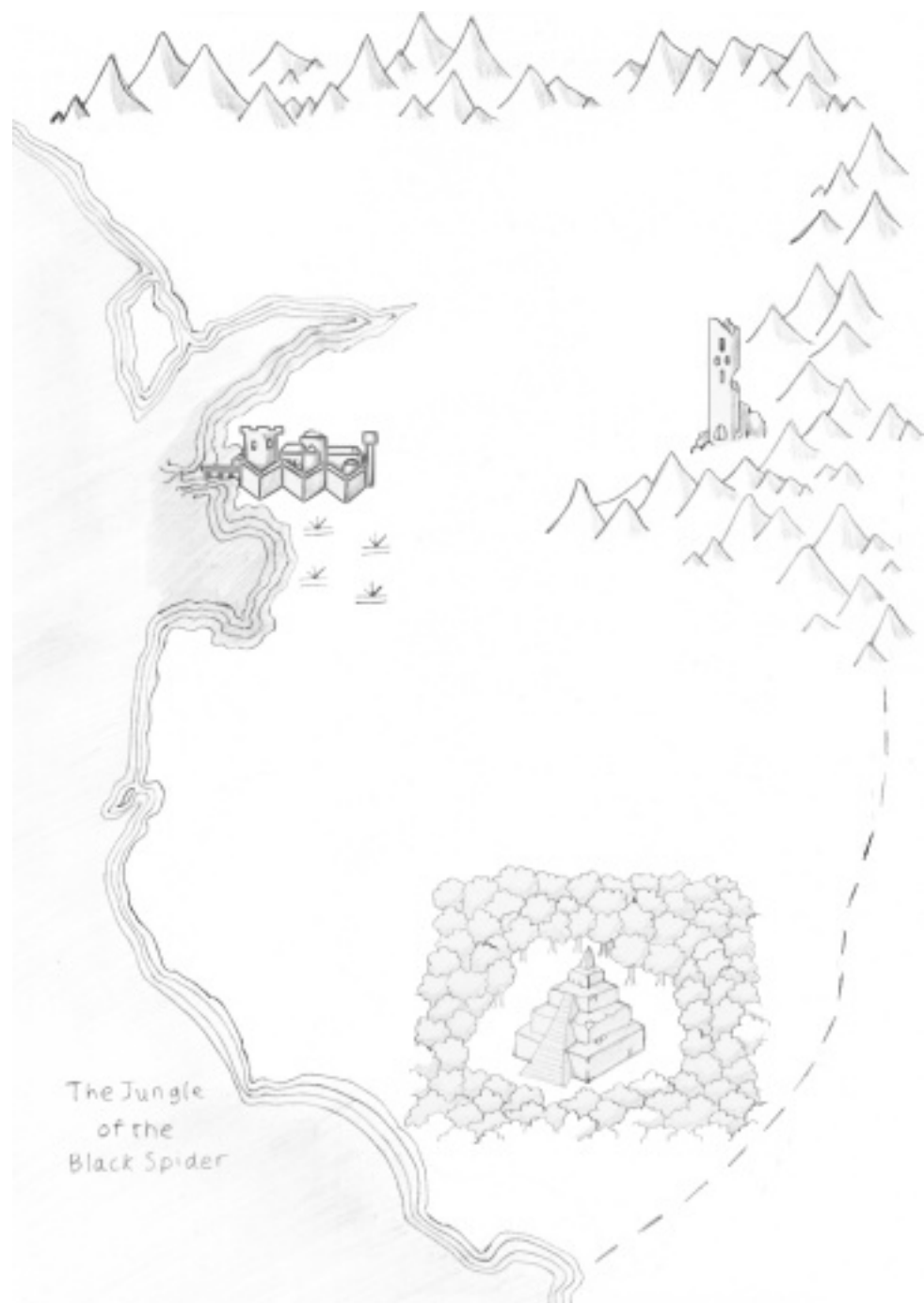
EXTRA CONNECTIONS

- ~ The Spider Hunters are fighting against the Imperial Army.
- ~ Ezekiel Taine is being hunted by The Silken Web.
- ~ There is bad blood between the Spider Hunter and The Silken Web.

QUESTS

- ~ Something ancient on Eversnow peak.
- ~ The raid on Golden Hollow wasn't what it seemed.
- ~ The Amulet of Blood still holds power.





The Jungle
of the
Black Spider

PLAYING THE GAME

Spread the map out in the middle of the table. Arrange the quest cards around the map so that they are within easy reach of everyone. Arrange the character cards similarly.

HELD CHARACTERS

If a player desires to play a particular character, they can pick up and place the relevant character card in front of them. That character is then said to be held by that player.

If you hold a character you will always get to play that character in any scenes they appear in and you will always make decisions about scenes where they are the focus.

A player can hold only one character at a time. Between scenes you can give up your held character and pick another from those available.

TAKING TURNS

You and your friends will take it in turn to play scenes. Anyone can start.

When it's your turn to play a scene, you will:

- ~ *Choose a character* to be the *spotlight character* for the scene.
- ~ If the spotlight character is not already on a quest, *choose a quest* for that character to pursue.
- ~ *Frame the scene* by plunging the spotlight character into a dramatic situation.

One of the other players will then assume the role of the *director*: the director is responsible for continuing the dramatic narration of the scene.

When the dramatic situation established during the framing of the scene has been resolved, the scene ends.

Play proceeds to the left.

When choosing a character at the start of the scene, you are free to choose:

- ~ the character *held* by yourself;
- ~ a character *held* by another player;
- ~ a character from the pile of un-*held* characters;
- ~ a supporting character that doesn't yet have a character card;
- ~ a new character you will create on the spur.

If you choose to play a character that you hold, continue on to framing the scene.

If you choose another player's held character, you are ceding the scene framing rights and responsibility to the other player.

Do this when you are interested in that character's story.

The other player will frame the scene from the perspective of their character. You are free to assume the role of the director. At the conclusion of the scene, play proceeds to *your* left (not theirs).

If you choose to play a supporting character, take a new index card and write their name and a little about them. Supporting characters will have been introduced previously through play, and they should already have connecting links on the relationship map.

If you choose to create a new character, take a new index card and write their name and a little about them. Add the new character to the relationship map, and create connecting links between them and one existing faction and one existing location.

CHOOSE A QUEST

If the spotlight character is not already on a quest, choose a quest for that character to pursue.

You can choose from any of the quest cards arranged around the map *with one exception*: you cannot opt to put the character on the quest you created.

To put a character on a quest, scribble their name on the quest card and explain to your friends why the character is pursuing that quest. The character doesn't necessarily need to know they are on the quest—they might be about to become involved by accident—but players do need to know what is happening.

If this is the first character on the quest, you can choose to elaborate on the rough details written on the quest card.

Keep in mind that quests should not be mutually exclusive, nor should they have the same goals.

Given the existence of a quest to save a princess, a new quest shouldn't be about killing the princess: success in either quest invalidates the other, which is unsatisfying in play.

Likewise, you shouldn't make a new quest about saving the princess: there's already a quest to do exactly that, so just join that quest. (It is okay for your character to have a radically different agenda for saving the princess though.)

The Amulet of Blood still holds power.

Ezekiel has heard rumours of its power and needs it to maintain his immortality ritual.

QUEST PARTICIPATION

Before framing the scene, look at the *progress markers* located near the bottom of the quest card. (Those are the circles drawn during the set-up.)

If the character is being added to a quest that other characters are already pursuing, draw an additional *progress marker* circle on the card: as more characters become embroiled in the quest, the quest becomes richer with more characters allowing room for twists and turns.

When only one progress marker remains unchecked, all characters with names written on the card must be present in any scene involving that quest. The quest is coming to a dramatic conclusion, and so everyone must be present at the denouement.

Think of the opening scene of a movie: Who is present? Where are they? Why are they there? When is this happening?

A good way to start framing a scene is to pick something on the relationship map and explore one of its relationships.

Let the other players know what you've picked so they can co-operate: just remember that the scene probably won't (and shouldn't) go as you imagine it.

The process of narrating answers to those questions is called *scene framing*: a pithy slice of narration to establish what is happening.

"It is a dark and stormy night. Captain Ezekiel, with a company of men at his command, ride single file along a narrow jungle trail.

A scout comes back along the trail: their destination is just ahead, the Pillars of the Earth! The seers there must surely know where the Amulet of Blood lies! Ezekiel spurs his horse onwards, his blood quickening as he anticipates the confrontation with the seers."

- ~ Where are we? *Deep in the jungle, at the Pillars of the Earth.*
- ~ Who is there? *Our army captain, Ezekiel, a company of his men, and some seers.*
- ~ When is this happening? *On a dark and stormy night.*
- ~ Why are they there? *He is looking for information about the Amulet of Blood.*

If the scene is introducing a character for the first time, take a moment to describe the character to help your friends better visualize them.

Other characters can be present in the scene. If you want them there, narrate them into the establishing frame.

The first scene on a quest must be in a new location. Draw that location on the map after you've framed the scene.

In the example, the Pillars of the Earth is the new location.

Resist the urge to narrate any actions for the characters or say too much about what led up to the current state of affairs. You're just framing the scene: you're not painting the entire picture contained within the frame. Narrate just enough—and no more—to capture the interest of your friends.

In many other role-playing games, scene framing typically is the responsibility of the GM. In Intrepid, this responsibility is shared amongst all players.

Don't frame a scene in the middle of a journey, unless you are passing through an interesting location and cool drama is sure to happen.

The Alternative Rules chapter has a section on Journey Scenes that might satisfy all your "scenes on a journey" desires.

The scene has been framed and we know “*the who, the why, the where, and the when*” of what is happening.

One player—not the player who framed the scene—will now assume the role of the director.

If you’ve listened to your friend’s scene frame and have an idea for how the scene might unfold, stick your hand up and say that you’ll be the director. If more than one of you wants to be the director, then sort it out amongst yourselves which of you will direct, or have the scene framer pick.

If no one wants to be the director, consider redoing your scene framing. Picking something from the relationship map, that another player cares about, can help a lot, or you can always ask for suggestions.

The director has two responsibilities:

- ~ to provide dramatic challenge;
- ~ to ask leading questions.

The director will role-play enemies and allies, present the spotlight character with tough choices, and bring colourful drama to the scene.

If you’ve experience of other role-playing games, being the director is a little like being the Game Master for the duration of the scene.

For the duration of the scene the director has responsibility for narrating the actions of any character not played by another player. The director is also responsible for narrating anything external to a character’s actions, such as the weather, the passing of time, and suchlike.

The other duty of the director is to ask the other players questions about the scene and the characters in it. These questions are asked outside the context of the scene and must be answered by the *player* being asked.

If the action becomes muddled, be proactive and ask questions: you might want to clarify detail, to allow players a chance for an ‘out of character’ explanation, or to inject twists or intrigue into the story.

Asking provocative and leading questions is fun! Contrast the following two questions:

“What do you think about the spirits?”

“Why do you no longer revere the spirits?”

The second question is juicier than the first: it’s more likely to provoke an interesting answer and lead to cool drama. Using questions like this to add drama and surprises into a scene is the most important duty of the director.

The scene plays out as a conversation between the director and the player role-playing the spotlight character, each collaboratively narrating what is happening in the scene.

The director will throw dramatic challenges in the path of the spotlight character, challenges that the spotlight character will engage with and vanquish.

The conversation continues until one of the following happens:

- ~ the scene framer says the scene is over;
- ~ any player says *"We have reached a crossroad..."*

(See the Crossroads chapter for the significance of the latter phrase.)

DRAMA

The director has three immediate sources of inspiration for presenting dramatic challenge:

- ~ the framing of the scene;
- ~ the relationship map;
- ~ the quest.

Do the obvious thing. When a scene framing establishes a pool of black water in a jungle clearing, accept that contribution and work with it: narrate a capricious water spirit rising from the inky pool, one that could aid or hinder the quest depending on how the scene plays out. If the water spirit is already an element on the relationship map, so much the better.

When you're stumped about how to present drama, be upfront about it and tell everyone "I'm stumped." Spin around the table soliciting ideas from your friends: someone will have an idea about how to progress the scene.

OTHER PLAYERS

Other players are not expected to sit quietly while the scene plays out.

They might be called upon by the director to role-play any incidental characters such as greasy ostlers or surly guards; they can even volunteer themselves to play such characters.

Other players can also contribute with vocal encouragement and special phrases.

PACING

During playtesting, scenes sometimes fell foul of escalating too early and changing too much too quickly. If every scene ends with world shattering consequences the game can become a farce.

The impact of a scene, how much it affects the world and the characters, should generally be limited to changes that are both temporary and local.

Consider Frodo's quest in The Lord of the Rings: the action doesn't immediately segue from the Council of Elrond straight to the Crack of Doom. There's a whole journey prior to that epic conclusion, during which Gollum's pitiable character is explored and the mettle of Sam's friendship with Frodo is tested beyond endurance.

The final crossroad on a quest can have far-reaching and lasting consequences: it's the exciting denouement to a quest that's had at least a couple of scenes of cool role-play, so do feel free to capstone it with something suitably epic.

SECRETS

Intrepid is an open game: players are expected to share everything so that everyone can shape and fashion drama from the same shared base. Characters can have secrets, but players cannot.

It's okay for the princess to be secretly possessed by the vengeful spirit of the long-dead queen: that sounds pretty ace! It's not okay if that information is not shared amongst all of the players. Keeping such information secret makes it hard, if not impossible, for the other players to present drama based on that secret during scenes.

TEAMING UP

Characters can and should meet up during scenes, even if they are on different quests. Do introduce other main characters into a scene if it's appropriate.

If characters pursuing different quests do team up, the goals of both quests should not be made the same... each quest must be able to conclude in its own scene.

Don't force such meetings though: if your characters never meet, that's fine. Let their quests inform and highlight each other as they pursue their quests in parallel.

Intrepid uses a few phrases to help shape the way the game plays. These phrases can be used by all players, and can be said at any time, including set-up.

These phrases are borrowed from Archipelago III, an excellent role-playing game by Matthijs Holter.

DO IT DIFFERENTLY

At any time in the game a player can tell another to “*do it differently.*”

The player to whom the phrase is addressed must rewind and narrate the last thing they said in a different way.

A player might say this phrase because they feel that their friend's narration doesn't fit the established tone of the setting; perhaps they don't like the direction in which the story is heading; or the narration was all a bit Monty Python and it jarred with the mood.

No justification for saying the phrase is needed or expected. If your friend says do it differently, accept the direction and narrate the last thing you said differently. If you need to ask for clarification about what should be changed, it's cool to ask for clarification.

If you feel that this phrase is being used a lot, that might be a sign that you are not all on the same page with regard to the tone and direction of your setting and genre. You may need to talk as a group about the direction in which the game is heading.

MORE DETAILS PLEASE

Any player can ask for more details about some narration by saying “*more details please.*”

You would say this phrase when you find another player's narration interesting and want richer detail; likewise, you might find something confusing and want clarifying detail.

A crossroad is a moment of dramatic tension in a scene, where the players are given a choice about how the story proceeds.

Mother Rogan is sneaking into the castle, hoping to pass as a harmless old woman when there is a tap on her shoulder...

Sleeping Lion lies wounded in a temple cot. A young priestess walks over, their eyes meet, and she smiles...

Captain Ezekiel's arguments with the seer council are going nowhere. His hand reaches for his sword...

A crossroad is used to bring a scene to a dramatic close. If you find yourself wondering which way a scene is going to play out, that's a good sign that a crossroad is imminent.

A crossroad can be initiated at any time during a scene by any player by saying:

"We have reached a crossroad..."

When a crossroad is declared, you'll progress through the following process to resolve the crossroad:

- ~ the scene framer narrates their version of how the scene concludes.
- ~ the director narrates their alternative version of how the scene concludes.
- ~ everyone casts a vote for the version they want to see happen by placing a card face down on the table.
- ~ a red card for the scene framer, a black card for the director
- ~ the director shuffles the cards and presents the face down cards to the scene framer.
- ~ the scene framer picks one card.
- ~ the colour of that card determines which of the two versions actually happens.
- ~ an empty *progress marker* located on the scene's associated quest card is ticked.
- ~ the scene concludes.

To cast a vote each player needs at least one black and one red card. Regular playing cards are ideal for this. Players can draw cards from the deck at any time so that they always have one card of each colour to hand.

Place the card deck in the middle of the table so that everyone has easy access to it.

Narration in a crossroad takes the form of a brief story that brings the scene to an exciting conclusion. The narration is expressed as a monologue: it is not an opportunity for role-play, nor is it a perfunctory summary of events. Narration with a duration of a minute or two is about right.

Before narrating anything, take a look at the *progress markers* located near the bottom of the quest card. If this is the quest's final crossroad—indicated by the presence of only one remaining unticked *progress marker*—the narrators should endeavour to bring the quest to a satisfying conclusion in their narration. Care should also be taken not to invalidate a quest in progress or resolve it early.

Both narrators are free to narrate whatever outcome they find most dramatic or interesting. The scene framer will often narrate a favourable outcome for their character, but this isn't required.

If you're the scene framer, it can be exciting to dig your character into a deep hole of pain. Slaughtering their allies, crushing their hopes, and spiriting away their amours is often deeply satisfying.

When the crossroad has been resolved, the scene concludes.

Ezekiel has tracked down the seers he was looking for at the Pillars of the Earth. The director has chosen to play Elder Harkan, the leader of the seer council, while the other players chime in as soldiers and seers.

After some colourful narration and role-playing it is clear Captain Ezekiel's arguments with the seer council are going nowhere...

"Ezekiel's gnarled hand reaches for his sword; we have reached a crossroad..."

SCENE FRAMER'S VERSION

Ezekiel draws his sword and holds the tip to the seer's throat.

Harkan's response is defiant. "Kill me and you will never find the amulet!"

With a nod to his soldiers a crossbow bolt is loosed and one of the other seers collapses with a cry of pain. Ezekiel's next words are level and chilling. "I don't need to kill you... you still have plenty more friends to lose."

Looking around wildly Harkan relents, speaking of a legend which tells of the amulet being buried in the Hunter's Steps. Without a backwards glance, Ezekiel signals his men and they depart...

DIRECTOR'S VERSION

Ezekiel draws his sword and holds the tip to the seer's throat.

Harkan's response is defiant. "Kill me and you will never find the amulet!"

At these words, a hideous six-legged creature of unnatural sorcery leaps from the shadows and wraps itself around Ezekiel's neck, hissing as it thrusts its glittering proboscis deep into the soldier's spine.

As Ezekiel reels in agony, Harkan cackles cruelly. "The Gonchong is an unusual beast. It has been enslaved to my will and now I can see all you can. On my command it can cripple you with agony. You will retrieve the Amulet of Blood for the Hunter's Steps... but you will do so for me."

THE PLAYERS CAST THEIR VOTES.

Barbara thought the Gonchong was horrific, but cool! She places a black card face down in the middle of the table to reflect her favoured version.

Ashley likes to see the ruthless Ezekiel cut loose... but places a black card face down on top of Barbara's card because the plot twist is too sweet to pass up.

Colin—the scene framer—likes his own version... but finds the idea of his immortal super-soldier being threatened rather exciting. He places a black card face down atop the pile.

Ester—the director—also likes her own version, still, she feels that having Harkan bear a grudge could be more interesting in the long run, so she places a red card face down atop the pile.

Notice how the scene framer and director didn't choose their own version: the player went with the version they liked the most.

Ester—the director—scoops up the pile of four face down cards and shuffles them. She then fans them and holds them out in front of Colin—the scene framer. Colin picks a card and flops it onto the table, revealing the colour... red!

Colin's version—assaulting and intimidating the seer—is the version that happens. The scene concludes.

The version with the Gonchong never happened. The Gonchong was pretty cool though, so the parasite might well make an appearance in a subsequent scene. Harkan could still have his revenge!

SUMMARY

1. the scene framer narrates their version of how the scene concludes.
2. the director narrates their alternative version of how the scene concludes.
3. everyone casts a vote for the version they want to see happen by placing a card face down on the table.
 - ~ a red card for the scene framer's version.
 - ~ a black card for the director's version.
4. the director shuffles the cards and presents the face down cards to the scene framer.
5. the scene framer picks one card.
6. the colour of that card determines which of the two versions actually happens.
7. an empty progress marker located on the scene's associated quest card is ticked off.
8. the scene concludes.

The conclusion of a scene is an opportunity to reflect on the events of the scene and record what happened.

Everyone should look at the map and add any details that were created or changed during the role-play:

- ~ locations.
- ~ factions.
- ~ characters.
- ~ relationships.

Be proactive in adding detail to the map: your setting will become more interesting to explore as you flesh it out.

Having introduced the Pillars of the Earth, Ezekiel's player scrawls and labels some standing stones on the geographical map.

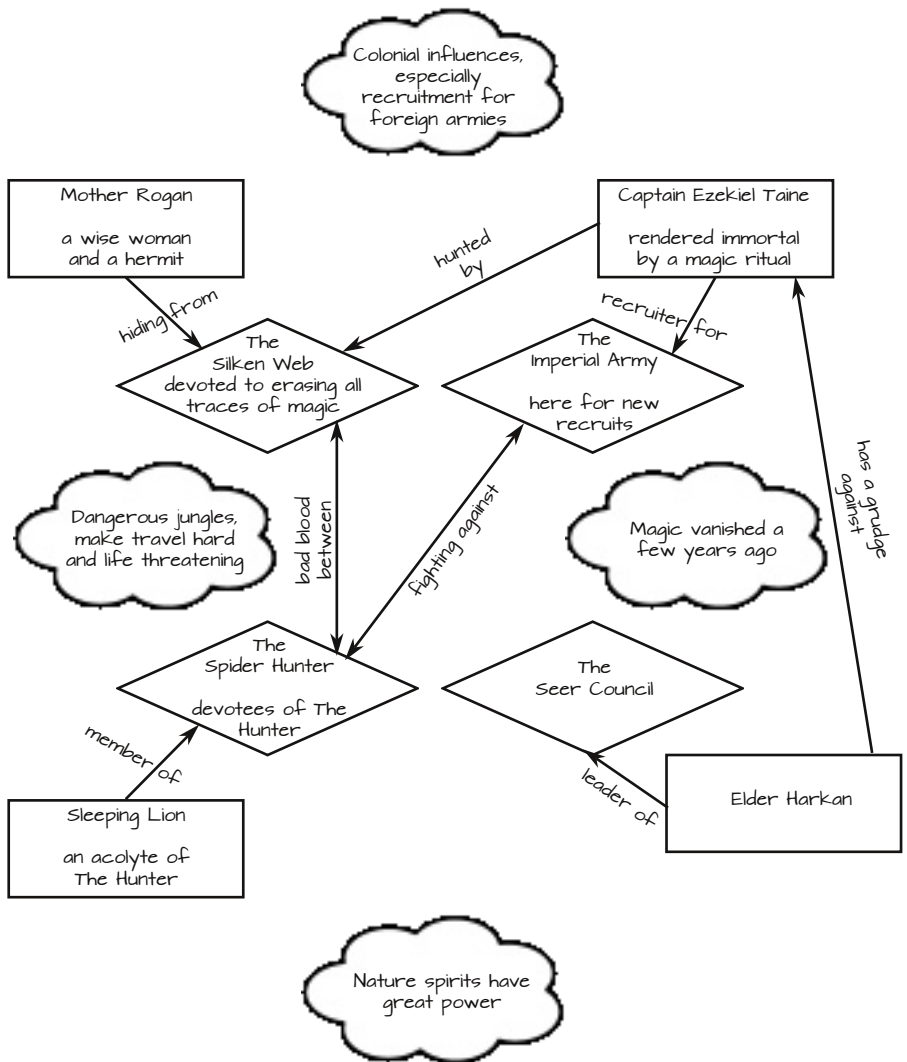
If a character, location, or other element was given a name during the scene, then that element deserves to be added, even if the element didn't appear in the scene directly.

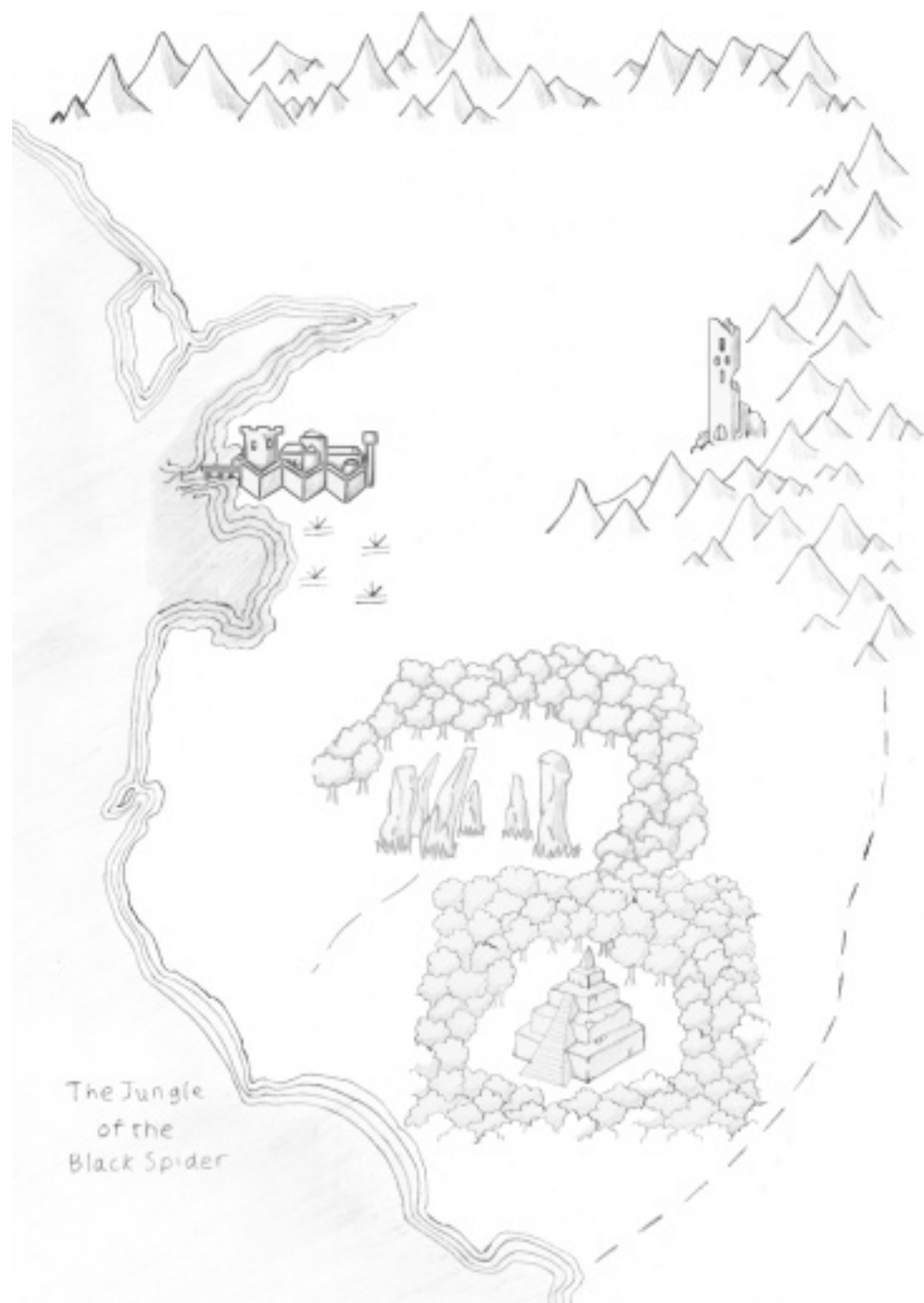
During play, it was established that Elder Harkan leads a group of seers; the seer now also bears a grudge against Captain Ezekiel. The character was a blast to play, so the character is added to the relationship map and linked to Ezekiel.

If you think a cool element should have a name and no one made one up in the scene, name it and add it.

When you add an element to the geographical map, do make an effort to include some of the surrounding land so that locations can eventually join up. Roads and rivers that the characters may have travelled down are good examples of such ancillary detail.

Don't add details that are transient: not every greasy beggar deserves to be enshrined on the map.





The Jungle
of the
Black Spider

QUEST COMPLETION

If you had a crossroad in the scene, mark off a *progress marker* on the current quest.

A quest is complete when all *progress markers* have been ticked off: when this happens, discard the quest card.

All characters on the quest at the time of completion are now free to pursue other quests when someone later chooses them as a spotlight character, or they could fade into the background and become supporting characters.

If you are playing a campaign game, you'll find additional rules for what to do when a quest is completed in the campaign chapter.

HOLDING ON TO A CHARACTER

The scene framer can choose to *hold* on to the character that they played during the scene: the character card remains in front of that player.

If the scene framer chooses not to *hold* on to the character, the character card is returned to the pile of *un-held* characters in the middle of the table.

ABANDONING QUESTS

The events of a scene can sometimes invalidate a character's reason for pursuing a quest.

The Amulet of Blood might have been destroyed in a pillar of fire; or Mother Rogan is struck down before she can reclaim her power.

When this happens, the character can abandon the quest: remove the character's name from the quest card. You should avoid doing this if at all possible.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Play continues with the scene framing duties passing to the left. If you are running out of time, or have reached a satisfying point to end the session, then do so. Multiple sessions of the same game can be combined into a Campaign, as detailed in the next chapter.

CAMPAIGNS

While *Intrepid* works well as a game played for a single session of 3-4 hours, *Intrepid* can also be played as a *campaign*: an ongoing game played over the course of many sessions.

The campaign game will likely see your setting grow to be vast in scope and rich in detail. Your characters will pursue—and complete!—many quests; factions will rise in favour and fall in ignominy, locations will be razed to the ground in mighty wars, and relationships will spider across your map in elaborate webs.

This chapter describes extra considerations for playing *Intrepid* as a campaign game.

THE SET-UP

In a campaign game, your first session plays just like a regular session: you'll spend the first 30 to 60 minutes engaged in the set-up and then you'll play out a series of cool scenes.

Subsequent sessions in a campaign game do not feature a set-up. Instead, play resumes where the last session left off. The entire session is filled with a series of engaging scenes that build upon what has happened.

Since some time may have passed since the last session, it can be helpful to nominate one player to say a few words summarising the highlights of the previous session to refresh everyone's memory. This summary happens at the start of every session subsequent to the first.

If you've ever watched popular American TV serial dramas, this summary is like those "Previously on..." segments that many episodes begin with.

When a new player joins the game they will need an introduction to your existing setting.

Your map is an excellent tool for structuring this discussion: it contains many of the important elements of your setting. Walk the new player through the map, introducing each element in broad brush strokes and answering any questions the new player may have.

Ensure only that the new player gets a feel for the themes and tone of the setting. Don't go into too much detail: they can pick up the fine details through play.

Run the new player through a cut-down version of the *set-up*: guide them through the process of creating a theme, character, location, faction, and quest. The new player must also link an element they create to an existing element created by another player.

The new player should then take up position as the last person in the turn order: this gives them the chance to see the game in action before becoming the spotlight player.

ABSENT PLAYERS

If a player is absent from a session and they are *holding* a character, the question arises of what to do with their *held* character.

For the duration of the session the *held* character can be played by another player, but only in scenes involving the quest the *held* character is pursuing.

Alternatively, you can state that characters cannot be *held* by someone absent. At the start of a session, any character *held* by an absent player is returned to the pool of characters in the middle of the table.

Each player may even opt to have their *held* character treated differently in their absence. How you choose to handle absent players should be agreed with the rest of the group in advance.

The longer play time of the campaign game provides the opportunity to explore your setting in greater detail.

The scope of your original map might be broadened to include the previously undiscovered second moon orbiting the main planet of your futuristic spacefaring setting; or, existing elements of your setting might be deepened and explored in finer detail.

Sleeping Lion finds himself conscripted into the Imperial Army and is loaded onto a boat heading for the empire's heartland! Ezekiel may embark upon a quest based entirely in Port Marsham, visiting many different places within the town.

To facilitate this exploration, create more maps.

Campaign games will often feature a host of maps at different scales: one map might be at the scale of a single city where lots of courtly intrigue takes place. Another map might be at the scale of the surrounding kingdom: the city featured in the first map would be marked on this other map as a small circle.

New maps must have room for a relationship map. Write down any of the themes from the original map that are appropriate to the area featured on the new map; add extra themes as needed.

When a new character or faction is created they should be added to the map that matches their area of influence. A king would go on a map of a kingdom, not a map of a favoured tavern; for a barmaid, the reverse is true.

If the elements of one map later develop links with elements on a different map, the element should be drawn on that new map: it's fine for such elements to be duplicated.

When a quest is completed any player can narrate some extra detail that can provoke ideas for future quests. This extra detail is optional, so don't feel pressured to force it.

Many of the Marvel superhero movies feature teaser vignettes after the credits have rolled which hint at future movies.

The player who created the quest must take a moment to create another quest. This new quest is created using the same process described in the set-up. The new quest can be a quest that follows up on events spinning out of the completed quest, or it can be something completely unrelated and new to the setting.

Finally, the player who created the quest may choose to add an element to an existing map: a new theme, faction, location, or character. The new element must be linked to an element created by another player.

EPISODIC GAMES

While a single session game of *Intrepid* fits comfortably into 3 or 4 hours, a campaign game can easily run in much shorter (or longer) sessions if needed.

Shorter sessions of an hour or so are an ideal length for those without much time on their hands. Your first session will be taken up entirely by the set-up phase of the game, while there should be enough time in each subsequent session for everyone to play one scene.

Such sessions should be regular—at least once a week—otherwise the players are going to forget what is happening.

ALTERNATIVE RULES

Here are some alternative rules for *Intrepid*.

Try playing *Intrepid* by the book first to get a solid grasp of the gameplay, and then consider dropping one or more of these alternative rules into your next session.

RANDOM CHARACTERS

This alternative rule affects the *set-up*.

After everyone has created a character, place the character cards face down in the centre of the table. Shuffle them and then deal the character cards out at random, one per player.

The character on the card that a player is dealt is that player's starting *held character*. The player can subsequently relinquish their *hold* on that character.

This encourages players to get involved in other stories, at the cost of the loss of some control.

NO HELD CHARACTERS

This alternative rule affects the *Choose A Character* and *Conclude The Scene* sections.

No player can *hold* a character.

Anyone can pick any character to play during a scene. At the conclusion of a scene all character cards are returned to the pool of character cards in the middle of the table.

This alternative rule affects the *set-up*.

Instead of drawing your own map, find and use an existing one.

Good maps to use are those from existing fantasy settings or historical maps. Annotate it using *Post-it Notes*.

Decide as a group about how much you want existing knowledge of the area on the map to influence the game.

A map of Oxford in 1833 could infer a pre-Victorian theme centred around a university; or you could just use it as a set of geographical features and create a setting completely unrelated to the source material.

It can be fun to explore places you already know well—fictional or real—and good maps are great for providing inspiration.

Using an existing map means you don't get to create your own world from scratch.

This alternative rule affects the *Frame-* and *Direct- The Scene* sections.

A player can choose to direct their own scene instead of framing it.

After the player has chosen their character and quest, another player must volunteer to frame the scene and role-play the chosen character on the chosen quest.

By choosing to let one of your friends frame the scene, you're giving your friends the opportunity to surprise you with cool situations.

The role of the director gives you more control over how the scene unfolds.

QUESTIONS

This alternative rule affects the *Frame-* and *Direct- The Scene* sections.

After a scene has been framed, players take it in turn to ask the scene framer leading questions just as the director will during a scene.

The scene framer picks one leading question to become the *focus* of the upcoming scene: the player who asked the question becomes the director.

The answer to the leading question should be discovered during the scene. This variant can be played where the leading question replaces the director's obligation to ask leading questions during the scene, or it can not.

This can lead to more interesting twists and drama than the regular rules.

It can also slow down the start of a scene, especially if players struggle to think of suitable questions.

JOURNEY SCENES

This alternative rule affects the *Frame The Scene* section.

When a player frames a scene they can opt for the scene to be a *journey scene*.

The scene is framed as a moment on a journey between two locations at a time when *nothing much is happening*. (That last bit is crucial.)

There is no director in a journey scene.

Instead, other players can choose to play characters who are journeying with the spotlight character; they might also chose to play fellow travellers on the journey, or incidental characters such as river pilots, coachmen, or sailors. If no other players choose to play characters in the scene, then the scene is a monologue.

There is no crossroad in a journey scene.

Players cannot declare a *crossroad* during a journey scene. Instead, players should ask each other questions (leading or otherwise) about the spotlight character's past and future, about their hopes and regrets. These questions should be answered in the journey scene.

A journey scene affords players the opportunity for quiet reflection. It is a chance for characters to draw breath and take stock of their situation: role-played well, such scenes add richness and texture to characters by giving us the chance to hear their inner thoughts and desires far away from the fire and the fury of dramatic conflict.

A journey scene concludes when everyone agrees that it is time to move on to another scene.

FIGHT!

This alternative rule affects the *Crossroads* section.

When two characters are set to beat seven shades of hell out of each other, any player can say "*Fight!*" in order to provoke a blow-by-blow cinematic account of the combat. (Essentially, "*Fight!*" is a new ritual phrase.)

The fight is narrated using the rules for the short-form role-playing game *Showdown At The Falling Blossoms* found at the back of this book. Substitute your own characters and situation for the "colour" from that game—Chen Zu, Leung Jan, the restaurant, the quest for vengeance are all superfluous colour that you can ignore. Pick one player to begin and then start drawing cards and narrating.

There is one small change to the rules of that game when you're embedding it inside *Intrepid*. When a player draws an ace, that player must choose one of the following options.

- ~ Concede the fight: their opponent narrates the outcome of the combat.
- ~ Raise the stakes: this could be moving from fisticuffs to swords or endangering innocent bystanders.
- ~ Say "*We have reached a crossroad...*" to end the fight and conclude the scene using the standard *crossroads* process.

Keep your narration as punchy as the blows the combatants are throwing. Using short evocative sentences helps the action crack along at pace and can help stop players who don't have characters involved in the combat from getting bored.

This rule lends the game a more action-packed tone. Ensure that this rule fits with the established tone of your game before you crack it out.

If you do choose to use this rule, be sure to have a few warm up games of *Showdown at the Falling Blossoms* before you start play.

SHOWDOWN AT THE FALLING BLOSSOMS

Showdown At The Falling Blossoms is a short-form game for 2 players.

You will need:

- ~ a deck of regular playing cards.
- ~ 5–10 minutes to play the game.

Shuffle the cards and place the deck between the players.

One player reads out the following text.

Chen Zu, a chef and kung-fu expert, is working in the kitchen at the Falling Blossoms Restaurant when in bursts his rival Leung Jan, a bicycle courier and kung-fu expert.

“Chen Zu, you killed my father and I will have vengeance!”

Play proceeds as a conversation conducted at pace: you’ll be narrating the furious fight between these kung-fu warriors!

Showdown... is set in the real world so you don’t have recourse to magic or gadgets in your narration. The game is designed to stretch your powers of narration, especially with regards to fight scenes. It can be quite challenging to play, but it should be a rewarding experience.

The reader of the opening passage will play Leung Jan; the other, Chen Zu. Leung Jan’s player starts, and then players take it in turns to go.

When it’s a player’s turn, they will draw the top card from the shared deck and place it face up on the table. The player will say exactly one sentence about the fight. The content of the sentence is determined by the drawn card.

After drawing a black card your turn ends and your opponent takes over the narration; if you draw a red card your turn continues.

SPADE

Describe an attack and narrate how it affects your opponent.

"The sound of crunching bone and splintering teeth greets the first meeting between Chen Zu's fist and Leung Jan's face!"

"Leung Jan leaps over the table and knocks Chen Zu onto the hot stove!"

"Chen Zu sweeps low with a kick that knocks Leung Jan to the floor!"

CLUB

Describe making an attack and your opponent describes how it misses them.

"Leung Jan's fist snakes through the air: Hooded Cobra Strike!"

"... Chen Zu's eyes widen as the blow only just slides by his face!"

"Chen Zu snatches a knife from a rack and hurls it at his foe's face" "... but at the last moment Leung Jan snatches it from the air!"

"... then he launches a strike at the throat" "... which Chen Zu backflips away from!"

DIAMOND

Narrate something about the scene external to the fighters.

You might say something about bystanders, the scenery, or the weather.

"Great swirling clouds of sweet and sour steam engulf the fighters as they clash!"

"Sous chefs scatter like falling leaves!"

"Thunder cracks and a torrential downpour begins."

Narrate an action your character takes that is not an attack.

The character might pick up a weapon or taunt their foe.

“Bwahaha, you fight like a coarse peasant boy from Wu Lin Province!”

“Chen Zu adopts the Leaping Mantis stance ...”

“Leung Jan grabs an umbrella from a passerby and brandishes it like a sword.”

Aces and Jokers are special cards and have the following effects. (Ignore the suit of an Ace.)

Special effect! Take a little more time describing something spectacular, something you might expect from a movie rather than real life.

“Chen Zu’s eyes widen as he sees Leung Jan reach back as though gathering something from his belt... and a smoke bomb is thrown to the floor. We are unable to see anything until the smoke clears... and when it does we find Chen Zu pinned to a wall by a barrage of blows from his foe!”

“As Leung Jan throws a rapid fire barrage of daggers towards Chen Zu, time seems to slow as we see each dagger parried by the palms of Chen Zu’s hand as he steadily walks forwards. As the supply of blades runs dry a two handed blow to the chest knocks Leung Jan off his feet to smash into a wall!”

“The van, carrying our fighters on its back, crashes into a market stall, sending up a cloud of smoke and feathers. When the camera catches up with them we find Leung Jan and Chen Zu on the floor with their hands round each other’s throats.”

1st, 2nd and 3rd Aces: Narrate a change of scene.

“Leung Jan’s flying kick catches Chen Zu straight in the chest, and the chef is smashed through the swinging doors of the kitchen out into the restaurant!”

“Realising that the cramped confines of the kitchen give the advantage to his opponent’s Raging Crane style, Leung Jan spins on his heel and moves the fight out into the back alley with Chen Zu in close pursuit!”

“Leung Jan is knocked out of the window and onto the back of a passing flatbed truck. Chen Zu leaps out after him...”

4th Ace: Narrate your victory over your opponent. The fight ends.

“Chen Zu’s neck snaps like a bamboo stalk; Leung Jan nods, his father is avenged.”

“You were foolish to think you could defeat me Leung Jan: your mightiest blow was as a breath of summer wind against a tall mountain.” With that Chen Zu delivers a final blow to his foe, rendering him unconscious.

“With a final mighty punch Chen Zu is knocked over the edge of the building, to an eight floor drop from which no one could possibly survive...”

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The design of *Intrepid* owes a lot to many other games, most notably.

- ~ Archipelago, by Matthijis Holter
- ~ Fiasco, by Jason Morningstar
- ~ Microscope, by Ben Robbins
- ~ Mist-Robed Gate, by Shreyas Sampat
- ~ Wushu, by Daniel Bayn

Further thoughts on the design of this game, and others, can be found on the Kiwi RPG design blog (<http://kiwirpgdesign.wordpress.com/>).

QUICK SET-UP

These tables will let you quickly set-up a game for 4 players. Each table provides 2 each of themes, character ideas, factions, locations, and quests. Just choose 2 tables that look appealing, draw a map, add relationships, and you are good to go.

THE FADING LIGHT



The magic is fading
Fall from grace



A once great hero
Beautiful and sad



Melancholy elves
A cabal of dark sorcerers



An ancient citadel
Abandoned mines



A trinket with hidden power
A place of light, under threat

THE WITCHING HOUR



A seed of evil in everyone
Misunderstood magic



A young widow
A vampire



A cult older than civilisation
Hunters of evil things



A forest shrouded in mist
Gallows on a hill



The Wyld Hunt is coming
A folk hero turns to darkness

BLOOD AND RUST



A war without end
The gods are dead



A lowly goat herd
Mighty thews



A cult to a dark god
A dynasty of tyrants



A pitiless desert
A bloody altar



A tyrant with no apparent heir
A demon in search of revenge

THE FROZEN NORTH



Brutal rites of passage
Months without sun



A smith
Deadly trickster



Warriors without a home
An isolated tribe



A thousand foot high glacier
A trade route over tundra



A child, lost in a storm
A gate that mustn't be opened