Forged Ties
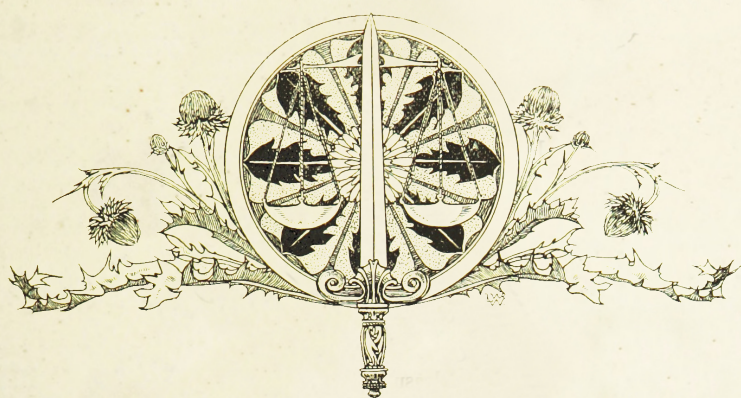
Corey Hickson

It is the ties we form with others that drive us to be who we are, where we go, and what we do.

Colophon
IM Fell Double Pica for titles and *Spectral* for body.
Designed in Affinity Publisher.

Acknowledgements

Inspiration
Forged Ties was inspired by Death Stranding by Hideo Kojima and wondering what an action-adventure roleplaying game would look like if it was based around the bonds we forged with others.

The breaking and ruin system was inspired by pathos in Agon by John Harper and Sean Nittner. Position and effect and pushing yourself were taken from Blades in the Dark by John Harper. The challenge dice were taken from Ironsworn by Shawn Tomkin. Bonds were inspired by the intimacy and advancement in Urban Shadows by Andrew Medeiros & Mark Diaz Truman.

Many other games have inspired me to this point, including: Monsterhearts by Avery Alder, Star Crossed by Alex Roberts, and Thousand Year Old Vampire by Tim Hutchings.

Introduction

Forged Ties is tabletop roleplaying system for action-adventure games powered by the bonds our characters forge with the world and those within it.

This is the digital pre-release, that means it is still being developed, but is complete and playable. This system pairs with modules that contain the content for gameplay; for example, Forged on the High Seas. Additionally, there are guidelines at the end for building your own module to meet the needs of your group.

This digital pre-release contains the bare information to play the game, not detailed examples or further explanations. If you're uncertain with how to proceed on a mechanic, make your best guess. If you're familiar with games like Blades in the Dark, Agon, Ironsworn, or any Powered by the Apocalypse game, you'll be well set for this system and how it operates.

Finally, this game is currently best supported on Google Sheets. A set of Google Sheets for the playkit can be found on Itch.

Licensing

You can license the Forged Ties system under the [Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY)](#) license. The intent is such that you can create and distribute your own modules providing credit for using the Forged Ties system. To do so, you must include the following text:
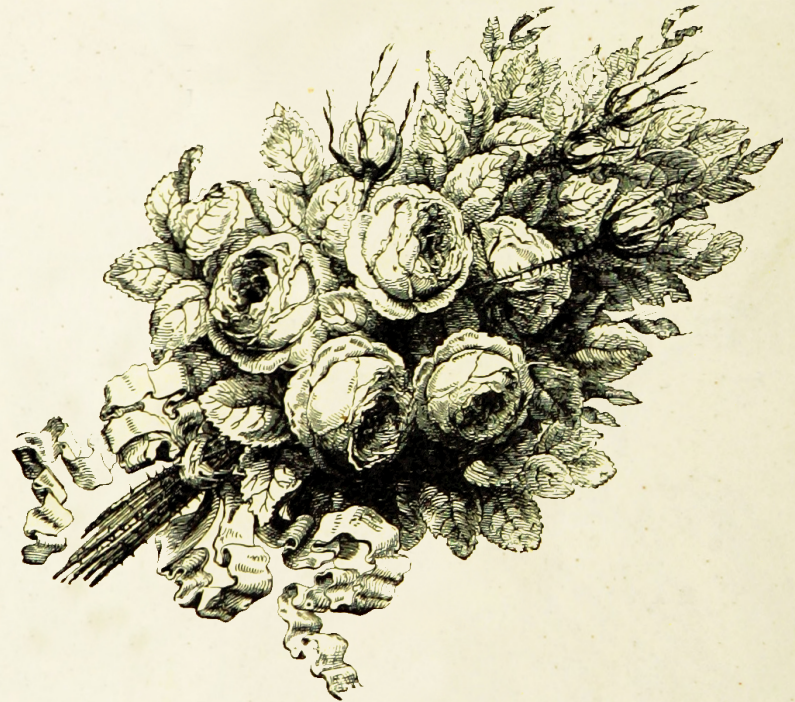
Forged Ties Rules Reference

Character Creation

1. **Choose your forged tie**

The tie you forge defines who your character is and who they can become. **Add the tie to your character sheet, including the XP trigger, & answer the opening questions. Mark the entry requirements and add all the traits**.

2. **Assign d8, d6, d6, d4, & d4 to your stats**

Your stats will be used to determine advancement for your skills & will be rolled when a skill does not apply.

3. **Advance your skills**

Each of your skills is rooted in a stat. For each skill, advance them as below:
- For **d4** stats, **mark one advance** in their related skills,
- For **d6** stats, **mark two advances** in their related skills,
- For **d8** stats, **mark three advances** in their related skills.

4. **Complete your crew**

Each module comes with a set of opening questions for your crew. Complete this step as a group, starting from the top and working your way to completion.
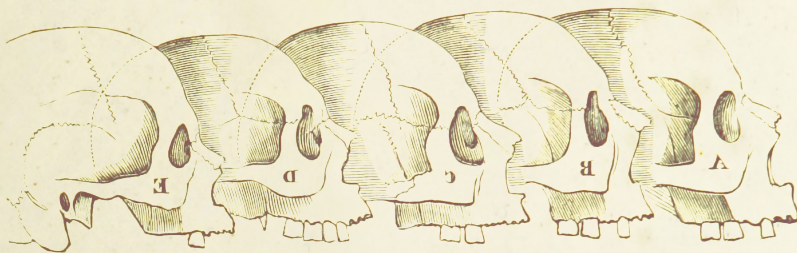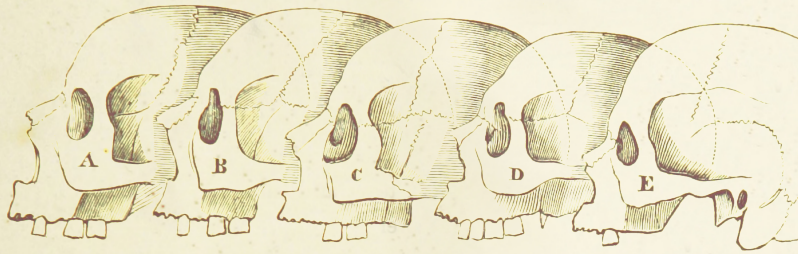
Rolling

When your character attempts something and the outcome is uncertain, roll as follows.

1. The player picks a skill, or stat if none apply

Choose a skill that fits the narrative. If no skill applies, or the character does not have the skill, choose a stat instead.

2. The GM determines position and effect

Each roll has a position & effect based off of how risky the action is and how effective the approach is. The GM determines this based off of how applicable their approach is to the fiction.

Position
Controlled

- On a **miss**, you miss and will need to push to achieve this.
- On a **partial success**, you miss or you do it but there's a minor consequence.
- On a **full success**, you do it.

Risky

- On a **miss**, you miss and suffer consequences. **Mark harm or breaking**.
- On a **partial success**, you do it but suffer consequences.
- On a **full success**, you do it.

Desperate

- On a **miss**, you miss and suffer severe consequences. **Mark harm and breaking.**
- On a **partial success**, you do it but suffer severe consequences. **Mark harm or breaking**.
- On a **full success**, you do it.

3. Create your dice pool

Start with the dice from your chosen skill or stat.

- If you're **using a skill**, **add dice based off of related skills**.
- If **someone is helping**, **add their dice** based off which skill or stat they're helping with. Stats can help stats, and skills can help either stats or skills.

4. Optionally, push yourself

If you push yourself, **mark breaking** and then either **add one die** or **increase the effect**. The die you add is based off of the skill you rolled, not any other dice added.

5. Roll and take the highest die

Roll all the dice. Your result is the highest die.

6. Compare the die against the challenge dice

The GM rolls two 10-sided dice,
- If the player's die is **higher than both challenge dice**, it's a **full success**.
- If the player's die is **higher than one challenge die**, it's a **partial success**.
- If the player's die is **lower than both challenge dice**, it's a **miss**.

If the challenge dice match, the result includes either a **new complication** if it was a miss or **new opportunity** if it was a success.

Stats

Your character has five stats which your skills are based upon.

Each stat has a track associated with it. These tracks will fill as you mark and clear Bonds with other player characters. **When a track is full, reset the track and advance one skill related to that stat**.

Wit

Your mental acuity and deductive powers. Roll Wit when it comes down to a question of calculation or acumen.

Power

Your raw physical power and staying force. Roll Power when it comes to feats of force with the body.

Speed

Your agility and ability to move quickly. Roll Speed when it's a matter of quick reflexes or precision skill.

Face

Your charm and circles. Roll Face when you're trying to interact with someone or connecting with your network.

Soul

Your inner fire. Roll Soul when you are relying on your heart or need to pull through with pure determination.

Skills

Each core skills is rooted in a stat. Other skills are listed with their tie and will list if they're rooted in a stat. Some may not be.

Study and Survey

Study applies when you try to understand what is before you, or make conclusions based off of the information you have. Study is not used when you do not have the information at hand. When you're trying to gather information, consider Survey.

Survey is used to notice or discover something unknown to you. You use your senses to gather information. Survey is not used to understand what you see. When you're trying to understand what you can see, consider Study.

Overpower and Resist

Overpower applies when you are trying to use your physical force to impose a change. You use your force to make something fold, or bend, to your physical will. You do not use Overpower to stop someone from imposing their physical will on you. When someone is imposing their physical will on you, consider Resist.

Resist is your physical ability to stay change. You stand your ground using your body and physical force to prevent their change from happening. You do not use Resist when you are trying to change something in the world. When you are trying to enact physical change, consider Overpower.

Finesse and Traverse

Finesse applies when you require physical precision, like threading a needle or carefully placing a trap. You use your

precision to make some expert motion. You do not use this when you're trying to cross distances or keep pace. When you are trying to close a distance, consider Traverse.

Traverse applies when you need to cross some distance, whether by swimming, crossing dangerous terrain, or another mode of transportation. You do not use this when you're trying to do something precise with your hands. Instead consider Finesse.

Parley and Consort

Parley applies when you offer promises, seduction, or threats to get what you want from another person. It's used to be convincing. It does not used to find someone and it is not used when nothing is being offered. If you're trying to find someone, consider Consort. If you're not offering promises, seduction, or threats in exchange for something, keep roleplaying or make that offer.

Consort is used when you're trying to find someone within your network. It is used when you ping your web to see who might have what you need. It is not used when are meeting with someone and offering them something. When you are with someone and offering them something for what you want, consider Parley.

Forge and Resolve

Forge is a special skill. It is used when you advance your tie. Forge is not typically rolled otherwise, but it may be forked in if you're specifically trying to forge a bond with someone or someones.

Resolve is used when you use the accomplish something using your inner resolve. It applies when you want to stand strong facing otherworldly horrors, or when you are being impacted by the magical bonds of a spell and wish to break free.

Exhausted

Some abilities may ask you to mark Exhausted. Once Exhausted, **you cannot use the same or another ability which requires you to mark Exhausted**.

You clear your Exhausted status at the **end of each session**.

Armor

Some abilities may ask you to mark Armor. Once marked, **you cannot use the same or another ability which requires you to mark Armor**.

You clear your Armor at the **end of each session**.

Heart, Breaking, and Ruin

As your character pushes themselves and faces challenges, they will begin to wear down and break.

When you face certain consequences and push yourself, your breaking track will advance until you are broken. **When you mark broken, mark one harm "broken." After you are broken, you will advance ruin.**

If you **mark a ⊙ ruin space**, you immediately **choose a ruin advance**.

At the **end of the session, you recover your breaking track, but only to the amount of harm you have left**. For example, if you have 2 harm, you will start the next session with 2 breaking marked.

Ruin does not clear. It will continue to advance where you left off if you become broken again.

If you have heart, **you clear heart before marking breaking**.

Pag. 68.

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.
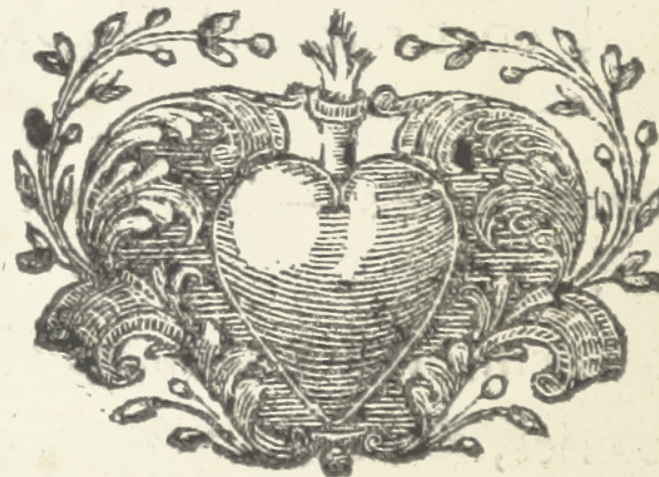
Harm

Harm is descriptive ways in which your character has been hurt. They will build up as a result of consequences for risky and desperate misses or risky partial successes.

If you have no room for additional harm, but take harm, you instead mark breaking. You may rewrite one of your previous harms to reflect the new harm, though (still marking breaking).

If harm is resolved in the fiction, remove the harm. For example, if your character marked "scared," but time has passed and they're no longer scared, then remove the harm.

You may also clear harm when you Forge or at the end of session. See the rules on forging or the end of session move for more details.

Forged Ties

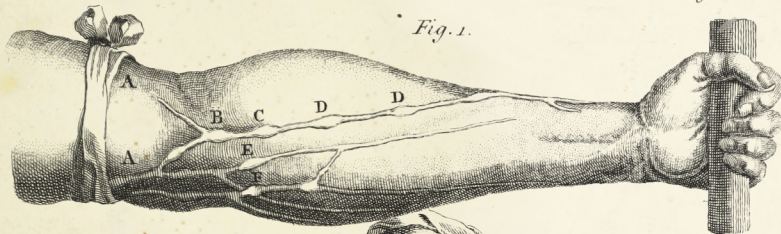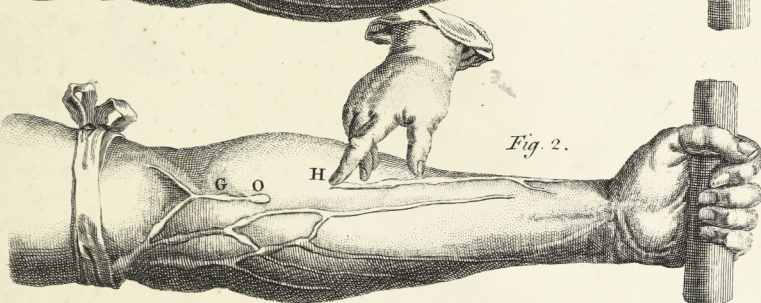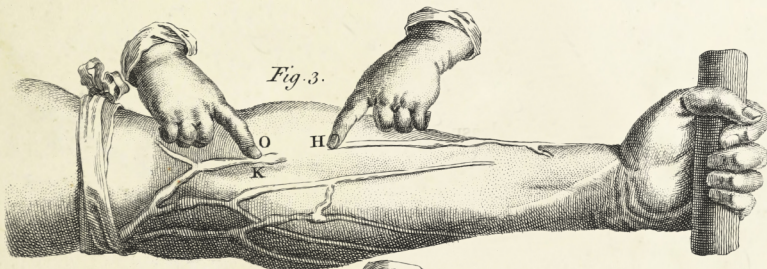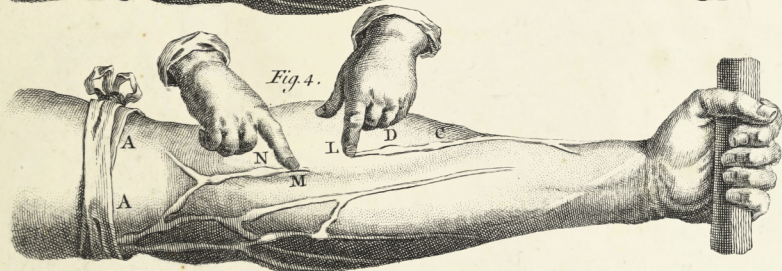Forge is a special skill. It's your ability to forge ties. It's rolled **when you complete requirements in your tie**.

When you roll Forge, **fork in a die based off of your Forge track**. Your Forge track progresses via the end of session move and your XP condition.

Advancing Ties

To advance your tie, you must **mark the requirements listed at your current level** by accomplishing what it is listed. You cannot mark requirements ahead of the level you're on. **When you mark a requirement**, **roll Forge**,

If someone helped you meet the requirement, they mark their Bond with you.

- On a **miss**, despite what came before, the tie will be tested. **Mark breaking & answer** 'what new difficulties await me as I forge on?'
- On a **partial success**, the tie ebbs and flows. You **may mark breaking and remove harm, then answer** 'what new opportunity is at stake and how is it in danger?'
- On a **success**, the tie will strengthen. You **may mark heart or remove harm, then answer** 'what new opportunity awaits me and how is it accessible to me?'

When you complete all requirements for a level, advance the tie. To advance a tie, choose a number of traits from the tie based off of the level completed.
- When you **enter the tie**, choose **all traits**.
- After the **first level**, choose **5 traits**.
- After the **second level**, choose **4 traits**.
- After the **third level**, choose **3 traits**.
- After the **fourth level**, choose **2 traits**.
- After the **final level**, choose **1 trait**.

Breaking Ties

We have to break ties to forge new ones. **At the end of a session, you may choose to break your tie** (even if it's not advanced to completion). **Remove the tie and write it into your legacy**.
- **If you completed the tie**, **choose one advance to add to your character sheet**.
- **If you completed your Forge track**, **choose one advance to add to your character sheet**.

The advances you add to your character sheet are now available to be taken when you complete your advances track.

Next session, choose a new tie. **Add the tie to your character sheet**, **including the XP trigger, & answer the opening questions**. You may instead choose to answer the opening questions after you have completed the entry level.

Forge Track

The Forge track represents your momentum towards your goals. You can choose to advance it at the end of a session based off of how much your XP condition came up. See the end of session rules.

Your Forge track determines the size of the die you add to your Forge rolls when you roll Forge.

Bonds

Bonds are the ways in which we learn from each other and deepen our connection to the other player characters in the game. They are complement to the forged ties which give our characters connection to the greater world.

When another player marks a requirement you helped them complete, mark your Bond with them. Your Bonds are specific to the character you marked it with and cannot mark it with them again until you resolve the Bond.

When you share a moment of intimacy or reflection with another character, **you may choose to resolve your Bond** with that character. If you do, **clear the Bond, answer the question** 'how have I grown from my bond?', **mark your advances track, and choose a stat track to mark** based off of how you have grown.

If you have **filled your stat track**, **clear it and advance one skill** related to that stat. If you have **filled your advances track**, **clear it and mark one advance**.

Intimacy and reflection can come in many forms. You may share physical intimacy, emotional intimacy, or another kind of intimacy that you and the other players have consented to the characters engaging in.

End of Session

At the **end of the session**, **mark any requirements** you completed during the session, **rolling Forge for each one. If another player character helped** you to complete it, **they mark their Bond with you**.

Then, consider your XP condition. If it happened **once, choose one**. If it happened **multiple times, choose two**:
- Clear 1 harm
- Advance your Forge track
- Mark 2 heart

Lastly, **clear your breaking track to the number of harm you have and clear Exhausted**. For example, if you finish the session with 1 harm, clear your breaking track except for one space.

Game Runner's Guide

Hacked Ties

Ties are built with hacking in mind. You can write ties to fit the game you want. Below are guidelines for writing your own ties.

Requirements

Requirements can come in any form, they're just what needs to be done before a tie can be taken.
- Story requirements - something you've done in the narrative
- Mechanical requirements - a certain skill, or tie, related to the module
  - Require a core skill to be a certain level
  - Require a non-core skill
  - Require to have completed a previous tie

When writing requirements, it can help to answer 'what does this character's story look like?' and then fill in each level, one after the other, based off of those answers, starting with the entry level.

Traits

The set of traits in a tie follow a guide:
- Two traits advance your core skills
- Two traits advance major skills based off of the module
- One trait advances lore skills based off of the module
- One trait advances minor skills based off of the module

Major skills can be categorized as skills that will be applicable across the whole adventure. If you're in a seafaring adventure, that might include sailing, or swashbuckling. These will come up often and others might have them, as well. They are more applicable than minor skills.

Minor skills can be categorized as skills that will add flavour or potentially influence behaviour. They add tone to the tie. It's unlikely any of the others will have these skills, as they can be very specific to the tie. In a seafaring module, the might include skills like digging, or drinking. The player will be able to use them in a niche.

Lore skills are a special type of skill. You might recognize these as wises if you're familiar with Burning Wheel! Lore skills come in the format *Name Lore*. For example, Great Beast Lore, Ancient Ruins Lore, Spiced Rum Lore, or Rat Lore. They are information your character contains on specific knowledge and their ability to establish facts about them. They're rolled when a player wants to establish canon about their lore. They're forked in when they do something involving that lore.

Changing Traits

While a typical tie has traits which offer you a set of skills, there's a variety of variations. These traits replace the ones which offer you major skills.
- Allows you to spend a new kind of resource
- Allows you to choose from multiple skills to advance
- Provides you with armor against a certain effect
- Allows you to move harm to breaking under certain circumstances

Hindrances

A hindrance might be offered by a tie because that tie offers a trait that is exceptional. A hindrance is a trait which reduces one or two skills.

Advances

Advances are capstone abilities that change your character or offer them some kind of new power which they can evoke. Examples listed below.

- Allows you to do something out of the ordinary
- Add an **extra die** or **increase effect** in a specific circumstance
- **Push yourself** to a supernatural talent for exhaustion
- Mark **breaking** to use a supernatural talent

Advancement Requirements

Each tie comes with a set of advancement requirements. These requirements set out the path one will complete to advance. They can be broken into major and minor requirements. Some ties will tend to have more soft requirements and some will tend to have more hard requirements. Each tie should come with approximately 15-20 requirements, a mix of soft and hard requirements, and assuming you complete a few requirements each session, those ties will last roughly 6-12 sessions.

Major Requirements

Major requirements are hard narrative requirements. They prescribe a task or accomplishment to achieve. They take the spotlight and require your character to actively pursue a goal.

Minor Requirements

Minor requirements are softer narrative requirements. They might prescribe a way to behave or way to address a problem, but not what the problem is. They can be done during other parts of the narrative.
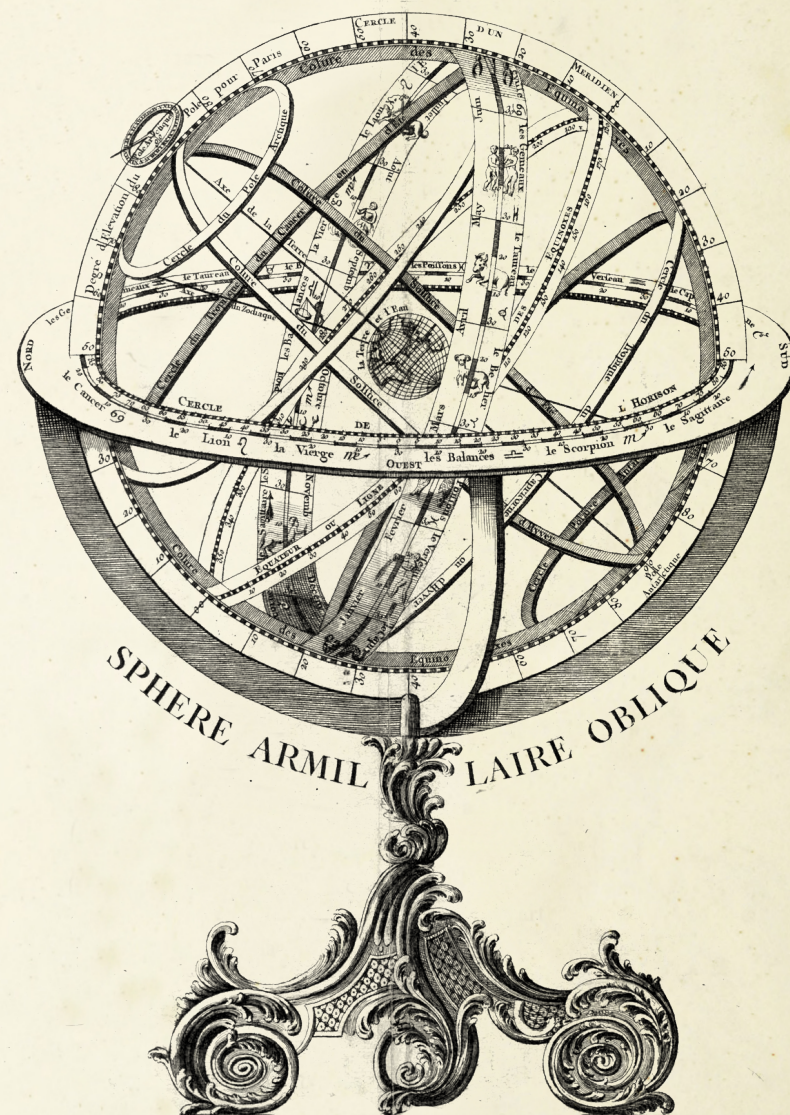
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Forged Ties is tabletop roleplaying system for action-adventure games powered by the bonds our characters forge with the world and those within it.

Play with a game runner and a handful of players in whichever module you choose, or create your own. Play for a couple sessions or play an extended game.