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Skein of Destiny

Dave Morris presents a role-playing system with an authentically Tsolyáni premise.

The Tsolyáni believe that a person has five selves: Body (bakte), Mind (hlakme), Passion (pedhetl), Dream (chusetl) and Spirit (baletl).

Attributes

Roll 2d10 for each attribute: **Body**, **Mind**, **Passion**, **Dream** and **Spirit**. It is up to you how you interpret a high score. For instance, high Body could mean you're strong, wiry, big, dextrous, etc.

Initial attribute scores are modified by social class. Nobles get +1 Spirit, townsmen get +1 Mind, and peasants get +1 Passion.

Abilities

Abilities are divided into skills (which can be trained) and talents (which can only be improved by experience). Abilities of either type are based on a primary and a modifying attribute. The sum of these attributes determines your maximum possible score in that ability.

Skills

Skill	Based On
Agility	Body + Spirit
Brawling	Body + Body
Etiquette	Spirit + Mind
Magic	Mind + Dream
Medicine	Mind + Spirit
Missile Use	Mind + Body
Priestcraft	Spirit + Dream
Scholarship	Mind + Mind
Seamanship	Body + Mind
Singing	Spirit + Dream
Spellcasting	Passion + Mind
Thievery	Dream + Mind
Tracking	Mind + Body
Weapon Attack	Body + Passion
Weapon Parry	Body + Dream

Talents

Talent	Based On
Authority	Passion + Mind
Charm	Passion + Spirit
Perception	Dream + Mind
Sex Appeal	Body + Passion
Stealth	Dream + Spirit
Streetwise	Mind + Dream
Survival	Body + Mind

You begin with two skills at half maximum possible value, three skills at one third maximum value, and four skills at one quarter maximum value. (Round fractions up in your favour.)

Using Abilities

To use an ability, roll 2d10. Success is indicated by a roll equal to or less than your score in the skill. The degree of success is equal to the higher of the two dice in the case of skills and the lower of the dice in the case of talents. If you roll a double then add another 1d10 to either number to get the final degree of success.

Example: Rasunra has a Perception score of 9. He rolls, getting a 3 and a 5 on the dice. The total of the dice is 8, which is less than his Perception score so he has succeeded. Perception is a talent, so the degree of success is the lower number rolled: a 3.

Optional modifiers

Instead of making a straight skill roll, you can choose to "play safe" or "make an effort". To do this, apply a modifier ranging from -5 to +5 to the total roll (announced, of course, before you throw the dice). If successful, you must apply the same modifier to the degree of success, to a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 15. (Note that optional modifiers cannot be applied to talents, only to skills.)

Example: Tu'unme is asked to entertain Prince Taksuru. He decides to try and impress the prince by attempting a particularly difficult song. He opts for a modifier of +5 to the dice roll. His Singing score is 13 and he rolls 6 and 2, giving an 8. With the +5 modifier he just succeeds, and he also gets to add 5 for a total degree of success of 11.

Attribute rolls

Sometimes you will need to roll against an attribute directly. This works exactly like using a talent, ie optional modifiers cannot be applied. Some common uses of attributes are:

Match Mind against another person's Charm to see if you have the good sense to resist them (Assuming you want to). The higher degree of success wins out.

Match Passion against another person's Authority roll if you want to resist giving in to them.

Match Spirit against a dishonourable suggestion to see if you have the nobility to refuse to go along with it. (The Referee will assign an arbitrary value measuring how dishonourable the suggestion is.)

Some examples of competitive use of attributes are:

Body vs Body in a contest of strength.

Mind vs Mind to outwit someone in a game of skill.

Passion vs Passion to intimidate a foe.

Dream vs Dream to win a game of chance.

Spirit vs Spirit when vying for respect or promotion.

Loss of attribute points

Attribute losses can be brought about by magic. In most cases losses will only be temporary.

Body is reduced by wounds, poison and disease.

Mind can be reduced by terrible experiences.

Passion is reduced by release of emotion and by casting spells.

Dream is reduced by supernatural encounters or sleeplessness.

Spirit is reduced by disgrace or failure.

Reduction of an attribute to 0 has the following effect:

Body death

Mind insanity

Passion apathy

Dream undeath

Spirit annihilation

Ability scores are affected by the loss or gain of points in the primary attribute, but not the modifying attribute. If you lose Body during a fight, for instance, you also lose the same number off your Weapon Attack and Weapon Parry scores.

Recovering attribute points

Attributes recover at different rates:

Body: roll Spirit or less each day to recover a point; a Medicine roll at least equal to your current lost points adds 1 extra point a day.

Mind: roll Spirit or less each week to recover a point.

Passion: recover all lost points in one night on a successful Dream roll.

Dream: roll Dream or less each week to recover a point.

Spirit: noble action will restore lost points at the Referee's discretion.

Improving ability scores

Both skills and talents can be increased by experience. You are eligible for an ability increase in any month in which you got a degree of success of 10 or more with the ability. To increase the ability you must make a Dream roll. To the degree of success of this roll, add the number of uses of the ability for which you are eligible. You need a final total higher than half your current score to increase the ability by 1.

Example: Muresh twice got a degree of success of 10+ when using his Priestcraft skill this month. At the end of the month he makes a Mind roll and gets a degree of success of 7. Adding 2 to this gives a result of 9. This is higher than half his current Priestcraft score, so it goes up by 1.

Training can also be used to increase skills. Typically the Referee will first require a Spirit roll to see if the teacher is impressed enough to take you on as a pupil. (In Tsolyánu, money alone can't buy everything.) At the end of each month, the teacher makes a skill roll and you make a Mind roll. If the total degree of success exceeds half your current score in the skill, increase it by 1. You can only train in two skills at a time.

Combat

Combatants act each round in descending order of Mind score. You can take one action, either an attack or a parry. The attacker's degree of success minus the defender's degree of success is the amount of damage that gets through to the defender's armour. The defender can then make an armour roll, and the degree of success of this roll is how much of the damage the armour absorbs.

Armour	Value
leather	5
light chlen-hide	7
medium chlen-hide	8
heavy chlen-hide	9
shield	+2
ordinary steel	+1
excellent steel	+3
enchanted steel	+4

Use the higher of the dice scores for the degree of success of an armour roll. Unlike an ability roll, the armour roll cannot be optionally modified.

Spellcasting

Spells can be based on Gardásiyal or *TIRIKELU*. To attempt a spell you first make a Magic roll to see how much you remember of it at that moment. Time is a factor, so if you attempt the roll after only one round you must take an optional modifier of -5, after two rounds an optional modifier of -4 and so on. (If you have a book or scroll containing the spell then the roll is a little easier, beginning at -3, etc.) The degree of success of the Magic roll is the maximum level of the spell that you can then attempt to cast.

You then attempt a Spellcasting roll, subject to normal optional modifiers if you wish. The attempt costs 1 point of Passion. The degree of success of the roll is the strength of the spell. The target can attempt a Dream roll, and must get a higher degree of success to avoid the effects of the spell.

If you then want to cast the same spell again there is no need to repeat the Magic roll. You already have that spell in mind and can cast it in just one round. Only make a new Magic roll if you want to attempt a different spell.

Other magic

It is possible to learn Magic and not Spellcasting. The Magic skill on its own is used for preparing horoscopes, making talismans, brewing love philtres, and so on.

Insults

Insults can cause the loss of Spirit. The severity of the insult ranges from 2 to 20. If in doubt roll 3d6 for this. (Calling somebody clanless is always severity 20.) A 2d10 roll of equal to or less than the severity of the insults causes the insulted party to lose 1 Spirit point.

Normally it is possible to prevent the loss of Spirit by extracting a payment of shamtla or by issuing a challenge to duel. However, if the character making the insult gets a degree of success with Etiquette at least equal to the insult's severity then you have no legal recourse.

Example: Hetle insults his friend Gedan, calling him an oaf. The Referee rules this is severity 9. Hetle gets an 11 on his Etiquette roll so Gedan cannot demand shamtla. On a roll of 9 or less on 2d10 Gedan must lose a point of Spirit.

Wealth

The clan system means that most Tsolyáni do not use cash as such. To save the usual bother of keeping a "bank balance" of Kaitars on your character sheet, which in any case is not authentic in a Tsolyáni setting, characters are simply assigned a Wealth score ranging from 1 (pauper) to 20 (very rich). Wealth is used like a skill.

Example: Shokesh wants to buy a steel sword, for which a degree of success of 12 on his Wealth roll is required. His Wealth is 14 and he attempts the roll with an optional modifier of +5. (He's really wheedling his uncles for this.) Rolling a 6 and a 3 gives success even with the modifier, but only with a degree of success of 11. The Referee announces that Shokesh was outbid by someone from a rival clan.

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