Overview of Contests in Karbon

These are the basic contest rules for playing Karbon, which is what happens when your agent takes risky action. In simplest terms, the contest happens in rounds where the dice are rolled by the player of the agent and the narrator, determining how the Agent did in the risky action. The dice however come from a pool, limiting what can be drawn in total. You must also keep track of the Agent's situation with a Track and Chips (which go on the track). How does this all work? Here we go.

The Dice Pool

The dice pool of Karbon is a fixed arrangement of dice which are available to the players in a contest. Here is the setup:

- 7 six-sided dice
- 5 eight-sided dice
- 3 ten-sided dice
- a separate set of 5 six-sided dice, set aside as the Reserve

These are the twenty dice needed to play Karbon. The first 15 dice are the main pool and are used normally. You will only access the Reserve when a rules specifically says so, otherwise its off-limits for use. You always reset these pools at the start of each scene, and only then. If adjustments are made across the scene, they stick. This means the contents of the main pool and Reserve can change over the course of a scene.

The Stacks

Each player in the contest has a stack which can hold five chips. When they can stack five chips they reach a meaningful moment in the contest. The player of the Agent earns a Break, and the narrator earns a Glitch. Once this happens that stack of chips is discarded. Players can also have chips in hand, but can't stack them until the rules allow.

The Dice

In Karbon you will roll one or more dice for each roll, and treat each die's result independently. Each die rolled can be one of three things depending on its result: A **miss**, A **hit**, or a **turncoat**. The value of the roll determines what a die is counted as:

- **1-3 = Hit**. This is the result you want the dice to show. Hits count towards winning the roll. You count them and the player with the most hits is the winner of the roll.
- **4-5 = Miss**. This isn't a good result, but it isn't bad either. Misses don't count for anything.
- **6+ = Turncoat**. This is a bad result. Not only do these dice not count as hits, they are turncoats and you count them as a group for the roll. If you rolled three 7's, you have three turncoats for that roll. Having the most turncoats is bad. Always set aside the turncoat dice until the contest round is over.

A Contest Round

A round of the contest is one roll made by the player of the active Agent and the Narrator. In each round both players roll their dice and then each counts up their hits and turncoats. We have two things to determine after the roll:

- **Winner**: The winner of the roll is the one with the most hits. The winner of the roll will earn chips equal to the hits they rolled. Chips are the currency of the contest. Chips in the hands of the Player means the Agent is doing well and chips in the hands of the Narrator means the Agent is struggling. If a tie is rolled, both players earn chips.
- **Opening**: The player with the most turncoats suffers an Opening. To be exact, the player with the most turncoats *offers* an Opening to the other player. This may trigger game rules (gear commonly for example), and always results in the player offering the Opening surrendering all those turncoat dice to the other side. A tie here results in no Opening at all for the round.

The player that narrates the action of the contest is determined similarly. Once the winner has been determined, that player narrates how the Agent made progress (chips for the player) or encountered problems (chips for the narrator). In the case of the tie the player narrates some progress and the narrator adds some complications afterwards.

Once the roll is done and narrated, its time for a final step: Risk and Peril:

- **When an Agent puts it all on the line**, their player picks up three eight-sided dice and rolls. Each die that results in a hit lets them take another die from the pool. Dice that are misses or turncoats give the narrator one chip each. When a player elects to do this, they must narrate a risky move by the Agent.
- **If the Agent is in Peril**, the narrator picks up eight-sided dice equal to the Peril of the contest and rolls. Each hit on these Peril dice puts a chip on the narrator's track. Misses and turncoats do nothing. If one or more chips are placed on the track, the narrator should narrate some nasty complication in the contest.

That is it for each round, you need to determine the winner (or tie) and the opening, then determine in the agent is putting it all on the line or is in peril and do those rolls as needed. After the round comes the Test.

The Test

At the end of the round is the Test. At this time the player that won, or both players in a tie, can place chips from their hand onto their Stacks. If this completes a stack, making it five tall, they earn their reward: A **Break** for the player of the Agent, or a **Glitch** for the narrator. A break means the Agent has taken a step towards winning the contest, and a Glitch means they have suffered along the way.

Break

When the Agent catches a Break, they always mark one Win(X) towards the contest total. They have clearly taken a step towards winning it, and narrate doing just that. In addition they pick from one of

the following choices:

- **The Agent seizes the moment, and gains security.** In this case you remove one Peril die from the contest, regardless of how it got there.
- **The Agent exploits a slim opening, and gains footing.** In this case the player picks one: The narrator discards all their chips in hand, or gives them two dice of the narrator's.
- **The Agent reaches the conclusion of a stunning plan, and gains advantage.** In this case the player trades one or two dice from their hand with dice in the Reserve.

Glitch

When the narrator throws a Glitch, they always mark one Loss(O) towards the contest total. They have clearly taken a step towards losing it, and the narrator narrates that. In addition the player of the Agent picks one of the following choices:

- **The Agent is hurt, but persists.** The narrator chooses to either give the player both an injury and two chips, or a condition and no chips.
- **The Agent's plans take a turn for the worse.** The narrator chooses to either take two dice from the pool or add one Peril die to the contest.
- **The Agent is side-swiped.** The player removes a Win(X) mark from the contest and if they do so: the narrator gives the player all the chips they have in hand or two dice of their choice as the player elects.

The Conclusion

Once all the victory track of the contest is full of Wins(Xs) or Losses(Os) the contest is over. If the track has more X's than O's the Agent has won and reaches the Goal. If the track has more O's than X's the Agent has lost and not reached the Goal. In the case of a tie, the contest is just that and is unclear in outcome. In these cases a sudden death one victory track contest with the same stats as the first can be commenced by the player if they choose.

If an Agent reaches the conclusion of a contest with zero Fortune, they reclaim any depleted Fortune. When this happens on a win, its something promising and the Agent earns one additional Fortune in return. When this happens on a loss, something terrible has happened to the Agent as a result of losing. They either suffer a Blackout or a Moment of Madness, as the player of that Agent chooses.

Setting up a Contest

A contest is defined by a Goal, an Ability, and three stats: Challenge, Consequence, and Peril. The first two of these are worked out between the player of the primary acting Agent and the narrator. The last three stats a created by the narrator solely. Once defined, only Challenge and Peril can change for a contest without backing out of it.

The Goal of a contest is what the player’s Agent hopes to achieve. In general this give you an idea of what they are doing to make that happen. This leads into Ability. The Ability of a contest is the one that the Agent will bring to bear on it. When you have a Goal and determine how the Agent is approaching the contest, you can determine the Ability.

The Challenge of a contest is how difficult it is, and in general and level of the opposition. The narrator decides this as described under Determining Challenge. If the contest has requisite assets, they are defined here.

The Consequence of a contest is its breadth, how much is involved. The more consequence, the longer the contest and the more chance the Agent may suffer for it but the larger impact it will have. The narrator uses the rules provided in Setting Consequence.

The Peril of a contest determines how likely the challenge will cause harm to the Agent. This is magnified by Consequence and ramped up by Challenge. The narrator uses the rules in Picking Peril to determine the starting Peril of a contest.

Determining Challenge

Setting Consequence

Picking Peril

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