Yam!

The Project

Every character has a project. Projects are defined by a few things:

First, the alignment - Law, or Chaos. A Project of Law is a commitment to preserving something the way it is. Law represents order, predictability, the old, and static forces; it is the fundamental conservative principle. A Project of Chaos is a commitment to change something. Chaos represents disorder, randomness, the new, and movement; it is the fundamental liberal principle.

Second, the object - the “something” that the character wants to change or maintain. This can be any old person, place, or thing that seems interesting, as long as it's concrete. Objects can't be just simple abstractions. The object is what tells you when the project is over with - something has, or has not, been created, destroyed, preserved, or permanently changed. Relationships make especially good objects.

Third, the attachment - in old time terms, the character's “motivation.” Characters are stuck to their projects; for some reason they can't just pack up their toys and go home. The attachment explains why that is. The object explains what's bugging the character; the attachment explains why they can't let it go. Attachments can be abstractions (duty, family), or literal constraints (we share a prison cell). It's not always necessary to make the attachment explicit - sometimes an attachment is implicit in a project, or can even be simply taken for granted (“he just does”) - but you should think about answering the question “why does the character want that so badly?” Sometimes answering that question will make the project better.

Fourth, the threat - this is what makes the project a project. If no one is undermining the status quo (in the case of a Law project) or stopping the character from getting what they want (in the case of a Chaos project) then the object is simply attained. The presence of opposition means that the object is contested, and the project will be a source of conflict.

Fifth, hit points - the project has a kind of “health bar” for tracking the character's progress. During play, characters will have opportunities to “attack” their projects and “do damage” to them. The goal of play is to finish off the project by “killing” it. Finishing the project resolves it, finally. The object is achieved, or not; the threat is defeated, or not; but one way or another, the character is “unstuck,” and the project is over with. Characters who have completed their projects may stick around as supporting characters until everyone else has completed their projects too. Then the story is over.

The Play's the Thing

On your turn, you make a “play.” I'm imagining it like playing a card in a trick-taking game. It's a little piece of narration that you smack down in the middle of the “table.” It's similar to a “sentence” in SOAP or a “go” in S/Lay w/Me. Thinking of it as a “card play” gives you an idea of how much material it should cover. It's not a chapter, or even a paragraph, necessarily; but it can be bigger than just one sentence. A play is dramatic, in the sense of “acted out” or “immediately depicted.” In other words, it's not summary exposition. A play includes any or all of descriptive material (about the place where things are happening), lines of dialogue (what the people there are saying to each other), and what

people are doing there (action!). Every “play” moves the story forward a little bit, as though you were turning the crank on the mainspring of the universe, inching forward the hands of time.

A good play does two things:

First, it messes with at least one of the other players. When you make a play, you're trying to get one of the other players to object to it. You do this not by being an asshole, or messing up the continuity, or breaking color conventions, or anything like that, but by threatening something in the story that the other person really cares about.

Second, it attacks your character's project. That is, it shows the character working on the project in some definite way that will lead to the project (in game terms) “taking damage,” which (in story terms) means progress towards the object. “Progress” in this sense doesn't necessarily mean that character is closer to achieving the goal. In story terms, setbacks are also “progress.” What it does mean is that the situation is clarified; going forward there are fewer options. Progress means that the situation has escalated. Events are coming to a head.

(In literary theory, this is customarily described as a ladder of increasingly intense climaxes, culminating in a crisis - a point of total destabilization. In game terms, those “climaxes” are “conflicts,” which you instigate by baiting the other players into attacking you, and the “crisis point” is what happens when you knock your project down to 0 HP. Everything shakes out into a new equilibrium.)

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