Obscurity

From: JasonP - Under Directory: Game Design

This system is a low crunch, narrative driven set of rules designed particularly for The Game of Shadows.

Goals

Obscurity is a system with multiple, overlapping goals. It is meant to engage the player's mind in the realms of imagination and drama, while helping create an unfolding story full of secrets and mystery. Above all though, the rules provide a simple but robust resolution system for the conflicts that arise during play, which focuses on the setting and imagination of the players just as much as it does dice.

Creating Characters

Each player is going to need a character to play in this pulpy, dark, and somewhat twisted setting. In order to make one, they will need to start with a general **Role**, which gives us an idea of who they are in the fiction. Pick one of: **Detective**, **Adventurer**, **Hoodlum**, **Mad Scientist**, **Criminal**, **Mechanic**, **Doctor**, **Royalty**, **Soldier**, **Cursed**. You may also elect to append 'Extraordinaire' to your role, in which case your character will play against the type suggested by the role. Here is a summary of the ten roles, and their discovery ability:

- 1, **Adventurer**: The swashbuckling, battling, laugh in the face of danger type. *The adventurer's power of discovery brings action to the story.*
- 2, **Criminal**: While the hoodlum rebukes the law with little success, the Criminal has achieved a place in their society. These are the types that extort and racketeer, murder and plot, still evading the scrutiny of the law. *The criminal's power of discovery brings underhanded deals to the story.*
- 3, **Cursed**: The cursed have no place in proper company, each has been given foul demonic power at a price from some occult or mythical source. They are wonders of the world, the vampires and werewolves - oh my. *The cursed's power of discovery brings occult and myth to the story.*
- 4, **Detective**: These are the people that can leave no mystery unsolved. They walk the shadows in an attempt to illuminate the mysteries of the world. *The detective's power of discovery brings reason and logic to the story.*
- 5, **Doctor**: In a time where people still live under the impression of a world supported by magic, the doctor stands for science. Doctors may be of the medical kind, or just experts in a given field. *The doctor's power of discovery brings science and understanding to the story.*
- 6, **Hoodlum**: While perhaps not a criminal per say, the hoodlum is a lowlife without an upstanding profession or position. Though it is indeed likely that they will take from your home. *The hoodlum's power of discovery brings elements of wild chance to the story.*
- 7, **Mad Scientist**: These people have been moved by science, moved right out of normal sense. They are the ones with daft inventions and wild world changing ideas. *The mad scientist's power of discovery brings fancy technology to the story.*
- 8, **Mechanic**: The world is changing and steam machines are taking center stage. The

mechanic lives and breathes mechanical work, building, designing, and repairing. *The mechanic's power of discovery brings durable simple elements to the story.*

- 9, **Royalty**: The politics of the world might have moved on from simple feudalism, but that doesn't mean old money has vanished. The royalty of the time still pack the power of traditional station and carry a large purse. *The royalty's power of discovery brings historic events to the story.*
- 0, **Soldier**: Even in these enlightened times, skirmish wars break out all over the old world. Soldiers don't always stay in the military though, and those that come out are hardened men of brass with flint hearts. *The soldier's power of discovery brings brutality to the story.*

Each character begins the game with a full two hands of **Fortune**, where a hand of fortune means five coins worth. Fortune is the currency of the game, you'll be tracking it a lot across play. During character creation, you surrender fortune to create keywords for your character. You must surrender at least one fortune, and can aurrender up to five, a full hand's worth. There are three things that you can buy with fortune now: **Merits**, **Motifs**, and **Tales**. This isn't the only time you can buy these, at any time the director allows, you may purchase more and sometimes trade in ones you have for fortune in return.

You surrender one fortune for each merit you'd like to buy for your character. A **Merit** is a special keyword in the game that gives them advantages in specific situations. These are always something the character is born with, abilities and talents. When you can apply a merit logically, it will be free to use. If you get creative though, and think of a way to apply your merit to something it would not logically assist, you will spend one fortune to do so. You can't choose your merits for your character though, so while they are unique and powerful they are random and all suffer the **Concept**: Hap. Each merit is rolled for on the Merit Table.

You also surrender one fortune for each motif you purchase for your character. A **Motif** is a style, or theme for the character. Motifs generally suggest a particular set of equipment and skill set for the character. A perfect example would be: "*Courageous Outback explorer*" or "*Strict Naval Officer*" and so on. These aren't limited to occupations though, things like "*Witty Street Rat*" and "*Angry Old Drunkard*" both establish motifs. A motif must have an adjective as its opening, and then a descriptive term following it. You create your motifs as you like, just keep in mind that you spend fortune to combine them in play, so stacking them isn't really all that beneficial. For each motif you also select a motif compatible concept from the concept list.

When you decide to create Tales for your character, you do not surrender fortune. Instead you invest fortune into each tale, from one to three. Each **Tale** is a definitive moment in the history of a character that defines them in some way. They are written out in the first person, and are one line maximum, never more than a moment. However, they can include a second line if that explains the character's mental state and feelings at that moment. The actual story leading up to and including the moment is subject to the opinions of all players, its shared fiction in play. A great tale would be "*The light from the lantern flared as I held the pistol to my brother's head, but couldn't fire. Tears welled in my eyes.*" Each story then earns a keyword from it, a phrase or adjective that describes how the story affected the character, "*Heart of Flint*" for example. For each tale you also select a tale compatible concept from the concept list.

After you have a Role, a Fortune total, and one or more Merits, Motifs, and Tales, you just need to fill in the blanks for the character. You give them a name, a look, a style. Then we are off to the races, and each character gets an initial scene called an Introduction.

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