Welcome to Nate B's wondrous game of Swords & Sorcery. Characters live large and face great dangers as they seek fame and fortune in a fantastic land of ancient civilizations.

System Text - A Draft

Adventurers

In this game you play an adventurer - everyone does. Your adventurer is Violent, Charismatic, Skilled, and Sorcerous - these are the four Methods. During play you will be faced with Obstacles and Adversaries. The four Methods are the tools you use to overcome these challenges.

To start with, you have 15 dice (10-sided ones) to distribute among the 4 Methods. Give at least one die to each Method. If it helps, think of it like this: “On a scale of 1 to 5, how Violent (or whatever) is my adventurer?” An average everyday Method has 2 dice, which is enough to handle the mundane obstacles and confrontations regular people encounter as they go about their lives. A Method with only 1 die represents a bit of a disadvantage compared to most people. There's no limit on the number of dice you can assign to each Method. If you want your adventurer to be a stupendously powerful sorcerer - say, on a scale of 1 to 5 he's a 9! - that's just fine.

A Note about Sorcery

Just because every adventurer has at least 1 die in Sorcerous doesn't mean everyone is running around slinging spells right and left. It just means that if your adventurer encounters or engages with sorcery in some way, that's how many dice you roll.

Next, assign a Style to each Method. Styles provide a little color and background information about your adventurer; they represent all the stuff your character did before taking up a life of adventure. One Method gets to have two styles. That second style is your adventurer's specialty. If you want, you can leave one of the Methods blank and have two specialties. (A Method can't have more than one specialty though; pick one of the other two Methods.) If you want to use the same Style for more than one Method you can do that. There's a big list of Styles down below to choose from.

You begin every adventure with 1 Will. You will gain Will by having your adventure do certain things during play. Anyone can do one of the following any time nothing else is going on:

- Sleeping in a Comfortable Place
- Eating a Good Meal
- Reveling With Companions
- Enjoying Intoxicants

If you do, you get one point of Will.

Now you and your GM will need to brainstorm some other ways for your adventurer to gain Will. These are called Attachments. Your adventurer has 3 Attachments:

- Your Minor Attachment generates 2 Will points any time your adventurer does the reinforcing action. Minor Attachments should be fairly easy to access.
- Your Major Attachment generates 3 Will when activated. Major Attachments might be more

complicated to access, even requiring a roll or two to bring about.
- Your Pivotal Attachment generates 5 Will when activated. Activating a Pivotal Attachment represents a major accomplishment of some type. (A better name might be called for here… Crisis Attachment? Core Attachment?)

Your adventurer also has a Harm track that runs from 1 to 5. You don't have to do anything with it right now, but notice that it's there on the character sheet.

Example Character

Grimm the Assassin

Violent: 8	Charismatic: 3	Skilled: 3	Sorcerous: 1
Poisoner	Stylish	Assassin	
Assassin		Acrobat	

Will: 1

Attachments:

- Minor - Witness a display of virtuosic skill
- Major - Smoke the “Dust of the Black Moss”
- Pivotal - Murder a stranger in cold blood

Harm: [1][2][3][4][5]

Trophies:

The Mechanics

Any time an Obstacle or Adversary is encountered by your adventurer you can try to defeat it with one of the four Methods by rolling that Method's dice. Grimm the Assassin rolls 8 dice to do Violence. If you're using a Specialty, dice that turn up greater than 5 are successes. If you're using one of your other Styles, dice that turn up greater than 6 are successes. Otherwise, dice that turn up greater than 7 are successes. Grimm the Assassin needs 6 - 10 to sneak up and cut his victim's throat from behind, 7 - 10 to poison the wine, and 8 - 10 to duel with a sword.

Generally, a single success is enough to get what you want. The man on the street needs one success to kill or convince. Of course, if there are 10 of them you need 10 successes to defeat the whole angry mob. Naturally, some Obstacles and Adversaries will be more significant. The famous swordsman might need 5 successes all to himself, and the sheer wall of the Crying Magician's tower might need 3 successes to climb.

If you fail to get as many successes as you need, you must make a choice. You can accept your failure. If you stop now, nothing bad happens. You don't get what you want, but that's all; no further consequences. On the other hand, you can spend Will points and re-roll. Each Will you spend adds more dice equal to the Method that you're using. You still get to use your original dice too. So let's say

Grimm is trying to talk his way past a guard. He rolls 3d10, but sadly doesn't get any successes. If Grimm spends 1 Will, he can retry the roll using 6d10. If he spends 2 Will, he can roll 9d10, etc.

The thing is, when you use Will to re-roll, you are taking a risk. If the re-roll fails not only do you not succeed at what you were trying to do, but one of the following happens as well, depending on what Method you were using:

Violent - You suffer Harm Charismatic - You receive a Burden Skilled - You experience a Complication Sorcerous - Your Sorcery runs Amock

Some Nuances

If you want to, you can spend Will on your very first roll and so use lots of dice right away. If you do, though, you take a risk on that very first roll as well, just as if it were a re-roll.

The initial “risk free” Method roll gives you a certain amount of descriptive leeway. If you're rolling to jump across a wide abyss and you succeed, then you made the jump. If you fail and don't spend Will, maybe at the last second you decided it was wider than it looked at first, so you don't make the attempt. If you spend Will to re-roll but still fail, that's when you really jump but don't make it across.

Harm

Harm is the difference between the number of successes you needed and the number of successes you actually got when failing a Violent roll. If the number of Harm is 5 or less, cross off the corresponding box (and ONLY that box!) on your adventurer's Harm track. If that box is already crossed off, cross off the next highest available box instead. This is called a “bump.”

Harm can affect your character mechanically in two ways, depending on whether or not you have any Will left.

If you have any Will (even just one point) and you receive enough Harm to bump all the way off the track (i.e., you need to cross off box '5' but it is already crossed off, or you take 6 successes of Harm in one blow) you are Down. The GM decides what happens to your helpless battered and / or unconscious body, how long you're out, and what the circumstances are for your return to the world of the living. Additionally, you receive a Scar. A Scar is some kind of permanent mark left by your traumatic experience. A Scar works like one of the universal Will generators - any time you reference it meaningfully in play you get 1 Will. (You will have to work out with the GM what “meaningful” means.)

If you have no Will and you receive enough Harm to bump all the way off the track, you die.

Harm heals in two ways. First, your adventurer starts fresh at the beginning of every adventure, no matter what happened last time. Second, any time you gain Will you may uncross one box (the smallest one available) of harm.

Character Generation

Players make characters per the below rules.

METHODS

Characters have 4 METHODs by which they get stuff done.

- VIOLENCE
- CHARISMA
- SKILL
- SORCERY

The player distributes 15 dice between these. Scale is:

1 - Low Human
2 - Typical Human
3 - High Human
4 - Exceptional
5+ - Heroic

STYLES

Each METHOD gets 1 STYLE specified for it, except for one the player specifies as the character's specialty, which gets two.

Here are some examples of STYLE:

Barbarian	Ranger	Warrior	Wizard	Sorcerer	Scholar
Merchant	Vagabond	Pirate	Thief	Beggar	Thug
Gladiator	Slave	Slaver	Prisoner	Shaman	Priest
Diplomat	Spy	Haberdasher	Cavalier	Archer	Soldier
Conjuror	Elementalist	Brigand	Scout	Holy Warrior	Beastmaster
Herald	Entertainer	Monk	Mentalist	Drover	Alchemist
Acrobat	Assassin	Noble	Witch	Mage	Warlord
Rogue	Swashbuckler	Freebooter	Tribesman	Poisoner	Craftsman
Reaver	Mercenary	Swordsman	Tradesman	Trader	Cutpurse

MOTIVATIONS

The player will also select X moderate and Y major motives. For the effect of these, see The WILL to Power below.

Characters start play and every new adventure with 1 WILL.

Character Sheet

Here is a character sheet template: S and S Game Character Template

Resolution

This is how characters get things done.

Target Number

The GM sets a target number based on how well suited the character's METHODs and STYLES are to the task at hand.

6 - anybody can do this, but the character is not particularly well suited
5 - this is something the character specifically knows how to do, but not what they're best at
4 - this is something that fits well within one of the character's styles

Adversity Rating

The GM selects a number of successes that the player must roll for the character to succeed at the action.

Dice Pool

The player takes as many dice as the rating for the method their character is using.

WILL

The player can add dice to their pool equal to the method rating by spending one WILL.

Reading the Roll

The player rolls the dice and counts the number of dice that equal or exceed the target number. If this count is equal to the Adversity Rating, the character has immediately succeeded. If not, the player must decide if the character fails, or if the conflict escalates (see below).

Escalating

If a character fails at something, the player can spend will to add dice to their pool, and roll again. However, if the character fails once this is done, they risk having some sort of actual (mechanical) harm befall the character.

HARM

Harm is what happens when a character fails an escalated conflict.

The WILL to Power

WILL is very important. As noted characters start with only 1 WILL, but can gain more from various activities.

Minor Gains

These are activities that can gain any character a WILL, and represent the small pleasures that most any adventurer enjoys. Players should inform the GM when they think their character has gotten one of these that their character enjoys, and the GM will decide if the events in question count. Note that these rarely, if ever, take conflicts to acquire, mostly being about opportunity costs instead.

- Sleeping in a Comfortable Place
- Eating a Good Meal
- Reveling With Companions
- Enjoying Intoxicants

Moderate Gains

The player will specify X conditions for the character that will gain the character 2 WILL. Note that this level means that it is cost inefficient for the character to spend much will to get these, so these should represent things that are obtained relatively leisurely, or otherwise without much actual motivational benefit.

Major Gains

The player will specify X conditions for the character that will gain the character 5 WILL, when satisfied. These must be fairly difficult sorts of things to accomplish, and may require some WILL spent in contests in order to get them.

TROPHIES

At the end of an adventure, a player may spend unused WILL to purchase TROPHIES, which make permanent any sort of loot they want the character to retain permanently. Any other gains are likely gone when the next adventure starts. Such is the life of an adventurer. Trophies have dice equal to the amount of Will spent on them. They can add those dice to re-rolls as bonus dice. Trophies are things like powerful magic items, famous weapons, social positions, wealth, etc. If you're the King of Town (2), then any time it matters to the other guy that you're the King of Town, you can add 2 extra dice to your re-roll.

Play Testing

About Thornstad

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