

AGÊRATOS

AN ONEIROSTORIA A.E.O.N.



CORE RULEBOOK

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Agêratos 1st edition (October 2024)

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Stock Images: Wikimedia Commons (commons.wikimedia.org), Pexels (pexels.com), Pixabay (pixabay.com)

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This book is a work of fiction designed for entertainment purposes as part of a role-playing game (RPG).

All scenarios, characters, and events depicted within are purely the product of imagination, intended to provide a framework for storytelling in fictional settings.

Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or to real-life events or locales is entirely coincidental.

This game invites players to explore imaginary worlds and experiences far removed from reality.

Remember that the actions, decisions, and consequences within the game do not reflect real-world values.

Please engage with the content responsibly, keeping a clear distinction between the game's imagined settings and the real world.

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Welcome

Welcome to the Quickstart of Oneirostoria's first A.E.O.N.: **Agêratos**.

What is an A.E.O.N. I hear you ask? Well, it is an **Adventure Engine for Originating Narratives** – an RPG gaming system.

All A.E.O.N.s are named after one of the Aeons found in Gnostic myth and history: Agêratos is agelessness, immortality, and eternity – as all good stories are timeless, it seemed an appropriate name.

If you see this icon anywhere on an Oneirostoria product, it relates to Agêratos:



Agêratos is a stand-alone system, not tied to any particular setting and can truly be used for any that you can imagine.

This is because, unlike many other RPGs, Agêratos focuses on the overall authoring of stories – called **Sagas** – rather than the activities of the individual characters or situations within.

This allows its principles and mechanics to focus on narrative creation rather than specific actions or settings.

For instance, the Conflict mechanics deal with adversarial situations within the Saga, and does so without needing to know the details of what is actually taking place; the characters and situations come alive solely through your imagination and narration.

In other words, Agêratos empowers you as an author, rather than as a character.

You do have a character, but they exist as your means to experience the Saga, rather than your means to affect it.

In fact, one of Agêratos's benefits is that all you need to run Sagas is knowledge of a setting; specific rules, system conversions, and the like are unnecessary – though can be used if you'd like.

All in all, if you can imagine and narrate it, Agêratos can help author it as your Saga.

So, within this Quickstart you will find the book's introduction, an abridged version of the Narrative Framework (core mechanics), and a playthrough example of Conflict.

(Optional rulesets – Overlays – do exist in the main book, one of which offers a more traditional character-centric experience).

Note: Conflict is the most 'gaming' part of Agêratos – in fact, it contains most of the mechanics – so the playthrough may seem a bit daunting at first, but rest assured the Narrative Framework chapter will gently introduce you to its strategies and wisdom.

One thing you will not find within this document is a 'pre-generated adventure'.

Yet, this is not due to an oversight, but rather because of the fundamental concepts behind Agêratos: narrative freedom and collaborative storytelling.

After all, how can a script possibly confine you, when every member of your RPG group is both author and reader?

Your Sagas will never be the dream of one, with others mere wanderers at the mercy of their vicissitudes, but rather unfold as true realisations of your collective imaginations.

However, you will find the seeds for three Sagas; overviews of their premise, Prologues, and suggestions for how your RPG group can continue them.

So, please read on and if you would like more information, please don't hesitate to get in touch: oneirostoria.com

After all, **your** Saga awaits.

HOLD UP!

Looking to read as little as possible?

Is the Monad (the GM) going to be filling things in for you?

If so, you can read the introduction that comes next (pages 8 – 15) and then head straight to the S.O.S. Section on page 83.

There you will find a broad overview of all Agêratos' concepts, a summary of all the gaming mechanics, and a blank character sheet.

(Yours is the sheet without the purple/black table on it)

If you do read on – which would be nice – you'll find purple boxes like this one throughout that summarise the section they are in to help you figure things out.

Changelog (October 2024)

Rule changes since the release of this Quickstart (April 2024)

Central pot, page 023

Old Rule: Starts with 10 Focus Points.

New Rule: Starts with (6 + 2 per Author) Focus Points.

Reasoning: Very large groups of Authors have a much higher chance of drawing a court card – this new rule takes that into account:

A large number of Authors drawing from the Central pot at the same time.

If each Author has their own individual deck then the odds of drawing a court card is increased.

Blocking Action Cards, page 038

Old Rule: Use Lead Tiebreak.

New Rule: Use Climax rules from Conflict Resolution.

Reasoning: Previously, you could see who was going to win the Lead Tiebreak before deciding to Block – now, as a blind attempt, there is true risk involved on all sides.

Foreshadowing, page 044

Overall, the premise of Foreshadowing remains the same, but the rewards for both types of Prediction have been changed and/or clarified. There are also many clarifications to several aspects of Foreshadowing.



Introduction

Narrative Storytelling and Role-playing Games

The purpose of any role-playing game (RPG) is to tell a story, one that has no predetermined outcome or script.

Rather, it is authored by you and others deciding on, talking through, and acting out its content with the intent to author your own, unique story.

Alongside the story narration there is a gaming component, where mechanics adjudicate the outcome of actions and game events.

In Oneirostoria, these gaming systems are called A.E.O.Ns: Adventure Engines for Originating Narratives.

In this book, the A.E.O.N. is known as **Agêratos (ah-GEHR-ah-tos)**.

And, in Agêratos, the stories you create are known as the Saga.

Agêratos consists of a core set of gaming mechanics – the **Narrative Framework** – and some optional gaming mechanics – the **Overlays**.

The Narrative Framework focuses on narrative creation rather than specific settings, and so can be used to set your Saga in any setting or world you wish.

Overlays are used to either adjust some mechanics to your liking or to portray the specifics of your setting – cybernetics, magic, etc.

These settings can either be of your own devising or ones provided elsewhere.

E.g., Oneirostoria's **Chained Reverence: Echoes of Belief**, details the world lore of Ysælör, as well as the Overlays needed to portray its inhabitants – both the deified Revered and the mortals they rule over.

Playing an RPG

Unfortunately, RPGs can be as diverse and unpredictable as imagination itself, however, there are normally some basics that most have.

To begin, you create a character: your means to interact with the game world; their actions and survival in your hands.

Using the provided gaming mechanics, you define their capabilities: are they strong, smart, altruistic, or selfish?

Do they command an old but reliable star ship, weave magical strands of ethereal energy to cast powerful spells, or both!

They are your **Player Character (PC)**.

There is also an individual in your RPG group that is in charge; they do not design their own character.

Rather, they portray the myriad of characters yours will meet during the story and detail any world events.

The characters they portray are known as **Non-Playing Characters (NPC)**.

Ultimately this individual controls the game and is often all-powerful, and to ensure no one forgets this, they are given a special title: Dungeon Master, Referee, Game Master, Storyteller, or Director, to name but a few.

While the title varies from game to game, most role-players understand the term Game Master, or GM.

That said, Agêratos uses its own special term for its GM: **the Monad**.

All others of your RPG group, are known as the **Players**.

Together, you are known as the **Authors**.

Introduction

Authors is a key term to understand, as, unlike in many other RPGs, the Monad is not an all-powerful force.

Agêratos' focus is on an Author's ability to affect the Saga, including the Monad.

So while, the Monad may begin by outlining the Saga's premise, once begun, all Authors can introduce or remove characters, events, and situations to it.

Thus, you all equally contribute to the creation, portrayal, and ultimate fate of your own game world and setting.

If RPGs are completely new to you, or you have only played more traditional character-centric RPGs, fear not.

To help you understand Agêratos' style of collective authoring, this book will detail numerous examples.

So, like so many before me, I've taken a liberal, very liberal, approach to language to come up with a 'fancy name' for the Game Master.

As for the word 'Monad':

In some Gnostic traditions, the Monad is the Supreme Deity – the One or the Absolute – from which all existence emanates.

In Leibniz philosophy, the monad is the most basic element from which all other things are derived: without them, nothing else can exist.

There are other meanings, but less relevant.

In all Oneirostoria A.E.O.N.s – Adventure Engines for Originating Narratives – they are you and I.

That is, anyone who draws inspiration from the world around them, possessing the imagination to create characters, stories, and Realities.

We are, after all, the reason any fictional world or story exists: it is our imaginations that not only drives humanity forward each day, but also inspires us all to create, to feel, and to dream.

Latin	Greek	Phoenician	Hebrew	Arabic
A	Α	𐤀	א	ا
B	Β	𐤁	ב	ب
C	Γ	𐤂	ג	ج
D	Δ	𐤃	ד	د
E	Ε	𐤄	ה	ه
F	Φ	𐤅	ו	و
G	Ζ	𐤆	ז	ز
H	Η	𐤇	ח	ح
I	Θ	𐤈	ט	ط
J	Ι	𐤉	י	ي
K	Κ	𐤊	כ	ك
L	Λ	𐤋	ל	ل
M	Μ	𐤌	מ	م
N	Ν	𐤍	נ	ن
O	Ξ	𐤎	ס	س
P	Ο	𐤏	פ	ع
Q	Π	𐤐	צ	ف
R	Ρ	𐤑	ק	ص
S	Σ	𐤒	ר	ق
T	Τ	𐤓	ש	ر
U	Υ	𐤔	ת	ش
V	Φ	𐤕		ث
W	Χ	𐤖		ح
X	Ψ	𐤗		ذ
Y	Ω	𐤘		ض
Z		𐤙		ظ
				غ

The Narrative Framework

The Narrative Framework is so called as it provides the narrative structure for all Sagas, including gaming mechanics – its use is necessary for every Saga.

It is about empowering you, the Author, not your character, to guide the Saga towards your desired outcomes.

Although your character provides a means to interact with the Saga's world, it is ultimately you, the Author, who creates and narrates its content.

Thus, the Framework only focuses on the identities of your Player Character: emphasising who they are, while paying less attention to what they can do.

That is, detail is not given to the *how* of your character, but rather the *has* – has your character influenced the Saga or been influenced by it?

Once the *has* is determined, the *how* can then come to life through your narration, role-playing, and storytelling.

To help with this concept, the Narrative Framework draws a lot of inspiration from literary concepts.

As an Author, you use **Authorial Agency** to guide the Saga, **Focus Points** to shift the narrative spotlight, engage in **Conflict** to overcome adversity, or seek to predict future Saga events via **Foreshadowing**.

Author n. /'ɔː.θər/ The creator of a story, including its narrative, characters, and dialogue.

Agency n. /'eɪ.dʒən.si/ The capacity of an entity to act and make choice.

Proactive adj. /prəʊ'æk.tɪv/ The behavior of taking initiative in anticipation of problems or needs.

Reactive adj. /ri'æk.tɪv/ Responding to situations or stimuli after they happen.

Third person omniscience

In many RPGs, the GM is omnipotent and views the world akin to that of a third person omniscient narrator.

This helps them serve as the force that portrays all the world and its challenges.

Yet, you are limited to the viewpoint of a first person narrator.

That is, you interact with story events only through your character's point of view and are limited by their capabilities.

It is through your character's actions, and only those actions, that you are able to influence the story.

However, Agêratos is different.

While you still primarily interact with the Saga through your character's perspective, there are also times where you can pull away, altering events akin to a third person omniscience narrator.

That is, you can take **Saga Control**.

During Saga Control, the Monad may only intervene to maintain the Saga's setting and theme.

Any Saga Changes you make that align with these conditions cannot be stopped, unless another Author challenges you.

The Narrative Framework

Ends, not means

Agêratos' gaming mechanics focus on who has Saga Control, and the outcome of events rather than the means taken to reach them.

So, once you take Saga Control, you are free to describe events how you wish — keeping to the setting and theme.

If we take combat as an example; although the term combat is not quite right for Agêratos, but more on that later.

In many RPGs, you would declare what you want your character to do and then make a skill check to determine success.

However in Agêratos, you determine Saga Control before any declaration of intent or narration takes place.

You may think of this as Authors making skill checks at the start of each turn.

If you win, you take Saga Control, and earn a certain degree of gaming progress.

Now, you can narrate Saga events within the boundaries of this gaming progress.

Remember, as a third person narrator, this can be more than your character's actions, and include surrounding events.

Thus, you may narrate your character doing a series of acrobatic flips and kicks, reinforcements arriving, or even a traitor in the enemies' midst turning on them.

Each description indicating the manner in which progress was made during the combat... but not bringing the combat to an end — an important distinction that the Narrative Framework will go into.

Mechanics to justify these narrative descriptions are unnecessary, like an acrobatics check for your character or a morale check of the enemy.

Determination of success has already occurred, and thus you can focus on allowing your narrative descriptions to add flair and atmosphere to the Saga.

Taking the example of a star ship being boarded by hostiles, you take Saga Control during a combat turn and can thus narrate:

As I race to reach the airlock on time, the ship's hull is rocked by the incoming shuttle—I'm too late!

The 'hostiles', as we have taken to calling them, are here.

An explosion rips through the corridor, as the airlock bursts open and laser fire fills the air.

Yet, without missing a beat, I engage.

Evading the hail of laser bolts with the grace and agility I display in all my actions, I strike the first hostile hard to their gut and they crumple to the floor.

Spinning, barely avoiding the butt of a rifle, I go low, sweeping at the legs of another hostile before striking them swiftly as they fall.

A third tackles me: I'm slammed hard against a wall, a laser bolt barely missing my face.

Thoughts race through my head: "I cannot let them take the ship!", "We cannot let the delegates die, they must survive."

Pushing the hostile off me — its cold, featureless helmet betraying no sense of emotion — I drop into a low stance, and force them backwards driving towards the airlock.

I push on, using the hostile's body as a shield against the continuing spray of laser fire.

As you can see, sometimes quite a lot can happen during a single turn; however, also note that there are still 'hostiles', the threat is still present, and the combat was not brought to an end.

The Narrative Framework

Playing Cards

Unlike many other RPGs, Agêratos does not require any dice to play.

(An Overlay does allow for dice use).

Instead, playing cards offer both the fickle nature of luck and the foundation for strategic decision-making.

While you are often reliant on the random chance inherent in dice rolls, cards give you more flexibility in deciding when you wish to seize Saga Control.

Don't worry though, you'll still have a chance, in a way, to use the hordes of dice we all know you have...

Now, at least one deck of cards should be used for every three Authors; remember, an Author refers to both the Monad and to Players. You may use more if you wish, such as a single deck each, or even each Author using multiple decks.

However, it's worth noting that cards do not belong to any one Author. That is, they will move around within your RPG group during play.

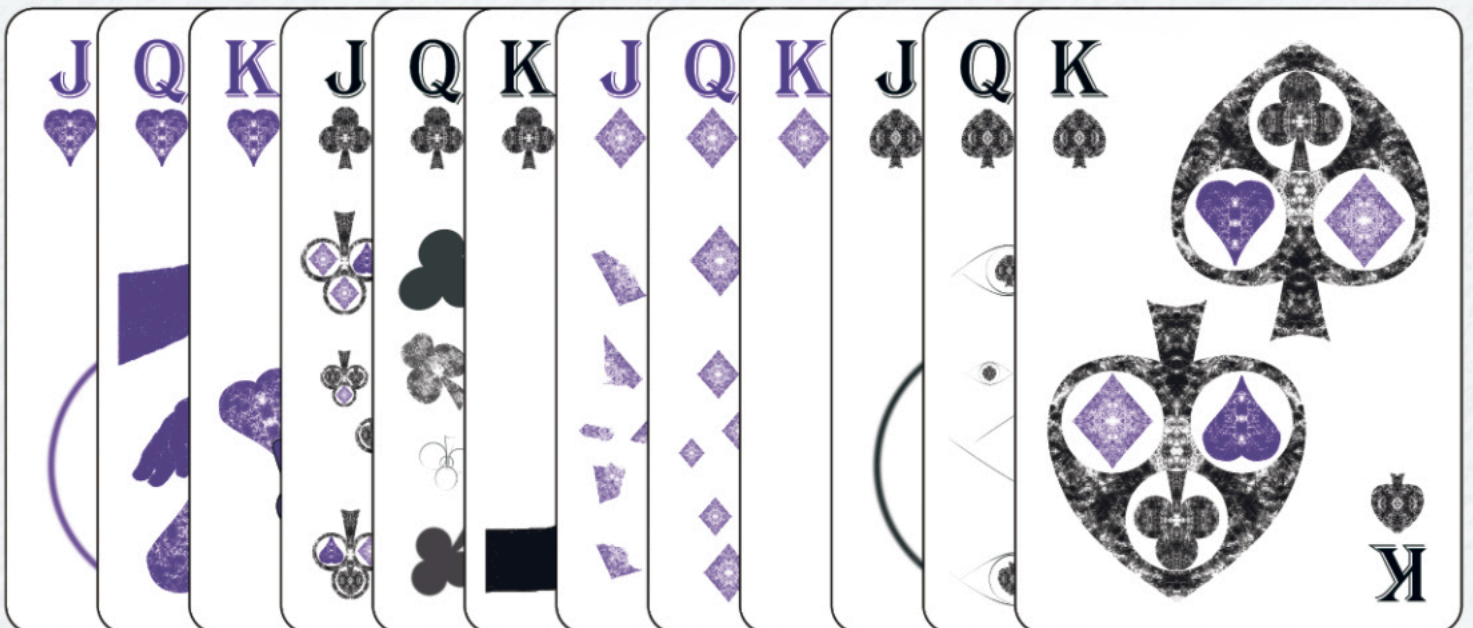
The standard mechanics are written with the 52-card French-suited deck in mind, used with the following considerations:

- Suits are ignored (bar some Overlays).
- Pip (Numeral, Number) cards have values as presented.
- Aces have a value of 1, and are pip cards.
- Court cards (Face, Royalty) have no value, instead they have special applications.
- Joker (Jester, Bower) cards are not used.

Other styles can be used, provided you all use the same style and the decks contain the equivalent of pip and court cards.

Cards are only used during adversarial situations, or when you and other Authors clash over Saga Control.

In these moments, when you cannot decide the outcome through storytelling and role-play alone, cards and mechanics are used in what is known as **Conflict**.



The Narrative Framework

Conflict

Conflict is a gaming mechanic for resolving adversarial Saga events, such as combat, competitions, harsh conditions, debates, haggling, even moral dilemmas.

This is the only time within the Narrative Framework that cards are used.

However, it should only occur when your narration and role-playing are insufficient to resolve the issue.

During Conflict, turns take place where you build **TENsion**: a mechanic tied into the narrative progression you can make.

The building of **TENsion** also allows you to apply **Circumstances**, gaming modifiers to the value of playing cards to either help yourself or hinder others.

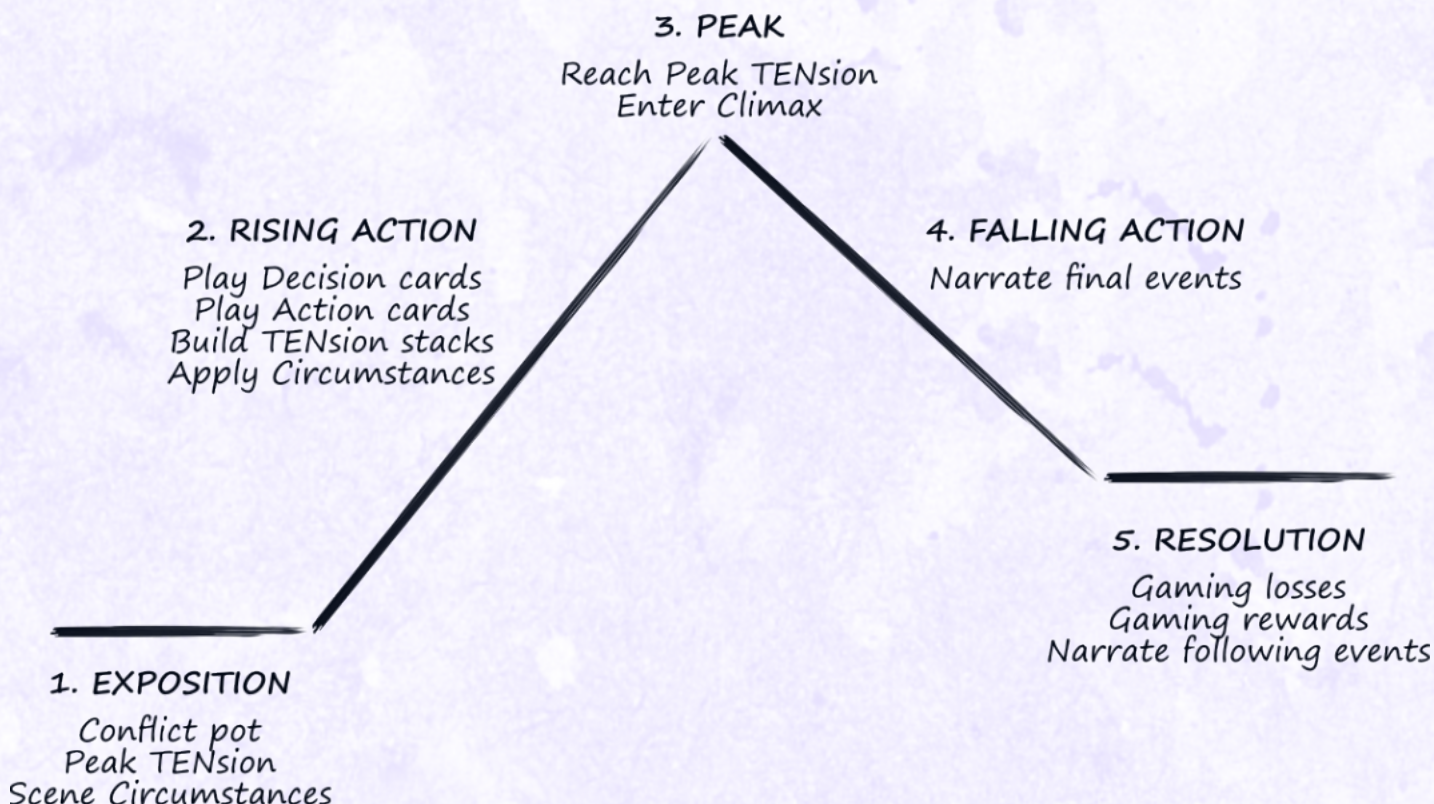
At their most basic, the mechanics are:

- You have 5 cards in your hand.
- Each Conflict turn, you place 1 card facedown in front of you: a **Decision Card**.
- When all Authors have selected their own Decision Cards, they are revealed.
- The highest value card gives who played it brief Saga Control and builds **TENsion**.
- The lower value cards are discarded.
- When an Author has enough **TENsion**, they bring about **Conflict Resolution**.

Keep in mind, this is an overview of the basic rules; there are also Action Cards, Proactive Agency, Reactive Agency, Circumstances, Climax, and more.

The full mechanics will be explained later in this book; they are designed to be minimal with the focus very much on the collaborative narration of your Saga.

CONFLICT STRUCTURE



The Narrative Framework

Focus n. /'fəʊ.kəs/ The centre of activity or interest.

Conflict n. /'kɒn.flɪkt/ Disagreement or struggle between parties of opposing principles or actions.

Foreshadowing n. /'fɔːʃædəʊɪŋ/ A literary device that uses descriptions, mood, and themes to hint at possible future events.

Flaws and Shortcomings

You may think it odd to discuss the flaws of a system during its introduction.

However, it is important to understand what something is not, just as much as what it is.

After all, no rule system will ever be perfect: no Author or RPG group will like every system, and no system will suit every Author or RPG group.

Your reasons for enjoying RPGs and what you hope to get out of them are as unique and diverse as anyone's.

So with that said:

Agêratos is not a system of structure.

It primarily relies on understanding overarching concepts and ideas, rather than lists and numerical data.

For instance, if anything in Agêratos could be considered its Soul, its beating heart, that would be Focus Points.

These allow you as an Author – not your character – to enact Saga Changes (among many other things).

The amount required? It depends!

Costs are **dynamic and contextual**, being dependent on established Saga events.

Saga Changes deviating from previously established events have a higher cost, whereas changes enacted with the right narrative justification cost less.

That is, you are rewarded for keeping the narrative consistent: if the Saga proceeds with rhythm and logic then Saga Changes can have a low, even zero, Focus cost.

Also, you should note: all mechanics empower you as an Author, not your character, who exists solely as your means to interact with the Saga.

So, while your character may be central to your enacted Saga Changes, they do not have to be – the Narrative Framework being about you as an Author.

It is you that uses Authorial Agency and Focus to enact Saga Changes; you engage in Conflict and employ Foreshadowing.

In short, while there are mechanics and numbers, they are minimal, with you encouraged to ignore them entirely if they get in the way of narration.

The Overlays

Your Saga, Your Way

Overlays modify the concepts and mechanics of the Narrative Framework. You may use them according to the requirements of your RPG group – in fact, they can be applied or removed at any time during your Saga if you so wish.

However, they must be used by all or none in your RPG group, so their use should be discussed with everyone. Also, while some make minor adjustments, others can alter the Narrative Framework in significant ways.

Protagonist Overlay

The Protagonist Overlay is a substantial change to the Narrative Framework, designed to provide a more traditional character-centric approach to your Sagas.

You can think of it as shifting your capacity for making Saga Changes from the **Author level** to the **Character level**.

Now, your character must be central to all your Saga Changes, and they are given form through numerical values.

They are given the *how* of their existence.

They have detailed skills, strengths, weaknesses, allies, phobias, injuries, and other characteristics – collectively, known as **Vicissitudes**.

These are applied through either the **Active Voice** or **Passive Voice** – literary concepts still a strong influence.

Indeed, while the Protagonist Overlay may use more mechanics and numbers, its focus is still on the role-play side of RPGs.

Essentially, the Protagonist Overlay focuses on the structure and substance of your character, giving you both the narrative tools and quantitative metrics to see them evolve during the Saga.

Minor Overlays

While the Protagonist Overlay forms a substantial change to the Narrative Framework, the following are relatively simpler ones.

Bibliomancy Overlay

Replaces playing cards with random words selected from books.

With literary concepts influencing Agêratos as they do – shifting the narrative via Focus, engaging in Conflict and Foreshadowing – this Overlay asks: “Hey, why not go the whole way!?”

Dice Overlay

A small Overlay that replaces the use of playing cards with that of dice – you get to use all those hordes of dice you have!

Mantle Overlay

This Overlay gives all Authors their own Player Character by transforming the Monad’s role into a **Mantle**.

During the Saga, any Author may don this Mantle at different times.

The purpose for this is two-fold: firstly, it is to acknowledge that different Authors have different strengths and weaknesses when it comes to storytelling.

Secondly, if you lack experience in being the Monad, or equivalent (GM) in other RPGs, you can gain some while being supported by those with more.

Wild Card Overlay

This Overlay, puts the Monad’s control into the hands of random card draws.

Thus, you may either engage in the Saga alone or add an unpredictable influence over your group Sagas.





NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK

The **Narrative Framework** forms the foundation for authoring your narrative – the **Saga**.

Its concepts and gaming mechanics are always used, with all additional Overlays adding to or modifying them.

Within the Framework, you are a third person omniscience narrator, as found in many stories throughout literature.

In this role, you are a co-Author of the whole Saga, not just your character – that is, you narrate at the **Author level**.

At the Author level, you can take control of the Saga – **Saga control** – and dictate its content: introducing or altering events, characters, or anything else you wish.

Well, almost anything: you must keep to the Saga's overall setting and theme – as judged by the Monad (GM).

Upon losing Saga control, you 'drop' to narrating at the **Character level** – your character primarily existing as a means to interact with Saga events.

Incidentally, your character is not the main focus of the Narrative Framework; rather it is about you being a co-Author of the Saga – little emphasis is placed on what your character is capable of.

For them, only *who* they are and their place in the Saga are emphasised – are they being influenced by, or are they influencing it?

To the Narrative Framework it does not matter *how* your character overcame an obstacle, only that they *did or did not* – once established, the *how* comes alive through your own imaginative narration.

Ultimately, the Narrative Framework is about you coming together with others to author your own, unique Saga.

Lexicon

Key Terms

Author: Everyone involved in the game: the members of your RPG group.

The Monad: The protector of narrative integrity and sole adjudicator of the gaming mechanics – think of them as the lead Author that ensures consistency throughout your Saga.

Non-Player Characters(NPC): The characters created by the Monad.

Player: All Authors that are not the Monad; each of you creates a Player Character to portray in the Saga.

Player Character(PC): The character you create and portray in the Saga.

Facets: Your abilities, skills, traits, and similar; they are given to you as an Author, not to your character.

Playing Cards

Playing cards are used to adjudicate some gaming mechanics.

These gaming mechanics are written with the standard 52-card French-suited deck in mind, but other forms can be used, as long as they have pip and court cards.

Hand: The cards held in your, well, hand.

Saga

The story you and your RPG group are authoring together.

Saga Control: Allows you to dictate new Saga content and the outcome of actions.

Saga Changes: Changes you enact to the Saga's content during Saga Control.

They must be in keeping with the Saga's setting and theme – the Monad decides.

Prologue: The Saga's start, free of rules so you can set up future Saga elements like mysteries, machinations, and MacGuffins!

Interlude: A pause in the Saga so you can introduce new Player Characters, or to help reinvigorate it.

Epilogue: A final farewell to your beloved characters after the Saga – the conclusion to their story.

Character Synopsis

An outline of your character, giving a broad overview of their life experiences: possibly detailing interests, strengths, weaknesses, regrets, and aspirations.

It exists to represent your character, and will grow and change alongside them as they experience the Saga.

It can also be used by the Monad in the adjudication of some gaming mechanics.

Focus Points (Focus)

Depicting the Saga's narrative spotlight, you use Focus Points to focus the Saga on the characters and events you wish.

However, Focus Points are finite, with the points moving between Authors – even stolen – when spent and gained.

You spend Focus to take Saga Control, enter Conflict, and Foreshadow events.

The cost for Saga Control varies: Saga Changes more divergent from established events are higher than those that align.

Central Pot: A communal pot of Focus Points. Added to when they are spent, and taken from when they are received.

Court cards: The safest way of recovering your Focus Points; all others come with risk and difficulties – be ever wary of your fellow Authors!

Lexicon

Conflict

A gaming mechanic played out in turns, used to resolve adversarial Saga events – combat, debates, haggling, and so on.

Conflict takes place on both the Author and Character level, with you competing for Saga Control each turn using cards, Agencies, and strategy.

Conflict Pot: A pot of Focus Points used during Conflict.

Decision Cards: Cards you must play each turn, with higher values beating others and granting you Saga Control – they cost zero Focus Points.

Circumstances: Negative or Positive modifiers to the value of Decision Cards.

These modifiers apply in any Conflict situation the Monad deems appropriate; e.g., a physical impairment affecting your combat capabilities, but not memory.

Action Cards: Cards you choose to play in an attempt to quickly seize Saga Control – they cost 1 Focus Point.

TENsion Stacks: Stacks of cards you attempt to form each turn: when they equal TEN they are ‘completed’.

Peak TENsion (PT): The required number of completed TENsion Stacks you need to win Conflict.

Safe TENsion (ST): The minimum TENsion Stacks you require to avoid gaming losses even if you lose Conflict.

Climax: A final gambit to win Conflict if you and other Authors reach Peak TENsion simultaneously. Also used to break tiebreaks with Action Cards.

Conflict Resolution: Reaching Peak TENsion allows you to bring the Conflict to an end and obtain gaming rewards.

Authorial Agency

A conceptual blend of author’s voice and character agency – this is your influence over the Saga on the Author level.

It also makes your character, a Player Character – if it reaches zero, you lose narrative control of your character.

In Conflict, it is split into sub-Agencies:

Proactive Agency: Allows Action Cards to be played; quickly builds TENsion.

Reactive Agency: Prevents Decision Cards being discarded; slowly builds TENsion

Foreshadowing

Predictions you make about future Saga events. If accurate, you are rewarded.

Load: When made, Predictions are Loaded through Focus expenditure – signifying both the risks and rewards.

Narrative Beats: As the Saga progresses, Narrative Beats periodically occur, diminishing a Prediction’s Load.

Direct Predictions: Made publicly, and other Authors may buy into them: if accurate, all are rewarded.

Loaded and offers rewards instantly.

Indirect Predictions: Kept secret from all others except for a cryptic hint.

Are Loaded over time, with rewards only offered once full. However, once Loaded, they begin to diminish.

You cannot enact the predicted Saga event yourself, so instead, must subtly guide others to do so for you; if you do, both of you are rewarded. So plan carefully lest the predicted Saga event be enacted either too soon or too late.

Order from Chaos

Few objects are as humble, yet potent, as the playing card.

Though obscured by the sands of time, their origins are believed to be ancient China. From there, they journeyed through elegant Persian courts and Arabian regality, traversed the Nile through the Malmuk Sultanate before sailing across the Mediterranean.

From the 48-deck 'Italian suits' of cups, coins, clubs, and swords to the 32-deck 'Germanic suits' of hearts, bells, acorns, and leaves - each culture imparted new meanings and forms to the symbols.

Court cards became standing or seated Kings, Queens, Malik, knights, upper knaves, lower knaves, and maids; each reflecting their artisans' imaginations.

Eventually, in England, the playing card began to adopt a familiar form: suits of clovers, tiles, hearts, and pikes—symbols recognised throughout the world today.

The seeds of the familiar 52-card French-suited deck were being sown.

Yet, despite their storied history, the playing card remains ever humble: a silent judge of fate and fortune.

And, while they may be modest, their impact is complex: influencing decisions, settling conflicts, and forming the vicissitudes of entire lives.

They allow for tactics, yet insist on luck—blending action and reaction.

So, next time you shuffle a deck: give reverence to the balance of certainty and hesitation, and listen for the whispers echoing in each riffle and snap.

For in those cards lie not just a game, but the myriad voices of untold stories.

Quickstart Summary Gaming mechanics

The next few pages detail various fundamentals regarding the handling of numbers in the game: basically, you begin with 5 playing cards in your hand.

Draw Deck & Discard Pile

The draw deck cannot run out of cards: at any time the discard pile can be shuffled to restock the draw deck.

Draw Deck

- Aces are valued at 1, and are pip cards.
- Pip cards hold the values indicated.
- Court cards have no numerical value, instead having special rules.
- Joker cards are not used.

You do not own any card in the Narrative Framework; they move freely between everyone as and when required.

You must use at least one deck for every three Authors, though you can use more if you wish, with the following considerations:

- You must all use the same type of deck.
- Decks can be incomplete or even feature different back designs.
- If one deck is incomplete, all decks must be made comparable—though they must contain both pip and court cards.
- The gaming mechanics are designed for 1 – 10, so ideally your decks will also contain this range of pip cards.

Ultimately, the key is consistency and fairness, with you all using the same method, and there being an equal chance for each card at the beginning of the Saga.

Order from Chaos

Drawing Cards

At the start of the Saga, when everyone is ready, you draw 5 cards – your Hand.

Drawn court cards are immediately played, granting you 2 Focus points, and sourced in this order:

1. The Central pot, unless empty.
 - 1.1. If there is 1 point, take it and move on.
2. Next, the Author with the highest number of Focus points.
 - 2.1. If this is you, then the next highest.
 - 2.2. If there is a tie, use Lead Tiebreak on page 023.
3. If you already have all the Focus points, then lucky for you! – you do not keep the court card, nor get Focus points.

If you ever need to know the order in which court cards are played, use the rules for Tiebreakers – Lead on page 023.

You redraw 5 cards only when your last card is used – this occurs immediately, whether you are in Conflict or not.

If your Hand ever exceeds 5 cards; play court cards, and then discard down to the allowed limit of 5.

The Monad may also allow cards to be redrawn if there has been a significant pause in the Saga's events: the 'end of a chapter', character downtime, or similar.

As if you had drawn...

A number of gaming mechanics state you gain Focus 'as if you had drawn a court card', or similar.

This means, you gain an amount of Focus as indicated by that gaming mechanic sourced in the same way as court cards.

Counters

Within each Saga, there is a finite amount of Focus points.

When you spend them, they go into a communal Central pot that other Authors then take from, unless they are stealing them directly from you!

As such, you may find it easier to use physical counters – poker chips, glass beads, coins, or similar (all those dice you have!) – as these can be easier to move around the group.

Rounding Numbers

While the Narrative Framework uses division in only a few places, some Overlays may require it more often.

Therefore, when making calculations and are left with a fraction; you always round down to remove the fraction – this can leave you with zero.

Numerical Representation

Several Facets in Agêratos have values ranging from the negative to positive.

For the sake of clarity, the sign indicators for negative (-) and positive (+) will not be used.

Instead, **Negative** or **Positive** will directly precede the number.

For instance, Positive Circumstance 3 rather than Circumstance +3, as well as Negative Circumstance 1, rather than Circumstance -1.

This immediately informs you whether a Facet is Negative or Positive, to hopefully help avoid them being misread.

Order from Chaos

Tiebreakers

Ideally, all Saga events and narrative interpretations of the gaming mechanics would unfold simultaneously.

That is, if you act simultaneously with another, both your actions are narrated as happening concurrently.

However, there are times when this is not possible: in such cases, the mechanics will call for a Tiebreak.

Lead Tiebreaks favour Authors currently taking a more central role in the Saga.

Foil Tiebreaks favour those currently taking a more background role.

When either Tiebreak is needed, use the following hierarchy of deciding factors:

Lead Tiebreak

- **Highest** Focus points.
- **Highest** Authorial Agency.
- **Highest** number of cards in your Hand.
- Draw a card; highest wins (court cards count as 0, but give Focus as normal).

Foil Tiebreak

- **Lowest** Focus points.
- **Lowest** Authorial Agency.
- **Lowest** number of cards in your Hand.
- Draw a card; highest wins (court cards count as 0, but give Focus as normal).

Example: Tiebreaks

Three of you are in a Lead Tiebreak situation.

Focus is checked but you and one other still tie.

Out of you two, Authorial Agency is checked; you have the highest, so the tie goes to you.

Quickstart Summary Character Design

To design your character:

- Write a Character Synopsis.
- Distribute 10 points between:
 - **Proactive Agency.**
 - **Reactive Agency.**

Character Creation

To design your character, follow these steps:

- Write a Character Synopsis.
- Distribute **10 points** between Proactive Agency and Reactive Agency.
- Begin with **5 Focus points**.
- Draw **5 cards**.

Your Character Synopsis can be short, long, detailed, or brief: anything that you feel comfortable with.

It is through the Saga and your narration that they will truly come alive, with the Character Synopsis simply serving as the seed from which they can grow.

You have **10 points** to distribute between Proactive Agency and Reactive Agency.

- **Proactive Agency:** Quickly builds TENSion but requires Focus points.
- **Reactive Agency:** Slowly builds TENSion without using Focus points.

You are given **5 Focus points** at the beginning of the Saga.

The **Central pot** starts with 6 Focus Points + 2 for each Author.

When everyone is ready, **draw 5 cards** — remember, drawn court cards give extra Focus points from the Central pot.

Opposite is an example of a character and their Character Synopsis.



Narrative Framework

Player Agêratos

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga Narrative Framework

Character Kanami

Kanami, Scout with the Edoina army.

A lithe, athletic woman of 23 years, Kanami has trained in the Edoina army since the age of 9.

Sold by her parents into the service of Lord Haoyu, she has only ever known duty and loyalty to the Lord and castle.

As a scout she is trained in light warfare, tracking, and the ways of the forest.

Recently she has become interested in travelling further afield to see firsthand the wonders of the world.

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 ~~4~~ 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 ~~6~~ 7 8 9 10

Notes

Simple camping gear and backpack

Tinderbox, blanket, rations, flask.

Jian sword – standard issue.

Lamellar armour – standard issue.

Pressed Peony, hidden beneath clothes between two small pieces of wood.

Nanxiao

Roleplay notes:

Loyalty before self.

Duty before joy.

... Though recently, has begun questioning such things.

Athletic

Shy and unaccustomed to socialising



Characters

No truly great literary character exists only in the moment; they exist as the living, breathing incarnation of a life lived.

From the depths of our imaginations, they emerge—their eyes reflecting worlds yet seen, their voices echoing songs yet composed, and their Souls emanating dreams yet dreamt.

And while we may only observe their lives in moments of drama, adventure, or comedy, truly great characters invoke the feeling that they are more than we observe.

Though we may not witness it, they—like all of us—work and play, hope and despair, laugh and cry.

For they are the slate upon which triumph and loss, youth and experience, heartbreak and love is forever etched.

Yet, while each of these greats started life as a thought, they likely first took form in the scratchings of a pen, the clattering of a keyboard, or even the flourish of a brush.

Quickstart Summary Authorial Agency

In Agêratos, you are a co-Author of the Saga, rather than just the player of one character.

You do create and portray a single character, but they exist as your means to experience the Saga, not affect it.

As an Author, you have one 'stat':

- **Authorial Agency**, rated **1 – 20**.
- Start with 10 points.

This is a measure of your presence in, and influence over, the Saga.

Its value can change, and at zero, your character is forced to leave the Saga.

Quickstart Summary Sub-Agencies

For Conflict (adversarial events), Authorial Agency is split into two sub-'stats':

- **Proactive Agency**, rated **0 – 10**.
- **Reactive Agency**, rated **0 – 10**.

These ratings allow you to affect the various card types in the game whose values are equal or lower than the sub-Agency rating.

Proactive Agency helps to quickly win Conflicts, but costs Focus.

Reactive Agency helps to slowly build to a win, and costs nothing.

Character Synopsis

The Narrative Framework places little emphasis on what your character is capable of, only who they are.

So, simply introduce who they are: their career, quirks, hobbies, regrets, desires, motivations, aptitudes, dislikes; anything that defines them – for better or worse.

The only restriction you really have is that the Monad must agree they are a suitable fit for the Saga.

Your Character Synopsis is not set in stone, it should change as your character evolves during the Saga

When they make close allies or bitter rivals, note them, when their reputation soars or scandal is endured, note it; when your character's life is forever altered, note the momentous occasion.

When writing your Character Synopsis, write as much, or as little, as you feel comfortable with.

The key is that you convey a sense of who they are and their broad capabilities.

Authorial Agency

Authorial Agency

Authorial Agency is a measure of your presence in, and influence over, the Saga.

It has a value of **1 - 20**.

While it does not quantify your character's specific capabilities, they and Authorial Agency are inexorably linked.

As your character is your conduit into the Saga – your means to interact with it – Authorial Agency echoes their narrative drive, such as health and capabilities.

That is, as they experience narrative triumphs and setbacks, your Authorial Agency is similarly affected.

Player Characters

Authorial Agency grants your character one thing: **Player Character** status.

Consequently, if your Authorial Agency reaches zero, your character is removed from your control as a Player Character.

However, to remove the Monad's antagonists (NPCs) and events from the Saga, does not require Authorial Agency to be reduced to zero – they typically require Conflict and Saga changes.

Sub-Agencies

Your Authorial Agency is a combination of two sub-Agencies: **Proactive Agency** and **Reactive Agency**.

Each is valued **0 - 10**.

Combined, these values are what make up your Authorial Agency.

As the Saga progresses it is possible for your Authorial Agency or a sub-Agency to be altered in value – notably via Conflict.

When it is stated that Authorial Agency is altered, you may choose which of the two sub-Agencies is affected, but when Proactive Agency or Reactive Agency are stated, then only that Agency is affected.

Proactive Agency

In Conflict, you use this to try and seize Saga control, quickly build TENSION, and force Conflict Resolution.

Reactive Agency

In Conflict, you use this to slowly build TENSION and covertly work towards Conflict Resolution.

The Monad & Sub-Agency

To clarify: Authorial Agency is not a direct measure of any character's – PC or NPC – capabilities.

Rather, it indicates their agency within the Saga: in essence, how important they are to Saga events.

For instance, the Saga talks of daring rebels trying to destroy the terrifying, planet destroying weapon of an evil Galactic Empire (No, not that one!)

A guard stationed at the door to a relatively unimportant room might have a low Authorial Agency value.

However, position that very same guard next to the reactor core and a large 'Big red self-destruct button', and they would have a much higher value.

So, the Monad may adjust their Proactive and Reactive Agency values as required; however, this does not alter the value of their Authorial Agency, which they must ensure to keep track of as you would.

Saga Structure

*Like the first drop of ink writ upon a page, or the hushed whispers in a darkened theatre before curtain's rise, so too does a **Prologue** herald the Saga.*

Within, ideas spring to life, seeds of desire are sown, and the echoes of adventure begin to chime.

It whets the appetite but does not satisfy, it alludes but does not explain, and it sets the grand stage for the Saga that awaits.

For the Prologue exists to spark the flames of your future adventures.

But every protagonist and antagonist needs their rest, time to recuperate, or to meet new acquaintances.

*And so, like a deafening silence between the echoes of adventure, an **Interlude** brings both rest and new perspective.*

Within, tales unfold like petals in the morning sun, and the first steps are taken on paths old and new.

*And final, like the soft closing of a book long cherished, or the gentle embrace of darkness after a play's final act, an **Epilogue** brings closure and reflection.*

For, as the echoes of adventure fade away, all that remains are the heart-bound whispers of those whose Saga has ended.

Quickstart Summary Prologue

The Saga begins with a **Prologue**:

- No rules, except the Monad has absolute control.
- For setting up future Saga elements: mysteries, machinations, and MacGuffins!
- Not for rewarding yourself.

Prologue

Every Saga begins with a **Prologue**, that lasts as long as the Monad wishes.

It exists as a period of creative freedom, both for the Saga to start, and for you to become a truly living, breathing part of it.

During your Prologue, the Monad has complete Saga control, it cannot be taken from them.

However, you are constrained by no other rules – no Focus, no Conflict, no cards, no limits! ...Well, OK there is one limit: the Monad must agree.

This freedom is to let both you and the Monad introduce the Saga that you all truly want to be part of.

Memorable protagonists need their foils, legendary adventures their MacGuffins, and thrillers their suspense.

Interlude

When you wish to introduce a new Player Character to the Saga, an Interlude occurs.

This has the same form and function as your Prologue, unfolding in the presence of other characters or as a vignette..

If you are a new Player, you start with an Authorial Agency of 10, 5 Focus points, and 5 cards – the same as all Players.

However, if you are an existing Player:

If the Monad agrees, and you simply wish to draft a new character, then you keep your current Authorial Agency, Focus points, and cards.

Conversely, if your old character was forced from the Saga at zero Authorial Agency, then your new value is the lower of either 5, or the lowest value present in your RPG group.

Saga Structure

Quickstart Summary Saga Structure

As an Author, you can contribute to the overall Saga narration, adding or removing characters, events, or other elements.

The only restrictions are that you must have **Saga Control** and all events are in keeping with the Saga's setting.

There are three ways for you to gain Saga control:

- Focus-enacted Saga Change.
- Conflict.
- Foreshadowing.

Focus-enacted Saga Changes use Focus Points: you start with 5.

When you wish to take Saga Control, the Monad decides how many Focus points are needed, and this depends on the plausibility and likelihood of your desired Saga change.

Conflict is for resolving adversarial situations in the Saga.

Sub-Agencies and cards are used, during structured turns where each Author competes for Saga control; the ultimate goal: bring about Conflict Resolution.

Conflict Resolution rewards the winner with Saga control, as well as various gaming benefits.

Foreshadowing allows you to try and predict future Saga events; if these occur, you are rewarded with Saga control as well as various gaming benefits.

Foreshadowing is long-term, occurring alongside all other narration and gaming mechanics.

Framework Structure

Structurally, there are three main elements to the Narrative Framework:

- Focus-enacted Saga Change.
- Conflict.
- Foreshadowing.

These each focus solely on which Author takes Saga Control, rather than dictating the success or failure of specific tasks. That is, your narration and role-playing is always the primary means for how your Saga's actual content comes about.

Outside of Conflict, you gain Saga Control via Focus-enacted Saga Changes, which cost Focus Points to make.

However, Focus Points are only spent when your Focus-enacted Saga Changes diverge significantly from previous Saga events – if not, Saga Control stays with the Monad while your Saga's narration passes seamlessly between all Authors.

In fact, if your Saga evolves logically from Saga event to Saga event, you may find entire play sessions passing as pure storytelling, without any mechanics.

However, if contradictory Saga Changes are enacted and your narration alone cannot bring about a compromise, the Monad may move your Saga into Conflict.

Conflict is a risk-reward mechanic for resolving adversarial Saga events. With Conflict, you may earn gaming rewards, but may also suffer gaming loss.

Finally, Foreshadowing can bring you Saga Control and other rewards, but is also about the skill and mystery of trying to accurately predict future Saga events. Predictions that also serve to unite, as you collaborate to enact the predicted Saga events... before time runs out.

Focus

Legend, Myth, Skazka, Fable, Saga, Epic, Tale, Edda, Yarn, or Gesta—each word attempts to capture the intangible narratives of our dreams, woven from our thoughts and imaginations.

Every term, from Legend to Gesta, embodies not just a narrative but also the profound cultural history from which it originates.

Drawing from this diverse lexicon, Agêratos embraces the word ‘saga’.

For a saga is an epic odyssey, where the world of horizons and the depths of the soul are explored and conquered.

They are the narratives of valiant journeys, of warfare and vendettas, of chronicles and legends that delve into both the factual and fantastical.

*Thus the term: **the Saga**.*

Chosen for its evocation of the epic and legendary, this term suitably conveys the sense of the grand adventures that await you.

Through your ideas, your words, your voice, your Saga can be more than just a story; it can truly be a living, breathing incarnation of your heart and dreams.

So, what actions will you take?

Will you be a shadowy agent, witnessing your Saga’s unfolding events, reacting only to the decisions of others?

Or will you be a proactive agent in the weaving of your fate, walking your own path through your Saga’s world and history?

What vision will you bring to life, how will you harness that limitless power of imagination that dwells within you?

The pen is in your hand, the cards are on the table—the adventure of your Saga awaits.

Quickstart Summary Narrative Justification

The Focus cost for you to take Saga control, the requirements to win Conflict, and the difficulty of Foreshadowing, are all affected by **narrative justification**.

That is, the Monad uses the existence of previous Saga events to judge how plausible and likely proposed new events are.

The more plausible and likely an event is, the lower/easier things are for you, and of course, the opposite is true.

Previous events include your character and their Synopsis, so, while they are not given ‘stats’ directly, their existence, actions, and equipment are important.

The Saga

The Saga is your story – a story with no script or predetermined outcome, whose purpose is to entertain and delight, not judge who is a winner or loser.

Its content is authored by you and your RPG group through storytelling and acting to bring forth your own Saga.

As a mechanic, the Saga gains tangible form via **Saga changes** and **Saga events**.

Saga changes are what you enact when you take Saga control, while Saga events are simply the events of the Saga.

However, even with Saga control, the Monad can disallow your Saga changes if they contradict the Saga’s setting or theme; they can, however, ask you to reassess your narration if it doesn’t make sense – like possibly, cleaving through multiple opponents armed with a toothpick.

Focus

Saga Control

Saga control lasts long enough for you to enact any Saga changes, rather than oversee the entire new Saga event.

Also, your fellow Authors still have a voice, and are able to contribute to the Saga change's narration.

Yet, when you have Saga control, it is you that decides what gets incorporated.

Therefore, you could just say "No...", or you could – metaphorically at least – say either "Yes, but..." or "Yes, and..."

"Yes, but..." is about acknowledging others' desires, blending them into your Saga control, but still keeping the essence of what you wanted protected and intact.

"Yes, and..." however incorporates their idea and then builds on it even further.

Either way, after you lose Saga control, it always reverts back to the Monad.

Saga Control and Players

With Saga control, you can narrate the momentary actions of your fellow Authors' Player Characters.

However, you cannot make long-term decisions for them – such as alter their core beliefs, or ongoing story arcs.

So you could, for instance, narrate them diving to one-side as an explosion occurs, or their thrusts and parries in melee.

Your control is meant to keep the Saga flowing and avoiding having to check with everyone, but should always respect the autonomy of other Authors and the development of their Player Characters.

You have your character, they theirs.

Focus

You start with 5 Focus points.

To take Saga control, the Monad decides how many Focus points are needed factoring in the plausibility and likelihood of your desired Saga change.

Focus and Saga Control

Focus points are the primary means by which you take Saga control from others.

Only when Focus points are actually spent, is Saga control taken from the Monad – zero cost Saga changes, do not.

The majority of your Saga will likely be comprised of such zero cost changes, as the Saga moves rhythmically and logically from one Saga event to the next.

As such, though they retain Saga control, the Monad should freely allow you to narrate such zero cost events to ensure the Saga flows smoothly.

Focus may only be spent to gain Saga control outside of Conflict – once Conflict has begun, it must be resolved before Focus can be spent in this way again.

Narrative Consistency

Focus is also the answer to a question you may be asking yourself:

"What's stopping me from simply narrating all adversaries are defeated, thereby bringing the Saga to an end?"

Well, that is the primary purpose of Focus – if an RPG is the authoring of a story, then completing it may require thousands of Focus points.

However, authoring the first line, of the first paragraph, of the first page, would cost significantly less – even zero.

If your narrative is revealed with a sense of rhythm and logic, there is no Focus cost; only when you introduce plot-twists – a betrayal, a new antagonist, a miraculous escape – is there cost.

The greater the impact on the Saga, or the more divergent or illogical your enacted Saga change is from established Saga events, the higher the Focus cost.

Thus, **Focus costs are dynamic and contextual** – you lower them through the establishment of related Saga events, essentially forming the individual steps of the path that leads to future events.

Focus: Character Synopsis

The Monad always adjudicates Focus costs – to help keep things consistent – and in this decision, they can account for your Character Synopsis.

However, the Narrative Framework is about authoring your Saga, not deciding whose character is better than the others.

As such, the Monad can accommodate your Character Synopsis as much, or as little, as they like; this is especially true for Conflict, where matters may be complicated by variable win conditions.

Example: Character Focus costs

You need to shut down a computer based security system, and so for the characters among your group, the Focus costs may be:

Criminal defence barrister: 4 Focus.

Telecommunications engineer: 2 Focus.

Cyber-security specialist: 0 Focus.

Your Synopsis should always represent who your character currently is; if you use them as justification for a Saga change, you may wish to modify your Synopsis.

Focus Cost Guidelines

The Monad adjudicates all Focus costs by assessing the impact your Saga Change is likely to have on the Saga – the greater the likely impact, the higher the cost.

However, you can drive costs down by using previous Saga events to justify your desired Saga Change.

Yet, a casual remark like, “Hey, doesn’t that person over there look suspicious,” would not be enough to identify them as a long sought-after murderer, at least not without a substantial Focus cost. Costs are only reduced when previous Saga events firmly establish the plausibility and likelihood of your Saga Change.

Consider, at the start of your Saga, the Focus costs for dealing with the investigation into a criminal gang:

- 1-2 points: You find a suspicious shop that may or may not be involved with the gang.
- 3-4 points: You visit a shop that is a front for the gang... unbeknownst to you.
- 5 ≥ points: You enter a shop just as the gang are moving a large consignment of goods, which may or may not be illegal.
- 10 ≥: You enter a shop just as the crime boss and gang lay down their weapons, their hands full moving a large consignment of obviously illegal goods – and oh look, is that a fully functioning camera system!

With the investigation continued – gang members identified, victims helped, or shell companies dismantled – Focus costs are driven down.

Next, while equipment, information, and possibly even spells, psychic powers, cybernetics, or similar – depending on your Saga – may not have direct gaming applications, their mere presence provides narrative justification.

This alone, can drive down Focus costs.

Focus

Pointing a weapon at someone makes it easier to intimidate them; armour and protection can help you miraculously survive a cave-in; and the extraordinary can allow for extraordinary events.

Thus, while the game operates mostly on the Author level, do not lose sight of the impact the Character level can have.

Tip: it is important that the Saga, your narration, and the game in general, is allowed to flow.

As such, it may help if the Monad allows you, as you are narrating Saga events, to pay what you believe to be a fair Focus cost into the Central pot.

Only if the Monad disagrees should they either ask for more or reimburse points.

Combining Focus Costs

You may NOT combine Focus with others to enact Saga changes.

Zero Focus Points

At zero Focus, once any Saga changes or Conflict have ended, you regain Focus.

At this point, if you are the Monad, you take 1 Focus point from the Central pot and 1 from each Player.

As a Player, you only take 1 Focus point from the Central pot.

If you and another Player needs Focus, and the Central pot has too few, use the Foil Tiebreak rules on page 023.

If the Central pot is empty, you must wait until it is replenished.

While this offers you a safety net, it is still wise to maintain your Focus reserves, for you also use them in both Conflict and Foreshadowing...

Focus Cost Guidelines

Natural flow: 0 points

The plausible and likely.

Changes that align with the current or established events of the Saga.

Subtle nudges: 1 point

The plausible, yet unusual.

Lays 'stepping stones' as the groundwork for future events, or subtly redirects the Saga.

Substantial Nudges: 2 points

The plausible, yet unexpected.

Clearly redirects the Saga.

Character capabilities which could feasibly come from a hobby, side business, or similar.

Subtle changes: 3 points

The implausible, and yet not surprising.

Changes, that while unexpected at the time, were perhaps obvious in hindsight.

Characters gaining specialised capabilities outside those originally stated.

Substantial changes: 4 points

The implausible and highly unlikely.

Alters the Saga significantly.

Characters gaining unlikely capabilities.

Monumental changes: 5≥ points

Redefines the Saga's setting or theme.

Characters gaining skills that contradict their original Character Synopsis.

5 points: Adjust Authorial Agency

Adjust Authorial Agency by 1 point.

Conflict

Stories are driven by conflict; a crucible in which desires and motives become tempered and forged.

No mere clash of swords or battle of wits; conflict's pulse sparks drama, invigorates characters, and inspires narratives.

*Agêratos honours the concept of literary conflict through its own mechanic, aptly named: **Conflict**.*

Within such Conflict, its drumbeat marching ever onward, tension builds as if heralding an oncoming storm.

A harmonious and discordant maelstrom drawing all to its abyssal heart—calling them to desolation and despair.

Yet, rising tension may too lift the victorious beyond this storm, bearing them aloft on triumphant wings.

*Literary tension is thus mirrored within Agêratos as **TENsion**.*

*With TENsion rising and the drumbeat echoing, fleeting chords of hope and peril resound—auspicious moments waiting to be exploited, known as **Circumstances**.*

As TENsion mounts and Circumstances evolve, would-be victors rise ever higher seeking to escape from the storm, though in this there can be only one.

*And so, when the crescendoing drumbeat turns to a cacophonous clash, Conflict enters **Climax**—a battle of wills for a single victor to rise beyond the storm.*

Yet, even the most tumultuous of storms must break—gales turning to breezes and darkened clouds to clear skies.

*So, just as any storm reaches its resolution, there too is **Conflict Resolution**.*

Quickstart Summary Conflict

Conflict is used to resolve adversarial situations in the Saga.

It costs 1 Focus to enter Conflict: you can win this back—and more—if you do well enough.

Conflict is played out in turns, with your cards played as either **Decision** or **Action** cards.

The goal of Conflict is to build stacks of cards—**TENsion stacks**—until their value is at least **ten**, at which point they are completed.

Completing stacks also allows you to apply **Circumstances**—modifiers to Decision card values.

To win Conflict, you need a certain number of completed TENsion stacks, called **Peak TENsion**.

Each turn:

- You play one Decision card.
- If its value is the highest out of every Author's, you gain Saga control for the turn and keep the card to build TENsion.
 - All others are discarded...
- For 1 Focus, you may **seize** any discarded Decision card using an **Action card**, but only if:
 - Your Action card's value is equal or less than your **Proactive Agency**.
 - The values of your Action card and the Decision card **total exactly ten**.
- If your discarded **Decision card** is not seized, you may **save** it, but only if its value is equal or less than your **Reactive Agency**—this costs zero Focus.

Conflict

Conflict

When adversarial Saga situations occur, they can be modelled, and resolved, through the gaming mechanic of Conflict.

The Saga enters Conflict when:

1. The Monad wishes it.
2. You wish it, and the Monad approves.
3. You contradict a Saga change with one of your own, and the Monad approves.

Conflict offers a risk-reward gaming mechanic, using Agencies and playing cards, along with guile and strategy, in a race to bring about Conflict Resolution.

If you win: you are rewarded, including potentially being able to enact significant Saga changes for low Focus costs, though, if you lose: Authorial Agency can be lost.

Conflict is split into stages, and one stage – Rising Action – is played out in repeating turns until Conflict resolves.

Once Conflict is initiated, it must be ended through Conflict Resolution before Focus enacted Saga changes can occur.

To initiate a contradictory Saga change, you must be able to match the Focus cost of the other Author; however, you do not actually spend any Focus and they get their points refunded – Conflict now deciding who gets Saga control.

Also, in the ensuing Conflict, you have narrative ownership of your enacted events, and are thus the Author others must overcome even if you must narrate both your character and the opposition.

If this ever becomes too impractical, then the Monad can decide to step in and take narrative ownership of your events.

Conflict Levels

Each Conflict takes place on both the Author and Character level, and to engage in Conflict, your character must be involved in the current Saga events.

The Monad, who has no Player Character, can always be involved in Conflict if they wish; even if it's just to narrate random or environmental events.

Conflict Narration

Outside of Conflict, your narration is open and free form, until an Author spends Focus to take Saga control.

However, as Conflict is structured so too does your narration become structured.

Incidentally, the time limit for a Conflict turn, depends on the Conflict itself – some last moments, others minutes, hours, or even years!

Saga control is shared each turn by all Authors that build TENSION.

This sharing of Saga control is guided and moderated by the Monad:

- Completing a TENSION stack gives you a high-level of Saga control.
- Adding to a TENSION stack gives you a low-level of Saga control.

If you think of an RPG as akin to writing a novel: adding to a TENSION stack equates to commentary or observation, but the narrative does not truly advance.

Significant events may occur, such as the defeat of some enemies or a shift in the weather, but only if nothing in an overall sense is achieved – some bandits may be defeated but still many more remain.

“I strike forward, initiating a series of thrusts and feints; the bandit however, is quick, and with surprising grace, evades each strike.”

Conflict

Completing a TENSION stack equates to pivotal moments where the narrative advances and achievement is made.

These moments are also represented by gaming mechanics, in this case: Negative Circumstance 1 {Injured}.

"The bandit, though previously unhurt, seems rattled by my earlier offensive.

I press this advantage: giving a loud battle cry and swinging my broadsword in a wide arcing sweep, bringing it to bear with all my might.

This time, they are too slow, and my blade cuts deep into their weapon arm, slicing open a vicious wound."

Yet, while they have a gaming side, Circumstances are first and foremost narrative opportunities.

Use them to describe injuries or setbacks, your clever reversal of a shield's polarity, or the deep psychological scars your devastating quip has wrought upon those that dared to try and insult you.

You cannot narrate the end of Conflict, unless you bring about Conflict Resolution; in this case, you may also narrate subsequent events and rewards.

"The bandits lay dead, I am victorious.

I spend a few moments to recuperate before gathering my things, and taking the opportunity to look through theirs.

I am in luck! Along with some money and equipment, they have a map of the forest, the very thing I have been seeking."

From a narration point of view, all Conflict actions occur concurrently.

Where possible, events should thus be narrated as occurring simultaneously – if this is not possible, use the rules for Lead Tiebreak on page 023.

Conflict Scope

When narrating, it is important to account for what the Conflict is actually about.

For instance, if the Conflict is about you squaring off against bandits, then you would be unable to narrate their defeat until Conflict Resolution.

However, if Conflict was about you passing through an area, then you could narrate their defeat, as long as another cause for Conflict was introduced – with the Monad's approval.

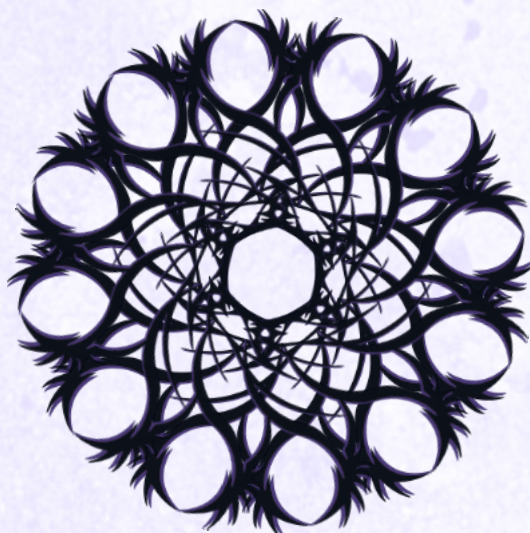
This approval is largely to ensure you do not sneakily put the means to get a long sought after reward into the Saga.

Ha ha!

The bandits flee before my imposing might as I take up my weapon and bear down on them; they scatter like cowards.

...only moments later do I realise they're looking behind me; turning slowly, I too recoil as a huge Ogre lumbers towards me.

So, in this manner, you can use a single Conflict to mark a number of related events – a journey between towns or a series of negotiations, for instance.



Conflict

Conflict Structure

From a gaming point of view, you may choose not to be involved in Conflict.

While this means you can neither resolve the Conflict – obtaining rewards – neither can you lose – resulting in gaming losses.

You still portray your character from a narrative sense, but you may not take Saga control.

Conflict is split into stages mirroring the narrative arc typical of full-length stories: Exposition – Rising Action – Peak – Falling Action – Resolution.

This approach, while atypical from a literary point of view, emphasises each Conflict as its own mini-narrative – brief, but exciting vignettes of drama, suspense, and character growth.

1. Exposition

1. A **Conflict pot** of Focus points is formed.
2. **Peak TENSION (PT)** is determined.
3. Scene **Circumstances** are applied.

This stage establishes the conditions and reasons for Conflict, along with the gaming stakes you are competing for.

Conflict Pot

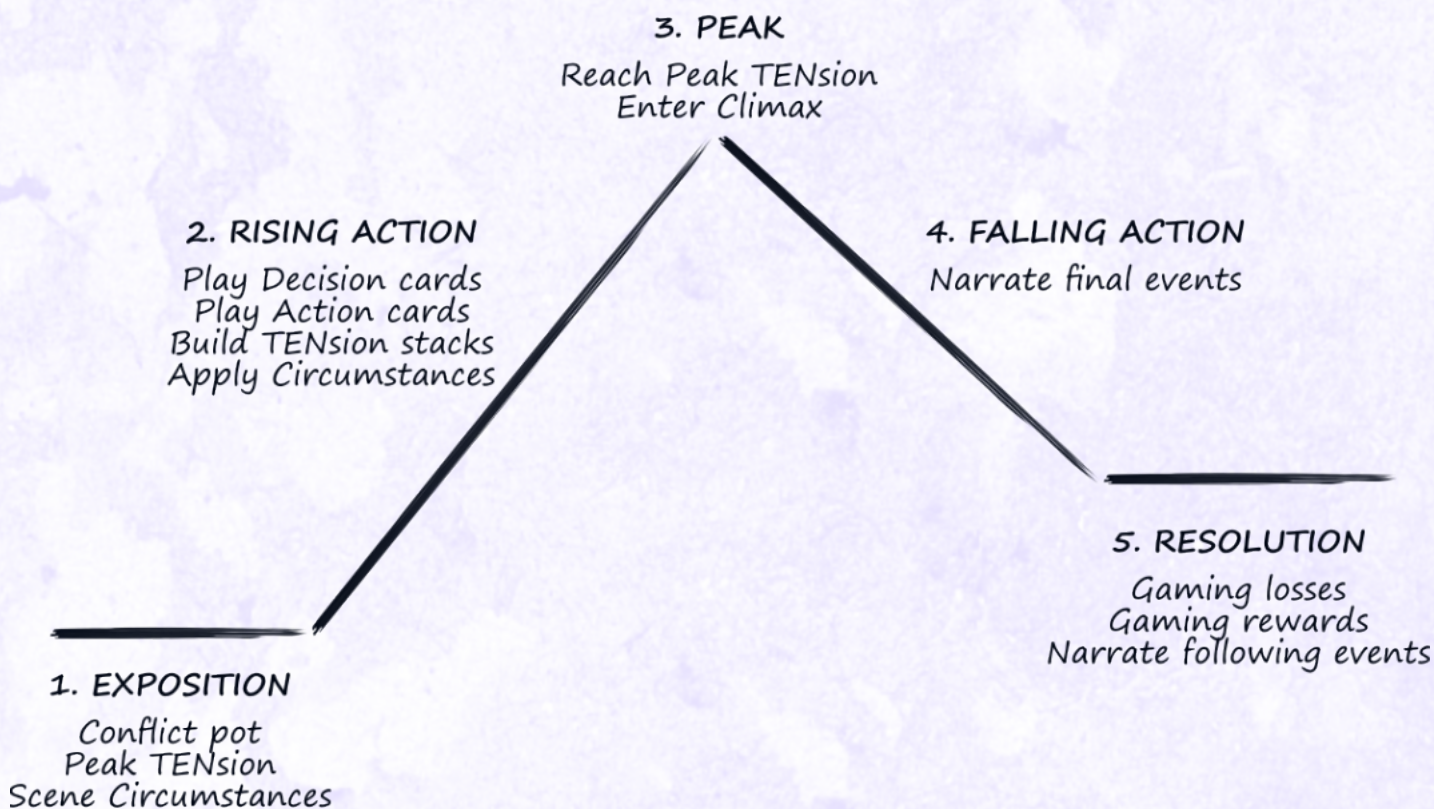
A **Conflict pot** of Focus is formed by all Players entering Conflict.

You give 1 Focus point, if you cannot, you may not enter Conflict.

The Central pot gives 1 Focus point – if empty, it gives no points

The Monad gives no Focus points.

CONFLICT STRUCTURE



Conflict

Peak TENSion

The Monad determines the Peak TENSion (PT) and Safe TENSion (ST) — these cannot be changed once Conflict has started.

Each Conflict turn, you build TENSion stacks representing your narrative momentum within the Conflict.

You do so through various means during Rising Action — more coming up — to form either new TENSion stacks or add to an existing one (your choice).

These TENSion stacks are *completed* when they reach a value of 10 or more; thus the TEN in TENSion.

Peak TENSion (PT) is the number of these completed stacks you need to win.

PT is always determined by the Monad, even if not involved in the Conflict, and based on the same criteria for enacting a Saga change through Focus.

That is, how many Focus points would be needed to enact the Saga change that the Conflict is now replacing.

Safe TENSion (ST) is also determined: equal to half of PT (round down).

ST is the minimum TENSion you must acquire to avoid gaming loses during Conflict Resolution.

Example: Peak TENSion

Discovering a rare antique, you wish to haggle to drive down its price.

As a Focus enacted Saga change, the Monad decides this would cost 2 Focus points.

Therefore, to haggle through Conflict instead would mean a PT of 2—the same as Focus.

Also, this Conflict would have an ST of 1.

Scene Circumstances

The Monad applies any Circumstances that are a result of current Saga events.

These are numerical modifiers to the value of your revealed Decision cards.

They range from Negative 5 to Positive 5.

There is no set list of Circumstances, they can be as varied and diverse as your narration and the Sagas themselves.

Note: In this book, all Circumstances will be named using curly brackets, {}.

You are free to name them however you wish: {High ground}, {Psychic burst}, {Drugged}, {Inter-dimensional, spatial-inversion, temporal-fissure}, anything.

Use names that enhance the immersion of your Saga, and to make it clear why the Circumstance exists and its effect.

For regardless of their name, they have a gaming component that is always applied consistently through specified criteria.

When setting scene Circumstances, the Monad is encouraged to do so sparingly and only apply Circumstances that truly help link the Conflict to the Saga events of the immediate moment.

For instance, starting from a fortified or higher position, engaging in combat after a gruelling hike, or being hyped-up on caffeinated energy drinks before an exam (Negative? Positive?)

All Circumstances applied this way should be clearly described, and the reason for their application explained.

Remember: Authorial Agency is a reflection of your character's health and drive, so previous injuries or setbacks are factored in to this value.

Conflict

2. Rising Action

1. Reveal **Decision cards**.
2. Compare Decision cards – highest is kept, all others discarded.
3. Play **Action cards** to seize any discarded Decision cards.
4. Save non-seized discarded Decision cards through Reactive Agency.
5. Build **TENsion**.
6. Apply **Circumstances**.

Rising Action is the main stage of Conflict where you and other Authors compete to achieve Peak TENsion first.

Decision Cards

Choose one card and set it facedown in front of you: this is your **Decision card**.

When all Authors are ready, you each reveal your card and compare their value.

The Author with the highest valued card keeps it, while all others are discarded.

In the event of a tie, each is kept – if this is difficult to narrate, use the rules for Lead Tiebreak on page 023.

If you have no cards remaining at this point, draw from the draw deck until you have 5 in total, then play any court cards.

Action Cards

You may play a card from your hand to try and seize control of any discarded Decision card: this is an **Action card**.

If successful, both your Action card and the discarded Decision card, form a new, completed TENsion stack.

Though take note, when playing Action cards, the following must be considered:

- Its value must be equal or less than your **Proactive Agency**.
- Added together, its value and the discarded Decision card's must **equal exactly 10**.
- It costs **1 Focus** to play, and this point is placed into the Conflict pot.
- You must allow time for other Authors to declare any **Blocking** attempts.

Special: A value 10 Action card does not need to target a Decision card.

Blocking

Your Action Cards may be blocked by others if they play their own against the same Decision Card.

In this case, use the rules for Climax on page 040 to determine which Author seizes the Decision Card – Note: Focus Points spent here go to the Conflict pot, so if you bring about Conflict Resolution later you will get them back... if.



Conflict

Saving Decision Cards

If your Decision card is not seized, then your **Reactive Agency** may save it from being discarded.

If its value is equal or less than your Reactive Agency, you can choose to save it and form a **NEW TENSion** stack.

To clarify, you cannot add saved Decision cards to incomplete TENSion stacks.

However, any 10s you save in this way are already complete TENSion stacks!

Note: You can choose not to save your Decision card if you so wish—though as to why you may wish to do so, is up to you and your strategies...



Build TENSion

All kept, seized, or saved Decision cards, build TENSion stacks.

Kept Decision cards either start a new TENSion stack, or add to an existing one—this is entirely your choice.

Seized Decision cards are combined with the Action card into a completed stack.

Saved Decision cards may only start new TENSion stacks.

When you complete a TENSion stack, you may do both of the following:

1. Take 1 Focus from the Conflict Pot—if empty you get nothing.
2. Apply a Circumstance to any Author, including yourself.

Apply Circumstances

Circumstances only modify the value of Decision cards when comparing them at the beginning of Rising Action.

So, Circumstances:

- **Do not** affect if your Action cards can seize them when being discarded.
- **Do not** affect if they can be saved through your Reactive Agency.
- **Do not** alter their value in TENSion stacks.

You may apply Circumstances to either yourself or another Author—you do not have to if you do not wish to.

They represent a change in the, well, circumstances that arise during the course of Conflict

They are the advantage of higher ground, the effects of injury or morale, audience reactions, or anything that makes narrative sense given your Saga.

Though they cannot stop you applying the Circumstance—your right for building TENSion—the Monad must approve its name and intended scope.

When applied they are done so as either:

1. A new Negative or Positive Circumstance 1.
2. An increase or decrease to an existing Circumstance by a value of 1.
 - 2.1. A Circumstance with a value of zero, is removed entirely.

Multiple Circumstances can stack, but they cannot exceed either Negative 5 or Positive 5.

All Circumstances last until the end of Conflict or until they are removed through the application of another one.

Conflict

3. Peak

In the Peak stage, the number of your completed TENSion stacks is compared to Peak TENSion (PT).

If you have achieved PT, then you move into the next stage of Falling Action – you have brought about Conflict Resolution.

If no one achieves PT, then another turn of the Rising Action stage takes place.

If there is a tie in the race to achieve PT, then the Conflict moves into Climax.

Climax

In Climax, you are drawing new cards from the deck, not using those in your Hand – neither do Circumstances modify these newly drawn cards.

You start by drawing and placing facedown, one card without looking at it.

Now, you may draw 1 extra card at a cost of 1 Focus point – goes to the Conflict pot.

You may do this until you have 5 cards, for a total of 4 Focus points.

When ready, you and the other Authors each reveal your cards – one at a time helps build suspense!

A revealed court card is valued at zero, though give Focus as per the normal.

Once all cards are revealed: if you have the highest value card, you have brought about Conflict Resolution.

If there is still a tie after this turn, you may enter Climax again or narrate the tie into the Saga.

4. Falling Action

You use Falling Action to narrate how the Conflict was resolved – how were enemies defeated or systems bypassed, what was the crowd's reaction as you delivered the winning verse, or similar.

This narration is directly tied to the Conflict itself, it does not encompass subsequent events or rewards.

5. Resolution

The Conflict Resolution stage details both the gaming wins and losses, as well as the Saga event immediately after Conflict: loot, glory, intel, exploration, or similar.

If you failed to achieve enough TENSion stacks to reach ST, you lose:

- 1 point of Authorial Agency.
- 1 Focus point to the **Central pot** – only if you have some.

If you brought about Conflict Resolution, after those that lost, you gain:

- 1 point of Authorial Agency.
- 1 Focus point from the **Central pot** – unless it is empty.
- Any remaining Focus in the Conflict Pot.
- Saga control for the next Saga event.

This subsequent Saga event is narrated as a Focus enacted Saga change at a value equal to PT.

You may use this to further adjust an Author's Proactive or Reactive Agency as per the 'Variable' Focus cost Saga change.

Also, with Monad approval, this may be enacted as a number of Saga changes whose Focus costs add up to PT.

Conflict

Circumstance Remarks

With the Monad's approval, you may apply a Circumstance not just to an individual but to any **Entity** – a group, location, or similar that could conceivably be viewed as singular in that moment.

This approval can again be influenced by your Character Synopsis, or anything you can use as narrative justification.

For example, a fully-automatic firearm may allow all in an area to be hit, while experience in public speaking may allow for a rousing speech or pathos-filled poem to affect all who hear it.

Also, your narration of Conflict actions may suggest a Circumstance's value is altered or even negated altogether.

However, Circumstances are a gaming mechanic, and only affected by the gaming mechanics.

If narration contradicts the description of a Circumstance, then its description is changed.

Example: Persistence of Circumstances

A magical pulse literally flattens the entire area.

This would suggest your Positive Circumstance {Higher ground} is lost.

However, the magical pulse was merely a description in the narrative; it was not a result of a completed TENSION stack.

In this case, your Circumstance would be changed to something else—a morale boost or the momentum gained from a truly lit forward flip off the high ground before the pulse hit!

Also, even if the pulse was a result of a completed TENSION stack, but the resultant Circumstance was not applied to you, you would not lose your Circumstance.

Circumstance Tokens

If it helps, you can track Circumstances through the use of tokens: one type to denote Positive, another for Negative.

Each token is a 1 point modifier, with tokens of the opposite type cancelling each other out and being discarded.

Circumstance Examples

Injure an enemy – Negative Circumstance {Wounded} – applying to all actions taken by them whether against you or not.

Bolster morale – Positive Circumstance {Courage} – or dent the enemies' morale – Negative Circumstance {Afraid}.

Damage a door's hinges so further attempts to break it down are more likely to succeed – Negative Circumstance {Cracked and splintered} – regardless of who attempts to ram it.

Barricade the same door to remove the Negative Circumstance {Cracked and splintered}.

Or, declare that your stubbornness has kicked in granting you, and only you, a boost to taking down the door...for you will be the one to triumph over this foe – Positive Circumstance {Stubborn}!

Create an opening in a systems' firewall easing all subsequent hacking attempts – Negative Circumstance {Breached}.

Leap upon the banquet table to gain Positive Circumstance {Higher ground} to all subsequent combat actions.

Leap upon the same table so an enemy loses Circumstance {Higher ground}...at least against your character.

- (This could make keeping track of things a bit complicated: 'applies against some, but not others' is down to your RPG group).

Conflict

Variable Peak TENSION

As with Focus costs, the Monad can account for your Character Synopsis when deciding on PT.

However, while you can have different PT to others, this should only be done in exceptional situations – Conflict is for you as an Author, not your character: it is the co-Authoring of the Saga that is the goal.

Your character is merely a conduit through which you can narrate the Saga, they are not there to overshadow others.

If you are given a different PT, your reward for Conflict Resolution is still based on the original value.

Example: Variable Peak TENSION

The Saga enters Conflict as your characters are captured by a dastardly villain—white cat, sharks with lasers on their heads, not caring to actually witness your demise—you know the type.

Bound to chairs, facing a bank of multi-coloured lights, the villain melodramatically taunts you, “So, my friends, you thought you could beat me? Well, let’s see if you still feel that way after some truly enlightening...education!”

They exit as the lights pulsate, and dull, dulcet tones fill the air—your mind begins to cloud!

You must escape: success not only means surprising the guard but will also give you a strategic advantage as the villain has graciously brought you into the heart of their lair.

For this Conflict, the Monad decides on PT of 4.

However, you are accustomed to avoiding mind control and brainwashing techniques.

Therefore the Monad decides that you, and only you, has a PT of 3—should you bring about Conflict Resolution however, you still enact a Saga change as if you got 4 TENSION stacks.

Alternative Peak TENSION

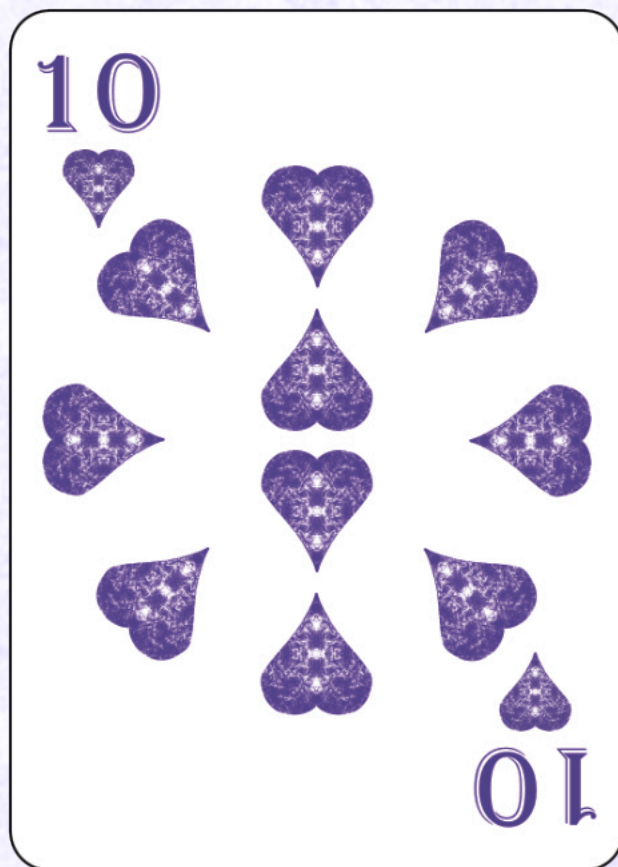
The Peak TENSION described earlier is the most common goal for Conflict, and is known as personal PT.

Yet, such goals may not be appropriate for all Conflicts, so there are a number of alternative ways to use PT:

- **Personal:** you must acquire the specified number of TENSION stacks.
- **Group:** Authors group TENSION stacks.
- **Timed:** If you have the most TENSION stacks after a set turn limit, you bring about Conflict Resolution.
- **Creative:** Conflict ends when you want: your reward scales with TENSION, but so too does your risk.

Quickstart notes:

For this Quickstart, these other PTs will not be detailed.



Foreshadowing

Anticipation, expectation, and promises: authors tempt and tease us, all the while preparing us for what is to come.

By means of imagery, suggestion, and symbols, our imaginations are roused and inspired as we are guided through both light and darkness—truth and falsehood.

Yet, is anything ever as it seems?

Though light may illumine our path and foster trust, it may too blind or lead us astray—distant lights shepherding us to danger and despair.

And, while darkness may obscure our sight and provoke our fears, it may also bring serenity, or safeguard the arcane—esoteric wisdom to elucidate and inspire.

So, as light and darkness wax and wane, we must judge for ourselves where truth ends and falsehood begins; that shadowed path between clarity and confusion.

And as long as this path's bedrock is both cogent and consistent, it can traverse even the real and surreal—familiar and fantastic—and still guide us with grace and credibility.

For that is foreshadowing: the sowing of seeds to bring forth future events, and to make the implausible, plausible.

*In Agêratos, we use **Foreshadowing** to make **Predictions** of future events and to give credibility to the bizarre.*

Quickstart Summary Foreshadowing Warning

Foreshadowing is a long-term aspect of Agêratos, and so you may not get much out of it if you are playing a single session.

It provides rewards like Conflict, but either through collaboration with other Authors, or by testing your wits against them.

Quickstart Summary Foreshadowing

If the Monad chooses to use Foreshadowing, read on:

In Foreshadowing, you attempt to predict future Saga events; if accurate, you are rewarded.

You may make two types of **Predictions**: **Direct** and **Indirect**.

Each type must be purchased with Focus points, albeit in slightly different ways.

Once purchased, they slowly diminish as the Saga progresses; for you to be rewarded, the predicted event must occur within this time frame.

This is not governed by game world or real world time, but rather as the Saga progresses, measured via **Narrative Beats**.

These Narrative Beats occur due to Focus expenditure and Conflict.

As for the Predictions themselves:

Direct Predictions are public, with others able to join you in the risk and reward; via collaboration, you try to enact the predicted event in time.

Indirect Predictions are hidden from others, except for a cryptic hint that you give—you cannot reveal to them its true nature!

Neither can you enact the predicted event yourself; instead you must subtly guide another to do so for you, and if you succeed, both of you are rewarded.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is where you attempt to predict Saga events; if they occur within a certain time frame, you are rewarded.

There are two types of **Predictions**: **Direct** and **Indirect**.

Either may only be made, or discarded, when you could make a Saga change.

Making accurate Predictions is known as **Foreshadowing Fulfilment**.

There is also **Load**, representing both your risk and potential rewards.

While you may only own one active Prediction, you can buy into the Direct Predictions of others as much as you wish.

Narrative Beats

Narrative Beats dictate the time frame your Predictions have to produce Foreshadowing Fulfilment.

They are not tied to in-game events or actual time but rather to the expenditure of Focus, reflecting the Saga's pace.

They are broken down into steps – every 5 steps, a Narrative Beat occurs.

One steps occurs for each Focus point spent to enact a Saga change, or for each Peak TENSION during Conflict Resolution.

E.g., Conflict Resolution occurs with a Peak TENSION of 4: the Saga thus takes 4 steps towards the next Narrative Beat.

Note: if Focus costs are reimbursed due to contradictory Saga changes, they do not count towards the next Narrative Beat.

The exact effect of Narrative Beats varies between the two types of Predictions, and will be discussed in each of their upcoming sections.

Direct Predictions

You make a public Prediction that directly states what will happen, such as:

"The spaceship's AI will malfunction and attempt to kill the crew."

"Journalists will expose the mayor's corruption."

Also, being public, they can serve as a way for you to propose future events, and, as other Authors may buy into them, help foster communal planning of the Saga.

Your predicted event is locked-out from Focus-enacted Saga Changes; thus, they can only come about through role-play and narration. However, Saga events *near* your Prediction can still come about through Focus-enacted Changes.

To make a Direct Prediction you:

- You publicly state your Prediction.
- The Monad determines Maximum Load:
 - They assess the Focus cost for the predicted event if it were being made as a Focus-enacted Saga Change.
 - For the Monad: it is advised to not make this more than 5, but it is up to you – your know your Saga after all.
- You spend Focus to buy Load for any value up to the maximum, on a one-for-one basis.
- Other Authors can now buy into your Prediction at the same cost if they wish – this does not increase Load and you cannot prevent them from doing so.
- Your Prediction is now active.
 - With each subsequent Narrative Beat, its current Load drops by 1 point.
 - At zero current Load, it is discarded.
- If you achieve Foreshadowing Fulfilment before current Load reaches zero, you and all involved are rewarded.

Foreshadowing

Direct Predictions: Rewards

Upon successful Foreshadowing Fulfilment, you and all Authors that chose to buy into your Prediction, are rewarded.

Your reward's magnitude is based on:

Current Load + 1 for each Author.

Thus, by working together to resolve the Prediction efficiently and in line with Saga events, your rewards are maximised.

You and the other Authors involved, gain both gaming rewards and narrative rewards in two stages.

Firstly, gaming rewards:

- Gain Focus Points as if you had drawn a court card.
- Draw a card.

You gain these after the other Authors so that if Focus Points are taken from you, you get a chance to take them back.

They use a Foil Tiebreak – page 023 – to determine what order they are rewarded in (order is determined before rewards).

Secondly, narrative reward: you make a Focus-enacted Saga Change at a Focus cost equal to reward magnitude – this can be used to Adjust Authorial Agency.

The other Authors use Lead Tiebreak to determine the order they make their Saga Changes in – page 023 – while you can make yours at any point during this order.

Example: Direct Prediction

You make a Direct Prediction regarding an heiress and her diamond necklace that have only recently been introduced in the Saga:

“The heiress’ diamond necklace will be stolen from the vault.”

Considering the established Saga events – the necklace and heiress only briefly mentioned, no indication of their importance or the potential for a thief – the Monad decides that this is quite the divergence from established Saga events.

As such, in the current moment, it would require **4 Focus** for this Saga Change to be enacted.

However, this does **NOT** cause the Saga Change: the 4 Focus represents the cost of this change if it occurred at this point in the Saga.

Next, you can buy Load up to this value of **4**.

However, you decide to spend only **3 Focus**, and so your Prediction's **Load is 3**.

Now, other Authors may buy into your Prediction for the same amount: 3 Focus.

Four other Authors each spend 3 Focus to do so.

Your Prediction is now active at a Load of 3.

A Narrative Beat occurs

Your Prediction's Load is now 2.

A Narrative Beat occurs

Your Prediction's Load is now 1.

Foreshadowing Fulfilment occurs

Your reward is at a magnitude of 6 (current Load is 1 and 5 Authors are involved—yourself and the four other Authors).

Thus, you each get: 6 Focus, 6 cards, and enact a Saga Change as if you had spent 6 Focus Points!

Foreshadowing

Indirect Predictions

You make a Prediction that is kept hidden from other Authors, including the Monad. However, you do give them a hint about the nature of your Prediction, and it is in your interest to make these cryptic.

Secret Prediction: *“Bandits will attack the market village by month’s end.”*

Public hint: *“The currency of blood will hold sway in the next moon’s market.”*

So, why the hint? Well, first...

To make an Indirect Prediction:

- **In secret:** you note down your Prediction.
- **In secret:** you choose maximum Load.
 - This cannot be more than 5.
 - **Warning:** if your Prediction is discarded for any reason, you lose Focus Points equal to this chosen maximum Load.
- **Publicly:** you state your cryptic hint.
- On each subsequent Narrative Beat, current Load automatically increases by 1.
 - You do not pay Focus for Load now, but do so during Foreshadowing Fulfilment.
- When current Load reaches your chosen maximum Load, your Prediction is active.
- Current Load now diminishes by 1 point with each subsequent Narrative Beat.
 - If current Load reaches zero, your Prediction is discarded.
- When you believe a Saga event matches your Prediction, you must pay Focus equal to your chosen maximum Load, reveal your Prediction, and ask the Monad to judge if you have Foreshadowing Fulfilment.

If you tell another Author what your Prediction is, it is discarded; in this, the Monad’s decision is final.

The Author that enacts your predicted Saga event, is rewarded, so it benefits others to pay heed to your cryptic hints.

Thus, your hint...

If it is too obvious, another may enact the predicted event before your Prediction is fully Loaded.

Conversely, if it is too vague, no one may enact the Saga event in time.

Indirect Predictions: Rewards

You and the other Author that enacted the predicted event are rewarded.

Yet, only if you can pay Focus equal to your Prediction’s chosen maximum Load. If you cannot do so, your Prediction is discarded and you lose Focus.

The Author that enacted the predicted event has fixed rewards:

- Draw 2 cards.
- Gain 1 point of Authorial Agency.

Your reward’s magnitude is based on:

Maximum Load.

For your rewards you:

- Gain Focus Points as if you had drawn a court card.
- Draw a card.
- Gain 1 point of Authorial Agency.
 - Yes, for each point of maximum Load – for such Machiavellian manipulation of the Saga, you deserve such a prize!

Note: you are rewarded after the other Authors so that if they need to take Focus from you, you get a chance to take it back.

The Monad

A singular point alone in the void,

A singular point of existence,

The totality of all that is.

Inside, a nascent spark of awareness stirs.

*Though faint, it is undeniably present—a
concept, an idea, a dream.*

But what does this existence dream of?

What does this existence imagine it will be?

*What Saga does this **Monad** author in its
slumber?*

In but a moment, eternity unfolds.

*The Monad's spark bursts forth with glorious
luminance.*

*A symphonic pulse of vibrant lights and
melodious beats surges across the void.*

*Kindled by the symphony, another point flares,
infusing its own light and rhythm into the
resonating dream.*

*More follow, each reflecting and echoing the
Monad, yet adding their own unique
luminescence and timbre.*

*In time, against the banal, inky-black void, a
constellation of vivid lights and grand paeans
defiantly emerges.*

At its heart, the Monad.

*Though it shines with unparalleled splendour,
it does not eclipse.*

*Though it sings with unmatched melody, it
does not clash.*

*It seeks only to guide and embrace all in the
cosmic harmony of dreams.*

Guiding Light

As the Monad, your role is to guide the Authors in the penning of the Saga.

You are neither a tyrant nor despot, and must abide by the mechanics as much as any other Author; however, you are given some special gaming mechanics to help you, and the purpose of these is two-fold:

Firstly, you are alone: it is likely that you will be outnumbered by the Players.

Secondly, as the default Saga controller, you are responsible for keeping the Saga's momentum and narrative going.

Following is a discussion and reiteration of all the special gaming mechanics you have and how you might leverage them when guiding the Saga.

Gaming Mechanics

You are the sole judge of Focus costs, which themselves are a key part of Agêratos — practically every other mechanic operates off this judgement.

The reason for one judge is consistency.

So, do not overly worry if a cost should be one value or another; if you are always making the judgement, everyone will receive the same treatment.

You are also free to adhere to or ignore the cost guidelines: you may want a Saga where change is constant yet unexpected, or you may want the Players to justify and fight for every change.

Also, never underestimate the power you have in the Prologue: here, you have impunity to determine the established events that will set the 'rules' of the Saga's narrative, set worldly boundaries or otherwise set restrictions.

The Monad

Focus Points

- At zero Focus: Regain 1 point from the Central Pot and each Player.

To clarify: Though you have default Saga Control, you still need to spend Focus – or equivalent – to make any Saga Changes beyond ‘zero cost changes’.

Now, don’t be afraid of reaching zero Focus as you can always get more. Although, while you could go into a cycle of spending all your Focus, draining from Players, spending all your Focus, draining from Players... try not to as it would make the Saga rather uninteresting for them.

That said, the way you regain Focus could be leveraged to guide the Saga: you can easily use low cost Saga Changes to keep the Saga on track if you think it’s lost its way... though again, Agêratos is about everyone pursuing their vision of the Saga so take care when doing so.

Missing Players and Focus

Unfortunately, it is likely that Players will have to miss some gaming sessions, so what happens if they have all the Focus?

Well, Players should not be punished for missing sessions, especially as it can happen for all manner of reasons.

So, you should not simply take their Focus away but depending on how much they have, deal with it in one of two ways:

- **5 or less:** leave their points alone – they brought 5 into the Saga, so missing these points won’t affect balance.
- **More than 5:** place the excess points above 5 back into the Central Pot.
 - When the Player returns, give them back as many of the points as possible, even if it empties the Central Pot. After all, they earnt them in the first place.

Conflict

- Conflict Pot: you do NOT spend Focus to enter Conflict.
- Adjust Proactive and Reactive Agencies as you like.

When Conflict occurs, if it does at all, you are likely to be involved.

As you portray all events and characters of the Saga outside of Player Characters, you will need to use the strategy and mechanics of Conflict wisely.

Entering Conflict does not cost you Focus Points, you do not contribute to the Conflict Pot.

As you are likely to be outnumbered by the Players, this helps you have the Focus necessary to play Action Cards and engage in Climax.

Remember, if, after Conflict, you are at zero Focus, you can always regain some.

Also, before Conflict – never during – you can adjust your Proactive and Reactive Agency values.

Think of this total as a difficulty setting:

- **Easy mode:** Lower than players.
- **Normal mode:** Equal to players.
- **Hard mode:** Higher than players.

However, this only applies for one-on-one Conflicts, if you are outnumbered feel free to up your values to compensate.

During Conflict, remember you can not only play Action Cards to seize Decision Cards, but also to block Players – it may cost Focus to do this, but you can always regain that later.

Also, the more cards you use, the more often you have to redraw... increasing your chances of drawing court cards.

The Monad

Foreshadowing

- No special rules: when it comes to Foreshadowing — you are on your own.

Apart from judging Focus costs for Direct Predictions, you have no special mechanics for Foreshadowing.

Also, while Conflict is likely to be you versus the Players, in Foreshadowing, you are free to make and invest in Predictions, and try to solve any cryptic hints. Here, you are very much an equal in discovering the mysteries and machinations of everyone's Predictions.

Also, you can use Predictions to guide the Saga and set goals for the Players. Direct Predictions become goals, while Indirect Predictions are secret rewards.

As for keeping track of Predictions, you may wish to keep a notepad for Narrative Beats, Authors, and invested Load.

Note: Indirect Predictions being hidden from you, may cause some problems as it is the Authors that need to assess whether Saga events match their Predictions.

As such, it's worth giving them some leeway when it comes to accepting their assessments in this matter. However, if an Author is clearly being manipulative, then remind them of what's written in the Foreshadowing section and this sentence:

In this case, the Monad can say “No” to you and discard your Prediction.

Running the Saga

In many other RPGs, the Monad (or GM) is given a much higher degree of control than you are given in Agêratos.

Thus, in these other RPGs you could plan out specific events and encounters, intervene to protect key NPCs, or simply overwhelm and railroad the Players.

However, in Agêratos, the Players are also Authors and with enough Focus they could do all these things for themselves. They may introduce events that bypass your own, kill off or introduce key NPCs, and generally scupper your plans.

Of course, you can also do this to them!

Thus, during the Prologue, rather than plan out specific events in detail, you may want to focus on end goals. Introduce and narrate that a villain must be stopped or a MacGuffin must be found.

If it helps, you could think of your goal as having a starting Focus cost of say, 100 — don't reveal this to the Players — and then keep track of how much it falls or rises as the Saga unfolds.

Or, if your RPG group prefers, simply let the Saga take its course and discover its mysteries along with the Players.

Whichever method you choose, adapting to your Saga's unfolding events is key. Watch and listen carefully for what the Players would like to see, what goals they themselves set. In fact, if you are in an experienced RPG group, you may find yourself akin to a Player and being awed by your Saga's mysteries as much as them.

As a side note: this is one reason the **Mantle Overlay** was created.

Essentially, your role is to keep the Saga interesting and the adjudication of gaming mechanics. You are not meant to force Players into one action or another.

Your special mechanics do not exist to give you power over others, but to ensure there is always one Author that can drive the Saga forward, provide exciting challenges, and maintain flow.

So, concentrate on all being equal in the penning of the Saga, and you too may find yourself enjoying its twists and turns.



Playthrough Example

The Dark Hearts of Flint and Steele



System: San Francisco, the 80's: Silicon Valley's boom is beginning as dreams of the digital age take form in garages across the country. The streets are a canvas of eclectic fashion from the punk rock leather of Haight-Ashbury to the neon leg warmers and wide shoulder pads of the Castro, all walking beneath the city's fog shrouded skyline.

System: Computers are making their way into homes promising future innovation and pixelated entertainment for life, while the night buzzes with the synthesised rhythms of new wave music echoing out from venues like the legendary I-Beam.

System: Yet, beneath the vibrant neon of both fashion and ideology, a palatable gloom hangs over the city – a serial killer walks the streets, casting a long shadow over the city's promises of a bright future.

System: We join Ryan and Thomas, and their characters: Detectives Axel Flint (Ryan) and Logan Steele (Thomas), while on the trail of the serial killer 'the Dark Heart'; known throughout the city for taunting family members with the death of loved ones, as well as sending cryptic messages and threats to the media and others.

The Monad: It's been a long day, or was that yesterday? It's hard to keep track as neither of you have slept for so long. The bullpen fills with the smoke from people's cigarettes and the endless ringing of phones does nothing for your sullen moods.

Thomas: "What are we going to do Flint? We got nothing in this case."

Ryan: "I know. Thought we had something with that lady, but her alibi's airtight."

Thomas: "So, what have we got? Blood testing that narrows it down to about 40% of the population and that home video, but a fat lot of good that is given its quality." (aside to the group: did they really not have better stuff than this in the 80's?)

The Monad: 'Afraid not, sorry. You could've spent Focus for the video to just happen to catch something good, but, well, you didn't.'

Ryan: 'Oh, good point.' **Spends 4 Focus.** 'As we discuss the case, a uniformed officer walks over carrying a small parcel. "Hey, Flint, you got a package." he says. "Ah right, thanks." I respond and take the package from him.

Ryan: 'While, standing and opening the package, "Perhaps we should talk to all the witnesses again, something might jump out at us." But, it is me who suddenly jumps, away from the package, "Whoa!"'

Thomas: "'What!'"

Ryan: 'As we peer into the small package sitting on my desk, a pale, severed human finger sits there. I reach and take it out, noticing that underneath is a Dictaphone.'

Playthrough Example

The Monad: ‘Ah, but there is more: on top of the Dictaphone there is a small piece of card that reads “leexlemnaiaili tusrealiai leoemnai deurpequ ealiai”!? (The Monad hands the Players a handout they have prepared, no doubt seeking a chance to use it).

System: The fact that the package has already been introduced and its contents were a complete mystery, has allowed the Monad (though it could also have been any Author, including the handout) to add this without the need to spend Focus.

Thomas: ‘I take the piece of card out, reading the message. “What the hell is this, is this some sort of sick joke? Is this the Dark Heart?” Frustrated, I put the card back in the box.’

Ryan: ““What about the Dictaphone?” I take it out the package, and press play.’

System: At this point the Players look to the Monad; it seems that even though it was a Player that introduced the Dictaphone, they’d like the Monad to fill in the details, such as the life of the Monad...

The Monad: Pauses to think for a moment, and then: ‘The instant you press play, a screeching and hissing cacophony screams out from the Dictaphone’s tinny speaker, startling you both and causing the entire bullpen to take notice.’

The Monad: Within moments, it dies down and a gravelly, husky voice can be heard: “Do I have your attention, good. It seems, with such illustrious detectives on the case of its latest sensational news story, the city’s finally taking notice of its corrupt heart.”

The Monad: “Ah, but even members of our boys in blue need help at times, so allow me to be charitable. You’ve no doubt seen the present I’ve sent you? Though I make no claim as to how I have it, I advise you to locate the rest of the poor, unfortunate soul it came from.” The voice ends and an eerie silence follows before the Dictaphone clicks off.

Thomas: ‘Whoa, creepy. Oh sorry, (as Logan Steele) “Whoa, creepy. Tell you what, take all of this to forensics, see if they can do something with it.”’

Ryan: “Good idea Steele, but let’s keep this between as few people as possible...”

The Monad: Rolling their eyes slightly, ‘The large crowd of officers that gathered round, starts to disperse back to their work.’

Ryan: ‘Oh right, yeah. “Well, no one else OK? I’m worried the Dark Heart might have some way to know what we’re up to, as the public shouldn’t know it’s us on the case.”’

The Monad: ‘OK, first of all, given everything, I think that should’ve only been 3 Focus points, so take one back out the Central pot (Ryan eagerly does so). Secondly, you head to forensics and convince them to look at the new evidence quickly and quietly.’

The Monad: ‘It takes a day – you both catching up on some much needed sleep – and late in the evening forensics comes back. Fingerprints show the finger belongs to a Zachariah Cole, a 32 year old male that’s been missing for 3 days. He was last seen at his security job over at a warehouse in the Bayview Industrial Park.

Ryan and Thomas together: “Let’s go!”

Playthrough Example

The Dark Hearts of Flint and Steele: Conflict

Peak TENSion: 3

Safe TENSion: 1

So, following a lead to the Bayview Industrial Park and one warehouse in particular, Flint and Steele, true to form, have gone in with no plan, no back-up, and no clue.

Note

Decision card values altered by Circumstances will be shown in <>.

Incomplete TENSion stacks will be shown in [].

The Peak TENSion will be **Personal**, as despite the Players being in a car, the Conflict may develop in a way that causes them to give chase on foot.

The **Conflict pot** starts with 3 points: 1 per Player, and 1 from the Central pot.

Authors and Characters			
	The Monad	Ryan	Thomas
Player Character	?	Axel Flint	Logan Steele
Focus points	6	5	5
Proactive Agency	6	5	6
Reactive Agency	6	5	4



Playthrough Example

TURN 0 (Before the Conflict leading into Exposition)

The Monad: 'You take position across the street from the warehouse concealing yourselves behind some crates. It is just past midnight, there is a full moon though also heavy cloud cover.'

Ryan: 'I check my gun, and look for cover to get as close to the warehouse as possible without being seen.'

Thomas: 'Great, I'll check Steele's gun, his back-up gun...and his back-up, back-up gun.'

The Monad: 'Okay, the two of you are about 10 metres from the warehouse, a large blue building with the logo of a black lion. Flint, you can see a parked car about 3 metres from the warehouse door, it's an SUV, dark blue in colour, and does not match a description of any that's previously come up. The interior light is on but you see no one inside.'

Ryan: 'Hmm, I want to approach the car slowly, in the shadows. "Steele, cover me."'

Thomas: "'Sure thing Flint." I stay behind the crates gun drawn and ready for action.'

The Monad: 'Heading to the SUV you see no evidence of anyone inside. However, as you get close, the warehouse shutters start to open. They seem to be electronic and are rising quite quickly.'

Thomas: 'I break cover and try get in front of the shutters, my gun drawn, and ready to fire.'

Ryan: 'I get down using the SUV for cover. "Steele no! It could be a trap!"'

The Monad: (Spends 1 Focus points, they now have 5): 'Thomas (playing Steele), as you approach the shutters, you are blinded by a sudden flare of headlights. There is a screech of tyres, and you are forced to dive out of the way as a car speeds from the warehouse almost hitting you; it is a dark coloured coupe like the one from the photographs.'

Ryan: "Quick Steele, get in." I jump in the SUV hoping there are keys in the ignition.'

The Monad: 'There are...for 1 Focus point'

Ryan: Spends 1 Focus point, so he now has 4 Focus points.

Thomas: 'Logan fires a couple of shots at the escaping car as he runs to the SUV, leaping in the passenger seat.'

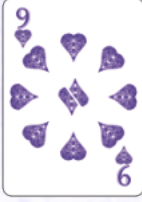
Ryan: 'I floor it after the suspect!'

The Monad: 'OK, this will be a Conflict situation. I'm going to say Peak TENSion 3 and Personal requirements.'

The Monad: Checks everyone is ready and...

The Monad: 'Flint and Steele speed after the suspect car, a black mid-sized coupe.'

Playthrough Example

TURN 1			
CONFLICT POT: 3 Focus points	The Monad	Ryan	Thomas
Focus points	5	4	5
Decision Card			
Final Decision card value	10	9	7

Crunch

- The Monad wins:** 10 beats 9 and 7.
- The Monad:** The 10 is kept and immediately becomes a completed TENSion stack.
- The Monad:** Gains 1 Focus point from the Conflict point.
- The Monad:** Gives themselves, a Positive Circumstance 1 {Hidden in darkness}.

Narrative

- The Monad:** ‘The car pulls away with a head start, and immediately switches its lights off, blending in with the darkness of the night.’
- Ryan:** ‘I keep on the car as much as I possibly can. “Steele, get back-up here now.”’
- Thomas:** ‘Scrambling for my radio I say, “Sure.”’



Playthrough Example

TURN 2			
CONFLICT POT: 2 Focus points	The Monad	Ryan	Thomas
Focus points	6	4	5
TENsion stacks – Completed	1	0	0
Decision Card			
Positive Circumstance	1 {Hidden in Darkness}		
Final Decision card value	<8>	9	3

Crunch

Ryan wins: 9 beats the <8> and 3.

Thomas: Saves his 3 from being discarded – equal or less than his Reactive Agency of 4 – this 3 starts a new TENsion stack of [3]

Thomas: As the 7 Decision card is discarded, Thomas declares he will pay 1 Focus and play an Action card – a 3. This 3 and 7 add up to 10 and no one blocks, so he is successful in seizing the discarded Decision card.

Thomas: With a completed TENsion stack, Thomas applies a Positive Circumstance 1 {Police Helicopter} to himself.

Thomas: For the completed TENsion stack, Thomas gains 1 Focus point from the Conflict pot, however, it also cost 1 point to use the Action card so he gains no points overall.

Narrative

Ryan: ‘I keep up as much as I can with the suspect. “Damn it, where’s the moon when you need it.”

Thomas: ‘Having got his radio, Steele gets through to dispatch, “Code 2, code 8, 33, whatever. Dispatch, it’s a 406. This is detective Steele, badge number FEC-266. We’re chasing a suspect driving a dark coloured coupe, no lights, heading west on Palou Avenue. It’s that god-damn ‘Dark Hearts’ guy! Get the helicopter here now!”’

Playthrough Example

TURN 3			
CONFLICT POT: 1 Focus point	The Monad	Ryan	Thomas
Focus points	6	4	5
TENsion stacks – Completed	1	0	1
TENsion stacks – Incomplete values	0	[9]	[3]
Decision Card			
Positive Circumstance	1 {Hidden in Darkness}		1 {Police Helicopter}
Final Decision card value	<5>	8	<3>

Crunch

Ryan wins: 8 beats the <5> and <3>.

Ryan: Decides to start a new TENsion stack with his 8.

Ryan: This gives him two incomplete stacks of [9] and [8]

The Monad: Saves his 4 from being discarded – a new incomplete TENsion stack of [4].

Thomas: Saves his 2 from being discarded – a new incomplete TENsion stack of [2].

Narrative

Ryan: ‘The suspect turns north onto Ingalls Street and I stick with him. Racing through several streets avoiding cars and a set of roadworks, the suspect tries to lose us, but I’m too good. Sticking close, though not gaining on them, I refuse to let this guy go.’

Thomas: ‘I breath a sigh of relief as I hear the police helicopter arrive. “Great work dispatch, the chopper’s here.” Steele continues to keep dispatch updated on where we are.’

Playthrough Example

TURN 4			
CONFLICT POT: 1 Focus point	The Monad	Ryan	Thomas
Focus points	6	4	5
TENsion stacks – Completed	1	0	1
TENsion stacks – Incomplete values	[4]	[9][8]	[3][2]
Decision Card			
Positive Circumstance	1 {Hidden in Darkness}		1 {Police Helicopter}
Final Decision card value	<4>	4	<9>

Crunch

Thomas wins: <9> beats the <4> and 4.

Thomas: Adds the 8 to his incomplete TENsion stack of [3] making the total [11]. This completes the TENsion stack; he gets 1 Focus from the Conflict pot.

Ryan: Saves his 4 from being discarded – a new incomplete TENsion stack of [4].

The Monad: Saves their 3 from being discarded – a new incomplete TENsion stack of [3].

Thomas: Has completed a TENsion stack and removes the Positive Circumstance the Monad has – narrated as the helicopter's spotlight – they now have no Circumstance.

Thomas: Has used all his cards (4 Decision and 1 Action), so he draws 5 more cards.

Narrative

Thomas: 'The helicopter, uses its powerful front spotlight to light the coupe up.

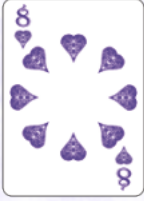
Ryan (rather triumphantly): 'As the suspect turns south onto 3rd street, Axel – sorry, I – see my chance; cutting across the corner, our SUV mounts the sidewalk and a stack of newspapers explodes on the front bumper. I close the distance between us and the coupe. "He's going for the Bayshore Freeway, we can't let him make it."

Thomas: 'I yell "Hey watch it. The paperwork, the paperwork!"'

The Monad: 'As you pull closer to the coupe and with the light from the helicopter, you can see the driver – a woman, late 20s to mid 30s, Caucasian with long dark hair and a look of determination on her face.'

Ryan: "'A woman? Then whose voice was that on the tape? That was definitely a man.'"

Playthrough Example

TURN 5			
CONFLICT POT: 0 Focus points	The Monad	Ryan	Thomas
Focus points	6	4	6
TENsion stacks – Completed	1	0	2
TENsion stacks – Incomplete values	[4][3]	[9][8][4]	[2]
Decision Card			
Positive Circumstance			1 {Police Helicopter}
Final Decision card value	7	6	<7>

Crunch

The Monad and Thomas win: 7 and <7> tie, and so are both kept; the 6 is discarded.

The Monad: Starts a new TENsion stack with a value of [7].

Thomas: Starts a new TENsion stack with a value of [6].

The Monad and Ryan: Have used all their cards (5 Decision cards), so draw 5 more.

All: While no one is an outright *winner* this turn, it doesn't stop anyone from narrating.

Narrative

Thomas: 'Wait, if that's a woman and the tape was a man then there must be two of them. Oh yeah, I forgot, "Dispatch this is detective Steele. We also need units to a warehouse on Palou Avenue. Large building, black lion thing on the front. You can't miss it.'"

The Monad: "'Detective Steele this is dispatch, Captain Iara. What on Earth is going on? What were you even doing out there? Why did dispatch not know your location?'"

Ryan: 'As Logan is talking to the captain I lean over and say "Sorry, captain, not now. Kind of busy. Just get units to that warehouse. There may be evidence in there.'"

The Monad: "'Will do detective. You and Steele better see me in my office when you get back! Dispatch out." Your SUV and the coupe continue on. You are barely behind and the helicopter has the coupe clearly lit up. The sirens of other patrol cars are close by – the net is closing in.'

Playthrough Example

TURN 6			
CONFLICT POT: 0 Focus points	The Monad	Ryan	Thomas
Focus points	6	4	6
TENsion stacks – Completed	1	0	2
TENsion stacks – Incomplete values	[4][3][7]	[9][8][4]	[2][6]
Decision Card			
Positive Circumstance			1 {Police Helicopter}
Final Decision card value	8	10	<9>

Crunch

Ryan wins: 10 beats 8 and <9>.

Ryan: Gains a completed TENsion stack with a 10.

Ryan: Gains no Focus from the Conflict pot as it is empty.

Ryan: Has completed a TENsion stack and uses it to apply a Negative Circumstance 1 {Police patrol cars} to the Monad.

Narrative

Ryan: ‘I ram the coupe executing a PIT manoeuvre, forcing it to spin out and come to a stop. I continue on to a safe distance and get out gun drawn. As I do, the patrol cars arrive surrounding the coupe and forming a perimeter; officers emerge, guns drawn, taking aim at the suspect vehicle.’

Thomas: ‘Steele gets out the SUV gun drawn, kneels and takes aim.’

The Monad: ‘The car sits there, its engine still running and you can see no movement inside.’

Ryan: ‘“Get out of the car with your hands up. I repeat: get out of the car with your hands up!”’

The Monad: ‘The driver’s door opens and out steps the woman you saw before. She has her hands in the air and seems to be complying...for now. Next turn, place your cards!’

Playthrough Example

TURN 7			
CONFLICT POT: 0 Focus points	The Monad	Ryan	Thomas
Focus points	6	4	6
TENsion stacks – Completed	1	1	2
TENsion stacks – Incomplete values	[4][3][7]	[9][8][4]	[2][6]
Decision Card			
Positive Circumstance			1 {Police Helicopter}
Negative Circumstance	1 {Police Patrol Cars}		
Final Decision card value	<9>	1	<7>

Crunch

The Monad wins: <9> beats 1 and <7>.

The Monad: Completes a new TENsion stack with the 10.

The Monad: Gives themselves a Positive Circumstance 1 {Crowd gathering}; this would help in causing distractions if the Saga goes that way.

Ryan: Saves his 1 from being discarded and starts a new incomplete TENsion stack of [1]

The Monad: Plays an Action card! They pay 1 Focus point and an Action card of 4.

The Monad: They seize Tomas's discarded Decision card of 6.

The Monad: The 4 and 6 make 10 so the Monad has completed another TENsion stack; this makes 3 in total and so they have achieved the required Peak TENsion!

System: (Stage 3: Peak TENsion): The Monad is alone in reaching Peak TENsion, so there is no need for Climax, and the Conflict moves straight into Stage 4: Falling Action.

System (Stage 4: Falling Action): The Monad narrates how the Conflict ends (next page).

System (Stage 5: Conflict Resolution): The Monad also gains 1 point of Authorial Agency, any remaining Focus in the Conflict pot, 1 Focus from the Central pot, and Saga control for the events immediately after the Conflict.

System (Stage 5: Conflict Resolution): Ryan and Thomas both reached Safe TENsion and so do NOT lose any Authorial Agency, but do lose 1 Focus to the Central pot.

Playthrough Example

Narrative

The Monad: 'The suspect starts to walk away from the car, still with her hands in the air. You are telling her to get on the ground but she remains standing. She looks directly at you detective Axel Flint, a look of sadness on her face.'

Thomas: "'What's she up to? I don't like this. Everyone be careful, and only fire on my order.'"

The Monad: 'She looks to you detective Logan Steele and for a few seconds just stares.'

Ryan: "'Get on the ground, put your hands behind your head. We don't want to hurt you.'" quietly speaking to Steele, "Hey, you think she's the 'Dark Hearts' killer?"

Thomas: "'I dunno, but we'll find out in interrogation.'"

The Monad: 'With those words barely past Steele's lips, the woman suddenly goes for something from beneath her coat.'

Ryan (frantically): 'What, no! "No one shoot, no one shoot!"'

The Monad: 'It's too late. A couple of the patrol officers fire their weapons, striking the woman centre mass; she slumps to the floor.'

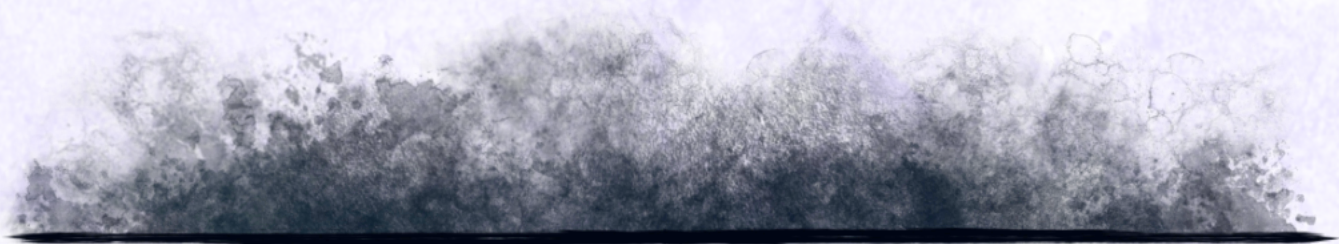
Ryan and Thomas (Screaming): 'Nooooooooo!'

Ryan: 'Flint runs forward waving his arms, "Cease fire! Cease fire!"'

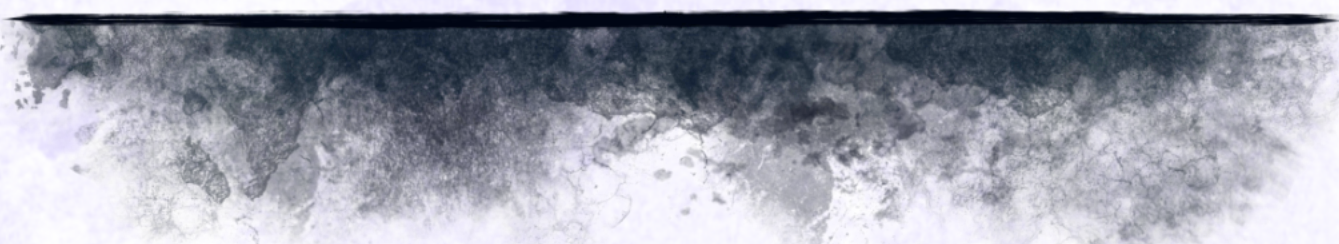
Thomas: 'Same! I run forward screaming "Cease fire! Cease fire!" oh, I get on the radio, "Dispatch! Dispatch, code 11-41, get an ambulance here now!"'

The Monad: 'The officers cease fire, and you rush to the woman. Her eyes open, blood oozing from her chest; she is gone, as are any secrets she had. Beside her is the object she pulled from her coat: a photograph of a young girl; the family resemblance is clear.'





SAGA SEEDS



This section details Saga settings for you and your RPG group to use, though they are not complete.

As you have seen from the concepts and mechanics of Agêratos, planning out a detailed, step-by-step Saga can be challenging when all Authors can, well, author their own events.

Instead, what you have been given is the seed, or three to be exact, to help start your own, unique Saga.

Each comes with four pre-generated characters, for you to use if you wish.

Their starting Proactive and Reactive Agency values are indicated on the character sheets by an underline.

Listed equipment consists of the main items only, so it is acceptable to also have common, likely held items.

Agêratos is not a game of meticulous record keeping, and so weapons run out of ammo when the Monad judges you've used them enough, armour and protection may degrade if the situation seems appropriate, and so on.

Of course, for the right Focus costs, spare ammunition can be found, fortifications can be demolished, and the like.

You are also free to draft your own characters – you will find blank character sheets at the very end of this Quickstart.

Remember, to draft a character, you write a Synopsis and distribute 10 points between Proactive and Reactive Agency.

That's all there is to it!

Quickstart Warning

One Saga seed, **Identity**, should only be read by the Monad.

Example Sagas

As for the seeds themselves, each one is written with these headings:

- Premise
- Prologue
- Established Events
- Suggested Events

The **Premise** gives you an overall feel for the setting and some of its backstory.

The **Prologue** relates directly to the gaming mechanic of the Prologue, giving you some ideas for content to put in.

Remember, the Prologue is there to set up future Saga elements, not reward yourself; the Monad can also say no to you as much as they like at this point.

For the Monad: You do not need to stick exactly to what is written, especially as all Authors can contribute to what's going on, it is there merely to guide you.

The **Established Events** serve to inform you of the Saga's setting and theme.

While, a setting would normally be given in much greater detail, what is written here should suffice to get you started.

Finally, **Suggested Events** are as you may expect: suggestions for Saga events, you may wish to put into the Saga.

Remember that the more plausible and likely a Saga event is given previously established events, the lower the Focus costs for introducing them.



The Bound Chasm

Premise

- Mediæval Fantasy
- Survival

In a Reality of magic and mystery lies the world of Isan.

Isan is like the 16th Century era from our own world, though with the presence of magic and sorcery.

Feudal societies dominate the majority of the populace, where everyone knows their place, and few yearn for anything more.

Here, we are interested in Olandis, a vast empire home to millions of souls.

Its lands cover snow-capped mountains to golden flatlands, and crystal-clear seas to blackened soot-coated calderas.

Its people are diverse, with a multitude of cultures and temperaments, bringing a richness to Olandis seen little where else.

Olandis itself is ruled by the Silent Empress, so called in recent years, as she has not been seen in public since her 50th birthday, some 4 years ago.

Yet, despite her absence, she rules with an iron hand, fiercely enforcing the law.

But all this knowledge is of little use to you, for you are soon to be one of the unfortunate sent to the Bound Chasm: a labyrinthine network of natural caves, forgotten ruins, and dark abysses beneath the peaks of the Killej mountains.

It has long been used to imprison those the Empire deems undesirable: murderers to petty thieves, or political prisoners to victims of an unjust system.

There are even rumours of captured mythical creatures, and things far less than human deep within.

But within its confines, all hope is not lost, for the Bound Chasm is a world unto itself, with its own societies formed by the prisoners in the depths of darkness.

So, though condemned to a life of peril and darkness, you may yet find hope in the Bound Chasm...

Prologue

As the carts trundle down the scarcely used dirt track, you are chained and held in the back.

Alongside you are other prisoners, equally bound, each and everyone watched closely by the guards.

The rattling of chains mixes with the creaking of the wooden wheels over the rough road, an incessant reminder of the fate that awaits you. The journey has been long, and the sun begins to dip below the horizon, as shadows creep ever longer over the land.

Without warning, a prisoner, barely past their teen years, screams out "No, please! I'm innocent, please, you can't do this." struggling against their chains, they lurch towards one of the guards. In an instant, they are cut down. Collapsing to the floor, they flail and writhe before limply falling silent, blood slowing oozing from their chest—a horrific reminder of where you are. The corpse is thrown from the cart, left to the crows and wild dogs along the roadside.

As the carts move on to the base of the Killej mountains, huge weather-worn and rune-etched stone doors seemingly carved from the very mountainside, come into view marking the foreboding entrance to the Bound Chasm.

The convoy halts and you, along with the other prisoners, are forced from the carts.

The Bound Chasm

An imperial sorcerer steps forward, and raising aloft a crystal tipped staff, utters a brief incantation. Magical energy swirls in elaborate patterns across the huge doors. Opening with a cacophonous rumble, the doors reverberate across the ground with a dull screech, as if echoing the sickening feeling in the pit of your stomach.

Your manacles are removed, and after a final glance at the sky above, you step towards the darkness.

Established Events

Confinement

Perhaps the most important factor of the setting, is one of confinement. The characters are imprisoned in the Bound Chasm, and it would take phenomenal amounts of Focus to change this. Of course, as with all Sagas, if the narrative slowly works towards a goal, any goal, its Focus cost is reduced.

Thus, if the characters hear rumours of an escape, follow clues to forgotten parts of the Chasm that tease freedom, and the like, Focus cost can be driven down.

Monad tip: If you'd like your Saga to have an end goal, one way to do so is to give it a Focus cost, and track the changes to that cost as the Saga unfolds – but never reveal this cost to the Players!

Survival

Resources in the Bound Chasm are scarce, with high Focus costs (3≥) to find even basic supplies.

Of course, this can be modified by previous Saga events as usual; e.g., a Chasm-bound community that is introduced, and befriended, may help to secure supplies at a lower cost, while alienating those within or becoming lost in the tunnels, may increase it.

Magic

The magic of Isan is slow and difficult, with even the briefest, seemingly simplest applications of magic taking hours, possibly days or months, of preparation.

The energy channelled by magic needs to be infused into suitable objects – like the crystal tipped staff earlier – before it can be used; the object's suitability dependant on the intended use.

However, once properly prepared, magic is capable of almost anything; injuries and illnesses healed, the future foretold, or the transformation of one thing into another.

Suggested Events

The Ruthless Ruins

A small crack is discovered in the wall of a tunnel, that leads to a forgotten ruin; it seems untouched by others and its plunder remains for the taking.

However, there too is danger: perhaps an ancient, also forgotten, creature lurks within, or the ruins were a testing ground for warriors or sorcerers of old?

The Community

In the upper levels exists a community of prisoners that have banded together for survival and mutual protection. They have formed a society just like any other, including laws and punishments.

How do the characters treat them? Do they seek to join or exploit them? Does the community even want to engage?

The Deceived

Are all those encountered even prisoners? What other reason may they have for being in the Bound Chasm? Or, more importantly, how did they get in?



Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga The Bound Chasm

Character Ari Evans

Ari is a small-time crook from the village of Huvarn, a place so obscure, even the locals have a hard time remembering it exists.

Ironically, Ari has been sent to the Bound Chasm for a crime they did not commit; the brutal murder of a family man known for their good deeds throughout society.

In a rush for a speedy trial and judgement to appease the public, the local guards rounded up the usual suspects, and Ari was the unfortunate one they sent away.

Ari is skilled at petty larceny, picking pockets, fast-talking, and generally being a nuisance to law enforcement.

Although they have never been responsible for any truly serious crimes, they have been prolific and consistent in the application of their skills.

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Ripped and weather-worn clothing.

Roleplay notes:

Angry at imprisonment, and the fact that you were sent down for a crime you did not commit.

The possibility of 'cosmic karma' does not sit well with you.

When in trouble, talk a lot or flee!





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga The Bound Chasm

Character Adair Roche

For years, the Night Ravens were a scourge upon the land, striking at rich and poor alike along the imperial highways and byways. Known for being ruthless, the Night Ravens were bloodthirsty bandits feared by all.

A day of national celebration was enacted when their leader, Adair Roche, was captured and convicted.

Born into a noble family, Adair was always destined for a life of luxury and pleasure; why then they chose to behave the way they did is a mystery.

Nevertheless, their family intervened and instead of execution, they were sent to the Bound Chasm; whether this was mercy, or intended as a greater punishment, remains to be seen.

Adair is a skilled fighter, never allowing honour or rules to get in their way; they too are an excellent leader, though they know only one style: brutal intimidation.

While more than capable of getting along with others, they often choose wealth and power over friendship.

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Fine clothing, though muddied from your time in prison.
A concealed punch-dagger in your boot.

Roleplay notes:

It is your birthright to have what you want, though you are no fool; you know that you cannot do things alone. Although, it is hard to conceal your true nature for too long, you do know that sometimes at least, you need to be nice.





Narrative Framework

Player

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga The Bound Chasm

Character Rashmi Mahmud

Rashmi Mahmud was an outspoken critic of the Silent Empress even before she disappeared from the public eye; Rashmi took this as a sign that the Empire was weakening and the Empress was ready to listen.

Rashmi was wrong, and so for the past two years, has been held in solitary confinement. They have had no visitors, and only infrequently allowed to leave the confines of their cell. Their departure for the Bound Chasm took place under the darkness of a new moon, quickly and without warning.

Rashmi, a leather-worker, comes from a family of artisans well known for quality goods and the ability to imbue their works with protective magics. Normally outgoing and jovial, the last two years have taken their toll, leaving Rashmi a shadow of their former selves, both emotionally and physically. Still, underneath their current state of anxiety and exhaustion is an amiable and artistic person of a good, solid education.

Proactive Agency

☐0☒1☐2☐3☐4☐5☐6☐7☐8☐9☐10

Reactive Agency

☐0☐1☐2☐3☐4☐5☐6☐7☐8☒9☐10

Notes

Tattered and filthy prisoner's rags.

Roleplay notes:

You are scared and in a near perpetual state of anxiety. While, you have never stopped believing in what you did, you can't help but wonder if you shouldn't have been more prudent in your zeal.





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga The Bound Chasm

Character Morgan Ellis

So, Morgan padded a few bills, charged for a few ailments people weren't actually suffering from, so what?

It's not like anyone got hurt, quite the opposite in fact!

Unfortunately, the Magistrate thought that joke was in poor taste as well, and sent Morgan to prison for a full lunar cycle along with a hefty fine.

It's true, that as a physician, Morgan probably should've known better, but their clients were rich and weren't going to miss the money. Unfortunately for Morgan, their clients were also influential, and just as Morgan's sentence was drawing to a close, they were shipped off for the Bound Chasm.

Morgan is a physician of some skill, though there are no doubt better, there are many more a lot worse; their good bedside manner also certainly helps.

Away from medicine, Morgan is well-read and actively seeks to learn new things. Though, unfortunately, they also actively seek to gain more than perhaps they really need.

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Good quality, middle-class clothes.

Roleplay notes:

Your departure for the Bound Chasm has yet to really sink in. Part of you is convinced that the journey is some sort of elaborate prank being played on you...until the doors slammed shut behind you.



Ukaln IV

Premise

- Science-fiction
- Exploration/Military

In a Reality where humans walk amongst the stars and the coldness of space gives way to the fire of passionate explorers, is the Milky Way Galaxy. Within, humanity has stepped from the confines of its home, the Earth, and ventured out into the very realms once considered the sole domain of the gods.

There, humanity found wonders, and terrors, beyond reckoning, but also something far more valuable: humility. For, centuries after it first ventured forth, yet a few mere decades ago, humanity found it was not alone in the Universe; intelligent life was indeed out there.

First, were the Iipa'tan, a reptilian-like species that welcomed humanity with open arms. They in time, introduced humanity to the Jastern, a species, who to this day, has never been seen outside of their environmental exoskeletons.

Together, humanity, the Iipa'tan, and Jastern have formed an alliance that spreads out across hundreds of populated worlds amid a web of interstellar trade and cultural exchange. The three species' civilisations have, over time, become nigh indistinguishable from one another. Technology, resources, and knowledge is freely shared...at least on the surface. Underneath, there are still those, in all species, that find it hard to trust or fully accept one another.

And then, a few years ago, a fourth species was encountered, the Artraltians. To date, they have sought neither trade nor negotiation, only the rejection of all that is not them. While having displayed mercy, even honour, at times, they can also be erratic: striking without warning and then retreating just as suddenly.

Prologue

<<Incoming Transmission>>

PRIORITY ONE DISTRESS SIGNAL.

Come in base command, come in base command, this is Lieutenant Commander Grey calling from the Aurora, currently in orbit around Ukaln IV.

We have sustained heavy fire from an Artraltian D-Class cruiser, repeat: we have sustained heavy fire from an Artraltian D-Class cruiser.

52 crew of 341 remain, repeat 52. We have been forced to abandon ship, escape pods programmed to head to Ukaln IV.

Will initiate survival tactics and await rescue. Primary scans of Ukaln IV atmosphere show heavy ionisation, communications and scans likely to be difficult, repeat commu...ion
...ely...fficul...

This distress signal from the Aurora was picked up by the Alliance Moon base Alpha97 at 0548 Standard Galactic Time (SGT) this morning.

You are on the crew of the Ouroboros, the vessel sent to rescue your friends and colleagues. It houses 276 souls and though not a military vessel, is equipped to defend itself if necessary.

The Aurora's captain and first officer are presumed dead, as it was the ship's third in command, Lieutenant Commander Grey that sent the distress signal; known for their ingenuity and tactical mind, it is believed that they have a high chance of helping the remaining crew survive.

Interstellar travel is faster than the speed of light, but it will still take 9 SGT days to arrive, let's hope the crew of the Aurora can survive that long...

Ukaln IV

Established Events

Technology

Technology remains mostly 'mechanical and physical'. Energy-Matter conversion is not possible, excluding transporters, energy shields, or matter synthesisers.

Faster than light travel is possible, via hyper-space, though it still takes days to travel between even close stars. Universal translators help those in the Alliance communicate – the Jastern alone having over 600 languages. Scanning technology gives imprecise locations and details only.

Though energy weapons exist, even hand-held ones, projectile weapons are still common.

Iipa'tan

A reptilian-like bipedal race, the Iipa'tan are outgoing and friendly. Though at times too trusting and some might say, downright naïve. Their culture pursues academic and scientific achievement, though they nevertheless also love competition and sport; a fact that helped with the initial first contact.

Of similar size to humans, they also have tails which range from short to long, and from thin to thick. Their pigmentation runs the gamut of every colour.

Jastern

No one has ever reported seeing a Jastern outside of their exoskeletons, and they refuse to speak on the matter; many believe it is out of embarrassment, rather than mistrust, so the topic has become widely recognised as rude to bring up.

They are often precise and polite in their interactions with others, though can get worked up into quite a frenzy if they feel passionate about something.

Their exoskeletons range from around 1.5 – 3.0 metres tall, mostly bipedal though quadrupedal ones have been seen; each seem as personal to the Jastern, as any human's or Iipa'tan's body is.

Artraltian

Standing about 20 – 30cm above the average human, an Artraltian has a solid, thick physique and a patchwork of greens and browns in a mottled pattern across their flesh.

Their armaments use focused energy blasts, though they have only been seen up close as part of military strikes.

While some have been captured, not one has spoken a single word; it has been noted speaking out on raids, they seem to emit a bioluminescence glow along with vocal sounds, and the universal translator struggles with this unusual input.

Suggested Events

Artraltian D-Class cruiser

Upon leaving hyper-space, the Ouroboros discover the enemy cruiser is still in orbit; Conflict starts immediately: remember this can take place on the Author level, so all Players can be involved as their characters are present.

Discovered Bodies

Unfortunately, a number of the Aurora crew are found dead on the surface of Ukaln IV. What killed them? Are their wounds caused by Artraltian weapons, local wildlife, or something truly alien?

The Ouroboros Crisis

Shortly after leaving hyper-space, critical systems on the Ouroboros begin failing; sabotage? An Artraltian agent? Ukaln IV? coincidence?



Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

10

Saga Ukaln IV

Synopsis

Character Enkh Erdem

Ensign Erdem

Human

Science Officer

- Astrometrics: Proficient
- Astrophysics: Advanced
- Bio-engineering: Advanced
- Quantum Mechanics: Proficient
- Stellar Cartography: Advanced
- Combat training: Basic
- Field training: Novice

Personal Notes:

Interacts well with crew mates.

Still struggles with attention to detail.

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Hand-held scanner (200m range, general information)

Simple side-arm: 300m range

Basic med-kit

Roleplay notes:

You are a newly assigned officer, ready and eager to impress.





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga Ukaln IV

Character Korten Ijsk

Lieutenant Commander Ijsk

Jastern

Tactical Officer

- Astrometrics: Basic
- Diplomacy: Basic
- Leadership: Proficient
- Security Protocols: Advanced
- Ship Warfare: Expert
- Combat training: Proficient
- Field training: Advanced

Personal Notes:

Firm and disciplined.

Avoid the subject of musicals when talking to!

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Simple side-arm: 300m range

Assault pulse rifle: 750m range, 2hrs continuous use

Blast resistant, projectile resistant body armour

Roleplay notes:

A seasoned officer, when things go wrong others look to you for guidance and safety.

Despite your own feelings, you must show strength and confidence.





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga Ukai IV

Character Iipa'gulan

Lieutenant Iipa'gulan

Iipa'tan

Medical Officer

- Exobiology: Advanced
- Leadership: Basic
- Medical Knowledge: Advanced
- Pharmacology: Proficient
- Xenobiology: Advanced
- Combat training: Proficient
- Field training: Proficient

Personal Notes:

Excellent medic, terrible record-keeper.

Personable and easy-going, but disorganised and often late.

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Medical hand-scanner: 3m range; slow, but good data

Advanced med-kit

Blast resistant, projectile resistant body armour

Simple side-arm: 300m range

Roleplay notes:

You got into medicine because you thought it would be a good way to help, and to meet all sorts of people. You weren't fully prepared for the emotional toll of the career, but you have adapted as best as you could and are pushing on.





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

10

Saga Ukai n IV

Character Emerson Beiler

Synopsis

Lieutenant Beiler

Human

Engineering Officer

- Communication: Basic
- Energy-Matter Conversion Theory: Proficient
- Hyper-space Drive: Expert
- Problem Solving: Proficient
- Ship's Systems: Advanced
- Combat training: Basic
- Field training: Proficient

Personal Notes:

Proficient in wood-working.

Family members on board the Aurora.

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Hand-held scanner (200m range, general information)
Simple side-arm: 300m range

Roleplay notes:

Focused, determined not to let anyone down. You could learn to relax and take it easy once in a while.



Identity

WARNING: If you are not the Monad, you may wish to read only the Premise; this seed has elements that will be more interesting if they are kept as a surprise

Premise

- Science-fiction?/Fantasy?/Other?
- Surreal

In a Reality of infinite possibilities, where choice and circumstance unfold in endless diversity, lies a home as familiar to its inhabitants as ours is to us.

The news is full of sports and politics, technology brings people closer than ever and yet forces them further apart, and the hum-drum existence of many is wake, work, tiredness, sleep, wake, work, tiredness, sleep, wake, work,...

For the people here, the current day begins just as any other; they wake, go through their usual routine, and leave as they have done many times before.

They head to the train station as if all was normal and board their usual train.

The carriage is packed, as usual, and people are forced to sit or stand wherever they can find a place.

The train trundles along at its usual pace, stopping at all the usual stops, picking up the same passengers as it always does.

A quiet, tinny tune plays from somewhere down the carriage, as usual, and everyone is either too hot or too cold.

The only break in all this, are the nigh incomprehensible announcements requiring either a code book or linguistic skills beyond reckoning.

The people drift into a haze of monotony and tedium as the train trundles along...

Prologue

Screech! As the train enters a tunnel, its brakes slam on with great force. Everyone is thrown forward, slamming into chairs, railings, and each other.

The lights strobe and flicker as the high-pitched squeal masks the cries and screams of all on board. Panic and confusion reign as people flail and struggle. Then, suddenly, silence and darkness envelope you, save only for your own muted breathing.

Slowly, a light flickers in the distance, followed by another, then another, as the train's emergency lights blink to life. Your carriage is soon bathed in a soft, dim glow, revealing that it is now almost empty, except for the few of you.

As you collect your thoughts, an eerie silence permeates the air, a realisation dawning on you: you are each different, yet the same. Though your hair and clothes may differ, your gait and stance may vary, you are each Alex Taylor.

You are they, they are you, and you are all, you. Thus, Alex Taylor stands alone in the carriage, as a group.

When you are ready to move one

Outside the carriage, the tunnel is worn and dilapidated, a condition clearly not caused by the train's abrupt stop. The carriage is a mangled lump of twisted metal and wiring; damage that far exceeds anything else around.

When making it outside

Before you lies a scene of utter horror, the world you knew is gone: a nightmarish, apocalyptic landscape stands before you.

Buildings are in ruin, many having crumbled and fallen long ago, and the sky churns with thick, noxious smoke.

Identity

Established Events

Alex Taylor

So, every player is Alex Taylor, or at least a different version of them at least. Before the Saga, when giving everyone their character sheets, ask them to not discuss their character with anyone else.

Alex Taylor is 29 years old, of mixed ancestry, allowing for potential diversity in appearance with the various iterations. They can have different hairstyles, scars, clothing, mannerisms, and so on, reflecting their unique life experiences.

These slight variations also affect DNA, including gender; variations in both nature and nurture.

The Worlds

Each Alex Taylor is from a world similar to our own, with comparable technology, society, and language.

In fact, language, technology, and pretty much everything is 95 – 99% similar enough to be compatible.

This World

The world into which the Alex Taylors find themselves in, is a wasteland.

Its civilisations and societies collapsed some time ago, and all that remains are the crumbling, hollow ruins of what was once a familiar world.

The cause of this devastation, the reason for their arrival, and the means to getting home? Well, that would depend on your Saga.

Also, is that really what you look like from behind? Well, that would depend on your Saga!

Smart Phones

This world has no internet or satnav capabilities left. As such, mobile phones have limited functionality:

- Local Apps: Alarm, Calculator, Camera, Clock, Calculator, Flashlights, and so on.
- Bluetooth and NFC.
- Sensors: accelerometer, compass, etc.

Suggested Events

The Cause

What caused the apocalypse? Technology gone wrong, environmental disaster, alien invasion, “Braaaaaains!”, sorry, Zombies?

Factions

Factions of survivors exist. Are they friend or foe, well-equipped or little more than scavengers themselves?

The Signal

The Alex Taylors find old radio equipment still picking up a signal; it gives co-ordinates to...somewhere; if only they had some maps.

Flee or Fight

After discovering what caused the apocalypse, do the Alex Taylors stay to help, or try to flee to their own worlds?

You may find interesting:

I ran this setting years ago: the apocalypse’s Alex Taylor was trying to create a portal for survivors to escape into a parallel world. They failed, and instead drew in more Alex Taylors because they had used their own DNA as the ‘human’ template in the experiments. I can’t remember what caused the apocalypse (sorry) though there were ‘monsters’, but the core of the portal device was made from an old train carriage...



Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga Identity

Character Alex Taylor (29)

Current Employment: Telesales Operator at Sun Finance

Employment History: 'Struggling artist' from 18 - 24. Now working at Sun Finance, (gained due to Father working there)

School: Average grades, routine

Hobbies: Art and gardening

Family:

Father, Richard Taylor (53), accountant at Sun Finance

Mother, Marian Taylor (51), housekeeper

Brother, Matthew Taylor (26), stuntman

Sister, Julie Taylor (25), secretary at Sun Finance

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Mobile Phone: mediocre brand, seen better days

Smart-casual clothing

Headphones

Some petty cash, debit cards, I.D.s

Keys

Bag with:

Packed lunch

Roleplay notes:

You're pretty comfortable with your life, though you still wish you could've made it as an artist. But, you can't deny, you've got a decent amount of money, good friends, and a nice routine.





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

Saga Identity

Synopsis

10

Character Alex Taylor (29)

Current Employment: Senior Medical Engineer at BES-ME.

Employment History: Numerous positions in major companies revolving around medical engineering; each new job brought promotion.

School: Degree in Medical Engineering. Chess club, maths club, debating and historical society.

Hobbies: None, too busy.

Family:

Father, Richard Taylor (53), retired accountant

Mother, Marian Taylor (51), museum curator at British Museum

Brother, Julia Taylor (26), accountant at Sun Finance

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Mobile Phone: top-brand
High-class business attire
Keys
Debit card, credit cards, pager, I.D.s
High-class bag with:
Laptop
Charger
Paperwork

Roleplay notes:

You've had a good family life, giving you a good education and plenty of opportunities. Though you try to remember others aren't as well off as you, you sometimes put your foot in it with off-hand comments.





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

Synopsis

10

Saga Identity

Character Alex Taylor (29)

Current Employment: None, petty thief.

Employment History: None, either committing crime or doing the time.

School: Below average grades, suspended often.

Hobbies: Reading, gaming, and cooking (done in secret).

Family:

Father, Richard Taylor (29), deceased

Mother, Maria Taylor (51), housekeeper

Brother, Matteo Taylor (26), unemployed

Sister, Julie Frost (25), office manager at Highgreen Pharmaceuticals

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Mobile Phones: top-brands

'Lower class' clothing

Headphones

Keys

Screwdriver

Someone else's wallet

Roleplay notes:

The death of your Father 24 years ago hit your mother and family hard making your upbringing difficult.

You struggled in school as you were often kept away for 'personal reasons': your mother's frequent drug use and hospitalisation.





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency

10

Saga Identity

Synopsis

Character Alex Taylor (29)

Current Employment: Office administrator at BES-MH.

Employment History: Unemployed until 24, when they got their first job at Sun Finance; then moved through various office jobs before joining BES-MH.

School: Degree in English Literature.

Hobbies: Reading, and writing fictional short stories

Family:

Father, Rickard Taylor (53), unemployed due to stress

Mother, Marian Taylor (37), deceased

Brother, Dylan Taylor (12), deceased

Sister, Katia Wood (22), unemployed

Proactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Reactive Agency

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Notes

Mobile Phone: mediocre brand, well-looked after

Smart-casual clothing

Headphones

Keys

Some petty cash, debit cards, I.D.s

Packed lunch (Stuffed in pocket)

Roleplay notes:

Overall, your family life was good, coming from a middle-class family. Although it was marred by the death of your brother and mother in a car crash 14 years ago; this caused great stress for your father. While he did what he could, you and you sister were often in foster care, and throughout your teenage years you practically raised your sister alone.



Authorial Agency

You are a co-Author of the Saga, rather than just the player of one character; you do create and portray a single character, but they exist as your means to experience the Saga, not affect it.

As an Author, you have one 'stat':

- **Authorial Agency**, rated 1-20.
- Start with 10 points.

This is a measure of your presence in, and influence over, the Saga. Its value can change, and at zero, your character leaves the Saga.

Saga Structure

As an Author, you can contribute to the overall Saga narration, adding or removing characters, events, or other elements.

The only restrictions are that you must have **Saga Control** and all events are in keeping with the Saga's setting.

There are three ways for you to gain Saga Control:

- **Focus.**
- **Conflict.**
- **Foreshadowing.**

Sub-Agencies

For Conflict (adversarial events), Authorial Agency is split into two sub-'stats':

- **Proactive Agency**, rated 0-10.
- **Reactive Agency**, rated 0-10.

Proactive Agency helps to quickly *win* Conflicts, but costs Focus.

Reactive Agency helps to slowly build to a *win*, and costs nothing.

Narrative Justification

The Focus cost for you to take Saga Control, the requirements to *win* Conflict, and the difficulty of Foreshadowing, are all affected by **narrative justification**.

That is, the Monad uses the existence of previous Saga events to judge how plausible and likely proposed new events are.

The more plausible and likely an event is, the lower/easier things are for you, and of course, the opposite is true.

Previous events include your character and their Synopsis, so, while they are not given 'stats' directly, their existence, actions, and equipment are important.

Character Design

To design your character:

- Write a Character Synopsis.
- Distribute 10 points between:
 - **Proactive Agency.**
 - **Reactive Agency.**

Focus

You start with **5 Focus Points**.

To take Saga Control, the Monad decides how many Focus points are needed factoring in the plausibility and likelihood of your desired Saga Change.

Prologue

The Saga begins with a **Prologue**:

- No rules, except the Monad has absolute control.
- For setting up future Saga elements: mysteries, machinations, and MacGuffins!
- Not for rewarding yourself.

Conflict

Conflict is a gaming mechanic used to resolve adversarial situations in the Saga.

However, despite being a gaming mechanic, role-play and narration are still very much front and centre in Conflict.

It costs 1 Focus to enter Conflict. You can win this back – and more – if you do well enough.

Conflict is played out in turns, with your cards played as either **Decision** or **Action** Cards.

The goal of Conflict is to build stacks of cards – **TENsion Stacks** – until their value is at least **ten**, at which point they are *completed*.

Completing TENsion Stacks allows you to apply **Circumstances**: modifiers to Decision Card values.

To win in Conflict, you need to form a certain number of completed TENsion Stacks, this number is called **Peak TENsion**.

Each Conflict turn:

- You play one Decision Card.
- If its value is the highest out of every Author's, you gain Saga Control for the turn and keep the card to build TENsion.
 - All others are discarded, unless...
- For 1 Focus, you may **seize** any discarded Decision Card by playing an **Action Card**, but only if:
 - Your Action Card's value is equal or less than your **Proactive Agency**.
 - The values of your Action Card and the Decision Card **total exactly ten**.
- If your discarded **Decision Card** is not seized, you may **save** it, but only if its value is equal or less than your **Reactive Agency** – costs zero Focus.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a long-term aspect of Agêratos, and so the Monad may decide to not use it if you are playing a quick single session.

If they do choose to use Foreshadowing, read on:

In Foreshadowing, you attempt to predict future Saga events and if accurate, you are rewarded.

You may make two types of **Predictions**: **Direct** and **Indirect**.

Each type requires Focus Points, albeit in slightly different ways.

Once active, they slowly diminish as the Saga progresses. For you to receive your rewards, the predicted event must occur within this time frame.

This is not governed by game world or real world time, but rather as the Saga progresses and is measured via **Narrative Beats**.

These Narrative Beats occur due to Focus expenditure and Conflict.

As for the Predictions themselves:

Direct Predictions are public, with other Authors able to join you in the risk and reward; via collaboration, you try to enact the predicted event in time.

Indirect Predictions are hidden from other Authors, and you cannot reveal to them its true nature, except for a cryptic hint.

Neither can you enact the predicted event yourself. Instead you must subtly guide another Author to do so for you, and if you succeed, both of you are rewarded.

NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Focus Cost Guidelines

Natural flow: 0 points

- The plausible and likely.
- Changes that align with the current or established events of the Saga.

Subtle Nudges: 1 point

- The plausible, yet unusual.
- Lays 'stepping stones' as the groundwork for future events, or subtly redirects the Saga.

Substantial Nudges: 2 points

- The plausible, yet unexpected.
- Clearly redirects the Saga.
- Character capabilities which could feasibly come from a hobby, side business, or similar.

Subtle Changes: 3 points

- The implausible, and yet not surprising.
- Changes, that while unexpected at the time, were perhaps obvious in hindsight.
- Characters gaining specialised capabilities outside those originally stated.

Substantial Changes: 4 points

- The implausible and highly unlikely.
- Alters the Saga significantly.
- Characters gaining unlikely capabilities.

Monumental Changes: 5+ points

- Redefines the Saga's setting or theme.
- Characters gaining skills that contradict the original Character Synopsis.

5 points: Adjust Authorial Agency

- Adjust Authorial Agency by 1 point

Foreshadowing

Narrative Beats

- 1 step for every Focus Point or Peak TENSION that forms a Saga Change.

Direct Predictions (Public)

- Loaded immediately: 1 Focus/Load.

Direct Rewards: Current Load + 1/Author

- 1 Focus and card/current Load.
- Saga Change equal to current Load.

Indirect Predictions (Hidden)

- Keep secret: Prediction and maximum Load.
- Publicly state: cryptic hint.
- Loaded over time: 1 Load/Beat.

Indirect Rewards: Maximum Load

- Event owner: 1 point of Authorial Agency.
- Event owner: 2 cards.
- Prediction owner: 1 point of Authorial Agency, 1 Focus and 1 card/maximum Load.

Tiebreaks

Lead Tiebreak

1. Highest Focus Points.
2. Highest Authorial Agency.
3. Highest number of cards in your Hand.
4. Draw a card; highest wins.

Foil Tiebreak

1. Lowest Focus Points.
2. Lowest Authorial Agency.
3. Lowest number of cards in your Hand.
4. Draw a card; highest wins.

When to use

- Conflict narration ties: Lead.
- Decision Cards: Lead
- Direct Predictions: Foil.
- Peak TENSION: Group: Lead then Foil.
- Regaining Focus: Lead
- Zero Focus Points: Foil.

Action Cards: Use rules for Climax.

As if you had drawn...

1. Central Pot; if only 1 point, take and move on.
2. Highest Focus; if tie, use Lead Tiebreak.



Conflict

1. Exposition

Conflict Pot

- Players pay 1 Focus to enter Conflict.

Peak TENSION

- The Monad sets type and amount.

Scene Circumstances

- The Monad sets pre-existing Circumstances.

2. Rising Action

1. Reveal Decision Cards

- Choose a card and place facedown, when everyone is ready, reveal them.

2. Compare Decision Cards

- Highest wins; tied cards are kept or go to a Lead Tiebreak.
- Kept cards start a new TENSION stack or added to an existing one.

3. Play Action Cards

- Action Card value $\leq$ Proactive Agency.
- Action plus Decision Card must equal 10.
- Costs 1 Focus.
- Can be Blocked; ties use Lead Tiebreak.

4. Save discarded Decision Cards

- Discarded Decision Card $\leq$ Reactive Agency.
- Forms a NEW TENSION stack.

5. Build TENSION

- A TENSION stack ≥ 10 is completed:
 - Take 1 Focus from Conflict Pot.
 - Apply a Circumstance.

6. Apply Circumstances

- 1 point modifier to any Author in Conflict.
- Circumstances reduced to zero are removed.

3. Peak

If one Author has reached Peak TENSION, move onto 4. Falling Action; in a tie, engage in Climax.

Climax

- Put Hand to one side.
- Draw 1 new card facedown.
- Draw up to 4 more cards for 1 Focus each.
- Reveal cards: highest wins Climax.
- Tied? Repeat Climax or narrate into the Saga.

4. Falling Action

- Narrate how Conflict is brought to an end.
- No subsequent events or rewards.

5. Conflict Resolution

Gaming Loss (failed to reach Safe TENSION)

- Lose 1 point of Authorial Agency.
- Lose 1 Focus to the Central Pot.

Gaming Rewards (reached Peak TENSION)

- Gain 1 point of Authorial Agency.
- Gain 1 Focus from the Central Pot.
- Gain remaining Focus in Conflict Pot.
- Subsequent Saga event equal to Peak TENSION.

Peak TENSION: Personal and Timed

- As above.

Peak TENSION: Group

- Split rewards: Lead – Foil – repeat.

Peak TENSION: Creative

- No Safe TENSION: automatic gaming losses.

Peak TENSION Types

Personal

Individuals race to Peak TENSION.

Group

Authors group TENSION stacks.

Timed

Highest TENSION after a set turn limit.

Creative

Reward scales with TENSION but so does risk.

Safe TENSION

Equal to half of Peak TENSION.

Circumstances

- Do not affect if Action Cards can seize discarded Decision Cards.
- Do not affect if Decision Cards can be saved through Reactive Agency.
- Do not alter Decision Card values within TENSION stacks.
- Can give no more than Negative or Positive 5.





Narrative Framework Saga

Authorial Agency

Notes

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Characters gaining unlikely capabilities.

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Redefines the Saga's setting or theme.

Characters gaining skills that contradict their original Character Synopsis.

5 Points: Adjust Authorial Agency

Adjust Authorial Agency by 1 point.

Narrative Steps

1/Focus or Peak TENSION that forms a Saga Change.

1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5





Narrative Framework

Player _____

Authorial Agency _____

Saga _____

Synopsis _____

Character _____

Proactive Agency

Reactive Agency

012345678910

012345678910

Notes