

Diesel Empire, v1.6.4-alpha

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22-1979

In 22-1979 the sovereignty of the King is still absolute, but the *Nuclear Kingdoms* have carved out an empire built on high-grade elos diesel, color television, and advanced mecharcanics.

These modern kingdoms have an *unprecedented* level of influence that transcends both borders and the sacred *Bloodline Oath of A'Sholk's Shining King*.

This realization is either *terrifying* or *enthraling* to the powerful *Ascendant Kings*.

As *another* post-war era comes to a close, the ancient Courts of the *Grand Kingdoms* will be forced to reconcile with a world that is beginning to shed *six-thousand* years of unquestioned tradition and dominion.

Historical Overview, 18-942 to 22-1970

The Veil Opens (18-942)

The Veil has influenced the last six thousand years of world history and politics. It is a series of interconnected, barely visible, magical rifts spread across 3,200 miles of desert in the *Central Expanse*.

These rifts open to the *Fae Lands*, an extra-dimensional world in the *Outer Astral*, and were likely opened by the *elves*, though the *Silohain* has never confirmed this theory.

The Ascendancy War (18-956 to 20-3)

After The Veil opened, powerful *Fae* entities stepped into our dimension and would spend the next two thousand years attempting to wipe out all life from this world. This nearly continuous period of conflict was called the *Ascendancy War*.

The War was ended in 20-3 after a coalition of elves, humans, and halflings defeated the Fae in the *Battle of High Peak*. Since The Veil could not be closed, an armistice was forged with the Fae, which has held for the last *six-thousand* years.

The Grand Kingdoms of the Ascendancy

The *Kingdoms of the Ascendancy* were the kingdoms of humans and elves that had ended the Ascendancy War. All of the ruling kingdoms, the *North Kingdom*, the *United Southern Kingdoms*, and the *Silohain*, are descendants of these original kingdoms.

Bloodline Oath of A'sholk's Shining King

The elven queen *A'sholk* prophesied that her husband, *King Dar'karis* (the "*Shining King*") would close The Veil and forever *end* the Fae threat, but he was killed before he could complete the prophecy. *A'sholk* later prophesied that the *Shining King* would be *resurrected* through the bloodline of one of his fellow warrior-kings and finally close The Veil.

The *Bloodline Oath* is a pledge that all Kings have taken since the end of the Ascendancy War to protect the integrity of the original royal bloodlines to ensure the *Resurrection of the Shining King*.

The *Oath* and the possibility of a *second* Ascendancy War has kept the Grand Kingdoms in power for thousands of years, but disagreements over *A'sholk's* Prophecy and the Resurrection have fueled dozens of major global conflicts, including *The Sovereign War*.

The Sovereign War (22-1924 to 22-1942)

The Sovereign War was fought over a centuries-old dispute between the Grand Kingdoms: who is the *Sovereign of the Oath* -- “the King who rules over Kings”. This title was always held by an *elven* King (since Dar’karis was an elf), though none of the elven Kings ever exercised the title’s power.

The dispute came to a head in 22-1922 when *King Belor* of the North Kingdom became convinced that the elves had been corrupted by the Fae, and that the North Kingdom needed to take the power of the Sovereign by *any* means.

The First Modern Global War

The North would invade the Silohain in 22-1924, and then the United Southern Kingdoms (*USK*) in 22-1927. North-backed orc nations created a second front for the USK in 22-1929, which would also plunge the entire Eastern and Southern Expanse into war.

This was the first global conflict in the post-industrial period, and the world was caught off-guard by the level of destruction modern machines of war could inflict. Airplanes, tanks, and machine guns were fielded in mass, and battles would escalate so quickly that they would often indiscriminately spill into civilian centers.

50-80 million would die in the War, along with two Ancients and seven dragons. Entire kingdoms were annihilated during the War, and no kingdom was left untouched.

Bonethorne Port Enters the War, 22-1936

Bonethorne Port was able to remain neutral for most of the War, not entering any conflict until 22-1935, when it sent *limited* military aid to its ally, the Huxlon Republic. In response, the North established a blockade around the Port in 22-1936.

With the possibility of a Northern invasion, Bonethorne officially entered the war at the end of 22-1936 with the *Strike of Long Crossing*, which shattered the Northern blockade.

Bonethorne Port had spent the war gathering vital intelligence and coupled with a military that was *decades* more advanced than *any* fighting force on the planet, Bonethorne Port was able to help the USK swiftly regain its lost territories.

The Caldwell Treaty, 22-1942

Bonethorne’s entry into the War would eventually force a *stalemate* with the North Kingdom, and by 22-1941, a general armistice was declared by all of the surviving nations.

The *Caldwell Treaty* marked the end of the War, re-establishing the old borders from 22-1924, and naming the North Kingdom as the Sovereign of the Oath. While the Silohain has never ratified the Caldwell Treaty, it has also never broken the armistice.

Post-War Reconstruction (22-1942 to 22-1970)

The Caldwell Treaty gave Bonethorne Port special economic powers to help fund the reconstruction of dozens of kingdoms, including the North. It would also help Bonethorne to establish an enormous monopoly on elos diesel processing.

Reconstruction would also bring modern technology and magics to every corner of the world, creating an export demand that would not only establish Bonethorne Port as a world power, but also its allies in the *Huxlon Republic* and the *Dwarven Compact*.

The Ruling Kingdoms, 22-1979

The Grand Kingdoms of the Ascendency

The North Kingdom (Est. 20-5. Formerly “The Grand Ascendant Kingdom”)

Monarchy. Greater Northern Expanse. 11,885,995 mi². Pop: 1,044m. The largest and most powerful kingdom on the planet, it has built its power on its massive workforce and military. Its King is also the *Sovereign of the Oath*, which allows the North to supersede the edicts of any other King, though the Silohain has never officially surrendered this title.

Despite its massive economy, the North lags behind in magic and technology, only recently implementing a modern telecommunications network and a public air travel infrastructure.

The North takes a “humans-first” position on most policy matters, but has given non-humans some rights in the post-war period. This position is deeply rooted in the North’s perception that non-humans are more easily influenced by The Veil, and that humans have always been the first and last line of defense against the Fae.

United Southern Kingdoms (USK) (Est. 21-2201)

Monarchy/Republic. Western Expanse. 12,722,973 mi². Pop: 820m. The second largest “kingdom”, the USK was once part of the North Kingdom, two thousand years ago. Unlike the North, which has had a single ruling bloodline since the Ascendancy War, the USK has *thirteen* Kings.

Each King is still a descendant of the *Bloodline*, and each swear by the *Bloodline Oath*, but each rules their own kingdoms *separately*, meeting periodically at *The King’s Table* to resolve issues that affect the USK as a whole.

The USK has a much more diverse population than the North, but most Kingdoms still have a tacit “human-first” policy.

The USK is also slightly more technologically and magically advanced than the North, owing to the USK’s more generous trade policies.

Silohain (Est. 20-5)

Monarchy. Central Expanse. 1,167,322 mi². Pop: 30m. The ancestral homelands of the elves, which is also home to the last remaining *dragons*, and primordial *Ancients*.

While elven kingdoms existed for thousands of years previous to the Silohain, this kingdom was created as a formal political entity which united the elves after the Ascendancy War.

The kingdom is self-sustaining and reclusive, so its borders are tightly controlled. Very little is known about the Silohain outside of historical texts, and limited intelligence gathered during the Sovereign War, but nearly all accounts describe it as a virtual paradise.

While the Silohain is likely far behind in modern technology, the kingdom possesses the greatest magical schools and artifacts ever to be created in this world, which has given the Silohain a significant advantage over all other kingdoms for thousands of years.

The Endless Lands (Est. 22-1946)

Monarchy/Social Republic/Democracy. Central Expanse. 3,122,988 mi². Pop: 220m. A loose coalition of kingdoms and nations held together by halfling societies. This vast kingdom in the Central Expanse is most notable for containing The Veil.

The Endless Lands was created as a result of the Sovereign War. Many of the kingdoms in the Central Expanse were completely wiped out in the Sovereign War, and the Endless Lands gave these smaller kingdoms the chance to centralize their economies and militaries to keep member states safe.

The Nuclear Kingdoms

Bonethorne Port (Est. 22-1402)

Democratic Republic. Western Expanse. 276,883 mi². Pop: 58m. “*The Rogue Kingdom*” is legally a territory of the North Kingdom. The orc Bonethorne Axesplitter captured the peninsula in the 22-1402, but was able to maintain autonomy by paying reparations to the North. The Caldwell Treaty ended these reparations, but Bonethorne is still an autonomous territory of the North.

After the North Kingdom, Bonethorne Port is the most powerful nation on the planet, and has likely surpassed the North in sheer *wealth*. It controls 60% of the world’s energy production, and manufactures 70% of the world’s advanced electronic and mecharcanic components. The Port has become synonymous with modern convenience and innovation.

It is also the most technically advanced nation on the planet, *decades* ahead of the North and the USK and was the first nation to create a nuclear energy grid. It is currently in the process of building the world’s first mass digital telecommunications infrastructure.

The Port also has one of the most diverse populations on the planet, and hosts the largest community of elves outside of the Silohain.

While the Port has always given *all* of its citizens equal rights, the military has an enormous amount of influence, which sometimes supersedes civilian laws and freedoms.

The Port maintains extremely close ties with its allies, the Huxlon Republic and the Dwarven Compact. The Port also has a close trade relationship with the neighboring USK, which has allowed the Port freely travel through its kingdoms for the last two centuries.

Huxlon Republic (Est. 21-756. Formerly “The Huxlon Empire”)

Democratic Republic. South Eastern Sub-Expanse. 3,001,119 mi². Pop: 210m. While not as powerful as Bonethorne Port, the saurian-founded Republic still has the third most powerful economy in the world.

Combining the technical and magical might of saurian innovation, with a large, diverse workforce, the Republic was able to rebuild quickly after the Sovereign War, and assist in the reconstruction of dozens of kingdoms, including some in the Orc Nations. These contracts would give the Republic the diplomatic and economic security to become a ruling power.

The Republic is nearly on par with Bonethorne Port in terms of technical superiority, and is the *only* nation with an active space program. Like Bonethorne Port, the Republic widely uses nuclear power, though it is also a pioneer in wind and solar power.

The Republic is an extremely close ally with Bonethorne Port. It is the only nation to recognize the independent sovereignty of The Port, and was the first to offer trade with the “Rogue Kingdom” in 22-1501. As a result, The Republic and Bonethorne have always had an *Open Information Treaty*, which has greatly contributed to the technological and magical achievements of both nations.

The Republic also controls and protects the longest, and wealthiest, ocean trade route on the planet, which begins in Bonethorne Port, and continues to ports in the USK, Southern Expanse, and the Dwarven Compact, before ending in the southern coast of the Federated Orc Nations.

Eastern Kingdoms

Dwarven Compact (Est. 22-1898)

Social Republic. Eastern Expanse. 1,270,922 mi². Pop: 180m. The Dwarven Compact began as a way for the dwarven clans to unite and *responsibly* manage the vast mineral wealth below the dwarven ancestral homelands. Eventually, the Compact would grow to protect the interests of all the nations that thrived all along the *Essian Range* and the *Essian Steppe*.

While the Compact is a smaller nation, it is the primary exporter of the rare-earth elements needed for many electronics and mecharcanics, and it is one of the few nations that is able to *recycle* these components, which has made it incredibly wealthy through the extensive investments from Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic.

The main reason for The Port's and the Republic's involvement in the Sovereign War was to protect the Compact from orc marauders, and the Compact received preferential economic treatment by the Nuclear Kingdoms during the Reconstruction period. It will likely become a Nuclear Kingdom in the coming decade.

While mostly dwarven, the Compact also has a fair population of goblins, humans, and mountain orcs. Uniquely, the Compact has an even distribution of wealth, with a huge amount of the nation's revenue contributing to social programs and public infrastructure.

Federation of Orc Nations (Est. 22-1946)

Monarchy/Representative Monarchy/Republic/Commune. Eastern Expanse. 15,009,288 mi². Pop: 600m. During the Sovereign War, the North Kingdom would disrupt two thousand years of clan balance by arming some of the more aggressive orc powers with sophisticated weapons of war. This would trigger conflicts all across the Eastern Expanse and plunge nearly all orc clans into civil war.

The intent of the Federation was to create a single coalition of nations to protect the surviving orc societies from outside influence. Each nation would be autonomous, but orc clans would be able to freely trade, and a non-aggression pact kept all clans at peace.

The effectiveness of the Federation has been mixed. The northern nations have continued to be destabilized by North Kingdom interests, and more recently, Bonethrone Port tried and failed to install an orc king in *Hu-rak Ossadior* (the *Ossadior War*, 22-1972 to 22-1978), which destabilized several central orc nations.

While the Federation does not obligate member nations to provide *military* aid, the non-aggression pact and free trade would help these nations *recover* from their conflicts, which would have been impossible *before* the Federation.

Unfortunately this has created a wide economic disparity within the Federation. North and central clans are still rebuilding from decades of conflicts, while the southern clans have experienced unprecedented economic growth through treaties with the Dwarven Compact and USK.

Creating Characters

Step 1: Attributes

Attributes are the traits that have a strong influence over your character, like *agile*, *strong*, *precise*, *small*, *creative*, *technical*, *wise*, *impulsive*, *beautiful*, *confident*, *witty*, *stubborn*, *brave*, *determined*, and *cowardly* are all examples of Attributes.

- **Give your character two Attributes.** You can use our examples or create your own.
- **Your character can have duplicate Attributes**, which just means that it has a bigger impact on their lives, for better or worse.

Step 2: Species

Pick your character's species. Your choice will give your character additional Attributes.

Species: Human

Prolific. Over-confident. Stubborn. Except for the *Silohain*, humans have a significant presence in every kingdom and of all the sentient species, humans are probably the majority.

The main reason for this proliferation is that humans seem to have evolved from more than two dozen different regions across the known world, appearing about ten thousand years ago with the orcs.

Attributes:

- **Social Dominance** - All major cities in the world are willing to accept the human North Gilder as currency, and almost everyone in these cities can, at least crudely, communicate in the common human language of *Northword*. Also, since most of the industrial centers are human and humans control a large portion of the economy, most modern devices and equipment are designed around humans.

Species: Orc

Expansive. Powerful. Stubborn. Orcs developed throughout the plains and steppes of the Eastern Expanse, where they continue to maintain total control. They appeared alongside humans, ten thousand years ago. Second only to humans, orcs are a major presence in every major kingdom outside the *Silohain*, but until recently, their populations were largely segregated.

Hardened tribalism keeps the orc nations divided and allows elven and human nations to maintain global dominance, but orc societies have been much faster in adapting to modern advances, which is beginning to become a significant economic advantage.

Attributes:

- **Strong** - Orcs are born strong, naturally on par with a well trained human athlete.
- **Hard to Kill** - Orcs are famously difficult to kill.
- **Family First - Who is your family?** This concept is a central tenet of all orc nations. Orcs are *driven* to advance the interests of their *own* family before the interests of anyone else, including themselves and other *individuals* of a family.

Species: Elves

Dogmatic. Magical. Ancient. Elves were the first species to “Know with the mind of the Gods” nearly thirty millenia ago and founded the first schools of science, magic, and philosophy. The elven calendar is still the world standard. As elves developed, magic became a central tenet of their societies, and their lifespans began to extend as a result.

Attributes:

- **Magically Attuned** - Elves are naturally attuned to magic.
- **Magical Senses** - Elves are able to naturally sense magical energies, perceiving magic in a way similar to a sense of smell.
- **Long Lives** - Elves live a long time (800 years or more), which gives them a level of historical wisdom, but makes it much harder to imagine the *immediate* future.
- **Homeland - Where is your home?** Elves have a *deep* connection to their home, which can have a *literal* effect on an elf's physical and emotional state. For example, studies on elves who live in *Bonethorne Port* are aging nearly *twice* as fast as *Silohain* elves.

Species: Dwarves

Productive. Generous. Loyal. Evolving from deep within the mountains of the Essian Range, dwarves were largely isolated but maintained a relative peace with their neighbors for twelve thousand years, even creating a kind of peace with the orcs for the last thousand years.

Dwarves have a special kinship with saurians. Saurian medicines and ingenuity help to stop the Firehand Plague, which nearly wiped out the dwarves two thousand years ago.

Attributes:

- **Short** - Dwarves are usually only about four feet tall, and never taller than five feet.
- **Muscular** - Though shorter, dwarves have a very dense musculature and have the same strength and weight as an average human.
- **Resilient** - Dwarves naturally have the same endurance as a human athlete.
- **Clan Affiliation - What is your Clan?** Dwarves are strongly tied to their clans, and are fiercely loyal, and will do what they can to help fellow clan members.

Species: Halflings

Patient. Diplomatic. Friendly. Halflings are the demi-Fae who were born during the Ascendancy Wars, eight thousand years ago.

Though there are no major halfling nations, halflings have kept their Fae ancestors from obliterating the world for thousands of years by maintaining a peace with The Veil and the Fae. By all accounts, the Fae only tolerate the existence of this world because of their half-cousins.

The Fae nature of the halflings means that they care very little for worldly power or wealth, preferring to spend their lives in pursuit of joyful fulfillment as explorers, artists, and teachers.

Attributes:

- **Short** - Halflings are short, never growing much taller than four feet. This also makes them slightly lighter and weaker than the average human.
- **Grounded** - Halflings are famously calm and composed.
- **Demi-Fae** - Halflings *usually* look like smaller humans or elves but halflings have a wide range of vestigial physical traits that come from their Fae ancestry. They are also able to sense the presence of other Fae and demi-Fae as a natural intuition.

Species: Goblins

Curious. Ancient. Underestimated. Goblin labor helped to build the First World and the Ancient World, and they were witnesses to every great fall for the last *thirty thousand* years. Their history is as long as the elves, but goblins have never held any significant power. Instead they have been subjugated by the elves, humans, and orcs several times throughout history.

Goblins have begun to see a renaissance in the last few centuries. While many nations still use goblin labor, modern manufacturing has replaced this need, and many goblins have begun to explore both the world and their history. Several key archaeological, geological, and biological discoveries in the past century have been made by goblins.

Attributes:

- **Small** - Goblins are famously small, never exceeding more than three feet. This also makes them much lighter and weaker than the average human.
- **Stubborn Survivors** - Goblins can survive on miniscule amounts of food and water in very extreme conditions.
- **Numerous** - Goblins can be found in *every* corner of the world and some have incredibly large extended families.
- **Extreme Immunities** - Goblins *can* get sick and are weakened by infectious diseases, poisons, and *radiation*, but only *very old* Goblins (60 years or more) actually *die* from these causes. Sadly this has made Goblins a favored target for magical and scientific experimentation.

Species: Saurians

Strange. Respected. Isolated. This species is relatively young, only eight thousand years old, but during that time saurians have been able to achieve the same level of scientific and philosophical achievements as the ancient elves.

The saurians also have a long-standing friendship with the dwarves. Though saurian doctors saved the dwarves from the Firehand Plague, dwarven experts and materials allowed saurians to build a thriving civilization in the swamps of the Southern Expanse.

Attributes:

- **Abstract Thinker** - Saurians are some of the most coveted thinkers in the world thanks to their unique and unusual brain structure.
- **Reclusive** - Saurians rarely have any cause or desire to *leave* the swamplands of the Southern Expanse, so seeing a saurian anywhere else is *highly* unusual.
- **Amphibious** - Saurians are able to *safely* breath underwater for a little under fifteen minutes and roughly twenty minutes in an *emergency*.

Step 3: Trades and Skills

Trades represent your character's general ability and knowledge, while **Skills** represent their active experience in a specific field. A character with the *Diplomat Trade* knows how to broker a deal, but a character with the *Negotiate Skill* has *actually* helped kingdoms sign deals.

Schools of Magic function exactly like any other *Trade*, but some have *prerequisites* that you must fulfill, and instead of *Skills*, Magical Schools have **Arcana**.

- You get **eight points** to spend on ranks of *Skills* and *Arcana*.
- **The rank of the Trade or School is based on the total value of the Trade's Skills or School's Arcana.** If a character has *three Professional Skills* in a Trade, then the rank of the Trade would be *Expert*.
- Your character **can** have *multiple* Trades and Schools.

Rank Chart

Ranks	Value	Description
Untrained	0	You have no training beyond <i>fiction</i> and <i>documentaries</i> .
Trained	1	You have worked in the field, but never on your own.
Professional	2	You are able to handle routine challenges without any problem.
Expert	4	You are a leader in the field and others rely on your abilities when there is a disaster.
Veteran	8	You are a pioneer in the field.
Master	16	You are a legend and a leader in this field.

Starting Trade Resources

For each *point* you spend in a *Trade*, pick and describe *one* item from the *Trade Resource* list as one of your character's starting resources.

Trades and Skills

Trade: Assassin

Stalking and murdering a target without getting caught.

Skills:

- **Murder (Diamond)** - Killing through unconventional means.
- **Escape (Club)** - The ability to escape without being detected.
- **Access (Club)** - The ability to reach a target without being detected.
- **Alertness (Spade)** - Being aware of danger and opportunities.
- **Manipulation (Heart)** - Guiding someone towards a truth, real or imagined.

Trade Resources: Advanced electronics, watch contact, political contact, high-end concealed weapon, safe-house, criminal contact, advanced surveillance tools, advanced security tools.

Trade: Diplomat

The ability to negotiate firm agreements despite cultural and political challenges.

Skills:

- **Negotiate (Heart)** - The ability to create compromise and agreement.
- **Control (Club)** - Being able to maintain confidence and authority.
- **Culture (Spade)** - The ability to hold a dignified and intelligent conversation in several languages.
- **Intelligence (Spade)** - Gathering and analyzing important details and secrets.
- **Motives (Heart)** - Reading and understanding someone's desires and fears.

Trade Resources: Political contact, criminal contact, political favor, profitable investment, academic contact, foreign contact, foreign influence.

Trade: Engineer

The practical application of scientific properties to create complex systems.

Skills:

- **Invention (Club)** - Designing new systems, compounds, and materials.
- **Material (Diamond)** - Working with natural and synthetic compounds.
- **Practical (Spade)** - Repairing and maintaining complex systems.
- **Scientific (Spade)** - An advanced academic understanding of the physical and chemical processes in a system.
- **Supply (Heart)** - Being able to find the components needed for a system, and getting the best price.

Trade Resources: Academic contact, workshop, advanced electronic, laboratory, political contact, advanced tool kit.

Trade: Fixer

The creative application of law and politics in the pursuit of power.

Skills:

- **Back-Channel (Spade)** - Collecting and understanding exploitable secrets.
- **Intimidate (Heart)** - The ability to gain control through fear.
- **Perseverance (Diamond)** - The will to survive no matter the cost.
- **Power (Club)** - Exerting political power for gain.
- **Rule (Heart)** - The ability to gather and maintain control.

Trade Resources: Political contact, criminal contact, political favor, profitable investment, criminal influence, foreign contact, safe-house.

Trade: Medical

Using modern medical techniques and medicines to heal others.

Skills:

- **Diagnosis (Spade)** - Finding the cause of an ailment.
- **EMT (Club)** - Healing trauma in emergency situations.
- **Medicine (Spade)** - The practical application of herbalism and pharmaceuticals.
- **Psychology (Heart)** - Understanding the underlying mental or emotional trauma.
- **Surgery (Diamond)** - The art of healing extreme trauma.

Trade Resources: Trauma kit, advanced medical equipment, advanced pharmaceuticals, medical contact, lab access, university access, hospital access.

Trade: Outlaw

Operating in the shadow side of a kingdom and how to thrive in that darkness.

Skills:

- **Fighting (Club)** - Improvised methods of combat.
- **Respect (Spade)** - The knowledge needed to gain and *keep* power.
- **Muscle (Diamond)** - Physical capability.
- **Hustling (Heart)** - The ability to gather information and resources.
- **Intimidation (Heart)** - Coercion through force.

Trade Resources: Criminal influence, criminal investment, illegal weapon, illegal pharmaceuticals, political contact, foreign contact.

Trade: Ranger

The training needed to survive and live in a hostile environment for extended periods.

Skills:

- **Endurance (Diamond)** - Physical and mental fortitude.
- **Hunting (Club)** - Seeking, stalking and killing a target.
- **Instinct (Heart)** - A sense for finding things out of balance.
- **Survival (Spade)** - Skills for living in harsh environments.
- **Awareness (Spade)** - Paying attention to the environment.

Trade Resources: Survival pack, hunting weapon, advanced survival equipment, cabin in the wild, Fae contact, GPS access.

Trade: Scholar

The art of pursuing and processing new knowledge through methodical research and careful study.

Skills:

- **Secrets (Club)** - Lost and forbidden knowledge.
- **Research (Spade)** - Discovering new knowledge.
- **Genius (Heart)** - Attempting to find solutions from unrelated facts.

- **Foundations (Diamond)** - General knowledge of all academic pursuits.

Trade Resources: University access, academic contact, research grant, political contact, lab access, Fae contact.

Trade: Spy

Gathering information about a target through covert observation, or more aggressive means like bribery, and torture.

Skills:

- **Clandestine (Club)** - The art of keeping secrets and staying undetected.
- **Coercion (Heart)** - Convincing a target to perform a given action.
- **Interrogation (Heart)** - Extracting the truth from a target.
- **Observation (Spade)** - The ability to detect important details.
- **Intelligence (Diamond)** - The ability to discern hidden secrets from collected research and observation.

Trade Resources: Political contact, criminal contact, foreign contact, foreign influence, safe house, advanced electronics, high-level political access, Fae contact, advanced surveillance tools, advanced security tools.

Trade: Thief

The art and craft of stealing through careful and patient observation, followed by complete improvisation when the plan completely falls apart.

Skills:

- **Fast-Talk (Heart)** - The ability to convince through confusion.
- **Fencing (Heart)** - The art of selling illegal products for the best price.
- **Security (Spade)** - The training needed to setup and bypass secure systems.
- **Stealing (Club)** - The art of taking something in secret.
- **Stealth (Diamond)** - Discipline required to be undetectable.

Trade Resources: Political contact, criminal contact, safe house, advanced electronics, advanced surveillance tools, advanced security tools, high-end vehicle.

Trade: Soldier

The tactical knowledge needed to maneuver a battlefield and the combat training needed to win a fight.

Skills:

- **Combat Training (Club)** - The ability to fight and kill in open combat.
- **PT (Diamond)** - Physical training needed to navigate and endure combat.
- **Tactics (Spade)** - Using strategy to subvert and defeat an enemy.
- **Composure (Heart)** - The ability to maintain focus while under fire.
- **Alertness (Spade)** - Being aware of all the dangers and advantages of a location.

Trade Resources: Military contact, military-grade weapon, watch contact, military-grade armor, advanced tactical equipment, illegal explosives, safehouse.

Trade: Watch

The abilities needed to administer the laws and protect order in a city, using force if necessary.

Skills:

- **Authority (Heart)** - Using trust and respect to maintain control.
- **Investigation (Diamond)** - The ability to draw sound conclusions from evidence.
- **Law (Spade)** - The knowledge needed to enforce and apply the law.
- **Special Tactics (Club)** - Close-combat training in urban settings with civilians.
- **Streetwise (Spade)** - Understanding a city, including its secrets and dangers.
- **Vigilance (Diamond)** - Paying careful attention to the details.

Trade Resources: Watch contact, watch-grade weapon, military contact, political contact, watch-grade armor, tactical equipment, watch lab access, safehouse.

Schools of Magic and Arcana

School: Ritual

The basic practice of reciting a spell and the completion of a rite. The more potent the outcome, the more complex, time-consuming, and dangerous the rite. This is an ancient School that is incredibly common, but it forms the basis for all modern magic.

Arcana

- **Creation (Club)** - Creating and undoing beings and objects.
- **Spellcraft (Spade)** - The ability to craft new spells and rituals.
- **Truth (Heart)** - The rites needed to see objective reality. This Arcana has destroyed countless practitioners, but it is widely employed for precision measurements.
- **Order (Diamond)** - The practice of manipulating natural law.

School Resources: Reagents contact, rare reagents, rites book, academic contact, safehouse, arcana library, university access.

School: Elemental

The ability to channel and embody the primal forces of nature. This art is older than Ritual magic and does not require any rites (though rites exist), but it requires an innate understanding of the energies at work and is *significantly* harder to *control*.

Attribute Prerequisites:

Magically Attuned

Arcana

- **Fire (Club)** - Controlling the transformational properties of fire.
- **Air (Spade)** - Manipulating the air, which surrounds and witnesses all things.
- **Water (Heart)** - Channeling the restorative and destructive elements of water.
- **Earth (Diamond)** - Harnessing the grounding and protective wisdom of the earth.

School Resources: Fae contact, elemental familiar, rites book, academic contact, safehouse, arcana library, university access.

School: Alchemical

The transformation of base materials into exotic compounds through the use of magic. The more powerful effects require the use of extreme rites, but the lesser effects can happen through simple incantations. This is considered one of the *Classical Schools*.

Trade Prerequisites:

Professional Engineer

Arcana

- **Transformation (Club)** - The founding rites of the School, which allows for the creation of new compounds from *base* elements.
- **Analysis (Spade)** - The rites to divine the nature of a compound, like its composition and how it was created.
- **Dissolution (Heart)** - The skill to break compounds down to base components.
- **Blending (Diamond)** - The rites need to combine *complex* compounds into *stable* materials. This does not always create *useful* combinations, but modern *plastics* were created through these rites.

School Resources: Fae contact, academic contact, rare elements, rites book, academic contact, lab access, safehouse, university access.

School: Mecharcana

This School blends mechanics with alchemy to create incredibly complex systems. The more powerful effects require difficult rites, but lesser effects only need simple incantations. This Art is less than a century old, but it has had a *massive* impact on society.

Attribute Prerequisites:

Abstract Thinker

Trade Prerequisites:

Professional Engineer

Arcana

- **Binding (Diamond)** - This art to create a permanent bond between two objects. This does not create any *new* compounds, and the bond is not always very strong.
- **Machine Nature (Heart)** - This allows the engineer to fully visualize and understand the internal workings of a device.
- **Shaping (Club)** - The ability to shape *stable* materials into intricate shapes of any size. This Art is often used to shape the copper circuits of modern devices.
- **Infusion (Spade)** - Allows the infusion of magical energies into a compound. Most often this is used to create batteries and Anatomancer surgical tools.

School Resources: Workshop, advanced tools, rare elements, rites book, academic contact, lab access, university access, advanced electronics.

School: Divination

This Art allows the wielder to open their minds to visions from other realms. It can be used to peer into parts of our own reality, or even other *existences* and futures. This is an *embodied* school, and requires no rites, but rites do make the casting *safer*.

Attribute Prerequisites:

Magically Attuned, Intuitive

Arcana

- **Precognition (Club)** - The ability to see into *all* possible futures. Often a team of researchers are employed to help narrow the possibilities.
- **Outsider (Spade)** - The training needed to see outside of our realm of existence. This does not grant *comprehension*, just the ability to see.

- **Prophecy (Heart)** - The ability to try to *set* a destiny for a subject. This is most often paired with *Precognition*, since it is easier to set a subject on an *existing* course as opposed to creating an entire *destiny*.
- **Viewing (Diamond)** - This allows a wielder to see into *this* realm of reality, provided they are able to create some *connection* to their location.

School Resources: Rites book, academic contact, safehouse, arcana library, political contact, university access, Fae contact.

School: Anatomancy

A modern School, derived from the art of *Necromancy*, allows for the manipulation of living tissue. This is a highly disciplined school requiring *many* rites, but many *commercial* tools have been developed for these purposes.

Trade Prerequisites:

- *Expert Medicine*

Arcana

- **Mend Flesh (Spade)** - The ability to mend flesh and bone back together, but the caster still needs to understand how the tissue *should* be mended.
- **Sense Blood (Heart)** - This allows the wielder to sense the blood in the patient, and allows them to get a sense of the *state* of the blood, which helps for diagnoses.
- **Shape Flesh (Club)** - This Arcana allows the caster to *reshape* flesh and bone, which is used to heal scars or resolve complications from traditional surgeries.
- **Give Life (Diamond)** - Allows the mage to give some of their own life energies, or the life energies of a willing subject. Many goblins make their living selling their energies to cure rich patients of diseases.

School Resources: Advanced medical equipment, advanced pharmaceuticals, advanced alchemical compounds, medical contact, lab access, university access, hospital access.

Step 4: Starting Point

In addition to the starting resources from your *Trades*, describe your character's:

- **Income** from their *Trades*.
- **Essential possessions** that they have gained as a part of their *lifestyle* and *hobbies*.
- **Friends and family** that still have an impact on their life.

Playing the Game

The Deck

You'll need a regular 52-card **Poker deck**, *with both Jokers*.

The Hand

At the beginning of each game, the GM deals *five* cards to each player. **The GM does *not* get a hand.**

Players can never have more than *five* cards in their hand.

The Check

All actions taken by a character are always successful. If the character leaps across a chasm, seduces the traitor, or discovers The Cure, they always *succeed*, unless a *Check* is called.

The GM can call a *Check* whenever the actions of a character have a *significant* impact on the plot. The outcome of the Check determines if an action is *successful*.

Step 1: Pick a Skill or Trade

When a Check is called the player picks one of their character's Skill or Trade that is the most appropriate for the action their character is attempting. This determines the *suit* and helps the GM decide the *difficulty* of the Check.

Skills provide a suit to the Check, but only apply to specific situations. The *Fast Talk Skill* will not help a character bypass a lock, but it will help them *lie* and the suit of the Check is set to *Hearts*.

Trades provide no suit for a Check, but can be applied to many situations. The *Thief Trade* gives a character all the training they need to *steal*, from *lying* to *lockpicking*, but the Check will have no suit.

Step 2: Determine Difficulty

The GM sets the Difficulty of the Check, based on the *rank* of the Skill or Trade that the character is using and the *action* the character is attempting to perform.

Difficulty		Target
Trivial	A rare case where an action requires almost <i>no</i> effort.	½
Routine	A simple action that still requires focus and effort.	1
Hard	An action that is familiar to the character, but still difficult.	2
Severe	An action that the character has only attempted in emergencies.	4
Extreme	An act that has <i>never</i> been attempted, but is <i>possible</i> .	8

The GM can increase or decrease the Difficulty level if the character has any Attributes that could affect the Check.

If the character is at the Impaired Trauma level, increase the Difficulty level by one.

Step 3: Play Cards

The player can only pick one of these options when they play cards for the Check:

- Play any number of cards from their hand. These cards can only be recovered through *rest*.
- Draw and play one card from the deck. No cards are used from the player's hand.

To succeed the total value of the cards played for the Check must match or exceed the Target value of the Difficulty. The value of a card depends on its type:

Type	Value
Numbered (2-10)	½
Royals (Jack, King, Queen)	1
Aces	2
Jokers	8

Double the value of a card if it has the same suit as the Check.

Whether or not the character succeeds, the cards in play are *discarded* and the story continues based on the *outcome* of the Check.

Special Checks

Magic Checks

Checks involving spells and rites work exactly the same as *normal* Checks, but the Difficulty level of the Check is determined by a spell's *impact* on physical reality.

Difficulty		Target
Trivial	A brief, trivial impact on reality.	½
Routine	Temporary alterations to reality: illusions, heating/cooling a room, telekinesis.	1
Hard	Lasting alterations to reality: changes to memory, healing, setting objects on fire.	2
Severe	Permanent alterations to reality: transmutation spells, creation or summoning spells, many alchemical and mecharcana rites.	4
Extreme	Effects that violate physical laws: portal spells, resurrection, invisibility.	8

Concentration

Most spells require *deep concentration* and *focus* to maintain an effect, but if a character *succeeds* their Check, they can maintain a spell for as long as they are physically able.

Casting Methods

The *Difficulty* of a spell can be reduced depending on how a character casts their spell.

- **Rituals** will always make a spell *much* easier to cast, but more potent effects require longer and more intricate rites.
- **Sacrifices**, either *material* or *living*, will reduce the Difficulty of the spell based on the personal *value* of the sacrifice. A raw diamond is a good sacrifice, but a character's *heirloom wedding band* is a *significant* sacrifice.
- **Totems or foci** can also make a spell easier to cast, but they are far less effective than *sacrifices*. These are often used in conjunction with other methods: Anatomancer ER mages will use *foci* in triage to *stabilize* a patient long enough to reach a surgeon.

GM Checks

The GM is free to call for Checks against their own *non-player* characters. Since the GM does *not* have a hand, the *success* or *failure* of their characters depends entirely on *drawing* a card from the deck.

Equipment Checks

Sometimes the *character* is better qualified than the *player* to pick their equipment. If it is *unclear* if a character has an essential piece of equipment, the player can ask for an *equipment* Check.

This is a *normal* Check, but on a *success*, the character finds the equipment they need.

Recovering Cards

The only way to restore lost cards is if a character takes the time to *rest*. The player narrates how their character attempts to rest, and the GM decides how many cards the player can recover.

Rest	Recovery
Pause. Enough time to eat a quick meal, take a few long deep breaths and stretch, or pack and badge a wound.	1 Card
Break. Stopping to have a good meal, take a nap in a hole, or stitch up wounds and allow the painkillers to do their job.	2 Cards
Sleep. The gold standard of rest, but the hardest to find. A deep, full REM sleep, with <i>no interruptions</i> .	4 Cards

The GM can change this amount if the character has any **Attributes** that could affect recovery.

Trauma Levels

Whenever a character is **injured**, the GM decides if the injury is severe enough to increase a character's *Trauma level*, and the number of levels a character gains. *Psychological damage* can also inflict Trauma. There are *five* trauma levels:

Trauma Levels

Hurt	The character feels the pain, but it is easy to ignore.
Strained	The pain is hard to ignore, but the character can still focus.
Impaired	The trauma is now <i>debilitating</i> . Increase the Difficulty for all Checks by one.
Incapacitated	The character has succumbed to their trauma and is either barely functioning or unconscious .
Crossroads	The character is at a pivotal moment in their story.

If a character is about to suffer Trauma from an injury, the player can make *one Check* for each level of Trauma the injury will inflict. A character can use their *Skills* or *Trades* for these Checks. **Each success reduces the Trauma from an injury by one level.**

Crossroads

When a character reaches a *Crossroads*, the player must decide if their character's story is going to continue.

If the player wants to **continue**, they must narrate how the character is able to survive, and the GM creates a *new Attribute* based on the character's injuries.

If the player **does not want to continue**, they must narrate how their character exits the story. **This does not have to be a death scene**, but they are no longer part of the story.

The player *always* gets a choice when deciding a *Crossroads*, even if an injury is *grievous*. There is **no limit** to the number of *Crossroads* a character can endure.

Treating Trauma

When a character's injuries are treated, the GM decides how many levels of Trauma are recovered based on the character's *injuries* and the kind of *treatment* they receive.

- Characters who are *Hurt* or *Strained* can recover with some *rest* and *basic aid*.
- *Impaired* or *Incapacitated* characters will need *professional* medical assistance.
- Characters who survive a *Crossroads* will require *significant* medical care.

Weapons And Armor

Weapons

Weapons will list the *types of injuries* it can inflict, along with how many **Trauma levels** each injury causes. The Trauma level is just a baseline and the GM can change this value.

Difficulty Ratings

When a player makes their Checks to reduce the Trauma inflicted by the weapon, this is the *initial Difficulty* level.

Attribute Modifiers

For hand weapons, a character's Attributes might increase the amount of *Trauma* a weapon inflicts.

Weapon	Injury Type	Difficulty	Trauma
Fists. Still the most popular fallback, especially with orcs and dwarves.	Blunt	Routine	1+Attributes
Combat Knife. The classic.	Cut	Routine	1+Attributes
	Stab	Hard	2+Attributes
Long Sword. The mainstay weapon of the Elven Nations.	Cut	Routine	4+Attributes
	Stab	Hard	4+Attributes
Spear. Also widely used by the Elven Nations.	Blunt	Routine	2+Attributes
	Stab	Severe	5+Attributes
Longbow. Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Elven Nations.	Piercing	Severe	4
9mm Pistol. Most civilian pistols.	Gunshot	Hard	4
.45 ACP Pistol. Heavier firepower with less armor penetration, but popular in civilian markets.	Gunshot	Severe	3
5.56mm Combat Rifle. The kind of rifles favored by human armies.	Gunshot	Severe	5
7.62mm Combat Rifle. These heavier rifles are favored by the militaries of the Orc Nations, but also by Bonethorne Port.	Gunshot	Severe	6
30.06 Sniper/Hunting Rifle. Used in both civilian and military arenas.	Gunshot	Severe	8
14.7mm Sniper Rifle. An anti-vehicle class of weapon used in many militaries.	Gunshot	Extreme	10
Hand Grenade. Now a common part of military equipment.	Explosive	Extreme	9

Armor

Protection Rating

An armor's **protection rating** is *subtracted* from any Trauma that a character suffers. The GM might change this rating based on what is attacking the armor and the condition of the armor.

Armor	Protection
Leather. Basic stuff that a lot of survivalists still wear.	1
Half-Plate. Steel chest armor that some orcs still use.	2
Elven Half-Plate. Magically enhanced steel chest armor.	3
Class IIa Kevlar. The kind of protection commonly given to watch members in major cities.	2
Class IIa KevFlex. Magically strengthened Kevlar, which makes it light enough to be woven into plain clothes. Worn by special watch members.	2
Combat Armor. Laminate cloth with a light steel plate backing. This is what is used by most militaries due to its low cost and <i>acceptable</i> protection.	2
KevFlex Combat Armor. Heavy KevFlex with ceramic inserts, which is rarely fielded by any military beyond Bonethorne Port and the Huxlon Republic.	5

Feedback

Thanks for picking up this game and taking a look! If you played in one of my playtests then *very extra* special thank you! *Diesel Empire* is in very early development, and I would absolutely love your feedback if you have any, especially if you decide to take this home and play it with your friends as the GM! Please send any feedback to jlee@uptoolategames.com.