

Project CHUPA

Version 0.10

The generic, modular RPG system with the cinematic feel!

Sponsored by the Dragon's Landing Podcast

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NOTE

Any phrases or characters appearing in **blue type**, show the changes or additions to the core rules between the previous version and the most current version. If you're looking for what's been ripped out – you're on your own.

CREDITS

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HISTORY

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December 15, 2005 – Version 0.03. Incorporates Keys and Secrets from *The Shadow of Yesterday*. Added Health Points, and more on Skill Resolution., some reorganizing of content and a Table of Contents.

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Introduction

What Is *DL CORE*?

DL CORE stands for the *Dragon's Landing Cinematic Open Role-playing Engine*. It is a set of core rules intended to be used as the foundation for other settings and systems to be built on. It was developed by the role-players on the Dragon's Landing Podcast forums to provide a system suited towards ROLE-playing and less towards ROLL-playing. We wanted a cinematic feel, meaning that, especially during combat, the game did not bog down into rolls and numbers, leaving each player enough time to get a drink, and make a snack run. This was not our only goal, however. We knew that characters should be central to the movement of the story, and they should be capable of heroic actions fitting in the grandest of Hollywood's movies and still focus on the needs and wants and pains of the character.

We wanted a system that could expand and contract to fit different styles of play and various settings, while still maintaining a consistent mechanism and familiar feel. This meant that we had to think of modules that could be snapped into play with ease. Not an easy task.

While the subconscious mind holds concepts from past RPG systems, we strove to be original. We threw crazy ideas against the wall, discussing them until we found ideas we all could pull behind. Then we reined them in and tested them, tweaking until they worked. To the best of our knowledge all of the ideas we ended up with are ours alone, with the exception of the Keys and Secrets, and the advancement system it used. During discussions, our ideas kept leaning towards what one of the designers called TSOY, *The Secrets of Yesterday*, an RPG system published under a Creative Commons License. When he posted the rules for Keys, the ideas clarified much of what we were looking for, and more.

This started as an experiment, to see if a group of disparate role-players, each bringing their own unique views and histories, could form something new and unique, something of value. During development, the fires of passion were lit. We hope it lights your imagination as well, and brings you many years of entertainment and vivid memories.

Using The Book

Since the project was designed with a "plug-and-play" approach in mind, we have split the rules into 5 distinct sections, to make whatever type of play you prefer easier to grasp.

ACT 1: BASIC RULES

This covers the basic rules, designed to get you up and playing as fast as possible. The rules here are very sparse and are perfect for one-shots and

convention play, as well as for those who want as few rules as possible.

ACT 2: ADVANCED RULES

Then we move on to more advanced rules, such as splitting the Attributes into Sub-Attributes, playing with individual Skills, and more. These rules are designed to be taken or left to meet the desires of your group, setting, or play style.

ACT 3: SETTING SPECIFICS

Now that you understand the rules, it's time to move into more setting specific rules. We'll look at a few simple world ideas and provide the rest you will need to add flavor. Of course, these are just one way to handle it. When designing a specific setting, feel free to craft your own.

ACT 4: THE LISTS

Collected in one spot for easy reference, you've got all of your lists of Skills, Secrets and Keys.

ACT 5: DESIGNER'S NOTES

Here we provide suggestions for crafting your own setting, as well as detailed looks into the reasoning behind our mechanics to help you craft the best, most consistent setting possible.

Act 1: Basic Rules

Act 1: Basic Rules covers the minimum amount of information needed to get started playing quickly. You don't need to whole book to play. It's not even recommended. The rules provided here are great for convention play, where you don't want to spend an hour covering how the system works, or for nights when some players are not available, but the rest still want to play something.

These rules are meant as an introduction to the Project CHUPA role-playing experience. It is up to your group how you use these rules. You might use these as the primary rules for your game, or scrap them completely in favor of the advanced rules. You might even find a few rules from the Advance Rules that you like and create your own, custom variant. You are encouraged to experiment and find what works best for your group and the way you play.

Attributes

Attributes are intended to demonstrate who the character is when they were born and how they have developed both mentally and physically since then. Three Attributes form the core of the system: Physical, Mental, and Social. A fourth Attribute will vary from system to system. In a fantasy setting it might be Magic, which would represent the inherent part of the character that can manipulate magic. In other systems it might be The Fold – the ability to fold space and help propel the ships through the final frontier. In the case that a fourth attribute is used, it should be an attribute inherent to all the characters in the game, even if some characters may never develop that skill. Some systems may not require a fourth Attribute.

PHYSICAL - This is a measurement of everything related to your character's physical body. It measures raw muscular strength, agility and coordination, health, and resistance to disease and damage.

MENTAL - This is a measurement of everything related to your character's mind. This includes how smart they are, how quickly they can grasp new concepts, and their ability to adapt to new situations. It also measures how much resistance

they have to other people's manipulations, pressure, or bullying, as well as their determination and willpower.

SOCIAL – This is a measurement of the character's ability to interact in social events. It includes how outgoing they are, how well they can handle criticism, and their ability to lie without being detected, sell snake oil, or even interact in diplomatic circles.

SPIRITUAL – This fourth Attribute is given as a default value. It is likely to change from game system to game system. It might refer to the character's ability to cast magic, clerical or arcane. It might be a character's ability to use psionic powers. It can be whatever your system or world needs it to be.

Attributes have a maximum value of 10 for normal humans.

OPTION: ATTRIBUTE DESCRIPTIONS

In the Basic Rules, Attributes provide a very broad idea of the character. They do not give any specifics about how powerful that Attribute might be, or with how much finesse the character can use it. Many times, this is much broader than we

would like, but we do not want to get into the specifics that Sub-Attributes would provide. Enter Attribute Descriptions. These are intended to be used as a step between the Basic and Advanced Rules and should not be used when Sub-Attributes are present.

Attribute Descriptions are a single short phrase, no more than a handful of words in length, that tell us what the character's strength in that Attribute comes into play. Basically, if you had to describe that Attribute in words only (no numbers,) what would you say? Perhaps your character does heavy physical labor at a factory

that requires him to lift 100 bags all day long. You might call his Physical Attribute "Strong from work." Maybe your character is very blunt, almost to the point of being abrasive. His Social Attribute might be described as "Too truthful," or "Blunt and too the point."

There are two types of Attribute Descriptions, and both are required: Strengths and Weaknesses. Strengths gain the character a +1 bonus when the Director agrees that the Description is applicable. A Weakness causes a -1 penalty when the Director agrees the Description is applicable.

Skill Groups

Skills are grouped together into Skill Groups to represent a collection of skills that should improve together. When a character raises the level in a skill, it has the possibility of affecting the other skills within the group and raising the abilities of all the skills by raising the Skill Mastery level. Individual Skills are not used in the Basic Rules. For details, see Act 2: Advanced Rules.

Groups are designed to make getting into the game quick and easy. They cover broad topics and are perfect all by themselves for one-shot games, conventions, and new players. They can be used either with or without the individual skills in each group. For players and systems that desire a little more complexity and realism, the individual skills are detailed in Skill Descriptions, below.

While system designers and world builders are encouraged to change the names of the groups to fit the settings, the default skill groups are:

General – The General Skill Group is a measure of all of the knowledge and abilities that every thinking creature shares. It include how to ride a horse, or drive space cruiser, your ability to win at poker, or woo the lasses with your song and harp. You can also win riches through your swimming or wrestling matches, notice details most would miss in your surroundings, and give great speeches in the halls of Rome. And

let's not forgot intimidating the local judge to your way of seeing things.

Knowledge – Every profession has its specialized niches of knowledge. The Knowledge Skill Group is their tome. Inside this Skill Group you'll find the knowledge of secret societies, the rise and fall of various cultures, how to care for your pets and avoid the wild animals that refuse to be domesticated, as well as the Machiavellian turnings of the legal codes and detailed instructions for the use and operation of the latest technology.

Survival – Fighting is inevitable when heroes are involved. The Survival Skill Group encompasses all forms of combat, whether martial arts, swords, guns, lasers or spaceships. It also includes the skills and knowledge necessary to survive in the world's many inhospitable climates.

Skullduggery – The skills of the con artist, street magician and wily rogues are grouped here. Breaking and Entering, cracking safes, sleight of hand, and the knowledge of surviving in the rough and tumble back streets and alleys are all found in the Skullduggery Skill Group.

Supernormal – Mighty Wizards, Wiccan priestesses, sharp-eyed Mentalists, and brazen Super-Heroes all share one thing in common: they have abilities most normal people would call

supernatural, paranormal, or just plain super. The Supernormal Skill Group is a measure of how much they know about their powers and how they work, as well as their ability to sense other supernormals, and manipulate their powers.

Skill Groups have a maximum score of 10 for normal humans.

All characters are allowed to try to use a Skill Group, even when they have no proficiency in it.

OPTION: SKILL GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

In the Basic Rules, Skill Groups provide a very broad idea of the character's abilities. They do not give any specifics about good they might be with individual Skills in that Skill Group. Many times, this is much broader than we would like, but we do not want to get into the specifics that Skills would provide. Enter Skill Group Descriptions. These are intended to be used as a step between the Basic and Advanced Rules and should not be used when individual Skills are present.

Skill Group Descriptions are a single short phrase, no more than a handful of words in length, that tell us what specialty that character has in the Skill Group. Basically, if you had to describe that Skill Group in words only (no numbers,) what would you say? Perhaps the character is a black belt in Karate, then the Survival Description might be "Martial Artist." Or maybe the character has a hard time not noticing things that go on around them, even when they wish they could tune everything out, then they might have a General Description of "Always Aware."

There are two types of Skill Group Descriptions, and both are required: Strengths and Weaknesses. Strengths gain the character a +1 bonus when the Director agrees that the Description is applicable. A Weakness causes a -1 penalty when the Director agrees the Description is applicable.

Mastery Levels

As a character gets better at a Skill Group, their chance at success naturally raises. In the game, that means you get extra dice to roll, keeping the single highest die roll. Characters start with a Skill Group score of zero. This Mastery Level is called Novice, and the player gets 1d10 to roll for Skill Group Checks. Every third Advancement in the Skill Group, the Mastery Level raises to the next level.

MASTERY LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

Novice - This is where the character starts play. It is the everyday man trying to do everyday things.

Apprentice - An Apprentice has enough skills that he is capable of performing those skills better than the Novice, but can still fail miserably.

Journeyman - The Journeyman will reach success more often than the Apprentice and is quite a bit more successful than the Novice. His skills are becoming a natural part of him. While rare, failures are still possible.

Master - The Master has become one with his skills. He knows them like he was born with them, and can wield them with superb success. Only in vary rare occasions will the Master fail.

Table 1: Mastery Levels and Die Bonus

Mastery Level	Required Score	Dice Rolled
Novice	0	1d10
Apprentice	3	2d10
Journeyman	6	3d10
Master	9	4d10

Skill Group Mastery is expensive, as only time and practice can bring a character to the point where their skills are a natural extension of themselves. It costs 5 Advancements to raise the Skill Group by 1 point. If individual Skills are being used, refer to **Mastery Levels And Skills** in Act 2: Advanced Rules.

Backstory

Backstory is the sum of events that happened to the characters before the game started. Many times, players will write out a general history of the character, complete with the most important events that made that character who they are today. Many times, this is just fine, and the player can spend points through their character to make the numbers match the backstory. Some times, though, we are playing after a long day of work and are tired enough that our muse is not working as well as we might wish. Or perhaps you want to get a game running on short notice. In cases like these, we provide archetypes you can use to build your character very quickly. These Backstories are divided into four Life Stages. They are: Childhood, Education, Passion, and Career.

To build a character as fast as possible, simply select one Backstory from each Life Stage, apply the bonuses provided, and you are almost done. All that is left is to customize your character with a few points in Skill Groups and Attributes.

By default, the rules assume the base character race is Human. All Human characters get a +1 bonus in all Attributes: Physical, Mental, Social, and Spiritual. If the system that you are playing has other races, spend the Attribute Points as defined in that Race.

Each player also gets four points to spend in their Skill Groups however they wish. This allows a player to customize the character to fit their vision a little bit more. It also helps to ensure that two characters that have followed the same sequence of Backstory will not be clones of each other.

It should be noted that using Backstories is not a required method to generate character, but it is a very effective method for sparking creativity and quickly building an interesting character. If a player decides not to use Backstory, they may spend the given points however they feel. See the Character Creation for details.

Backstory Descriptions

CHILDHOOD

Academic Prodigy - Either through nature or other means, the character is born with an incredible talent for certain skills. This is combined with a prodigious intellect.

Mental +1, Physical -1, Knowledge +1

Child Laborer – The character is put to work in some fashion, either because their family requires every penny, or possibly to generate income for the lazy guardians. Either way, life is hard, but the character learns to take their knocks early, along with an understanding of appropriate machinery (looms, presses, forges, etc.)

Physical +1, Knowledge +1

Created – The character was brought to life in some manner outside of the normal mechanisms. This includes vat-grown clone warriors or beings summoned from another dimension.

Physical +1, Survival +1

Mercantile – The character's parents were traveling merchants, either from merchant guild, or peddlers. Regardless, the character spends a lot of their childhood traveling and learning to communicate with others.

Social +1, General +1

Military Brat – The character grew up attached to a military unit. They become accustomed to the discipline of a military life, and learned the basics of warfare.

Physical +1, Survival +1

Monastic – The character was raised in a cloistered manner, possibly in a religious environment.

Spiritual +1, Knowledge +1

Mystical – The character is born into a mystical blood line. Perhaps the blood of dragons flows in their veins, or their ancestors consorted with daemons. For whatever reason, the forces of magic flow easily with them.

Spiritual +1, Supernormal +1

Natural – The character is brought up in harmony with nature, possibly with a tribal or aboriginal group. Their parents might be outdoors people, or they might live in a rural environment.

Social +1, Survival +1

Orphanage – The character was raised in an orphanage, which might have been a run-down state home or a private home. Money is scarce, but the character is taught the basics of learning. These children learn to work with others to achieve their goals.

Social +1, General +1

Royal – The character's parents or direct bloodline are royalty. This puts the character in a favorable position socially, but may bring responsibilities later in life.

Social +1, General +1

Schooled – The character's parents are regular folks. Their childhood consists of climbing trees, getting into a little trouble, and generally being average.

Mental +1, General +1

Street Urchin – Growing up in the streets, the character had no permanent guardian or family. They became tough and wily enough to survive rough nights, often relying on contacts.

Physical +1, Skullduggery +1

EDUCATION

Academic – The character enters full-time academia. This could be as a willing student or cloistered against their will. They may serve as a librarian, scribe, or in the service of more mysterious masters.

Mental +1, Knowledge +1

Criminal – The character receives their early training from criminals, likely as part of a gang or other organized group, or working on their own. They may be a thug, con-artist, burglar, or belong to some other nefarious profession.

Physical +1, Skullduggery +1

Laborer – The character works diligently through their apprenticeship. They could work in construction, in a factory, or in agriculture.

Physical +1, General +1

Military – The character learns with a group of warriors or as part of an army. They may work as a squire, help with the horses, or be involved in drilling or weapons work.

Physical +1, Survival +1

Mystic – The character's education was provided by an organization or individual that has strong connections with the supernatural. This could be a coven of witches, a strange alien benefactor, or a group of zealous cultists.

Spiritual +1, Supernormal +1

Socialite – The character spends all of their time partying and otherwise enjoying themselves. Such characters may well go on to be productive members of society, but might also stay this way.

Social +1, General +1

PASSION

Dilettante – The character is a social creature, finding recreation in the company of others, be it in a quiet dinner party or a raucous evening in a crowded tavern.

Social +1, General +1

Knowledge – The character thirsts for knowledge, spending their free time reading or studying.

Mental +1, Knowledge +1

Occult – The character desires knowledge of things beyond mortal ken, finding dark lore and searching the shadows.

Spiritual +1, Supernormal +1

Sports – The character enjoys one, or several, sporting activities and is proficient in their chosen sport.

Physical +1, General +1

Survivalist – The character enjoys outdoor pursuits, or possibly is a student of combat in one for or another. Armchair generals, hunters, martial arts enthusiasts, and others fit into the category.

Physical +1, Survival +1

CAREERS

Academic – A character specializing in knowledge of some sort. Could be a professor, scientist, or sage.

Mental +3, Knowledge +2

Con Artist – Quick banter and swaying others to their cause are the hallmarks of this class. Could be a demagogue, a trickster, bard, or even salesman.

Social +2, Mental +1, Skullduggery +1, General +1

Diplomat – A character who specializes in dealing with others, often of different cultures or races. Could be a diplomat, an interpreter, or anthropologist.

Mental +2, Social +1, Knowledge +1, General +1

Entertainer – A character who earns their living entertaining others. Includes singers, dancers, professional gamblers, bards and the like.

Mental +1, Social +2, General +1, Knowledge +1

Investigator – The investigator joins academic promise with a nose for trouble. This could represent a government agent, a detective, journalist, or a whip-wielding archeologist.

*Physical +1, Mental +1, Social +1, General +1,
Knowledge +1*

Laborer – A character whose living is made from hard manual labor, street gangs, factory workers, chain gangs. Can also represent professional athletes.

Physical +2, Social +1, Survival +1, General +1

Muscle – Strong arm tactics are this character's weapon of choice. Without specific military training, the character gets through life with a rough and tumble approach. Bikers, thugs, militia, or bouncers fit into this category.

Physical +2, Social +1, Survival +2, Skullduggery +1

Mystic Warrior – A warrior who has supernormal abilities influencing his martial abilities. Could include Paladins, mystical martial artists, or energy-sword wielding mystics.

Physical +2, Spiritual +1, Survival +1, Supernormal +1

Occultist – A specialist in secrets and forgotten lore.

Mental +1, Spiritual +2, Knowledge +1, Supernormal +1

Soldier – Whether a modern infantryman, a musketeer, or an archer, the character spends their time training in the arts of warfare.

Physical +2, Social +1, Survival +1, General +1

Tactician – A military career where brains are as, if not more, important than brawn. Includes command positions as well as special forces and other military specialists.

Physical +1, Mental +2, Survival +1, General +1

Thief – A catch all career for those whose careers depend on stealth and agility. This could represent a professional art thief, a street smart burglar, or a well-trained infiltration agent.

*Physical +1, Mental +1, Social +1, Skullduggery +1,
General +1*

Secrets

Where Attributes define the physical and mental properties of the character, and Skills represent all of the abilities they have learned over the years, Secrets and Keys fill the gap and venture into the darker, more mysterious and wonderful aspects of the character.

What Are Secrets?

Secrets are special abilities a character can learn that augment abilities. These are often preternatural, sometimes magical, and always better than normal. In order to use Secrets, Energy Points are spent, meaning that Secrets can be used a limited number of times before the character's Energy is restored.

Secrets can be better explained with an example:

Secret of the Hidden Pocket - This character is adept at hiding objects on her person. No matter how carefully searched the character has been, she may pull an inexpensive, small (hand-sized) item off her person with a successful Sleight ability check. There is no need for the player to have written this item on the character sheet previously.

Cost: 1 Mental Energy.

Some Secrets will be open for all characters to take. Other Secrets are "closed" – they are only available to certain races or professions.

Keys

What Are Keys?

Keys are the primary method of increasing a character's abilities. These are goals, emotional ties, or vows a character has. By bringing these into the story, the player gains experience points (XP) she can use to advance the character, increasing Attributes and Skills, or learning new Secrets and Keys.

Again, an example will illustrate this better:

Key of Conscience - Your character has a soft spot for those weaker than their opponents. Gain 1 XP every time your character helps someone who cannot help themselves. Gain 2 XP every time your character defends someone with might who is in danger and cannot save them-

selves. Gain 5 XP every time your character takes someone in an unfortunate situation and changes their life to where they can help themselves.

Buyoff: Ignore a request for help.

The buyoff shown above is a special bit about Keys. Whenever a player has a character perform the action shown in one of the buyoffs, the player can (this is not mandatory) erase the Key and gain 10 XP. Once bought off, a character can never have the same Key again.

Unlike Secrets, the number of Keys a character can have is limited. A character can have no more than five Keys at one time.

Equipment

Equipment in Project CHUPA is handled a little differently than in traditional RPG's. There are no huge equipment lists where the player is forced to browse through for an hour writing down each individual item the character has, calculating cost and weight. Instead, Equipment is very flexible. Since the damage done with most items is in the range of 1-3 points, the player writes down primarily the special items they have. They can also write down anything that is necessary to make their character's concept come to life.

Peter the Knight might have just his dappled-grey stallion, the horse's insect-like iron armor, the father's sword, his shield with the Raven's crest painted on it, and his plate mail with rows of sharp iron studs. They are listed on his character sheet because they help define the image of the character. Notice that it is not just listed as "a sword" but "his father's sword." This implies a history, and sentimentality to the character.

Equipment Types

Equipment is categorized into a few different types to differentiate between their usage and abilities, and the type of resources they require to use.

EQUIPMENT

These are mundane devices that characters use to perform certain actions. From swords to super-computers. Some items maybe required to perform certain actions (like an electron microscope to examining the molecular structure of an alien substance) or simply provide some situational bonus (using a sword against an unarmed opponent). They do not require any resources to be used.

FOCUS

This is a device through which a Secret is employed (the awe ability of King Arthur when holding Excalibur, for example.) The power of a

Focus lies in its ability to amplify a character's Secret. Some secrets may not function unless the character has a specific Focus.

ITEM

A device with a self-contained Secret. The methods for 'powering' the item's Secrets could be one of the following options:

Internal power supply - the Item has its own pool of resources that are used to activates its powers. This could be charges, uses, or ammo. It is part of the Item and stays with the item. Anybody using the Item has access to this pool of resources and can therefore use the Secrets of the item. If the item is stolen, taken, or given to another it will be fully functional for that, or any, individual.

Attunement - the character wishing to use the item must pay some resource in order to attune it to them. Attunement could be learning the word or phrase to activate the ring, for example. Thereafter they may use the Secrets contained within the Item (possibly by spending their own resources instead of some of the internal power supply). Attunement may be limited to one user or may be open to any number of users. If limited to one user it can not be used by another character, unless it is attuned to the new character, in which case the previous owner loses their Attunement with the Item and must Attune with it again to use it. If open to other users (or other type or class of user, i.e. 'pure of heart') then it will function as mentioned for any character fitting the proper description.

Equipment Quality

Poor quality equipment imposes a -2 penalty to all rolls involving that equipment. Normal quality does not have any bonuses or penalties. Master quality equipment provides a +2 bonus to all rolls using it.

Character Creation

Purchasing Attributes

During character creation, a player has a set number of points to spread through the Attributes. These points are not distributed in the Sub-Attributes. If the system is using only the three core Attributes, the player receives eight (8) points. If the system is using the full four Attributes, the player receives ten (10) points. These points may be placed however the player desires.

OPTIONAL METHOD:

4 Attributes - For quicker character creation, the player may put 4 points in the primary Attribute, 3 in their secondary Attribute, 2 in the tertiary Attribute and 1 in the remaining Attribute.

3 Attributes - For quicker character creation, the player may put 4 points in the primary Attribute, 3 in their secondary Attribute, 1 in the remaining Attribute.

POWER LEVELS AND CHARACTERS:

In some worlds or systems, a higher power level will be desired. In this case the system, setting or Director is encouraged to assign 15, or even 20 points to attributes.

Purchasing Sub-Attributes

For each Attribute, the player has three times (3x) the number of points in the Attribute to distribute among the three Sub-Attributes. These points may be placed however they desire. Repeat for each Attribute.

Purchasing Skill Groups

If individual Skills are not being used, players are given four (4) points to spread among your Skill Groups. Different systems and settings may provide a different number of points based upon the power level of the world.

Purchasing Skills

When playing with individual Skills, a character begins play with 20 points to spend in their

various skills. This may vary based upon the setting, system or Director.

Purchasing Secrets and Keys

Before play, players can choose one Secret and one Key for their characters.

Further Advances

Lastly, players start with a number of advances (chances to improve) for their characters. This is determined by the group before play, depending on how powerful characters are to be at the beginning of the game. The standard number is five. To figure out how to spend them, read below.

Conflicts

A role-playing session without conflict of various kinds is just plain boring. If we can't get into a good argument or fight, or pull a fast one of the local curmudgeon, something is lacking. Just like reading a story, part of the excitement in RPG's comes from living through dangers and triumphs that we will never see in real life. It might be racing through the streets, chasing the burglar on your Harley, or finding our way through the maze of Roman politics, or even defeating the evil Overlord through cunning, guts and luck.

Put simply, conflicts happen whenever one person wants something and someone else opposes them. They can be a fight, a verbal argument, trying to squeeze the proper amount of venom out of snake's fang for a potion, or trying to wrest your opponent's control of magic away from them. Conflicts can be associated with each of the four Attributes. They each form a different type of conflict, but all of them are resolved in the same way.

Conflict Scope

Every group has different elements of the game they like to focus on. Some groups like to get deep in the specifics of every combat, while other groups might like to detail only the conflicts that are most crucial to the story line, speeding through other, less important conflicts, in a single roll. Project CHUPA handles this with ease. Following, you'll find our recommendations for how to handle conflicts, and how much detail to go into. Remember, though, that the reason we role-play is to have fun, and each group should feel free to find the level of detail they prefer.

INCONSEQUENTIAL CONFLICTS

The first level of conflict are all of the smaller conflicts that do not have any direct impact on the overall story. These could be haggling over the price of a horse, or mowing through the vast battalion of orcs that stand between you and your true enemy. These conflicts are handled with a single roll for the overall conflict. They often do not present much in the way of danger to the characters.

IMPORTANT CONFLICTS

Important Conflicts are those conflicts where it does have a small impact on how the story progresses, but not so crucial that the story would end if this conflict was lost. These types of conflict should definitely hold the possibility of danger and death, but don't necessarily need every, little blow to be detailed. In the case of multiple opponents, you might separate each opponent into their own, individual conflict.

CRUCIAL CONFLICTS

These are conflicts that are vital to the story. The chance of death, if a physical conflict, is very real. The iconic example of this is when the heroes finally reach the primary Villain. Every strategy the players and villain can use to put their opponent off-balance should be another conflict. Every blow might be detailed, depending on the group.

Energy Points

Energy Points represent the character's physical, mental, social and spiritual (or magical, etc) energy. Whether we are physically exhausted, hurt, or simply mentally drained from hours of magical research, our current ability to perform is hampered in nearly everything that we do. All of these forms of exhaustion and pain are abstracted into Energy Points.

There are five Energy Pools: one pool for each of the Attributes, and a Core Energy Pool. Physical Energy shows how many physical wounds we can withstand and how exhausted our body might be. Mental Energy is a measure of how alert or drained we are mentally. When our brain is exhausted, clear thought becomes difficult and mistakes are made. When we're surrounded by people and trying to put up a good face, we turn to Social Energy to see how long we can keep up the charade. Using magic, or praying for long periods of time, among many other things, can deplete our Spiritual Energy.

FINDING OUR MAXIMUM ENERGY POINTS

Core Energy is the total of all of the Attribute Scores. It is the closest measure to pure health that Project CHUPA has. It is the sum of all Attribute Scores, even when Sub-Attributes are being used.

Each Energy Pool is equal to the Resistance Score of the applicable Attribute. A character with a Mental Resistance of 3 has a Mental Energy Pool of 3.

This value increases whenever an Attribute or Resistance score is raised, or through bonuses given by items, magic, technology, etc.

WOUND LEVELS

Each situation or item will have a Wound Level generally ranging from 1 to 3. For example, the Director might decide that the importance of the issue involved in the Roman Senate argument was crucial enough to your character that losing the argument would have a Social Wound Level of 3.

WOUND PENALTIES

When an Attribute Energy Pool has reached zero, the character suffers a -3 to all actions using that Attribute.

There is no penalty for losing individual Core Energy Points. They are a measure of how much life the character has in them. Of course, if they are ever allowed to reach zero then bad things happen. See *Death and Dying*, below.

RECOVERING ENERGY POINTS

Energy Pools can be replenished in several ways. Special situations may arise where your Director would award you Energy Points as a bonus for success.

Rest - Eight hours of sleep will recover a number of Energy Points equal to your applicable Resistance Score. This applies only to the four Attribute-related Energy Pools. With eight hours of sleep, Core Energy is restored in an amount equal to the Physical Resistance Score.

For example, Johan has taken 8 points of Core Energy damage. He has a Physical Resistance of

5. After eight hours sleep, he has recovered 5 points of Core Energy, plus the other four Energy Pools are completely refreshed. He now has a Core Energy score of 3.

Awards - If the character has recently suffered a tremendous Mental, Social or Spiritual setback that resulted in a loss of Energy Points, the Director may award a number of Energy Points equal to the applicable Resistance score if the character experiences a large success in that same area.

Taking our Roman Senate as an example: our Senator was trying to convince the Senate that action should be taken on a highly controversial subject. Being shot down, he lost 3 Social Energy Points because of his loss in Social confidence. Later that day, our Senator discovers another plan of his has come to fruition in a surprisingly good way. Since he has a Social Resistance of 5, the Director can elect to award him up to 5 Social Energy Points because his confidence in his Social skills have been restored. In this case, the Director would probably limit the award by matching the 3 Health Points that he lost. If our Senator had only had a Social Resistance of 2, then he could have only used 2 of the 3 Energy Points that he was awarded. The remaining Energy Point would be permanently lost.

A character's Energy Points can never be higher than their applicable Resistance score, even if an award or rest would put them above that number. Any remaining points are unusable, and therefore lost.

Healing Scenes – In order to recover Attribute Energy points between scenes, our character must make a Healing Scene. This is a simple narrative that the player makes showing how their character got their confidence or Energy back. This will fully refresh one Energy Pool. Between scenes, a player must choose a single Energy Pool to refresh. The other Pools are left untouched and must be refreshed between other scenes, or by Resting, or through Awards. Core Energy can not be healed though Healing Scenes.

A character has spent hours poring over complex mathematical formulas trying to find the safest ritual to banish the daemon prince for good. He knows that his results are crucial to everyone's salvation, and has wagered, and lost, all of his Mental Energy points. The calculations were broken off as the party was attacked by some of the daemon's minions. Because of this, he has also lost both Physical Energy and Spiritual Energy. He is exhausted and needs to take a break. Between scenes, the player describes how the character stretches out and then folds themselves into a meditative state to refresh their Mental Energy. The Director agrees that this would be a fitting way for the character to recover, and the character's Mental Energy Pool is completely refreshed, though their Physical and Spiritual are not.

The fighter in the party is exhausted, too, but their exhaustion is primarily physical. The player narrates a Healing Scene where the player forgets about the weariness and plays a few rounds of dice with the rest of the party, recovering his Physical Energy Pool. Another option for him might have been a good soak in a salted bath, easing sore muscles and allowing him to relax.

DEATH AND DYING

When a character reaches zero Core Energy Points, he falls unconscious, and could be considered dead at the Director's discretion.

Most often, dying will be the result of a failed conflict where the players and the Director agreed upon the terms. This allows the players to choose to make their deaths matter. It might be a sacrifice to save their party, or it might be the result of a specific spiritual ritual or quest that ends in the character's transcendence.

Frames of Time

While the system is designed to be flexible, frequently a reference to how long a conflict lasts, or a spell effect lasts. To handle this, we use the following terms for defining time.

Series - The over arching story for the game, synonymous with a campaign in other systems, made up of one or more Stories.

Story - A self contained adventure with a beginning, middle and end. It may take several Episodes to complete.

Episode - A single playing session.

Scene - A series of character Actions that all take place in the same location.

Action - A variable length of time that allows a character to perform some task.

Handling Conflict

STATING YOUR INTENT

When a conflict has reared it's ugly head, the first step is for the player to tell the Director what they're trying to accomplish and how they are trying to do that. They should make sure to tell what motivations are behind it. It is two very different tasks to dance with the Princess with the intent of impressing her father with your etiquette, or dancing with the intent to seduce her. Both situations would require a different set of Skills and Attributes to be used.

Skills are not tied directly to a specific Sub-Attribute. A situation often will be able to be solved using several different approaches, and the Director, paying attention to the player's description of how they want to accomplish the task, will have the flexibility to choose the best one, or to modify the player's choice.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE TERMS

Once the player has stated their intent, the Director states the results for both success and failure. Directors are encouraged to make failure more than "No, you don't succeed." Instead, the failure result should set the player up for more difficulties.

BARTERING THE TERMS

Often, what the Director states for success or failure are not what the players had in mind. In this case, they have one chance to barter for

different results. After hearing that they will do only 1 point of Physical Energy to their opponent, the player might want to try going for a more difficult shot for more damage. Of course, with more damage comes a larger penalty for failure. The player is encouraged to be creative with their suggested terms for failure. A good penalty for failure is often one that will provide more role-playing opportunities in the future, like a scar that marks him permanently. When trying for more damage, the player can not reduce the cost of failure, but might be able to change the way the failure affects them. As always, the Director has the final approval for the success and failure terms.

THE ROLL

Once the terms have been set, the player makes a Skill Check against the assigned Difficulty Range to determine their success. Difficulty Ranges are listed in the table below. Skill checks are resolved by rolling 1d10 and adding the value of the Skill and the relevant Attribute or Sub-Attribute, plus any other bonuses that may be appropriate, such as for higher-quality tools or materials being used.

Lt. Johnson needs to get his men across the small chasm that blocks their path to safety. He sees two options available to him. He can either use his Technology skill combined with Mental Finesse to design and build a bridge with cut branches and vines, or use Technology + Physical Power to find the right tree to topple, while understanding where he needs to break it to have it fall in the correct place and not fall into the chasm. Since the enemy is closing in hard on their position, he decides that toppling the tree is the only realistic option.

His Physical Power score is a 3, and his Sciences Skill is a 4 (Apprentice.) So he rolls 2d10k1 + 3 + 4. (2d10 because of his Apprentice Mastery level, 3 for Physical Power and 4 for Technology.) He rolls the dice and gets a 5 and an 8. He keeps the single highest result (8), adds his skill and attribute values and has a total of 15. If he would not have had any Mastery Levels in Technology,

he would have rolled 1d10, gotten the five, and had a result of 12 (5 + 3 + 4.)

This resulting number is compared to the Difficulty Number the Director has assigned the task. If it equals, or is greater than the Difficulty Number, the skill check is a success. If it is lower than the assigned Difficulty, the roll is a failure.

If the highest value on the dice is a one (1), then the Director is encouraged to find something bad that might happen because of the roll. It might not happen until the next round, or it might not become apparent until farther in the future.

Lt. Johnson successfully makes the tree-bridge, but rolled a one (1) on both of his dice. While the result is successful, the Director might decide that he did not judge the sturdiness of the tree as good as he should have. The tree has a hairline crack in the center of it now, resulting from the impact of the landing, and will collapse if enough weight is put on it. The Director secretly rolls 1d10 and gets a 6. He decides that when the sixth man is crossing, the tree snaps.

Table 3: Difficulty Ranges

Simple	1-8
Easy	9-11
Medium	12-15
Taxing	16-19
Daunting	20-24
Heroic	25-30

TAKING WOUNDS

When a character receives a wound from the conflict, they have a choice whether to take that wound cost from the Core Energy Pool, or from the specific Energy Pool they were using for the conflict. This allows for characters to choose where damage gets placed based on what they think will be happening in the near future.

Lt. Johnson waited for his men to cross the makeshift bridge. The enemies are rushing towards him so he crosses. The tree

cracks, and is barely holding itself up, but spilling him over the edge. He succeeds at his conflict roll, allowing him to catch a branch and avoid falling into the rushing river below. However, he wrenches his arm, taking 1 point of Energy damage. At this point, he can choose where to pull the damage from. Since the roll was based upon

Physical Finesse, which is at 1 from previous conflicts, he chooses to take the point from his Core Energy where he still has over half of his points left. If he had taken the damage from Physical Energy, he would have been at zero and suffered a -3 on all future Physical-based conflicts.

Character Advancement

Experience Points

Experience Points (XP) represent knowledge, insight, or other experience that improves the character. Experience is awarded at the end of each Episode, unless the Director chooses to award them more or less frequently. Experience can be earned through the use of Keys. Directors are also encouraged to award 1-5 XP for excellent role-playing – especially when the role-playing situation might hurt the character -- or for fantastic ideas and solutions during the game. These bonuses are generally handed out as they occur, since this encourages more role-playing from everyone involved.

Experience can be spent to buy advances to raise Attributes and Skills, or buy new Secrets and Keys. The advancement table is found under the Character Development section earlier in the book.

SPENDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

During the game, each player character will get experience points (XP) for meeting the player's goals for that character's story and the Director's goals for the overall story. These experience points are converted to advances, usually at a rate of five XP to one advance. Each advance that you get can be banked toward improving your character's Sub-Attributes, Skills, Secrets, and Keys. The costs are found in the table below.

Table 4: Advancement Costs

	Advances
Increase a Skill Group 1 point (if Skills are not being used)	5
Increase a Skill 1 point	1
Increase an Attribute 1 point (if Sub-Attributes are not being used, even if only for that Attribute.)	5
Increase a Sub-Attribute 1 point	3
Add a Secret	1
Add a Key	1

You can never increase the same Skill Group, Skill, or Sub-Attribute twice in a row. You need to increase something else in between. In addition, you cannot buy two Secrets or two Keys in a row.

THE TRAINING MONTAGE

To spend Advancements, the player must narrate a Training Montage. This is a short description of the event that is this inspiration for what they are spending their Advancements on. This might be a flashback to a pivotal event that made them start learning this skill, or Key. It might be something that happened "off-screen" that helped them develop their current skill or gave them their Secret. The player should have fun and be creative.

Act 2: Advanced Rules

Sub-Attribute Scores

Each attribute contains three Sub-Attributes: Power, Finesse, and Resistance. The definitions are intended to provide a complete, yet broad, description of the Attribute.

POWER

The Power Sub-Attribute is a measure of how strongly you can affect your surroundings.

- **Physical Power** represents not only raw strength, but also a knowledge of how to swing the weapon properly and create the best impact. You can use it to shove large boulders out of the way, pry open treasure chests, or wrestle your opponent to the ground.
- **Mental Power** is your raw intellect. It is used when learning new information from books, trying to invent a new item (this could also be Mental Finesse), recalling a specific piece of obscure information, or trying to follow complex instructions to perform an unfamiliar task (like trying to perform surgery while reading a medical manual.)

- **Social Power** is your charisma, or the power of your personality. This will effect people's initial reaction to you. It can be useful when trying to intimidate someone, and it can determine the outcome of negotiations where you are basing your actions on the strength of your character.
- **Spiritual Power** is how close you are to your god, the potency of your magic or your mind, and your ability to use those special abilities with a powerful, direct effect.

FINESSE

Finesse represents the creative, intuitive, and agile properties of the character.

- **Physical Finesse** shows how nimble and agile you are. It may be used for threading a needle, climbing a broken scaffold, or tumbling through dangerous traps.
- **Mental Finesse** is your ability to think creatively. It may be used to write a song, play games that involve intricate strategy,

form a battle plan, or solve complex riddles

- **Social Finesse** is your ability to manipulate people and situations. It is used when trying to talk your way out of difficult situations, overpower an opponent in an argument with fast-talking, or manipulate people's actions or reactions without their notice.
- **Spiritual Finesse** is your intuitive ability to understand your special powers. It might be used for creating new spells in the heat of the battle, understanding what powers were used to cause the damage laid out before you, or performing complex magical rituals correctly.

RESISTANCE

Unlike Power and Finesse, which are active Sub-Attributes that can be used to make things happen, Resistance is more reactive and used to measure your ability to resist effects that other characters, yourself, or nature are throwing at you.

- **Physical Resistance** shows your resistance to poisons and colds, and is a good indicator of the character's general health.
- **Mental Resistance** is the ability to think for yourself and not be influenced by actions around you. It can also be your ability to ward off supernormal attacks that might try to influence your way of thinking.
- **Social Resistance** measures your characters ability to resist the manipulations of others. It can help you detect a lie, or see through the public face a character may wear into the private demons that haunt them.
- **Spiritual Resistance** is your ability to protect yourself against supernormal powers that are used against you. Since most supernormal powers have a price to be paid, this can also measure how well you can stand against the cost of your powers.

Sub-Attributes have a maximum value of 10.

In some settings, dividing some – or all – of the Attributes into Sub-Attributes may be undesirable. By removing the Sub-Attributes for one of the Attributes, that Attribute's influence can be downplayed. In a setting that has very little combat, for example, you could just have the Physical Attribute with no Sub-Attributes, and all rolls would use the Attribute score, instead of a Sub-Attribute score.

Raising Attributes

When Sub-Attributes are not being used, either for any of the Attributes or for that Attribute only, the Attribute score can be raised by spending the appropriate number of advancements. See the Advancement Cost table above.

Attributes are raised whenever the sub-attributes are raised by 3 points. So the Attribute score is always equal to the total of the Sub-Attribute scores divided by 3. Refer to the Attribute Score Table below for a quick reference.

Table 5: Attribute Scores

Total of Sub-Attribute Scores	Attribute Score	Total of Sub-Attribute Scores	Attribute Score
0-3	1	16-18	6
4-6	2	19-21	7
7-9	3	22-24	8
10-12	4	25-27	9
13-15	5	28-30	10

Skills

Skills further define the abilities of the individual Skill Groups. They define the learned abilities of a character, and provide a measure of how well the character can brawl, drive a car, bake a cake or cliff dive. Unlike many other systems, Skills in Project CHUPA are meant to be general categories, not specific traits. For example, combat skills might be Melee, which shows how well the character can use hand-to-hand combat weapons, such as knives, staffs, bottles and chairs. There are not separate skills for each weapon.

There is no set limit on the number of skills that are allowed in a group, though smaller groups with broad skills are preferred. The default skills are detailed in **Skill Descriptions**, In Act 4: The Lists.

Skills have a maximum value of 10.

Mastery Levels And Skills

When individual Skills are being used in the game, the rules for advancing the Skill Group Mastery Levels is slightly different. Since Skill Groups have sets of related skills, it is natural that a synergy kicks into effect as you learn more Skills within that Skill Group. The more you improve your Skills in the Skullduggery Skill Group, the more contact you have with the other Skills in that

group, and the easier it is to perform any of them. The same synergy affects all Skill Groups.

To raise Skill Group Mastery Levels when Skills are being used, the total value of the Skill Scores is used to define when Mastery Levels raise within that Skill Group. If a Skill Group has five Skills, then for every five points spent on Skills within that Skill Group, the Skill Group receives one Advancement. Just like when Skills are not being used, for every three Advancements in a Skill Group, the Mastery Level raises.

Table 6: Skill Points required for Mastery level by number of Skills in Skill Group

	3	4	5	6
Novice	0	0	0	0
Apprentice	9	12	15	18
Journeyman	18	24	30	36
Master	27	36	45	54

Conflict Options

Who goes first?

While some groups may not need, or desire, a set method to determine who goes first. Many people, however, have been raised and Dungeons and Dragons or other systems that have taken the idea of Initiative from it. For those that are most comfortable with a turn order in place, we've got two options for your group to choose from.

TURN ORDER: OPTION #1

This method works best when the Turn Order is being determined between two people, or two groups. It is handled as any other Opposed

Conflict. Depending upon the situation, it might use opposed Physical Finesse + Brawl (or one of the other combat options.)

TURN ORDER: OPTION #2

Option #2 is ideal for use during Important and Crucial Conflicts, where every action matters. The turn order is determined by the character with the highest sum of Physical Finesse + Mental Finesse. This accounts for how quickly someone can spot what is happening and physically react to it.

Equipment Usage

Some types of equipment are more appropriate in certain situations than others. While fighting in a narrow hallway, the character using the short sword or knife, will have a much easier time of it than the character fighting with a two-handed wall-clearer. Picking a lock is much easier with lock picks than with a paper clip. The Director is encouraged to award a +2 bonus or -2 penalty when the equipment being used would be either a boon or a hindrance.

Boosting your chances

Since the goal of the game is to partake in heroic, cinematic adventures, we have provided a few ways to increase your chances

GIVING IT ALL YOU'VE GOT

Sometimes we just need to push ourselves a little past the bounds of our comfort zone. We need to put more of ourselves into the conflict if we're going to have any chance to win. Before they have made their roll, the player has the option of gambling some of the Energy Pool to hedge the bet and help insure a win. For every Energy Point the player spends, they get a +1 bonus to the result. The Energy Point must be from the same Attribute that the roll is being made against. If they roll a success, they keep the Energy Points and get a bonus on the next action within that conflict. The bonus is equal to the difference between their total roll and what they needed. The bonus can never be more than the amount of Energy Points risked. If they fail, the Energy Points are lost, just like the player took wounds from the conflict. This is in addition to any Wounds the player receives directly from the combat.

Killer and Goldentooth are facing off across the table, huge arms locked into an intense arm wrestling match. The winner takes the lion's share of the treasure they took from the local natives. They both have their eye on a piece of the treasure and refuse to give it up. The player decides Killer, even with his Physical Power of 6 and Entertainment of 3, is wor-

ried it might not be enough. Goldentooth looks pretty tough. He decides to bet 3 points from the 6 remaining in his Physical Energy Pool. While he would risk 5 of the 6, he's afraid things might go badly if he loses, so he wants to save some strength for the ensuing fight. The Director comes to the same conclusion for Goldentooth, and risks 2 Physical Energy. Goldentooth has a Physical Power of 5 and Entertainment of 3.

The player rolls a 5 for Killer which gives him a 14 plus the 3 Energy Points for a grand total of 17. The Director rolls a 3 giving him a 11 plus the 2 Energy Points for a grand total of 13. So the player wins by 4 points. Since he won he gets a +3 bonus if they were to continue the same action. Since this wrestling match is over, he will not get to use the bonus, but he does keep the Energy Points and he got his success.

THE BARSTOOL AND THE CHANDELIER

Combat in stories is filled with exciting battles as martial artists evade opponents with acrobatics among the pipes, and with swashbucklers swinging from chandeliers. Cowboys slide across the bar, cups shattering as they are shoved out of the way. To help players enter the thrill of these situations, they are rewarded for creative use of their surroundings.

When the player gives a creative use of their surroundings, or take a risk in a fun and dramatic way that enhances the game for everyone, the Director may lower the Difficulty Number by 2 or 3 points. This provides a gentle encouragement to players to have fun and take part in the game, which makes it a richer experience for everyone. Since the difficulties are lowered, the failure results must be steeper. In addition to the stated failure result, the Director should provide another failure result directly related to their use of the environment.

Monte has had his eye on the beautiful farmer's daughter for some time, but every time he tries to approach her, the farmer seems to be there, doling out another task that takes his daughter away from our hero. This time,

however, the farmer is nowhere to be seen. Desperate to make a good impression, Monte quickly grabs a handful of wildflowers and presents them to her using a little sleight of hand to make them appear from nowhere.

The Director acknowledges the showmanship by lowering the Difficulty. Unfortunately, our hero rolls badly and fails the roll. In addition to the farmer showing up, waving his pitchfork and screaming, the farmer's daughter is allergic to the flowers and breaks out in hives while clutching at her throat, barely able to breathe.

UPPING THE ANTE

Sometimes situations arise that a player may want to make a Conflict more difficult for the opposition than the normal Difficulty would show. This could be between two players, or between a player and an Extra.

When the player wants to do this they can Up The Ante by wagering some of their own Energy to raise the difficulty. The only limits imposed on the amount it can be raised is the character's Energy limits. Points can only be wagered from a single Energy Pool, and the maximum value is the current total of points in that character's Energy Pool. If the character making the Conflict Roll is successful, the character who has Upped The Ante loses those Energy Points. If the Conflict roll results in a failure, the character keeps the wagered Energy Points.

Xorn, an alien recently rescued by the a small trading ship, wants to use the communications array to contact his home planet. The Captain, however, is resistant to the idea, since he knows nothing about the alien or its intentions.

The Director decides that Xorn should roll for a Conflict based upon Social + General (using Basic Rules) with a Difficulty Range

equal to 10 + the Captain's Social + the Captain's General, for a total of 16.

The Captain is very resistant to the idea, and chooses to Up The Ante, making the conflict roll even more difficult for the new arrival. He decides to wager 2 points of Social, hoping that the alien's social skills are not its strong suit. Xorn now must roll against a Difficulty of 18. If Xorn is successful, the Captain loses the 2 points of Social Energy. If Xorn fails the Conflict, the Captain keeps his wagered Energy.

THE TURNING POINT

In movies and stories, the hero will often reach a very low point. To succeed within the story, that hero realizes what they've been doing that is causing them problems. This realization lets them bring to bear resources they didn't have and push through their obstacles to find success. In Project CHUPA, we wanted to incorporate those dramatic moments, giving the players the incentive to role-play and their characters a way to change. This is called the Turning Point. For a character to have a Turning Point, there are 2 requirements.

1. You must buy-out a Key. That Key must be relevant to the situation. You still get the XP they would normally be awarded.
2. The player must narrate a flashback. This flashback should describe moment that caused the applicable Key, and what has changed their character's mind and making them buy it out.

The Director has the final say, but as long as it's fun for everyone and encourages role-playing, it should be allowed.

Once a player has fulfilled the two requirements, any negative modifiers they have resulting from Energy Pool losses are turned into bonuses for the remainder of that Scene. These bonuses stack with all other bonuses currently in effect.

Act 3: Sample Settings

Now that you have a feel for the rules in a very generic sense, take some time to read through the different sample settings provided. They give an idea of ways to customize the system to make it your own, as well as provide new mechanics and powers that you can use as is, saving you hours of work.

Fantasy: Realms of Wonder

They ran, their boots slopping through the swampy marsh. Regg led the way, his once polished sword now tarnished and stained with ichor, slashing away the creeping vines that slowed their escape. Saindel was close behind, her light steps barely causing a ripple as she raced. As fey, she was more in tune with nature than the others, but this twisted bog bared no resemblance to her woodland home. Struggling to keep up with the other, Jonos wrestled with the tome as his soggy boots and travel cloak fought to drag him down.

The tome. They had to get the tome back to the Chancellor.

Their party, once numbering a dozen, had come to this wet and forbidding land beyond the standing stones to investigate rumors of goblins massing for an attack on the small borderland farming villages. They found no goblins. Instead they found abominations.

Jonos' foot caught on a gnarled root and sent him pitching forward with a yell of shock and exhaustion. Falling squarely on the great book, his breath was forced from his lungs and stars filled his vision. Saindel quickly turned and was about to help her fallen friend to his feet when she spotted movement in the underbrush

Acting on instinct, Saindel tapped into the ambient magical energy around her and summoned the will to command the decaying trees to do her bidding. As the monstrosity attacked, its eight barbed legs springing it forward, the blackened and moss coated limb of a nearby tree swatted it from the air and was soon joined by a second and then a third branch to pummel the creature's bulbous body into a sickening pulpy soup. Its gnashing mandibles continuing to snap as its essence mixed with the brackish water. Its many gem-like eyes focused on each of the party members.

"Quickly, there are more approaching," hissed Saindel as she strained to pull Jonos out of the muck, her hushed voice losing its normal sing-song quality.

"There are too many," Jonos began as he labored to extract himself from the bog under the weight of the book.

With two long strides Regg was at their side lifting the slender Jonos with little visible effort. "Then we stand and fight," boomed Regg's deep voice as he surveyed the dense tangle of vegetation around them for a suitable defensive position.

“No, our mounts are only a short way off now, if we hurry” the fear and frustration evident in Jonos’ cry.

“That is why you, mage, must get the book to the council while we hold the monsters at bay,” said Regg matter-of-factly.

“Regg is right, Jonos,” said Saindel as she placed her delicate hand on his shoulder. “As a Mage of the Fifth Order it is your duty to get that book to the Chancellor and his council. Thorendar and all of Gaia depend on that information making it there. As your Honor Guard it is our gaes to see you succeed in that mission.”

Jonos was about to argue, but he could tell by the look in their eyes that his Spellguard and Elven guide were not about to brook any bickering on this matter. Slowly, he nodded, resigning himself to their fate. Placing his hand first on Regg then on Saindel, he spoke the words of The Final Parting, “That which falls will rise again as the Wheel turns.” His blessing complete, he turned and ran with all his strength in the direction of their gryphon mounts.

Time seemed to slow as Jonos ran. The sound of his harsh breathing drowning out the bedlam of the battle he left behind. He told himself that Regg’s spellblade and Saindel’s elemental magic would protect them from harm long enough for him to return with the gryphons and they would all soon be home. He knew this for the lie it was as he crashed into the clearing that was once their base camp.

The gryphons lay dead and desiccated. The camp was in shambles, evidence that their loyal mounts did not die without a fight. Jonos sank to his knees, the weight of the tome suddenly doubled in his arms. Stunned and despondent, he gave no notice as the first of the spider-like abominations skittered into the clearing. What did cause him pause was when the first of their number spoke.

“Succeed you will not, little flesh-bag,” its guttural, alien voice struggling to form the words. “Lost your world is.”

“I will get word to them! They will see the truth,” he said holding up the book, anger filling Jonos’ words. “They will repair the curtain and send you back to your horrid plane.”

“Convince them of the truth you cannot, forsake their magic they must to repair the barrier. This you know they will not do.”

The strength gone from Jonos’ arm, the book fell to the damp earth. Fueled by rage he raised his arm and began to weave the spell of Lightning Stike in his mind, pulling the tendrils of Mana from the air around him. But since discovering the truth he was acutely aware of how each spell, no matter how insignificant, had pulled at the threads of a long forgotten barrier that had until recently protected their world. With a gasp of despair he let the spell fade.

“Yes, see the truth you do,” it hissed as it crouched back on its gangly limbs. A single leap brought it upon Jonos, its razor sharp mandible locked on Jonos’ outstretched arm. Searing pain shot through his body as his vision dimmed. He let out a wail as he lost all hope of seeing the spires of great school again.

Suddenly his pain was gone. Through the haze of his cloudy vision he made out a blur moving from creature to creature. As it past each monstrosity the creatures’ bulbous bodies exploded as if ripped by some great blade. Jonos thought he caught flashes of black obsidian. The

pressure on his arm released and he fell to the ground. The beast that had attacked him let out a screech of pain as Jonos' vision faded. A voice entered his dreams as he fell into the comforting darkness, "Rest, spell-weaver, you are safe now."

Overview

System Modifications

Attributes

Skills

New Secrets

New Keys

Sci-Fi Space Opera: *Final Frontier*

Humans have traveled to another galaxy and colonized it. There are lots of worlds and perhaps even some aliens.

Existing game reference: Traveler (possibly) or Dune

Character profession and goals: The players are explorers traveling in a ship performing specific work-for-hire.

Custom Attribute and its role: **Fold** - Travel is done via Fold Space (a hyper space type set up) **where** the vessels are Folded and Refolded by skilled Fold Space navigators

Possible new setting specific mechanics: Fold effects

Political Intrigue: *The Ides of March*

Political intrigue and scheming in Ancient Rome. The characters may be wealthy enough to own their own Legions, but actions will focus on the Political scheming. Cult-like religions still exist and may be used during game play.

Existing game reference: ?

Character profession and goals: The players are politicians in the Roman Empire attempting to expand their powerbase.

Custom Attribute and its role: Faith

Possible new setting specific mechanics: Powers of Faith

Post-Apocalyptic Horror: *After the End*

Inquisitor Firth ground his teeth as he watched the Soulless surround the rusted metal carcass. They massed around the corrugated metal building, in rows at least three deep, in some places up to five deep. They growled, baring their sharpened teeth, their grins twisting their boil-infested faces. Crude weapons, made from rusty pipes, pounded the rocky soil in a gut-wrenching drum beat.

“They’re Calling, sir.”

Firth never took his eyes off the creatures below him. Some of his best men had finally fallen to the Taint. They may even be there now. “Ready the men.”

“Sir?”

Firth raised his hand in ready for the command, then drew a deep breath. He clenched the muscles in his chest, fighting the gag reflex caused by the smoky air. It tasted of death. “Ready the men.”

“There’s too many. Sir.”

“Exactly. They cannot be allowed to make more. The Taint has already spread too far. If we do not get command of that water pump, it will spread faster than we can stop it. Do you want to be responsible for that?”

“Of course not, but –”

Firth’s tone softened. “None of us will live forever, Jenkins.”

“Yes, sir.” Jenkins turned away and relayed the orders, his voice a harsh whisper.

Firth turned back to the gathering of Soulless. He held his breath, waiting for just the right moment. To strike too early would give them too much time to turn the Taint back on them. Strike too late, and it was wasted. None of his men much liked being infected. Neither did he, truth be told, but the Taint comforted him with its power, as it turned his stomach with the knowledge of what it meant for his future. He watched as they summoned their powers, waiting to see where their talents lie.

The creatures continued their infernal drumming. Each beat thudded through the Inquisitors, releasing a new bead of sweat as their own powers swelled inside of them. The ground began to glow a sickly green as long-dead souls struggled to claw their way free of the surface.

Firth hissed with disgust. “Voiders.” He turned to Jenkins and whispered a sharp order. Grabbing his necklace he raised the painted locket to his lips. “Forgive me, Anne.” He dropped the locket, raised his hand above his head once again, and motioned for the attack.

The Inquisitors stood up, each wearing masks of concentration and resignation. They clasped hands with the Inquisitor next to them and the power thrummed down the line, building until their arms shook. Below, the Soulless cried as one voice that echoed through the barren landscape. They charged, confident in their numbers. The souls pulled free of the ground at last

and joined the charge, overtaking their summoners before three heartbeats had passed. Three deafening heartbeats.

Firth pulled Taint from the others, adding it to his own, while tears broke free and slid down his grease-spotted cheek. His stomach roiled. He clenched his jaw tighter, refusing to give up his concentration. The Taint bubbled inside of him, every nerve burning as it filled his body. He could feel it eating away at him, but pulled more and more until he felt ready to burst.

The screams of the called souls pierced his ears. Blood trickled lazily down. He had to strike now.

At the end of the line, one of the Inquisitors dropped, consumed by the Taint. Firth felt it at once – a small break in the chain that gradually built like a wave ready to crash into him. With the souls nearly on him, he lashed out with his men’s combined essences. Three more men dropped and the wave doubled, then tripled in strength. He spread their life out into the souls, and twisted the energy. Pain sliced through his ribs, worse than any nightmare had ever suggested possible.

Screaming louder, the souls writhed in agony -- spinning, twisting, folding – until they spun as one and charged on the men that had called them. As they crashed on the line of Soulless, their ethereal claws tore at the rotten skin, and their bites devoured them. The line of men blossomed into a shower of blood.

Firth screamed in agony as he willed the Taint away from him and back into the line of Inquisitors. He felt the rushing, sucking force of the Taint spin away and back into its host. He fell, convulsing, as the Taint that had no owners to return to, entered him, twisting his body into shapes it was never meant for. In seconds it was over, but the pain remained. He knew it was only the first scar of many that he would wear.

Overview

After The End is set ten years after World War III. Nuclear War destroyed most of civilization as we know it. What is left is merely the skeleton of life. In some parts of the world, civilization has been set back several hundreds of years. Many live off the land as well as they can. Others find the carcasses of buildings and make their homes their, carving out a life of trade where they can. Pieces of technology, even items as simple as a well pump, are fought over fiercely. In this new world, justice is a matter of who is stronger, or faster.

The Taint affects many of the survivors, and the number infected grow larger every day. Starting as radiation sickness, and mutations, it evolved into a life of its own. It gives the afflicted tremendous, almost magical powers, but the price is their mind and their soul. With every use, there

is the possibility of moving closer to insanity, grotesque malformations, or death.

As people sought protection and safety, groups formed to reform the world to their image, trying to create a civil life once again. One of these groups call themselves the Inquisitors. Judge, Jury, and Executioner, they scour the land, trying to rid it of the evil of the Taint. The only problem is that most of them are infected also. Many members lost their family or friends to the taint. Others vowed that, once they were infected, they would use the power only to keep others from being Tainted.

As millions died during the nuclear blasts, and the ensuing radiation, their ghosts were left behind, often seeking vengeance.

The world has truly become a nightmare. Only the strong can survive, much less thrive, and

strength comes in many forms. Where does your strength lie?

System Modifications

Attributes

This setting is all about survival. Some survive on brute strength, some outsmart their opponents to get the latest technologies, and others thrive by manipulating and leading. As such, all of the Attributes are kept. Spiritual has been replaced by Taint.

Skills

New Secrets

New Keys

Act 4: The Lists

Skill Descriptions

Skills are meant to represent broad categories of related activities. The skill descriptions take this into account, providing a general feel for the skill, not detailed rules on every possible use. If in doubt, look to the Director for a final call on which Skill to use. Each description lists two of the most frequently used Attributes with an example. That does not mean that those are the only two possibilities, however. Players are encouraged to use other Attributes as the situation calls for. Just be sure to give the Director a clear idea why you think that Skill is applicable.

General Skills

Athletics - The Athletics Skill lets you jump from the back of a covered wagon onto a riding horse, or take a perfectly executed swan dive off a tall cliff. You can swim the English channel, swing from chandelier to tapestry, or even roll past through a series of spear and scythe traps. All forms of physical athletics and games are covered by this Skill.

Physical Power + Athletics = brute force abilities, such as lifting weights, running, or climbing rock faces.

Physical Finesse + Athletics = demonstrations of agility, like tumbling, diving or jumping.

Entertainment - Whether at the party, dancing politely with the Princess, or concentrating on a difficult move in a game of chess, you will find the Entertainment skill to be very helpful. You can try to woo the lady of your dreams with song or instrument, or try your hand at acting with the traveling theater. Most forms of entertainment not covered by Athletics will fall under this Skill.

Mental Finesse + Entertainment = playing a game of poker.

Physical Finesse + Entertainment = cheating at a game of poker.

First Aid - Everyone needs a little TLC from time to time. The First Aid Skill can be used for giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, setting bones, stitching up wounds, or even knowing just the right spot to apply pressure to. You can tell what type of disease someone has, or if they are truly dead or just in a state of suspended animation.

Mental Power + First Aid = discover the type of infection a character has.

Physical Finesse + First Aid = perform brain surgery.

Influence - Some are masters of the sword, others masters of the tongue. Influence includes a wide variety of topics from diplomacy to intimidation to simple manners. Knowing just the right way to phrase a delicate situation and sway the Senate your way is one part of influence. You might use your feminine wiles to charm your way past a guard, or simply know when to talk and when to listen.

Physical Power + Influence = bullying or intimidating someone to get your way.

Mental Finesse + Influence = giving powerful, emotion speeches to sway others to your way of thinking.

Social Finesse + Influence = knowing who to talk to in order to find the information you need;

finding just the right guard to persuade to open the castle gates.

Perception - Trying to locate your lost keys? Or are you on watch in the evil forests? The Perception Skill measures your awareness of your surroundings. With a good roll you will be the first to notice the changing scents in the air. You can spot your prey from a hilltop away as he slips quietly through the grasses, or find just the right book in the thousands on the shelves at the local library.

Physical Finesse + Perception = notice the smallest change in air moisture in the air, or drops in temperature.

Mental Finesse + Perception = catch the sound of crunching leaves as your opponents try to surround you.

Social Finesse + Perception = catch the subtle body language of the Emperor's guards as you talk to their Lord.

Transportation - This Skill covers how good you are at all forms of traveling, with the exception of things covered by Athletics, such as hiking or swimming. You can gallop a horse through the King's forest, pilot the latest star cruiser, or race a jet boat through the canals of Paris.

Mental Finesse + Transportation = getting that stubborn horse to do what you want.

Physical Finesse + Transportation = master the "twitch" reflexes necessary to pilot the ship manually at light speed.

Knowledge Skills

Every profession has its specialized niches of knowledge. The Knowledge Skill Group is their tome. Inside this Skill Group you'll find knowledge of secret societies, the rise and fall of various cultures and how to care for your pets or avoid those wild animals that refuse to be domesticated. Characters who delve into the Machiavellian turnings of legal codes or use the latest technology to jack into cyber-space often have considerable Knowledge to back up their daring exploits.

Animals - Whether a lion tamer in the circus or a hunter following the migration patterns of his prey, the Animal Skill gives characters the information they need to perform their tasks. Use this Skill to determine if the snake that just bit your guide is poisonous or to identify the tracks that lead into the woods. Veterinarians rely heavily on this skill to heal their patients, as do archeologists when piecing together a newly excavated dinosaur skeleton.

Physical Power + Animals = using strength to work with animals, such as breaking a horse for riding or grappling with an excited animal so that it does not injure itself

Mental Power + Animals = recalling information about an animal, such as its diet, activity cycle or footprint

Social Finesse + Animals = using soothing words and signs to calm a frightened animal

Cultures - Characters will invariably travel to distant lands (or worlds) so encounters with strange and unusual cultures are inevitable. The Cultures Skill lets characters weave through the ins and outs of dealing with these strangers, knowing the best compliments to give or, more importantly, what not to say. Organizations can have their own cultures so characters can make use of this skill to climb the corporate ladder to success. Is your character a soldier with a three-day pass? The Cultures skill will help him know where the best spot for sushi is and what parts of town to avoid at all costs.

Physical Finesse + Cultures = performing physically demanding rituals such as knowing how to sit, stand, bow, dance in the proper manner so as to not offend his highness the Prince or perform the lengthy tea ceremony without offending the gods.

Mental Power + Cultures = recalling information about a specific aspect of a culture, such as knowing which fork to use for salads when dining at the palace or who is the best person to bribe at the DMV to pull up the owner of a license plate number

Social Power + Cultures = attempts to impress or intimidate others

Language - Does your character have trouble simply reading and writing her own language or is she fluent in many tongues? The Language Skill gives characters the tools they need to communicate with others. Read and perform sign language or translate what the foreign dignitary is saying. Use this Skill to decipher the Latin text found in the stolen manuscript or slip an innuendo into polite conversation.

Mental Power + Language = reading, translating or creating a literary work, such as writing a novel, creating an easy-to-understand users manual or even writing a political speech; translating spoken word into your native tongue

Mental Finesse + Language = creating a literary work within a specific form or time limit, such as writing in Iambic Pentameter or finishing a 20 page term paper before class; editing or critiquing a literary work such as revising the novel you just finished or grading your student's essays

Social Power + Language = conversing with others, such as writing an impressive cover letter to your resume or conveying your sympathy at a funeral

Law - Characters often find themselves on one side or the other of the law; knowledge of its codes and limitations is helpful in either case. Are your characters looking for a loophole in the contract they're about to sign? Looking to get a few more dollars on your tax return this year? Trying to remember the difference between a misdemeanor and a felony? Law is the place to find those answers and many more.

Mental Power + Law = creating articles of law, such as writing a contract, putting together a bill for the senate or passing judgment in court case

Mental Finesse + Law = recalling information on a particular law or understanding the intent of a law, such as remembering what time curfew starts, knowing if last night's dinner is tax deductible or finding the hidden clauses in a contract

Technology - Scientists, programmers, farmers and the village smith all use technology to perform their jobs. This Skill lets characters hack into the corporate mainframe, craft a well-

balanced sword or design a better mousetrap. Technology includes the theoretical as well as the practical. Use this Skill to hold a conversation about the Big Bang or calculate the distance to the nearest star.

Physical Power + Technology = applying muscle and technology to create something or solve a problem, such as crafting a sword, properly plowing a field or using a fallen sapling as a lever to dislodge a boulder

Mental Power + Technology = designing a new technological advance, such as creating a new weapon system for a suit of powered armor, designing the first flying machine, coding a new video game or designing a metallic alloy lighter than aluminum yet harder than diamonds

Mental Finesse + Technology = modifying, manipulating or circumventing a piece of technology, such as hacking the defense computer without leaving a trace, eking a few more joules of power out of the hyper-drive engines or overriding the android's Asimov programming

Survival Skills

This Skill Group represents those activities required for surviving hostile situations, be they in a rowdy tavern, spaceport back alley or wilderness expanse. The following individual Skills make up this group:

Brawling - This Skill lets characters bash their opponents without the use of weapons. Use it to hit, kick, head-butt, trip, flip or throw your enemies about. From the Olympic games of ancient Greece to the back alleys of Antares Prime, Brawling covers all forms of unarmed combat and wrestling; from simple contests of strength like arm wrestling to complex and highly formalized martial art forms as Boxing or Karate.

Physical Power + Brawling = using physical force for attacks to damage or subdue your opponents

Physical Finesse + Brawling = feats of agility like striking a sensitive or specific area on a target or using the opponent's attacks to unbalance, trip or flip them

Social Power + Brawling = using fighting prowess to intimidate an opponent

Melee - Characters often wield all manner of handheld weapons to do battle. So strike the monster down with a slash from your broadsword or use your whip to disarm the kidnaper. Use that tavern stool to pound the noisome patron into submission or break a bottle of wine over his skull. If you're having trouble with a zombie infestations don't forget your trusty chainsaw to cut them down to size. If the characters can pick it up and hit their opponents with it, it's covered by this Skill.

Physical Power + Melee = using physical force for attacks to damage opponents with any handheld weapon

Physical Finesse + Melee = special attacks like a feint or disarming an opponent

Mental Finesse + Melee = gathering information about melee like recognizing an opponent's combat style or recognizing the style of weapon by its description

Ranged - If hand to hand combat is not your character's cup of tea, try striking from a distance. Fire an arrow thru the sheriff's hat, throw that knife and sever the cord holding up the chandelier or shoot the guard from 500 yards out with your sniper rifle and high powered scope. If that's not your style then throw the lit stick of dynamite into the stage coach or lob that grenade into the pillbox. The Ranged skill covers all forms of combat at a distance.

Physical Power + Ranged = using your strength to make an attack at a distance using a muscle powered weapon like a compound bow or thrown knife or simply to see how far you can throw something

Physical Finesse + Ranged = using your sharp eye and steady aim to make an attack at a distance using a mechanical weapon such as a crossbow, pistol, rifle or blaster

Mental Finesse + Ranged = using familiarity with ranged weapons to gather information like recognizing the make and model of a weapon from its ammunition

Tactics - There will come a time when your character will rise to a position of power and command vast armies of warriors on the battle field. Or perhaps you will play the admiral in charge of the Defensive Space Armada or head of a security team trying to stem the breach on deck 17A after artificial gravity has failed. If you plan to lead your unit of tanks or powered armor into the fray you'd best brush up on your Tactics. It may very well save your character's life when you spot that ambush waiting in the dark shadows of that copse of trees.

Mental Power + Tactics = putting tactics in action to win battles by developing a battle plan or leading your unit in a charge

Mental Finesse + Tactics = subtle and ingenious uses for tactics such as selecting the best location for an ambush or finding the weak link in the enemy's defenses.

Outdoor Survival - Adventures don't always happen in the big city. Your characters may want to venture cross the frozen tundra, climb to the hidden monastery or trek through uncharted wilderness. Whether you make it or not will depend on finding good sources of edible food and potable water, knowing the warning signs of quicksand and finding the north as opposed to the east passage. Is that rain cloud a simple summer shower or the beginning of hurricane season? If your character doesn't know the difference, its time to work on their Outdoor Survival Skill.

Physical Power + Outdoor Survival = using muscle to build a shelter or pit trap from raw materials

Mental Finesse + Outdoor Survival = combining outdoor knowledge and an alert mind to track a creature through the wild

Mental Power + Outdoor Survival = recognize edible berries and plants

Skullduggery Skills

This Skill Group covers all of those skills associated with the criminal underworld, as well as activities of deception and stealth. The following individual Skills make up this group:

Breaking and Entering - This skill covers the art of entering buildings without the owners consent. Use it to open locks of all sorts and bypass security systems. Be it untrained talent or finely honed skills with a set of lock picks, opening door in an ancient tomb or getting around the latest IR sensors to steal a work of art in the Louvre.

Physical Power + Breaking and entering = Forcing a door way in an ancient tomb without triggering a trap.

Physical Finesse + Breaking and entering = Removing a gold idol from a pedestal and replacing it with a bag of sand in one motion.

Mental Power + Breaking and entering = Solving a difficult cipher code in a corporate vault.

Con - This skill covers convincing others through trickery and guile. Use it to fast talk a guard into letting you into a cults headquarters or to fake your way through a temple courtyard dressed in novices robes.

Social Power + Con = Spend an evening with some soldiers, pretending you are enlisted to gain their trust

Social Finesse + Con = Quickly convince a guard that these aren't the droids they're looking for

Physical Finesse + Con = Pretend you're an imperial storm trooper by marching and moving like one, when your face and voice are hidden

Sleight - This Skill covers careful body movements that are designed to pass unnoticed. Use it to perform feats of sleight of hand or to remove a wallet from a pocket without the owners notice.

Physical Finesse + Sleight = Dip a hand into a nearby pocket to grab some loose change

Mental Finesse + Sleight = Working a fast and complex card game con

Social Power + Sleight = Giving the instructions to perform a group sleight

Stealth - This Skill covers moving without drawing attention or avoiding detection. Use it to sneak across a rooftop unnoticed or to hide from the secret police as they raid a safe house.

Physical Finesse + Stealth = Stealthily cross a rooftop in silence

Mental Finesse + Stealth = Follow a target unseen through the city streets

Physical Resistance + Stealth = Stay hidden for hours in a shadowed corner without moving

Street Smarts - This Skill covers knowledge of the criminal underworld and surviving in urban environments. Use it to find edible food that has been thrown out, to locate the entrance to the Thieves Guild or to find a good fence for your stolen goods. Also covers survival in urban environments, finding and using contacts with criminal or street types.

Social Power + Street Smarts = Find and get on good terms with the local smugglers at a busy port

Mental Finesse + Street Smarts = Spot which alleys not to head down and avoid being mugged

Physical Resistance + Street Smarts = Spend a night safely in a big city without getting a room.

Supernormal Skills

Awareness - This represents your awareness of the supernormal abilities around you. You might be sensitive to the psychic vibrations left on objects by others, or able to feel the magic potential in a person or object. Small signs that others might miss would tip you off that your boss likes the moonlight and is nearing a change. A tiny tremor of the hairs on your arm might tip you off that a cloaking magic has hidden something in the corner. When a ghost is near, you feel a chill run through to your core that helps you locate it by the varying pressure and intensity of the feeling.

Spiritual Power + Awareness = an active search for the source of the evil, violence-inducing aura.

Spiritual Finesse + Awareness = your intuition letting you know your date is a vampire, or the sudden

vision that the woman sitting next to you only has 3 days to live.

Spiritual Resistance + Awareness = sidestepping the magical trap that lies in wait for you.

Lore - Lore comes in many forms. It could be found in a myriad of old, musty tomes, or passed down through years of unbroken oral traditions. It can also come at the cost of various experiences, many of which you would rather not go through again. The Lore Skill provides the knowledge of centuries old rituals that make your magic possible, or in-depth knowledge of the secret workings of the brain that bring an unmatched knowledge of the psionic powers. Every organization has its traditions, and a good Lore score will help you find the right tradition at the right time, and perform it with ease. It will help you know the right herbs to use to make sure the healing broth is correctly prepared.

Spiritual Power + Lore = spending hours working through complex and often convoluted equations of non-Euclidean geometry to develop the ritual needed to ward off the planar portal.

Spiritual Finesse + Lore = using your knowledge and insight to come up with a new solution to a common problem that has plagued your coven for centuries. It does not mean that you can perform the task, just that you figured out how.

Physical Finesse + Lore = performing the ritual correctly, or not accidentally putting too many drops of toad blood into the potion.

Manipulation - The ability to manipulate your powers are measured by Manipulation. Knocking someone senseless with your mind alone, or making your classmates spontaneously combust are good examples. The higher the score, the more tendrils of magic you can manipulate at once, possibly giving more powerful effects.

Spiritual Power + Manipulation = pelting your opponent with a shower of rocks, or bending the spoon.

Spiritual Finesse + Manipulation = changing water into wine, influencing the way someone feels about you, or knitting the bones and muscles back together in a healing spell.

Secrets Descriptions

Secret of Animal Speech

(Availability: +2, Scope: +0, Flexibility: -1, Power: -2, Cost: +1/0)

Your character can speak to an animal and understand its signals. In order to get the animal to cooperate or not try to eat you, you might need a successful Animals skill check. Even if you fail this check, you'll understand that it wants to eat you loud and clear.

Cost: 2 Mental Energy

Purchase Cost: 1 Advance

Secret of Blessing

(Availability: +0, Scope: +1, Flexibility: -1, Power: +2, Cost: +1/+0, Other -3)

With a successful Pray ability check, your character may bless the actions of a group. You must state a specific goal for them to accomplish. Your success level with this ability check is a pool

of bonus dice any member of this group can use in accomplishing this task.

Cost: 1 Spiritual Energy.

Purchase Cost: 1 Advance

Secret of Contacts

(Availability: +0, Scope: +0, Flexibility: -1, Power: +2, Cost: +0/-1)

Your character knows all sorts of people in all sorts of places. You can use this Secret for your character to automatically have a past relationship with any Director character in the adventure. You may describe the relationship in a short phrase, such as "old enemy," "wartime buddy," "ex-lover," but the Director gets to decide the history and current disposition of the relationship.

Cost: 3 points from Social Energy.

Purchase Cost: 1 Advance

Secret of Disarm

(Availability: +2, Scope: +0, Flexibility: -1, Power: +0, Cost: +1/+0)

Your character can disarm an opponent, without changing intentions, with a successful Brawl, Melee or Ranged Skill Check. Because weapons can be all sorts of things in this game, "disarm" just means that the weapon has been rendered ineffective for the duration of the Conflict.

Cost: 1 Physical Energy.

Purchase Cost: 3 Advances

Secret of Evaluate

(Availability: +1, Scope: +0, Flexibility: -1, Power: +0, Cost: -1/+0)

Your character's battle experience has given her the ability to read an opponent well. Evaluate your character's opponent not in descriptive terms, but in game mechanics, on a successful Tactics ability check. You can ask for any of the following information, one bit per success level: Physical Energy score, Mental Energy score, best combat skill and score, specific skill score.

Cost: 1 Mental Energy.

Purchase Cost: 1 Advance (calcs to 0)

Secret of Flying Leap

(Availability: +2, Scope: +0, Flexibility: -1, Power: +0, Cost: +1/-1)

Your character can make amazing leaps. Using this Secret, she can jump much further or higher than normal. For each Physical Energy point you spend, up to three, you can jump another multiple of normal human ability for one leap.

Purchase Cost: 2 Advances

Secret of Herbal Health

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Your character can always find an herb that is an effective healing agent with a successful Outdoor Survival skill check in the outdoors. The herb lets you use your Outdoor Survival skill to act like First Aid and heal others.

Cost: 1 Mental Energy.

Purchase Cost:

Secret of the Hidden Pocket

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Your character is adept at hiding objects on her person. No matter how carefully searched the character has been, she may pull an inexpensive, small (hand-sized) item off her person with a successful Sleight skill check.

Cost: 1 Mental Energy.

Purchase Cost:

Secret of Imbuement

Turn an item into a weapon or armor, using the rules found in the Resolution chapter. You can add one weapon or armor rating to the item each time you take this Secret. In addition, you can use this Secret to imbue the item with the power of another Secret. That Secret will have its costs lowered by one pool point. The item can be taken away from you, but you must be given a chance to get it back, or you can roll your advances spent on this Secret into a new item. You can take away someone else's Imbued item, but you'll have to pay the original cost to keep it. [EDITOR'S NOTE: This will depend on how our magic system is setup.]

Secret of Inner Meaning

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Your character's art carries a meaning beyond the surface. Use any non-physical Mental Finesse-based skill at a distance via a piece of your character's art.

Cost: 2 Spiritual Energy.

Purchase Cost:

Secret of Knock-back

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Your character's blows send people flying. Knock back a stricken character one yard per success level. This immediately ends the physical conflict, if you're involved in that, with no resolution as to intentions.

Cost: 2 Physical Energy.

Purchase Cost:

Secret of Mighty Blow

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Your character can strike with extreme might. Spend as many points of Physical Energy as you like to increase the harm of a successful blow in combat.

Purchase Cost:

Secret of Quality Construction (Craft Ability)

You must choose a specific Craft Ability when you take this Secret. Your character can craft items of excellent quality. Any item your character creates using this Secret gives one bonus die to a particular ability when using the item, permanently. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Not enough info at this time to tell if this fits.]

Cost: 5 Reason.

Secret of Shattering

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

The weight of your weapon can be used to destroy other weapons and armor in combat. With a successful attack, your success level (not including any damage bonuses) is removed from the damage bonuses of weapons or damage reductions of armor. If reduced to 0, the item is destroyed.

Cost: 2 Physical Energy. (Note: if used against player characters' weapons or armor bought with the Secret of Imbuement, they may repair the item or have it become something new after the scene.)

Purchase Cost:

Secret of the Signature Weapon

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Your character has one weapon with which she is bonded. You gain a bonus die to any action taken with that weapon and any other character else attempting to use the weapon receives a penalty die. (Note: to change this weapon, this Secret must be taken again.)

Purchase Cost:

Secret of Specialty (Skill)

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

You must select an skill when you take this Secret. Choose a specialty your character has within that skill - for example, cooking pastries for the Complex Crafts skill. You always have a bonus die when your character attempts an action that falls within that specialty.

Purchase Cost:

Secret of the Sudden Knife

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Your character is a master of the assassin's art. In a surprise attack, the victim automatically takes harm level 4 (bloodied) if your character successfully hits. She should make an Endure ability check resisting your roll. If she fails, she automatically takes harm level 6. This is irrespective of being in a Bringing Down the Pain situation.

Cost: 3 points from whatever pool is associated with the ability you're using, plus 1 from each other the other pools.

Purchase Cost:

Secret of Throwing

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Anything is a dangerous missile in your character's hands. She can throw anything fist-sized to greatsword-sized as an attack, and the object counts as a +1 weapon.

Cost: 1 Physical Energy.

Purchase Cost:

Secret of the Unwalked Path

(Availability: X, Scope: X, Flexibility: X, Power: X, Cost: X)

Your character's footfalls leave little trace for others to follow. You can use your character's Outdoor Survival skill in resistance to anyone trying to track her.

Cost: 1 Mental Energy.

Purchase Cost:

Key Descriptions

Key of Bloodlust

Your character enjoys overpowering others in combat. Gain 1 XP every time your character defeats someone in battle. Gain 3 XP for defeating someone equal to or more powerful than your character (equal or higher combat skill.)

Buyoff: Be defeated in battle.

Key of Conscience

Your character has a soft spot for those weaker than their opponents. Gain 1 XP every time your character helps someone who cannot help themselves. Gain 2 XP every time your character defends someone with might who is in danger and cannot save themselves. Gain 5 XP every time your character takes someone in an unfortunate situation and changes their life to where they can help themselves.

Buyoff: Ignore a request for help.

Key of the Coward

Your character avoids combat like the plague. Gain 1 XP every time your character avoids a potentially dangerous situation. Gain 3 XP every time your character stops a combat using other means besides violence.

Buyoff: Leap into combat with no hesitation.

Key of Faith

Your character has a strong religious belief that guides her. Gain 1 XP every time she defends her faith to others. Gain 2 XP whenever this character converts someone to her faith. Gain 5 XP whenever this character defends her faith even though it brings her great harm.

Buyoff: Your character renounces her beliefs.

Key of Fraternity

Your character has someone she is sworn to, a friend who is more important than anyone else. Gain 1 XP every time this character is present in a scene with your character (maximum 3 per adventure). Gain 2 XP whenever your character has to make a decision that is influenced by them. Gain 5 XP every time your character defends them by putting herself at risk.

Buyoff: Sever the relationship with this person.

Key of Glittering Gold

Your character loves wealth. Gain 1 XP every time you make a deal that favors you in wealth. Gain 3 XP every time you double your wealth.

Buyoff: Give away everything you own except what you can carry lightly.

Key of the Guardian

Your character has a ward, someone who depends on her for security and protection. Gain 1 XP every time this character is present in a scene with your character. Gain 2 XP whenever your character has to make a decision that is influenced by them. Gain 5 XP every time your character rescues them from harm.

Buyoff: Sever the relationship with this person.

Key of the Impostor

Sometimes your entire life is a lie. You gain 1 XP whenever you pass yourself off as someone/something you're not. You gain 2 XP whenever you convince others in spite of serious skepticism. You gain 5 XP whenever your story survives a deliberate, focused, "Hey everybody, look!" attempt to reveal your identity.

Buyoff: Confess your imposture to those duped.

Key of the Masochist

Your character thrives on personal pain and suffering. Gain 1 XP every time she is bloodied and 3 XP every time she is broken.

Buyoff: Flee a source of physical or mental damage.

Key of the Mission

Your character has a personal mission that she must complete. Gain 1 XP every time she takes action to complete this mission (2 XP if this action is successful.) Gain 5 XP every time she takes action that completes a major part of this mission.

Buyoff: Abandon this mission.

Key of the Outcast

Your character has lost fellowship or membership in an organization - which could just be a culture, or a specific cross-cultural group. This separation defines your character as much as membership in the organization defines its members. Gain 1 XP every time her status with this organization comes up. Gain 2 XP every time her disassociation brings her harm. Gain 5 XP every time the separation brings your character great pain and suffering.

Buyoff: Regain membership in the organization.

Key of Renown

"You must be the worst assassin I've ever heard of." "But you have heard of me." You gain 1 XP whenever you see to it that your name and deeds are known, by bragging about them or making sure there are witnesses. You gain 2 XP whenever you put yourself at risk to do something unnecessary or foolish that will add to your reputation. You gain 5 XP whenever you risk your life to take credit for your actions (bragging that you were the one who killed the Duke's son, for example.).

Buyoff: Give someone else credit for an action that would increase your renown.

Key of Power

You don't even care what you do with it, you just want it. You gain 1 XP whenever you earn a boon from someone important, earn a slight gain

in prestige, or make a rival look bad. You gain 3 XP whenever you ruin, kill, or otherwise eliminate a rival, and improve your own position because of it.

Buyoff: Relinquish your power and position.

Key of Vengeance

Your character has a hatred for a particular organization, person, or even species or culture. Gain 1 XP every time your character hurts a member of that group or a lackey of that person. Gain 2 XP every time your character strikes a minor blow at that group or person (killing a member of the organization or one of the person's lackeys, disrupting their life, destroying their property). Gain 5 XP every time your character strikes a major blow at that group or person.

Buyoff: Let your enemy go.

Key of the Vow

Your character has a vow of personal behavior that she has sworn not to break. This could be a dietary restriction, a requirement to pray at sunbreak every morning, or something else like that. Gain 1 XP for every adventure in which your character does not break this vow. Gain 2 XP every time your character does not break this vow even though it causes her minor harm or inconvenience. Gain 5 XP every time your character does not break this vow even though it causes her great harm.

Buyoff: Break this vow.

Act 5: Designer Notes

Creating Races

Orcs are strong and dumb. Elves are nimble and magical. These, and many others, are stereotypes evolved from years of Dungeons and Dragons. Nearly every system has a way to show these strengths and weaknesses in the different races. Project CHUPA is no different.

During character creation, under the Basic Rules, the character receives a +1 in each of their Attributes. This is perfect to represent the standard human race, who typically form the default that all other races deviate from. For each race, the designer is encouraged to take those four Attribute points and spread them however would best represent the individual races. For example, the

Orc, being strong and stupid, might have a + 2 Physical, 0 Mental, 1 Social, and 1 Spiritual. As a general rule, Attribute bonuses should go no higher than a +2 bonus, or, on the very rare occasion, a +3 bonus. Negative numbers are discouraged, except in the very rare occasion.

The races might also provide bonuses to spend on Skills or Skill Groups. For the Basic Rules, you should limit this to 2, occasionally 3, points spread through the Skill Groups. When individual Skills are being used, it is suggested to provide 4-8 points spread throughout individual Skills, and none spent on Skill Groups.

Creating New Secrets

Secrets are special qualities your character has that let her do extraordinary things. They generally work in the following ways:

- Permanently get a bonus die to a specific use of an ability.
- Permanently get +1 damage or protection with an ability.
- Permanently get a minor unusual skill. This skill may require a skill.
- Spend one die from an Energy Pool to use an ability in an unusual way.
- Spend two or three dice from an Energy Pool to use an ability in a supernatural or powerful unusual way.

- Spend as many dice from a pool for a scalable effect. If this effect is especially powerful or unusual, it may carry a cost of extra dice.

Most of the Secrets pre-made for Project CHUPA follow the above guidelines, but not all. Look at the pre-made Secrets, and examine them for ideas for your own. To determine the cost in Advancements of the Secret, consult the following chart when determining each aspect of the Secret, and the sum total of all categories is the Advancement cost.

Table 5a: Secrets Construction Costs

	Cost in Advances		Cost In Advances
Availability:		Power	
Once ever	-2	Small effect, hardly noticeable	-2
Once per Story	-1	Reasonable effect	0
Once per Scene	0	Strong effect	2
Several times per Scene	+1	Very strong effect	4
Always available	+2		
Scope:		Cost	
Effects one person	0	Requires specific and hard to obtain resources	-3
Effects s small group (up to 10 targets)	+1	Requires commonly available resources	0
Effects a small area (up to 10 meters square)	+1	Requires no resource	1
Effects a large group	+3	Requires Player Major wound	-1
Effects a large area	+3	Requires Player Minor wound	0
Effects entire world	+5	Requires no Player wound	+1
Flexibility		Required Die Roll Success	
Does one thing	-1	Simple	0
Does two things	0	Easy	-1
Does several things (3+)	+3	Medium	-2
Does almost anything	+5	Taxing	-3
		Daunting	-4
		Heroic	-5

Creating New Keys

Keys come in two types:

Motivations. When the motivation is fulfilled in play, gain an experience point. When the motivation is fulfilled against good odds, gain three experience points.

Everything else. When the Key comes up in play, gain an experience point. (You can use this three times per session. This applies to all Keys below.) When the Key presents a minor problem, gain two experience points. When it presents a major problem, gain five experience points.

All Keys have a Buyoff, which is a reversal from the Key by the character. All Buyoffs give the character 10 experience points. This Buyoff occurs only when you, the player, wants it to happen: you can lose a battle with the Secret of Bloodlust and still keep the Secret. If you want your character to undergo a change in her personality, though, adding to the story, you can take this Buyoff by fulfilling it. If you do take the Buyoff, you can never take this Key again.

As always, see the pre-made Keys to get a feel for creating your own.