The
Sher'zade
System

[BETA version 1.0]

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By Nagi

This is the first release of the beta version of the Sher'zade Roleplaying System. This document was written by Nagi and is distributed by BloodLetterPress Production Studio and Creative Collective. A live update page can be found here:

http://bloodletterpress.com/sherzade-rpg-system

This version of the beta was released on 4/30/2018. This version is expected to contain occasional spelling, grammar and typographical errors, and inconsistencies in game terminology. The game mechanics themselves are also not expected to be well-balanced yet. Nagi is still hard at work revising and reworking this system in order to release successive beta documents until he is satisfied with the final product.

If you have acquired this game and are interested in playing it, you are welcome and encouraged to send proof of errors of any kind, as well as thoughts and feedback to Nagi for his review to the following email: **nagi@bloodletterpress.com**

Thank you very much for your interest!

(1.0) What Is the Sher'zade System?

The Sher'zade System (or **SHZS,** also called the Sheherezade System) is a roleplaying game system that is focused on building engaging narratives through player choice. One player takes on the role of the Storyteller, while the others create the characters who make up the Main Cast. Their actions, reactions and interactions direct the flow of Scenes, sewn together into Chapters. Each time the players gather, they add another Chapter to the ongoing Story that exists within the world that the Storyteller is describing.

The SHZS is built around the primal spark of roleplaying; one person describes a scenario. A second person explains how they react to that scenario. The first person relays how that scenario changes based on those actions. Rinse and repeat until satisfied or the world is destroyed. Roleplaying is a universal human ability, requiring only the skills of imagination and communication. Dice are included, because the forces of fate brings a story to life beyond the power of human control, and because people like rolling dice. The SHZS starts with these fundamental concepts and creates a scaffold that can expand outward infinitely in complexity and minutiae, while still working perfectly well if the players choose to ignore 999.5 out of the 1000 rules they include.

This system is a love letter to the act of roleplaying, a challenge to the long-established RPG elite, and an invitation to those who have never considered themselves to be roleplayers. It is a tribute to those who gather around kitchen tables at night, in quiet corners of busy cafes, in basement dens during family gatherings, at summer camps and empty high-school classrooms and the backseats of cars; to passed-around pencils, to dropped and lost dice found years later, to meeting parts of yourself through the stranger you invented on a piece of paper. To the new communities you are adopted into, the cousins you keep in touch with, the friends down the hall, down the street or halfway across the world on a webcam.

This is a tribute to a great part of yourself, that is waiting for your very first or your next game. And best of all, this isn't just a tribute, it's a guide to make it all happen again.

(1.1) Features of the Sher'zade System

A Story Made *For* Everyone – From start to finish, the SHZS is designed to be simple to use and approachable by anyone, whether they're on day one or year twenty of roleplaying. This Core Module will always be free to share, so there are no cost barriers for play.

> Players roll dice with a Success-tally system compared to target numbers of 1 to 6, with all other rules building off of this simple and intuitive core mechanic.

> Characters can be made before or during the game; the character's skills can be chosen at the spur of the moment, avoiding the frustrations of "useless skills" while simultaneously highlighting their backstory.

> Roleplaying manuals and supplements can be costly. The digital version of the Core Module will always be available for free to download, use and modify by anyone as the world's first Public Domain RPG!

A Story Made *With* Everyone – The SHZS re-imagines the player-GM dynamics for a new generation of roleplayers; it's all about cooperative storybuilding in a way that makes players feel like their choices matter, and lets the Storyteller share their responsibilities.

> Game mechanics and narrative roleplaying create a self-cycling system that rewards player-driven character development and interaction with other members of the party. Why play alone when you can create evolving team attacks?

> No more frustrations caused by watching hours of session planning get derailed by unexpected choices; the Storyteller uses narrative tools like Hooks and the Repertoire to craft the story alongside the characters' actions and consequences.

> The addition of Modules can adjust the style of game the Storyteller and the players desire, to keep the number-crunchers, the dramatic actors and the perpetually-distracted folks at the table equally well-served.

A Story Made *By* Everyone – Once fully released, the SHZS will be the world's first roleplaying game entered into Public Domain status. Creators are encouraged to write their own modules and settings, for sharing or for profit, and to keep the spirit of roleplaying games alive in their work.

> There are no legal barriers to writing up your own Stories and Other-World Settings, to distribute online or even sell for profit. The more people create, the more the SHZS proliferates in the gaming community.

> Want a Module that's not included here? You can write one yourself, or check online to see if someone else has. The more people contribute, the more resources will be available for everyone to use.

Endless Worlds, Familiar Faces – The SHZS allows you to create your character even *while* you play in ways that builds on the narrative. Plus, you don't have to leave your character in one world; the system allows you to easily shift them into any genre or alternate setting imaginable, inspired by fanfiction "AU"s (alternate universes).

> Like your character in the high fantasy setting you created them for? What happens when you put them in a modern college lifestyle? Or a far-future space opera? A supernatural mystery? A horror-comedy? What will change and what will stay the same? The SHZS makes it easy to find out.

Those who wander may yet get lost
to not find what they seek
A moment past a success at last
Breaks the traveler's streak

A journey's last step is in the grave
And immortal every pace before
The worker 'fraid, the traveler brave
Not to flee but to explore

Put down your pen, dear old friend
Find strength to close the cover
What else lies beyond a story's end
but the beginning of another?

(2.0) Sher'zade System Core Module

This chapter consists of the SHZS Core Module, which is a set of the most basic rules you will need to play the game. The Core Module is designed to be simple, narrative-focused and easy to modify by adding on other Modules.

(2.1) Basic Challenges

During the course of a narrative, the ST will decide that a character's success or failure during a moment of action or danger should include a degree of fate. The typical method for resolving these situations is the **Basic Challenge**, as described here.

~First, the player will explain what actions their character is taking to meet their goal.
~Next, the ST decides on a Target Number for the Challenge.
~Then, the player forms a dice pool by drawing upon their Traits, Aspects, Merits and Equipment.
~Next, the player rolls the dice in their pool and compares their Hits to the TN, and identifies Crowns and Scratches.
~Finally, the ST explains the outcome of the character's actions in relation to the Challenge results.

The SHZ System is success-based, meaning a player must roll a certain number on a die to achieve a "success"; in this system, successes are called **Hits**. The Hits are then tallied and compared to the **Target Number** (**TN**) of the Challenge. If the number of Hits are equal to or greater than the TN, the character has succeeded in what they were attempting to accomplish.

TNs will range from 1 to 6.
1: mundane, achievable with mild exertion.
(squeezing through a crowd, recalling a prose passage, timing a joke)
2: routine challenge, when met with focus
(walking on one's hands, playing a memory game, holding a group's attention with a story)
3: fair challenge, requires significant effort
(picking a lock, playing a complex instrument, soothing a distraught animal)
4: tough challenge, character must exert their full potential
(swimming against a current, hacking into a secure database, lying during an interrogation)
5: incredibly difficult, character must be exceptionally skilled and/or lucky
(overpowering a bear, performing a high-risk surgery, swaying the opinion of an angry mob)
6: the line of impossible and achievable, the acts of legends
(sniping a bulls-eye more than a mile away, solving unproven mathematical theorems, befriending one's greatest enemy)

It's important to remember that the TN is based on the player's stated goal. If a TN seems too high for a character to pass with their current skills, the player may want to reconsider and adjust their aim.

(2.2) The Dice

In the SHZ System, both players and ST may roll any dice they wish out of the following pool: d4, d6, d8, d10, d12. Rolling an even number is a Hit, and rolling an odd number is a miss.

When a player rolls the highest possible number on a die, it's called a **Crown**. When a player rolls a 1 on a die, it's called a **Scratch**.

Crowns and Scratches make up a secondary system in Challenges that adds a bit of fateful flavor. Whenever a character rolls dice for a Challenge, they should total up the number of Crowns and Scratches they rolled.

If the player rolled more Crowns than Scratches, something will go right for the character - even if they failed the Challenge otherwise.

Example: Kaj the aristocratic spy has infiltrated a cordoned-off section of a mansion in which a lavish gala is currently underway. They are trying to slip past one of the patrolling guards as a Challenge of TN 3. Kaj rolls five dice and ends up with three misses, two Hits and one Crown. This means that they do not succeed in passing undetected; the guard spots them in the shadows and confronts them. However, because they have one Crown and no Scratches, Kaj has a potential stroke of luck; they can see that the guard is confused about who Kaj is, perhaps because they happen to closely resemble a member of the family that is throwing the gala. There is now a new avenue of success for Kaj to pursue, provided their deception skills are up to par.

Success with Crowns doesn't overturn the failure of the main check; instead, it should provide an opportunity that, if the player handles well, can lead them on an alternate path to victory, or to some other small fortune.

On the flip side, if a player rolls more Scratches than Crowns, something unexpectedly negative will befall them, even if they have succeeded in the Challenge.

Ketless only has a few precious meters gain on a pack of krenshar that are trying to make him pay for intruding on their lair. He rushes into the next room of the dungeon and sees two ways out- a closed door on the far wall, and an opening at the top of a steep, rocky embankment that appears to lead outside. Not knowing if the door will be locked or not, Ketless goes for the cliff and rolls six dice for his check to climb it. He passes the TN 4 Challenge admirably with four Hits, two misses and one Crown- but the two misses are Scratches. Ketless clambers to the top of the embankment and seems to be out of danger, but his backpack gets snagged on some of the jagged rocks and tears open. Ketless now faces the choice of gathering the spilled loot back up, or booking it before the krenshar find a path up to continue their pursuit.

(2.3) Forming Dice Pools

Players form their dice pools for Challenges by drawing upon several features of their character, as described below.

Traits and Aspects

The player can consult their character's Aspects and determine which one would be most relevant to how they approach the Challenge. This may be accompanied by further explanation of how the character utilizes this Aspect if the connection is not immediately clear. If the ST accepts it, the player adds dice equal to the Trait the Aspect is connected to, plus a die for each relevant Linked Aspect.

The solutions to some Challenges may not require any particular degree of skill, just raw exertion (lifting or pushing something with pure strength, for example). The ST may deem this a Simple Challenge, meaning the player doesn't need to utilize a specific Aspect to gain dice for the relevant Trait. On the flip side, some Challenges may be deemed Complex when they require an exceptionally-narrow expertise to stand a chance of success (surgical procedures, for example). If the character doesn't have just the right Aspect for the job, they will gain no dice from Traits and have to rely on dice drawn from other features to have any hope of passing the Challenge.

Merits and Equipment

Players may also draw dice from Merits that are relevant to their situation, or special Equipment that they are carrying. In either case, the descriptions of Merits or Equipment will tell you the circumstances in which you can add dice to your pool.

Forces

Dice gained (or lost) through Forces represent a wide range of environmental and circumstantial factors that can affect the character's chance of success. Forces are imposed by the ST while the player is forming their dice pool. Effort Forces grant one or two extra dice, or subtract one or two dice from the pool. Fateful Forces grant an extra one or two Crowns, or one or two Scratches (but not the Hits or misses associated with them).

In descriptions of abilities, items or effects that impose Forces, "Positive" denotes adding dice or Crowns while "Negative" denotes subtracting dice or giving Scratches. "Minor" denotes a factor of 1, while "Major" denotes a factor of 2.
It's not recommended to impose Forces of three or higher, as the effect would overshadow even the most adept character's efforts.

(2.4) Direct Challenges

Sometimes characters will come into direct conflict with another singular character or NPC, in which the success of one depends upon the failure of the other. This kind of Challenge could occur in a battle of reflexes, of wits, of honor, or it could even be in physical combat. The Challenge is resolved with all the same steps as a Basic Challenge, except instead of the ST setting a TN, the two actors compare Hit totals; the character with the higher result comes out on top, Crowns and Scratches also accounted for. If the results are a tie, no clear victor can be determined in that Moment, and another Direct Challenge will likely occur. Speed Factor can also be a tiebreaker in appropriate situations.

In the case of a fight, each actor's intentions determine what TNs they will compare their Hits to. If an actor's primary intent is to cause harm to their opponent (more so than protecting themselves), their Hits are compared to the opponent's Defense Score. If they equal or exceed that value, their opponent suffers a point of damage to their Corpus or Animus, depending on the nature of the assault. If the actor in this altercation is prioritizing their defense over causing damage to their opponent, each Hit adds to their Defense Score for the current Direct Challenge. In this kind of intensely-stressful situation, the ST may elect to raise both combatants' Fatigue Levels after each Moment of the fight.

(2.5) Supremacy Challenges

Supremacy Challenges are used for narrating conflict between multiple groups in a manner that is descriptive and engaging, while also swift in progression.

Supremacy Challenges last a Minute in the M3 system, with each actor's action taking place in a Moment.

When a Supremacy Challenge begins, Sides are formed; all actors involved in the Challenge align themselves to a **Side** based on who they are intending to help or harm at that moment. The most typical arrangement is the PCs on one Side, and the enemies on another Side. However, more complex confrontations might result in more than two Sides, or having actors switch Sides between Challenges.

Next, the players build dice pools by declaring their manner of engagement in the Challenge (running up to fight, finding a place to hide, defending bystanders, throwing insults from the rear, etc). Players roll their dice and count up Hits, Crowns and Scratches, and then all Sides add these Hits together to form a Side Pool. While the PCs are doing this, the ST is determining the Side Pool for the Sides they control. They may choose to roll dice like the players, or just add Hits based on how powerful the enemies are.

The Supremacy Challenge is then narrated, with each side taking turns to spend Hits from their Side Pool to perform actions. It's up to the players on each Side to agree who will take each turn; if need be, Speed Factor can be a way to prioritize. Depending on the circumstances of each Moment, a character might take more than one action in a row, while another character stays put for a more opportune time. The ST decides which enemies act based on narrative discretion.

An actor's actions fall under one of four options in a Supremacy Challenge, as detailed below.

Act: a Hit is spent to perform an action during the conflict that is not directly harmful to another actor. This option covers pretty much all activity that isn't fighting. If the action is especially difficult (TN 3 or higher), the ST may require the actor to spend more than one Hit.

Strike: Hits are spent to deal a point of damage to an opponent; a Side must spend Hits equal to the target's Defense Score, if they have any. With the Cinematic Module, "mob" enemies are defeated with a single point of damage.

Hamper: a Hit is spent to reduce an opponent's Side Pool by 2 Hits. An actor performs an act of trickery, sabotage or obstruction without intention of lethal harm to their enemies.

Defend: This option may be used in reaction to a Strike from another Side. A Side may spend a single Hit from their Pool to block a single point of damage done to an actor on their Side.

Each action taken should be described in the ongoing narrative of the conflict, with the ST and the players working together to create an exciting and suspenseful scene. A single Moment of action doesn't always equate to a single actor's single attack; imagination should be employed to describe

how characters work together, or are ganged up on and overcome the odds. In the end, whatever makes the Challenge most enjoyable for the players is the best way to play it out.

The ST should also look for a good time to throw in a factor of good or bad luck, depending on the results of the Crowns and Scratches that the players ended up with. It can happen at any Moment in the Challenge, before or after the player has taken their action.

Once all Side Pools are empty, the ST summarizes the status of the conflict. If there are still contentions to be resolved, another Supremacy Challenge may begin, until one Side emerges clearly victorious or all Sides no longer want to fight.

(2.6) Extended Challenges

Most Challenges take place within a Moment or Minute, time-wise. However, there may be some tasks that require a continuous, dedicated application of effort until they are finished. The ST can use Extended Challenges to resolve these situations.

Instead of a TN, the GM sets a **Hit Target** (**HT**). The character must accumulate a number of Hits equal to the HT to complete the task. The GM will also set the **Check Intervals** (**CI**), which determines how much time elapses between each check the character makes for the Challenge, in terms of minutes, hours, or even days. During each CI, the player forms their dice pool like a typical Challenge.

Relatively simple and straightforward task : **HT 3-5**
(cleaning a tool, organizing a room, digging a hole, meeting and greeting)

Moderately complex and engaging task : **HT 6-8**
(presenting a report, wiring an electrical network, doing historical research)

Exhaustively difficult and intricate task: **HT 9-12**
(jury-rigging a large vehicle, performing transplant surgery, talking down a gunman in a hostage crisis)

During the Extended Challenge, the player should keep track of how many Crowns and Scratches they generate. If the player rolls a number of Scratches equal to the HT before they can finish the task, they encounter some difficulty or bad luck that renders the task uncompletable. If the character has gained a number of Crowns equal to the HT upon completing the task, they have not only succeeded, but also gained an extra perk or piece of info that they were not expecting.

(2.7) Game Framing

All games have their own ways of representing narrative periods of time. Some common terms that are used in the roleplaying game community are "campaign", "game session", "one-shot", "scene", and "turn" among others. The SHZS uses its own terminology in line with its aesthetic of communicative storytelling.

The largest concept is the **Other World Setting**, or **OWS**. An OWS is roughly equivalent to a large-scale campaign setting. OWS contain extensive description of a game universe that the player characters inhabit; the genres, the narrative themes, the power structures, the politics, the evil forces, the important non-player characters, and the many potential storylines that can spring from the galvanization of all these factors.

A **Story** in the SHZS is like a narrative campaign that the Storyteller prepares and runs for the players. OWS can contain many Stories, depending on which themes, events or characters the ST wishes to focus on.

A **Chapter** tends to be a single session of gameplay within a Story. It's important to note that a Chapter is designated by its narrative arc and not the restrictions of real-world time, so some Chapters might last only a couple hours, while others will require multiple game sessions to finish.

Finally, Chapters are broken down into **Scenes**. It may be easiest to imagine them like scenes from a play, a tv show or a movie. Scenes are structured around a primary plot point, generally take place in a single setting, and finish when the plot point is resolved or advanced in some way. Then the characters may skip forward in time and place to where the next Scene is set.

Once time becomes a factor within a Scene, the Three M's system is used.

(2.8) The Three M's System

During Scenes in which characters are limited by or stressed for time, players announce their intentions whenever they feel like and the ST resolves them the order that feels natural to the narrative. However, when it becomes important to know what happens when, the Storyteller can make use of the **Three M's System** (or **3MS**).

The Three M's stand for **Moment**, **Minute** and **Meanwhile**. These are three periods of time that can "nest" within each other, giving the players and the ST a framing device for when events occur relative to one another in a Scene.
When the ST wants to use the M3S, they go around and ask all players what their characters are doing (as well as considering the actions of relevant NPCs). Each action is then designated to take a Moment, a Minute or a Meanwhile. Their lengths are an approximation of their names; a Moment could take a single second or several, while a Minute could be anywhere from half a minute to a few. The ST and the players should use their judgement on how long any particular action would take to complete.

All Moment actions resolve first (more or less simultaneously; Challenges can be used to determine order if it's vitally necessary). After those Moment actions resolve, anyone without actions are asked what they are doing again; if more Moment actions are taken, those resolve just as before. This continues until no one has any more Moment actions they want to take. Then Minute actions are resolved in the same way, and once no one has any more Minute actions to resolve, all Meanwhile actions finish (the exact amount of time a Meanwhile action takes varies widely, dependent on circumstance). When there are two or more actions of the same length that directly conflict, the actor with the higher Speed Factor completes their action first.

During a battle, almost all actions worth taking are Moment actions, and a single Supremacy Challenge is usually counted as a Minute. There might be some conflicts whose actions take longer to resolve (battlefield combat with troops, opposing political campaigns, etc) depending on the scale that the Supremacy Challenge is fitted to. In these cases the ST may rule that one Supremacy Challenge lasts a Meanwhile, or for the entirety of a Scene.

Example: The PC's team of exoplanet explorers is in a tight spot. Two of the characters, Harris and Shufi, have lead a pack of alien scavengers back to the base, where their teammate Enrique is repairing the oxygen modulator. The team's combat expert, Luliya, is off testing water samples in nearby tidal pools. Harris and Shufi's intentions are to get inside the base before the scavengers catch up; failing that, they will turn and fight for their lives. These frantic actions, from both the explorers and the scavengers, will take Moments to complete. Enrique is almost done with the repairs, and the ST determines they will be finished in a Minute. Luliya will return from her mission in a Meanwhile. Thus, the battle between the explorers and the aliens may resolve before Enrique even finishes their job, since all Moments resolve before Minute actions do. However, if the duo is able to shelter themselves and hide well, a Minute may pass and Enrique can come help. If the group locks successfully locks themselves inside the base, a Meanwhile might pass and Luliya could come back to find herself shut outside with some hungry scavengers.

(2.9) Speed Factor

There are climactic points of action during the game in which two or more actors are attempting to achieve a singular goal before their competitors, making it essential to know moves first in the hectic conflict of a single Moment. This is when each actor's Speed Factor (SF) becomes relevant.

Speed Factor is gained from Merits, Equipment and other modular rules; characters have a starting SF of 0. During Moments in which it's important to know whose action resolves first, simply compare the SF of all actors involved; the actors resolve their actions in order of highest to lowest SF.

In the case of ties in SF (including SFs of 0), a single die of the same type may be rolled by each actor, and their actions resolved based on highest to lowest result.

(2.10) Auspice

In any kind of story, there are moments when the main characters encounter shocking strokes of luck or pull of daring feats that would almost always end in disaster otherwise. These main characters are emboldened and protected by the will of the narrative itself; if a character misses a vital clue or dies before their time, how will the story continue? Whether it be help from "plot armor", a "macguffin", or simple "deus-ex-machina", Auspice is the factor that represents these storytelling traditions in the Sheherezade System.

Characters start a Story with one point of Auspice (a token that acknowledges their place in the Main Cast), and can gain more throughout the game by invoking their Facets, Convictions and Goals. Thus, by demonstrating their importance to the ongoing Story, characters are rewarded with a force of fate (or luck) that can push them through the most perilous times. Check section (3.3) to learn how invoking the Auspice Triad works.

The SHZS Core Module provides two options for characters to spend their Auspice. Some Merits require Auspice to activate their effects in the game. Auspice can also be spent on Bonds of Camaraderie. Other World Settings may provide still more uses for Auspice.

(2.11) Bonds of Camaraderie

All player characters are part of the Main Cast, meaning they are the narrative focal point of the Story they're in. For the sake of the plot and for more practical, out-of-game purposes, it's important for the Cast to stick together and interact with one another. The ST's job gets much harder if they have to narrate several separate plotlines lead by individual characters, and their players won't get much enjoyment of sitting around the same table while not actually playing together. The Bonds of Camaraderie system is designed to address those issues and keep the game focused on teamwork and cooperative story-building.

When two characters have an interaction within a Scene that is meaningful for both of them, their players may establish a Bond of Camaraderie between those characters. When a Bond is established, the character's names get written down in the Bonds of Camaraderie section of each other's character records. The players also establish an Icon; a material object in the real world that represents this Bond. This Icon is kept within the gaming space to remind the players of their Bond. Finally, the players consort with the ST to establish the Bond's first effect.

Bond effects come in three categories: **Boost, Break,** or **Boon**.

A **Boost** is any effect that adds a positive modifier. The Boost must be conditional, and be based on the roleplaying moment that created or strengthened the Bond. In this way it's like the two characters establishing a shared Aspect that they can both draw upon. The Boost can grant a Minor Positive Force if the condition is fairly general (like a normal Aspect), or it can grant a Major Positive Force for a rarer, more specific condition (like a Linked Aspect). Boosts may also be flat bonuses that temporarily increase Defense Level or Speed Factor based on a condition.

Example: Ygra and Gellespie have a moment during a Scene in which Ygra brings Gellespie to a library and shows her many books about astronomy and the stars. Their players decide to establish a Bond of Camaraderie based on this event; they Ygra's player writes Gellespie's name under the Bonds section of her character record, and Gellespie's player does the same for Ygra. They choose an Icon for the Bond; Ygra's player has a bookmark with constellations on it, representing the duo's shared love of stars. Finally, the players choose a Boost effect for their Bond: during a Challenge in which the character can read the stars for useful info, they gain a Minor Positive Force for their die pool. Alternatively, the Bond could have been based on their time researching at the library, or similar aspects of their past they talked about while looking through books.

A **Break** effect removes a negative modifier imposed by the ST during a Challenge. Just like Boosts, depending on whether the conditions are general or specific, the the Break will remove a Minor or Major Negative Force respectively. Breaks can also specify Fatigue Levels or temporary penalties that affect DL or SF. (Breaks can also reduce Major penalties to Minor ones).

Example: Instead of a Boost, Ygra and Gellespie's players opt for a Break, which removes a Minor Negative Force for all vision-based penalties when the stars are out, because they are bolstered and guided by the constellations.

A **Boon** effect is an advantage that isn't covered by Forces, but rather represents a general stroke of luck that can befall a character when they need it; one could think of them as on-demand Crown effects. Once again, Boons must be conditional; however, instead of being used to gain a certain advantage, they can also be used to counteract the effects of a Scratch that match their condition.

Example: Ygra and Gellespie choose a Boon for their Bond effect; when they activate their Bond and can see the stars, they are able to figure out their general location and direction of travel, preventing them from getting lost (or helping them get un-lost). They may also use the effect against a Scratch that might disorent them directionally.

Invoking Bonds - Once a Bond has been established, either character may invoke the Bond during the Story. A character may only invoke one of their Bonds per Scene, and may not invoke the same Bond twice during a Chapter. A character invokes a Bond by spending Auspice. At that time, the character gains access to all the effects connected to that Bond, and can use all that apply to their situation.

When two characters cooperate on the same action at the same time to achieve a singular goal, they may invoke their Bond together by each spending Auspice. This is called a *Unity Strike*. The characters gain two dice to their shared dice pool for the Challenge, or two free Hits to the action during a Supremacy Challenge. Unlike a normal invocation, the action does not have to be related to any of their Bond's effects.

Strengthening Bonds - As characters interact more, their Bonds develop over time. Just like when they established the Bond, whenever the same two characters share another meaningful moment within the Story that deepens their connection or further defines their relationship, their players may elect to strengthen their Bond, adding another effect with the same rules as above. A character may only strengthen one Bond per Scene, and may only strengthen a particular Bond once per Chapter.

When characters strengthen their Bonds, the players may want to take the chance to replace their existing Icon with one that better reflects their relationship as it grows and changes in nature. Players may also choose to add onto or modify the existing Icon to represent those changes.

(2.12) Character Mortality

A character can face down any number of dangers in a story, including wounding and death. A character tends to suffer instances of damage in single increments which reduce their Corpus or Animus by 1, depending on the nature of the attack. If a character's Corpus or Animus drop to 0, they fall unconscious and will remain so until the beginning of the next Scene, unless revived somehow.

A character can also suffer the strain of lesser hazards and stressful effects by raising their Fatigue Level. If a character's Fatigue Level is higher than either their current Corpus or Animus score, they are Weakened, and suffer a Minor Negative force to their die pools. If both their Corpus and Animus

is lower than their FL, they suffer a Major Negative force. Furthermore, whenever a Weakened character suffers damage OR raises their Fatigue Level, they must succeed on a Basic Physical Challenge with a TN equal to their current Fatigue Level or immediately fall unconscious.

When a character is at 0 Corpus or Animus and unconscious, they are in Peril, and potentially dying. Every Moment or Minute, the character gains another Fatigue Level automatically, unless they are stabilized by receiving appropriate medical aid or other care. If the character's Fatigue Level rises higher than their combined Corpus/Animus score, they have died.

Once a character in Peril has stabilized, the healing process can begin. Their Fatigue Level must return to 0 before they can recover lost Corpus/Animus. A character that is actively resting can recover from one damage to their Corpus/Animus at the end of their Healing Period (the length of which is determined by the Module that the Story is using). If the character is being tended to by another character or NPC that has appropriate Aspects for your care, they may recover from an extra damage.

There are two different Modules that offer rules for hurt and dying characters, as well as healing and recovery; the ST should choose which one best fits their Story before the game starts.

Cinematic Module: Characters in Peril raise their Fatigue Level every Minute. Stabilizing a character in Peril is a normal Challenge, TN 3. A Healing Period is 8 in-game hours. Characters heal one damage from Corpus/Animus at the end of every Scene. Characters' Fatigue Levels return to 0 at the end of every Scene.

Realistic Module: Characters in Peril raise their Fatigue Level every Moment. Stabilizing a character in Peril is a Complex Challenge, TN 4. A Healing Period is 24 in-game hours. Characters' Fatigue Levels lower by 2 at the end of every Scene.

(2.13) Value and Bulk

All objects in the SHZS have two important factors, Value and Bulk. Value represents how relatively valuable an object is within the local economy. Bulk represents a combination of how heavy and unwieldy the object is to hold or carry around; objects that are weighty but designed to be carried easily will have an average Bulk, like a suit of armor for example, while a longbow, even though it's not particularly heavy, is so cumbersome to carry it will have a higher Bulk.

Both Value and Bulk range from 1 to 10, and are detailed below.

Value

Value 1: objects mostly bought in bulk due to their low price and common use. You might not even notice if you dropped one out of your pocket.

Value 2: cheap everyday conveniences. Easy to make oneself in a pinch, available nearly everywhere for purchase.

Value 3: more uncommon versions of everyday conveniences. Slightly more specialized in material or use.

Value 4: uncommon tools, consumables or decorations. Perhaps only carried by a few shops in a large market, people often have to go out of their way to get them. Hard to substitute with something else.

Value 5: good-quality staples like clothing, meat, etc. The essentials of life, usually repaired instead of replaced by common folk.

Value 6: high-quality staples, important and essential tools, fancy consumables.

Value 7: small to medium home appliances, luxuries, mid-grade jewelry, fancy clothes.

Value 8: large appliances, bicycles, cruise tickets, etc. a few month's savings for common folk, well-cared for and passed down.

Value 9: personal vehicles, family heirlooms, objects made of rare materials. Could cost as much as a year's savings for a common family, highly prized.

Value 10: high-grade jewels, luxury items, masterwork tools and decorations. Most common folk can't outright buy these things.

Beyond Value 10, we start to talk about levels of Wealth, since a sizeable group of similar-Value objects tends to equal the next Value up. Wealth is a more fluid representation of the assets the character has available, that can be turned from cash into goods and back again with a bit of time and work.

Bulk

Bulk 1: an object (or set of objects counted for one) that you could fit multiple of in your hand, have to fish in your pocket to find it.

Bulk 2-3: handheld object, fits into most pockets, easy to hide on one's person. Most everyday clothing sets or uniforms.

Bulk 4-5: object that is convenient to carry or move with both hands, usually carried under arm or around/on shoulder. Possible to hide under large/baggy clothing. Thick insulating clothing layers.

Bulk 6-7: item that requires a bit of flex to pick up from the ground, difficult to hide on one's person. Light combat armor or related supplies.

Bulk 8-9: item you need to keep close to your body to carry for long periods of time. Often comes with straps or harness. Heavy combat gear.

Bulk 10: items requiring concentration to lift and maneuver around, far easier with two people working together. Objects tend to be large enough to support the weight of a human.

Beyond 10, Bulk becomes generally irrelevant as there are very limited ways a single human can bodily interact with such a large object.

Bulk can also be used as measure of the object's physical integrity, able to take damage as a character would. If damage is done to an object, it may lose Bulk, representing part of its form that was broken or sheared off. Its Value may also drop accordingly; if it loses all of its Bulk to damage, the object would be destroyed beyond repair.

(2.14) Character Advancement

Characters grow by spending the Experience (EXP) they are awarded at the end of every Chapter. After gameplay has concluded, review the Chapter together as a group, going Scene by Scene. For each Scene, players can nominate their character for a point of EXP. Their nomination should be specific, concise and well-reasoned. Players can use the following prompts to help them consider:

Was my character involved in the highlight of the scene? How did they contribute to that highlight?

How did my character deal with a situation that was challenging to their personality or abilities? How did the outcome change or develop them?

Did my character have interactions with other PCs that added positively to the Scene? How did it develop my character?

A player can only nominate their character once per Scene, but if they can adequately answer one of these questions (or offer another explanation that the ST finds acceptable), they earn a point of EXP. Not all Scenes are the same length; if players are having a hard time nominating their characters for a short Scene, move on to the next. For longer Scenes that hold a large amount of narrative weight, the ST may allow multiple nominations for a single character.

Spending EXP - All of the EXP a character gains should be totaled up in the EXP section of the Character Intro. Players can spend EXP in between Chapters to advance many different aspects of their character. When they spend EXP, the player should mark it down separately on the character sheet so they have a tally of how much EXP they still have left to spend.

There are two main ways a character can advance; vertically and laterally. Advancing vertically means leveling up the character's Rank, which confers a set of bonuses to strengthen the character all at once. Advancing in Rank represents the character's overall, longer-term growth in the context of the Story, or even between Stories. Some ST may not allow characters to advance in Rank mid-Story, due to the resulting power imbalance within the Cast.

Advancing laterally means acquiring more Aspects, buying or switching out Merits, or other Module-based improvements that represent growth from pivotal experiences within the Story. Sometimes a player may be asked to describe what kind of training or resources their character is taking advantage of in order to attain this new skill or ability. Other times it will be a result of the player realizing that this is a skill the character needed all along, and they are not better representing their abilities.

Below is a list of all the EXP-based advancements available in the Core Module.

New Merit: 5 EXP (in agreement with the ST, an old Merit may also be switched out for a new one at the cost of 3 EXP).
New Aspect: 3 EXP
New Linked Aspect: 1 EXP

Advancement to Rank C: 20 EXP
Advancement to Rank B: 30 EXP
Advancement to Rank A: 40 EXP
Advancement to Rank S: 50 EXP

Keep in mind that to advance to the next Rank, you must spend the amount of EXP listed above, not merely reach it with the character's EXP total. For details on the advantages conferred by the new Rank, see Section (3.10).

(3.0) Sheherezade System Character Creation

This chapter focuses on the creation of playable characters. The first section (3.1) is a quick-build framework for character creation that contains only the most necessary instructions. To find more in-depth information, consult the following sections for the appropriate part of the creation process.

(3.1) Quick-Build Framework for Character Creation

1. **Character Intro (3.2):** Fill in Name, Age, Race, Pronouns, Defining Features, Rank
2. **Auspice Triad (3.3):** Choose 1 to 3 Facets, 1 to 3 Convictions, 1 to 3 Goals
3. **Traits (3.4):** assign one of the following spreads to your Physical, Mental and Social Traits:
   5/2/3   4/1/5   4/3/3   4/4/2
4. **Aspects (3.5):** Choose a number of Aspects in each Trait equal to the value of that Trait, or leave the slots blank and choose them during the game. Buy extra Aspects for 2DP each, or Linked Aspects for 1DP each.
5. **Merits (3.6):** Buy Merits with your starting Development Points if you wish to.
6. **Equipment and Wealth (3.7):** choose three pieces of Value 2 and three pieces of Value 6 equipment. Buy Wealth at a ratio of 1 for 1DP if you wish to.
7. **Vitals (3.8):** Corpus = Physical Trait +1, Animus = Mental or Social Trait +1. Defense Level, Speed Factor are 0 unless Merits or Equipment states otherwise.
8. **Character Rank (3.9):** Lowest-level characters start at Rank D. For building higher-level characters, consult the table in this section. Rank D characters have 5 DP to spend, as below.

   --2BP per Aspect, 1BP per LA, 3BP per Merit, 1BP per point of Wealth --

(3.2) Character Intro

Your character's intro contains several features that are displayed for easy reference. The pieces of the intro are detailed as follows.
Name: The name that the character wishes to be addressed as during the game. Feel free to add titles, pseudonyms or internet handles here too.
Age: The character's current age; should be a close approximation of their actual existing age, depending widely upon their race, species or formation of existence.
Race: The most accurate description of the character's race. This designation is highly dependent upon the genre and details of the current Story; if you are unsure, ask the ST for more information. In a game with a variety of sapient species, they may designate themselves as "Human", while in a Story only involving humans, they may choose to designate themselves as their ethnicity, nationality or tribal affiliation.
Pronouns: The personal pronouns that the character uses, and that other characters should use for them in the game. Keep in mind that pronouns do not equate to gender identity or sexual orientation.
Defining Features: What are the most striking details of your character? What do people first notice about them? Consider adding two or three descriptive words or phrases that identify them physically or by personality. These descriptors do not have any mechanical effect in the Story.

Rank: All characters are assigned a Rank in overall proportion to how experienced they are. The five Ranks, in order of power, are D, C, B, A, and S. Characters who are just starting their adventures will likely start at Rank D; the ST will let you know if you are to use a different Rank for the Story.
EXP: The ongoing total of EXP (Experience) that the character has accumulated. While you spend EXP on your character to advance their skills during the game, you should keep this number as the grand total of EXP gained.

(3.3) Auspice Triad

The Auspice Triad includes three character features that interact with Auspice, a factor of fate in the SHZS. The three parts of the triad are **Facets**, **Convictions**, and **Goals.** Creating these parts of the character first can help inform your choices for their skills, special abilities and equipment later on.

Revealed Features: As a reminder, this part of character creation can be skipped over and filled in anytime during gameplay.

Facets are features that make your character unique and interesting to play. Many Facets can affect a character negatively, so one might be tempted to describe them as Flaws. However, doing so may discourage players from thinking beyond their limitations. You should consider the different ways a character's Facet can be expressed in their actions and decisions within the Story, as part of how you roleplay the character. There may be some situations when Facets become a benefit instead of a hinderance!

A player may choose between one and three Facets for their character. Some example Facets are: Stiff Joints, Short Temper, Nasty Scar, Hard of Hearing, Wanted by the Law, Chronic Illness, Social Pariah, Expensive Tastes, Talks Ears Off, Speedy Driver, Hates Kids, Night Owl, Always Cold, Obese, Allergies, Troubled Home Life, Nosy, Loud Laugh, etc.

Convictions represent linchpins of your character's moral framework. All characters are capable of doing good or evil; Convictions determine the drive behind their choices. When a character faces an ethical dilemma, or feels lost in their way, Convictions serve to set them back on their chosen path. A player may choose between one and three Convictions for their character. Examples include Fighting for Justice, Protecting the Weak, Getting Rich, Avoiding Capture, Becoming Powerful, Killing their Enemy, Preserving their Homeland, Honoring their Deity, Serving their Master, Seeking for Truth, etc.

Goals provide concrete motivation for characters during the Story. You can give your character both Short-Term and Long-Term Goals. Short-Term goals are generally dependent upon the current events of the plot, and can be accomplished within a Chapter or two. Long-Term goals are more general motivators that can't be finished within a brief period of time. Characters work towards them over the course of the entire Story, and when the they hit important milestones in this journey, they gain Auspice. Note that while they are important in defining a character's motivations, Long-Term Goals will likely change for the character as they grow.

Gaining Auspice - All three of these features are used to gain Auspice during gameplay. Facets and Convictions work the same way, while Goals are a bit different. During gameplay, you may invoke a Facet/Conviction to earn a point of Auspice. Notify your ST that you are invoking a

Facet/Conviction and then describe how you are incorporating that Facet/Conviction into an action your character is taking, or how the Conviction is involved in the consequences they face. The ST is looking for how the involvement of the Facet/Conviction adds to the ongoing narrative and further defines your character. If the ST accepts your invocation, you gain a point of Auspice. You should only invoke a Facet/Conviction once per Scene (or once per Chapter, depending on the ST's preferences).

When a character completes a Short-Term Goal, the player should inform the ST, and they will be awarded a point of Auspice. For Long-Term Goals, once the player feels that the character has reached a significant milestone towards their completion, the player may inform the ST and be awarded Auspice.

Invoking the Auspice Triad is the primary way that characters accumulate Auspice. Auspice is spent to invoke character features and special abilities that will help them during the Story, as seen in (3.6) Merits and ( )Bonds of Camaraderie. *Characters start a Story with one point of Auspice.*

(3.4) Character Traits

All characters have three Traits: **Physical**, **Mental** and **Social**. Each of these Traits has a value assigned to it, from 1 to 5. These values provide a general sense of how capable your character is in all the worldly applications of each Trait.

Trait Value	Description
1	markedly lacking in proficiency, a weak point
2	solidly mundane, can't exceed far past routine activity
3	averagely skilled, good example of proficiency
4	uncommonly proficient, admired and desired for their skill
5	incredibly capable, considered gifted or best-in-class

Choose one of the sets below and assign the three numbers to different Traits. Each set is equal in total value. The order of the set has no correlation to the order of Traits you may see.

5/2/3   4/1/5   4/3/3   4/4/2

A value of 5 represents the highest examples of commonly-seen human ability. However, through advancement in Rank or application of other game rules, Traits may rise to 6 or higher to represent characters who tap into supernatural powers, surpass the limits of societal expectations, or adjust to a Story narrative that describes actors with extraordinary abilities.

(3.5) Character Aspects

Your character's **Aspects** are their most prominent skills, their bread and butter, their greatest strengths and hidden talents. Aspects are divided into **Inherent Aspects**, which are advantages the character was born with or had ingrained in them from youth, and **Trained Aspects**, the skills and knowledge they have worked countless hours to master.

Furthermore, all Aspects are connected to one of the three Traits. Below you will find a list of example Aspects for each Trait category. *These lists are in no way exhaustive*; the Storyteller should provide you with a general description of the world your character inhabits and some context of what roles they will be taking on in the story. It's also common for a Storyteller or the campaign materials to provide a list of Aspects that are likely to be applicable in the game. This is more important for Trained Aspects than Inherent ones; Trained Aspects can be modified from Story to Story, while Inherent Aspects cannot be changed in this way.

Inherent Aspects

Physical	**Mental**	**Social**
Acute Hearing	Artistic	Attractive
Booming Voice	Hyperfocused	Beautiful Voice
Fine Motor Control	Keen Directional Sense	Empathetic
Iron Stomach	Mental Mathematician	Fashionable
Keen Vision	Pious	Intimidating
Limber Body	Positive Outlook	Poker Face
Strong Grip	Punctual	Prideful
Swift Runner	Puzzle Solver	Quick Liar
Tall	Storyteller	Social Butterfly
Well-Insulated	Thrifty	Trustworthy

Trained Aspects

Physical	**Mental**	**Social**
Brawling	Accounting	Acting
Climbing	Ethics	Deception
Dance	Engineering	Etiquette
Disarming Traps	Flora Identification	Flattery
Knotwork	Law	Gathering Information
Meditation	Medicine	Haggling
Metalcraft	Research	Leadership

Scouting	Sea Navigation	Political Theater
Stealthy Movement	Symbolism	Small Talk
Swimming	Weights and Measures	Taunting

Gaining Aspects during Character Creation - *For each Trait, give your character a number of Aspects equal to that Trait's value.* (For a Social Trait of 3, the character will have three different Social Aspects). During character creation you may also spend 2DP to add an extra Aspect to a Trait.

There are many Aspects that could arguably be Inherent or Trained, depending on how they're used; there other Aspects that could conceivably be Physical, Mental or Social in nature. It's up to the player to choose how their character most prominently exhibits the Aspect and assign it to the corresponding Trait.

When choosing your character's Aspects, consider the following: What is it they do best? What skills do they need to act as you imagine them? What features of theirs stand out the most, to you or to others who interact with them? If you're having a hard time putting an idea into words, consult with your ST or your fellow players, and they should be able to help you.

Linked Aspects - Sometimes characters will gain more specific proficiencies within a certain Aspect, usually due to special training they undertake within a Story. When attained, Linked Aspects are connected to an Aspect the character already has as a subset or specialization. For example, a Linked Aspect to Medicine could be Diagnosis, or Surgery, or Bedside Manner. Linked Aspects can also have Linked Aspects themselves, further narrowing the character's focus. An Aspect may only chain a number of Linked Aspects in this way equal to the Trait value.

When a Linked Aspect becomes relevant in a Challenge, the player adds an extra die to their pool.

Linked Aspects can be added to a character during creation by spending 1DP per LA. Linked Aspects can also be gained during a Story, when a character spends time researching, training or discovering something new. LAs are less costly and quicker to learn than a whole new Trained Skill, and will often be the solution to Challenges requiring specific skills that would otherwise render the character Inept.

Character Creation: Revealed Aspects - Due to the near-infinite range of choice, it can be quite difficult to settle on all of your character's Aspects at character creation, before they even find their place in the Story. That's what the Revealed Aspects feature is for; if you don't want to assign your free Aspects during Character Creation, you may keep them unassigned and start the Story. At any point during the Story, you may choose to assign an Aspect to one of those free slots immediately. Within the Story, the character may reveal their hidden talent as a yet-untold part of their past, further fleshing them out and adding more resources to the party. Aspects are supposed to be relevant and empowering for a character, and help create compelling moments in the Story, so whether they are revealed now or later is of little consequence.

(3.6) Merits

Merits are special abilities, social statuses or resources that your character can utilize during the Story. Many Merits are specific to the Story the character is currently involved in, while others are General Merits that the character may keep as they move from Story to Story.

Merits are bought with Development Points. Each Merit costs 3 DP, and the character must meet the requirements for the Merit. Below is a reference list of the Merits included with the Core Module; check **(3.10) Merit Description Appendix** for their detailed descriptions.

Merit Name	Description
Battle Soul	The pain from your wounds drives to you to victory.
Crisis Medic	You excel at giving emergency care in hostile situations.
Combat Training	You are skilled in martial techniques with your chosen weapons.
Defining Trope	You have a quirk that gilds your personality and reputation.
Enterprise (Small)	You are the owner or leader of a business or organization.
Enterprise (Mid)	You are the owner or leader of a business or organization.
Enterprise (Large)	You are the owner or leader of a business or organization.
Everyone's Best Friend	Your character's friendship and goodwill know no bounds.
Fame (Low)	Your persona and lifestyle has gained you a devoted following.
Fame (Mid)	Your persona and lifestyle has gained you a devoted following.
Fame (High)	Your persona and lifestyle has gained you a devoted following.
Fauna Connection	You can communicate with animals that approach you.
Field of Expertise	You have a specialty that few can rival your skill or knowledge in.
Imprinted Observer	You have a knack for noticing small details and recalling them later.
Iron Will	Your mental fortitude is incredible.
Jury-Rigger	You can put together repairs or inventions from nearby scrap.
Leader and Commander	You have command over a small group of NPCs.
Merchant-Minded	You know how to spot a deal and how to make one.
Official Rank (Low)	Your character has a position of power in some kind of organization.
Official Rank (Mid)	Your character has a position of power in some kind of organization.
Official Rank (High)	Your character has a position of power in some kind of organization.
Shady Connections	You can call in favors from sources of questionable character.
Team Spirit	You can't let your allies down, no matter what danger you face.
Tough Stuff	You are one tough customer.
Trouble Sense	Your character has heightened senses for potentially bad situations.
Unending Stamina	The strength of your will never lets your energy dry up.

(3.7) Equipment and Wealth

A character's Equipment is anything they currently have on or with their person. If something not on their Equipment list, they do not have immediate access to it. Most common Equipment includes clothes, weapons, currency, identification, and gear befitting their profession or status. All gear has a Bulk and a Value rating; Bulk represents how heavy or unwieldy the item is, while Value is a general representation of how much the item is worth in relation to other things in that Story's setting.

Wealth is a semi-speculative number that is the cumulative Value of all the items the character owns or has full access to that confers material benefits. This includes material items such as cookware, armor, livestock, works of art or tools. It includes larger items like houses, carriages, boats, or plots of land. Wealth includes designations of resources, such as deeds and titles, credit vouchers, or contracts. Wealth can be non-material as well, including membership or official standing in clubs or societies. It also incorporates the total sum of your currency or valuables that are securely stored in banks or other caches. Unless the Storyteller otherwise specifies, 1 Wealth = 10 total Value that the character has. The player may also gain extra Wealth by spending 1 DP per point of extra Wealth at character creation.

A newly-created Rank D character can start the game with up to *three pieces of Equipment that are Value 6 or lower, and three other pieces of Equipment that are Value 2 or lower* (not including the outfit they are currently wearing, unless it is worth greater than Value 6). As long as it is alright with the ST, the player may make small exceptions or shift the Values around a bit to better accommodate what their character would reasonably have (having a set of Value 1 items instead of a Value 2 item, etc).

(3.8) Vitals

A character's Vitals represent their overall wellbeing- full Vitals mean a character is happy, healthy and ready to go, while low Vitals mean they have suffered wounds or trauma, and could be in danger. Having a character's Vitals reach 0 may be fatal. Vitals are split into two main values: Corpus and Animus.

Corpus is the state of a character's physical body. A character's Corpus value is equal to 1 + their Physical Trait.

Animus represents the stability and health of a character's mental and emotional state. This value is equal 1 + the character's Mental or Social Trait, whichever is higher.

Defense Level is a value based on how much armor, combat training, or supernatural forces are protecting your character from harm. Defense Level bonus typically come from Merits or Equipment. A character's starting Defense Level is 0, meaning attackers don't have to spend any extra Hits to inflict damage.

Speed Factor determines when your character's action resolves during moments of intense conflict. A character's starting Speed Factor is 0, and is increased through Merits or Equipment.

Fatigue Level represents how much stress or exhaustion from environmental factors is affecting them. If your character's current FL is greater than one of their Vitals, they suffer a Minor Negative Force to all their die pools in that Scene. If their FL is greater than both their Vitals, they suffer a Major Negative Force in the same way.

Encumbrance determines how much your character is able to carry on their person without impeding their movement. If your character is currently carrying more than 2x their max Corpus in Bulk, they are Encumbered. They gain a Fatigue Level that does not go away until they become

unencumbered, and they suffer a Minor Negative Effort Force to any Challenges that would be difficult without good range of bodily motion. At greater than 4x max Corpus, they are Heavily Encumbered; the Negative Force is upgraded to Major, and the character gains 2 more Fatigue Levels as above; beyond this they can barely move at all underneath the weight they carry.

(3.9) Character Creation by Rank

As mentioned in section (3.2), all characters have a Rank that corresponds to their overall experience level. Characters grow in Rank by accumulating EXP, granted at the end of each Chapter of a Story. However, some Stories may require characters that start at higher Ranks, due to the more epic scope of their narrative contents. Check the table below to see how a character advances by Rank, and consult your ST if this applies to your current Story.

Rank	Merit Slots	Starting DP	Increases
D	4	5	
C	6	12	+2 Wealth, +1 Corpus or Animus
B	8	20	+3 Wealth, +1 Corpus or Animus
A	10	30	+4 Wealth, +1 Corpus or Animus
S	12	45	+5 Wealth, +1 Corpus or Animus

(3.10) Merit Description Appendix

Merits are special abilities or talents that characters have.
Each Merit has a Quality attached to it. This Quality is for transferring characters from one universe to another; if a the Merit isn't applicable in the new OWS (magical powers in a modern reality setting for example), the Merit may be switched out for another Merit of the same Quality.

Some Merits require the player to spend Auspice to activate their effects. A player may only use Auspice to activate any of their Merits once per Chapter.

Qualities

Body, Mind, Connection, Supernatural, Reputation, Universal

(Universal Quality Merits can replace Merits of any other Quality. This is mostly as a placeholder for when a character is put into a universe that doesn't have enough Merits of the same Quality to transfer the character's current Merits into). Merits may only be taken once unless otherwise specified.

General and World Merits: General Merits are merits that are available in any OWS. World Merits are specific to that OWS and cannot be transferred out.

Battle Soul
[General Body]

The pain from your wounds drives to you to victory. When you are Weakened, you may spend an Auspice to gain +1 Defense Level and ignore any negative Forces caused by Fatigue Levels for the duration of the Scene.

Crisis Medic
[General Mind]
You excel at giving emergency care in hostile situations. Once per Chapter per target, your character may take a Moment to perform first aid on the target and remove one Fatigue level from them. Your character may also spend Auspice to take a Minute to remove one damage from the target's Corpus, provided they have adequate medical supplies.
Requirements: Aspect involving medical care or healing.

Combat Training
[General Body]
You are keenly skilled in martial techniques and discipline with your chosen weapons. This Merit applies to a single Aspect, and can be taken multiple times for different Aspects. When your character uses that Aspect during a Supremacy Challenge to Strike a target, consider the target's Defense one lower than normal. If they have no Defense value, the Strike deals an extra Damage. In addition, while wielding this weapon during a Challenge, they gain +1 Defense Level.

Defining Trope
[General Reputation]
You have a signature quirk that gilds your personality and reputation. Choose a Facet your character has; during a Challenge in which the character is able to apply that Facet in a directly relevant way, they gain a minor positive fateful Force to their die pool. (example: *Lethal One-Liner.* Just before the character attacks, they utter a witty quip or pun for all to appreciate.)

Enterprise (Small)
[General Reputation]
You are the owner or inheritor of a small business, franchise, corporation or other organization that produces a product or service. Your character maintains the responsibilities that come constant with the running of an enterprise. They also reap the benefits of earned profit and industry connections. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.

Enterprise (Medium)
You are the owner or inheritor of a medium-size business, franchise, corporation or other organization that produces a product or service. Your character maintains the responsibilities that come constant with the running of an enterprise. They also reap the benefits of earned profit and industry connections. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.
Requirements: Rank B

Enterprise (Large)
You are the owner or inheritor of a large-scale business, franchise, corporation or other organization that produces a product or service. Your character maintains the responsibilities that come constant with the running of an enterprise. They also reap the benefits of earned profit and industry connections. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.

Requirements: Rank A

Everyone's Best Friend
[General Connection]
Your character's friendship and goodwill know no bounds. Once per Chapter you may invoke one of your Bonds of Camaraderie without you or the bonded character spending Auspice, even if you already invoked their Bond earlier in the Chapter, and even if you invoked a Bond earlier in the Scene. Furthermore, any Unity Stikes you are involved in get three dice or Hits instead of the normal two.

Fame (Low)
[General Reputation]
You cultivate a persona and lifestyle that has gained you a devoted following. This grants you perks, access and privilege that naturally come with being a minor celebrity, low-ranking aristocracy/nobility, or someone of notoriety. The drawbacks of limited privacy and constant recognizability apply as well. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.

Fame (Mid)
[General Reputation]
You cultivate a persona and lifestyle that has gained you a devoted following. This grants you perks, access and privilege that naturally come with being an established celebrity, aristocracy/nobility, or someone whose reputation precedes them in many circles of society. The drawbacks of limited privacy and constant recognizability apply as well. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.
Requirements: Rank B

Fame (High)
[General Reputation]
You cultivate a persona and lifestyle that has gained you a devoted following. This grants you perks, access and privilege that naturally come with being a superstar celebrity, high-ranking aristocracy/nobility (or even royalty), or someone whose reputation extends into living legend. The drawbacks of limited privacy and constant recognizability apply as well. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.
Requirements: Rank A

Fauna Connection
[General Connection]
Through innate understanding or years of practice, you can communicate with animals that approach you. By taking a Minute, the character can commune with an animal that is willing to interact with them, either giving them information or receiving information on the animal's comprehension level (animals know of locations of food, shelter, danger, etc. but not petty details that would concern humans).

Field of Expertise
[General Universal]
By training or by nature, you have a specialty that few can rival your skill or knowledge in. Choose one of your character's Aspects; during Challenges in which the character uses that Aspect, consider

the related Trait to be 5. Also the character is never considered Inept for any Challenges that would require specific Linked Aspects for the chosen Aspect.

Imprinted Observer
[General Mind]
You have an uncanny knack for noticing small details and recalling them at a later time. Once per Scene you may ask the ST about a detail in a previous Scene or Chapter. If the detail was priorly established, the ST may remind you of it and add extra information if they wish; if the detail was not priorly established, the ST may establish it at this time (or may allow the player to establish the detail themselves).

Iron Will
[General Mind]
The character's mental fortitude is incredible. Their Animus is increased by 1.

Jury-Rigger
[General Mind]
Your extraordinary mind and hands put disparate objects together into inventions that are just what you need in the moment. As long as there are accessible materials nearby, your character can take a Minute to put together a tool, weapon or device that will (most likely) last the rest of the Scene. Your character also gains minor positive fateful force to any repairs they make on an object.
Requirements: Mental Trait 4

Leader and Commander
[General Reputation]
Your character has command over a small group of NPCs who follow them due to shared ideology and obey the character's orders as long as the character treats them well and follows the ideology too. None of the NPCs can be equal to or stronger than the character, or else they may leave or challenge their leadership.
Requirements: Social Trait 4

Merchant-Minded
[General Mind]
You know how to spot a deal and how to make one. You gain a minor positive effort force to any die pools when searching a market for something specific, or haggling with buyers/sellers for items. Also if you spend a Meanwhile selling items at a market, you often come away with some extra cash or well-bartered goods.

Official Rank (Low)
[General Reputation]
Your character has a position of power in some kind of organization, granting them responsibilities and authority that match the importance of their station. Low Rank can identify any position in the lower strata of an organization. Private Officers of a military, team managers of a company, or a priest of a clergy all represent this Merit. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.

Official Rank (Mid)
[General Reputation]

This Merit improves upon the benefits of Official Rank (Low). You have risen in the power structure of your organization, gaining more responsibility and prestige. Middle managers of companies, battalion leaders in militaries or elected heads of churches and communities all represent this Merit. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.
Requirements: Rank B

Official Rank (High)
[General Reputation]
This Merit improves upon the benefits of Official Rank (Mid). You have reached the highest echelons of the power structure you belong to, becoming a mover and shaker amongst the other elites. Executive officers of companies, Captains and commanders of militaries and cardinals or prophets of religious organizations all represent this Merit. The details of this Merit are dependent on the Story your character is currently in, and should be determined through discussion by you and the ST.
Requirements: Rank A

Shady Connections
[General Connection]
Your younger days spent in more questionable company have left you with some useful favors to call in. If your character is able to utilize their contacts during a Challenge (usually taking a Meanwhile), they get a minor positive fateful force to any dice pools rolled, including Extended Challenges. Of course, if they Scratch, it's easy to imagine what trouble might befall them. If they use their Auspice for a Boon, they can also have access to otherwise-restricted or illicit resources.

Team Spirit
[General Connection]
You can't let your allies down, no matter what danger you face. During a Supremacy Challenge you gain +1 Speed Factor and a major positive effort Force to actions that directly involve aiding actors on the same Side as you.

Tough Stuff
[General Body]
The character is one tough customer. Their Corpus is increased by 1.

Trouble Sense
[General Mind]
Your character has heightened senses for potentially bad situations. You gain +3 to Speed Factor during the Moment a bad situation materializes, and retain a +1 to SF until the conflict is resolved. You also gain a Minor Positive Effort Force when actively keeping an eye out for danger.

Unending Stamina
[General Body, Mind]
The strength of your will never lets your energy dry up. Your character recovers an extra two Fatigue between Scenes, doesn't suffer from Fatigue 1 effects.
Requirements: Physical 4 or Mental Trait 4.

(4.0) Storyteller's Guide

If you are reading this section, you have taken on the role of the Storyteller for your game group. If you are familiar with tabletop roleplaying games, you may be equating this to being the Game Master, the person who writes and directs the plot that the characters star in, and controls all the non-player characters (NPCs) that they involve themselves with. This is not an inaccurate assumption, but it's important to define here, for both new and experienced roleplayers, what the Storyteller's key roles are, which in turn determine how that person's input will affect the game experience for everyone at the table.

First and foremost, you are a human leading a social event for a group of other humans. There are many diverse reasons people will become players in a roleplaying game, but the most prevalent, summative reason is fun. People have work, social and familial obligations, and always one-too-many problems of daily life that are easier to deal with once they've escaped from them for a few hours. Thus, the Storyteller has the responsibility of creating an enjoyable experience for people as players in the game, and people as people outside the game.

(4.1) ST's Responsibilities: Outside the Game

It's hard to know for sure what your particular group of players will want or need from you. You'll learn the specifics through traditional trial-and-error, as well as being receptive to feedback and suggestions. Generally speaking, people should feel **comfortable**, **engaged** and **valued** during a roleplaying game.

Comfort during a roleplaying game doesn't differ much from comfort in any other kind of social setting: do people feel safe in the space they're in, with the people they're sharing it with, and with the activities they are participating in? Due to social pressures, many people may not feel comfortable saying they're not totally comfortable, or may not be able to articulate how a situation can be changed to make them comfortable. This can be difficult to deal with, but let us assure you that it is always more difficult and frustrating for the person who's suffering. Be patient, be kind, and be open to communication on their terms.

Engagement is what makes an activity come to life. Engagement happens when people become invested, become excited, become competitive, emotional, and curious about literally anything; sports, trivia games, counting pennies, poking something squishy with a stick. In this case, you want people to become engaged with the world you and they are creating with pencils, paper, dice and the power of I M A G I N A T I O N. When people see their choices have meaningful consequences, and have their decisions respected and reacted to, engagement becomes easy to find.

People want to be **valued** no matter what. In our context, people want to be valued as friends, creators, and players. Even if we deny it out of social grace, almost everyone wants others to hear their opinions on a plan, to pay attention to their character's cool moments, and to feel like they've bonded through interactions inside and outside of the game.

As you may have noticed by now, the factors of comfort, engagement and value all seem to feed into each other when addressed well. You'd also be right in saying that producing those factors reliably

can be extremely difficult. That's the way it goes! There is everything to be gained in trying and trying again.

Encourage feedback from your players in ways they feel comfortable giving it; some players might only feel comfortable bringing something up after conferring with several other players, while some might prefer to talk to you in private, even over the internet via messaging. Just because players don't give you feedback doesn't mean there's nothing they want to say; you may instead want to check your gaming environment for factors that might be discouraging people from doing so.

(4.2) ST's Responsibilities: Within the Game

The Storyteller has three main responsibilities within the game itself:

Narrating the Events of the Game

Determining the Role of Fate

Recording the Lore

Narrating the Events of the Game - The most basic social exchange that constitutes roleplaying is when one person describes a hypothetical scenario, a second person says what they would do in that scenario, and the first person explains what would happen as a result of their actions. The Storyteller is the first person; they control everything the players do not, which is usually everything but the player's personal characters. All non-player characters, enemies, prophecies, coincidences, catastrophes, acts of god(s), and weekly weather forecasts act entirely by your design.

This responsibility comes with a tremendous amount of narrative power. The key is using this power wisely, in a way that makes the game enjoyable for all. Especially in older generations of tabletop roleplaying game culture, there was a tendency to equate the role of a Game Master to that of a Greek deity, ensuring petty vengeance upon individual player characters who dared act in a way that even seemed to mock their authority or pride. Who can help but fear and/or respect someone who can end an adventure just with the words "rocks fall, everyone dies"?
The SHZS is built around the idea that people can enjoy making stories together. There are times when an ST is encouraged to give some narrative power over to the players; this allows them to have more investment in shaping their own experiences, and it helps to share the large creative burden the ST takes on. This factor of the game is something you will want to discuss with your group before the game begins, so that everyone involved knows what to expect.

Some examples of narrative-sharing include:

Allowing a player to describe how their character succeeds in a Challenge, or the effect of a Crown they got.

When describing the setting of a new Scene, going around and allowing each player to add a detail, based on the imagery your initial description conjures up.

Letting players who are not currently involved in the Scene's narrative focus to act as NPCs that are by supplying them with the NPC's motivations and quirks, and letting them take it from there.

Determining the Role of Fate - Or the "roll" of fate, if you're feeling punny. As in most roleplaying games, dice are used in the SHZS to add a degree of chance to the narrative. This factor of chaos gives more weight to player choice, especially when plans fail; that is the moment when the narrative of a roleplaying game comes alive. After all, if a plot has already been pre-written, why risk ruining it all by allowing players to roll dice? That being said, it is up to the Storyteller to decide when the dice come into play. Based on where the narrative is headed, the ST may choose to "talk through" the outcome of some situations in favor of spending time on Scenes that benefit most from the uncertainty of dice rolls.

In the SHZS, dice are primarily rolled during Challenges. Challenges are more gestalt than discrete in nature, meaning that a single dice roll can account for the results of multiple actions that are all focused on achieving a singular result. Some game systems might have you roll four separate checks to dive into a river, swim to the other side, grab onto a rope and pull yourself up the steep bank. In the SHZS, it's easy enough to cover all that action in a single roll, and then use those results as guidelines in narrating how that process happens. The exact amount of time or effort that a Challenge includes is entirely situational and up to the Storyteller's discretion.

Basic Challenges are matching the results of a roll against a **TN** (Target Number) appropriate for the task.

Direct Challenges are two active sources (PC vs PC or PC vs NPC) matching results of respective rolls, with the narrative results favoring the side with the higher outcome. If there are just two characters involved in some direct dispute, it's generally easier to resolve it with Direct Challenges than a Supremacy Challenge.

Supremacy Challenges are multiple actors split into Sides (usually one Side with all the PCs and one Side with the enemies), in which all Sides contribute to their own Die Pools and spend the Hits to perform actions within single Moments of time in a high-stakes combat situation.

Recording the Lore - To have a Story that the players can become immersed in, there needs to be consistency in the people they meet, the events they experience and the plots they follow. It's the Storyteller's job to keep records on the most relevant parts of the Story, in order to recall what has happened before and to prepare for what might happen next.

The two important pieces of record-keeping in a SHZS game are the **Story Record** and the **Repertoire**.

The Story Record is, as its title suggests, a record of all the relevant characters, events and plot points that have been introduced in the Story. The Record might look like a journal or an encyclopedia depending on the recorder's personal style of information-gathering. In accordance with the idea of sharing narrative power, the ST may want to let the players have a hand in writing the Story Record, allowing them to decide the most interesting or relevant aspects of the game based on what they write down and what they omit. STs reviewing these notes from the players can determine what plot elements should be introduced in future Scenes and Chapters.

The Repertoire is the Storyteller's toolbox. Whereas the Story Record is an archive of things that were, the Repertoire is a staging room for things that will be. Most ST's Repertoires are lists of NPCs, events, items, rumors, half-formed ideas and Hooks that they want on-hand for the most current Chapter. The ST will be actively working from their Repertoire during gameplay, choosing when and where to introduce narrative elements and pulling out options based on the choices characters make.

(4.3) Building a Story

Creating a Story in the SHZS is a cooperative effort between the Storyteller and the players. The ST will narrate Scenes in which player characters will encounter **NPCs**, **Locations** and **Hooks** that they will react to; the outcomes of those reactions will determine the direction the narrative takes from there. These three narrative elements are pulled from the ST's Repertoire, and are further detailed below.

NPCs (or Non-Player Characters) are any characters in the game whose motives and actions are controlled by the ST. How much detail you want to put into your NPCs depends on how vital their role in the Story is. For background characters or minor actors that have little to no speaking lines, just a simple line of description might do. For more major NPCs that interact directly with the Main Cast, you might want a full profile on hand in your Repertoire. You can see an example of an NPC's profile below, taken from the **Spirits of Temperance** OWS.

Blake Bollanger
Role: Leader of the Rowdies (Human)
Traits: P/4, M/2, S/2   **Aspects:** Bulky Brawler, Liecatcher, Interrogating, Leadership
Features: Easily Taunted, Compulsive Whistler, Doesn't Understand Sarcasm
Powers: Spirit (lets him throw magical punches over a distance.)
Goals: Get the stolen Spirits back, overpower fools who challenge him
Equip: 4 small bottles of Mage Hand Spirit, 1 small bottle of Darkvision Spirit, 1 small bottle of Mage Armor Spirit, bowie knife, pistol
History: Fought his way from New York to Chicago as an amateur boxer. Trying to raise money for his career by being a Rowdy.

In an NPC profile, the Features section is similar to a PC's Facets or Convictions, combined for simplification. The Powers section includes any special abilities that are similar to Merits or other Module-specific skills. Goals provide you with the NPC's immediate and general motivations in the Story. The History section is for any other pertinent background info.

Locations are physical settings that the players inhabit in Scenes. The Cast may switch between Locations within a Scene, or split up and occupy different Locations. Locations can be thought of like staging in a movie or TV show, depicting the characters' immediate surroundings in a way that further informs the tone or mood of the Scene. However, in a roleplaying game the Cast can also be given the freedom to explore and interact with the Location without losing the narrative, because you only make Locations out of places you want the Story to focus on. If a character is insistent on going somewhere that you haven't planned a Location for, you can either choose to resolve their actions there in an "off-camera" fashion, summarizing events quickly and with little dice-rolling, or

you can decide to refocus the narrative there and build the Location as you go. Below is an example of a Location profile from the **Spirits of Temperance** OWS.

Goldie's Bar
~ A cozy speakeasy nestled below an old theater in a "historic" (dilapidating) part of Chicago.
Hook: Rowdies will force their way in, having been tipped off about the smuggled Spirits.

Atmosphere: Casual yet refined, honor among thieves, loosen-your-collar kind of place.
Features: Large gas lamps lighting, dark wood panelling, everything noticeably clean
People: **Nedd Khosk** (Owner and bartender; orc who took over the bar after the death of his human husband Goldie in WWI).
Artie Dakrow (local college professor, Racial Diversity specialist who is feeling the pressure from humanist sympathizers)
Vignetta (Elven drag singer, wants to go see the ocean someday, not just the Great Lakes)
Paulie Pocket (Pool Shark, slightly addled in the head from bad Spirits. Former Rowdy, knows how they operate and about security detail at the Rachstein Gala)
The Atmosphere helps set the mood for the Scene and inform players how their character would act in this Location, while the Features provide focal points that help build up mental imagery. The Hook is a plot point that can be brought in whenever the time feels right; the concept of Hooks and their use is explained below.

A **Hook** in SHZS take its name from a "plot hook", as a narrative device that drives characters to action. A Hook can take the form of a threatening force, an enticing treasure, a moral quandary, an unintended consequence, and so much more. If the characters are standing around kicking rocks or causing random trouble, it's because a Hook hasn't been adequately presented to them (or the one that was was entirely uninteresting).

Thus, Hooks should always have stakes for the characters. Some Hooks might hang around for awhile, waiting to lure a character in like a fat piece of bait, while other Hooks might be so imminent and imposing that there is no way to avoid the problem; inaction would be a moral choice in and of itself. And of course, using a wide variety of Hooks always keeps things fresh and unpredictable for the players.

Here's an example of a hook being developed, from a simple statement to a potential plot point:

> There's a market.
> > *Okay?*

> There's a market in Saverhall, the town the PCs are headed to.
> > *Sure, but also easy to assume.*

> The PCs need to restock and repair their inventories at the market in Saverhall.
> > *Good, almost there. We just need a little bit more.*

> The Saverhall Market just got an unexpected shipment of rare and dangerous creates.
> > *Perfect.*

Hooks are the element of the Story that provoke characters into creating the plot, so it's important to become familiar with their use. Hooks can be attached to Locations, as you see above, or NPCs.

They can also stand on their own and wait in your Repertoire until the time feels right to drop them into the Story. Players can also be encouraged to create and offer their own ideas for Hooks, based on their characters or things they want to explore more of in the world.

Economic Profiles - Aside from people, places and plot points, Stories are also populated with things. With the SHZS being a system that can host any genre or world setting imaginable, it's not possible to consolidate a single list of every possible object, tool, good or service that would be available. The SHZS addresses this problem with Economic Profiles; every OWS has its own Economic Profile, either created by the Storyteller solely for that Setting, or copied from another OWS that is similar enough in genre and time period.

An Economic Profile consists of a **Relative Value Chart**, which gives a range of how much Value equates to the currency used in the Story, and a **Gear Catalogue,** which is a large list of items that the characters may want to use for Equipment, arranged according to Value. The Catalogue is organized in this way so that players can get a sense of how much things would cost relative to each other, so when they want to buy/sell an item not found on the list, it's easy to reference the Catalogue and make an estimation based on similar items. Values are not meant to be exact and can fluctuate based on changes that occur within the Story; a collapsing silver mine will bring the Value of silver up quickly. A merchant wants to unload his wares before the invasion arrives, so he's willing to sell for well below the normal Value of those weapons (or perhaps they're lower Value due to their shoddy craftsmanship).

You can see an example of an Economic Profile by looking at Section (1.6) of the Spirits of Temperance OWS.

(4.4) Narrating a Story

As the Storyteller, it's important to have an idea of what running a game session in the Sher'zade System looks and feels like. What you read below are referential starting points for people who have little to no experience being a Storyteller, or running a roleplaying game in general. As you become more accustomed to the role, you are highly encouraged to develop your own style and personalizations to your games, in accordance with what works best for you and your players.

The player characters as a group are called the Main Cast. The degree of their importance to the overall Story is dependent on the aesthetic the OWS; depending on genre and tone, the Main Cast may be a group of awe-inspiring heroes, destined to be the only ones capable of saving the world from oblivion. Other times they are characters in a tale that are brought together by serendipity and the subtle threads of a shared past that will be uncovered in the proceeding plot. Sometimes they are simply mortals trapped in the machinations of something far greater than them, and they are simply used as a narrative point of view to watch the Story unfold. Players should be made aware of the roles their characters will play before the Story starts, so that everyone is on-board for how the Story will play out, and no one is left feeling confused or frustrated by a difference in what is happening in the narrative and what they expect to be happening based on their actions.

It's important to remember that the Storyteller is creating a Story *with* the players, not *for* them. The ST doesn't decide what the outcome of a Scene will be before it's even started; if the end was already pre-determined, why bother letting the Cast have any freedom of choice during the game? In the Sher'zade System, Stories are created by following the threads of player choice and consequence. What rewards could come of the characters banding together to escape incredible

danger? What problems could arise from them walking away from a bad situation they could change? What will happen if they are rude to or flatter the person in power they meet? It's the Storyteller's job to make their lives happy, to make their lives hell, but most importantly, to make their lives interesting. The ST's Repertoire should provide a never-ending supply of Locations ready to explore, intriguing NPCs to interact with and Hook after Hook to get caught up in. The Storyteller sets it all up, and the player characters knock it all down.

Game Flow - As you've read above, you are in charge of telling a particular Story with the players. Stories are broken down into Chapters; you can think of one Chapter as being one session of a game, for the convenience of your group in the real world. However, there may be times when there isn't a convenient stopping point or cliffhanger to pause the narrative; in that case you may choose to continue the same Chapter when you pick up at the next game session.

Chapters are further broken down into Scenes. To refer to Section (2.7), "It may be easiest to imagine them like scenes from a play, a tv show or a movie. Scenes are structured around a primary plot point, generally take place in a single setting, and finish when the plot point is resolved or advanced in some way." The length of a Scene can vary widely; the average Scene will likely last between 30 minutes to an hour of gameplay. Some Scenes could be as short as 10 minutes, while other Scenes could last nearly the whole game session, as climatic focal points of the entire Story. The longer you use the Sher'zade System the more you'll get a natural feel for when a Scene should change.

Scenes should be set in a Location, possibly involve some NPCs, and should always include a Hook. One Hook tends to create enough drama for a single Scene, but it is possible (and chaotic) to have two or more Hooks resolve concurrently. If your Scene doesn't involve a Hook, the focal point of the Scene should be clear to everyone participating in it; sometimes some Scenes that center around tension or conflict between the Main Cast don't need a Hook to be worth playing through.

Character Growth - At the end of every Chapter, you should take time to award EXP to the characters. This process is detailed in Section (2.14). Characters can also be advanced anytime outside of gameplay. It is generally not recommended to allow a character to advance a Rank during a Story, as most Stories are balanced for a team of characters of a particular Rank. Having one character increase in Rank mid-Story can also create a power imbalance that may offset the group dynamic.

Character Rewards - In any roleplaying game, characters (and their players) look forward to gaining rewards for their efforts, besides EXP. Material wealth is the most obvious example, and features prominently in many of the most popular RPGs. Making sure the players feels adequately rewarded is important in this game as well, although the ST will want to consider how the nature of the reward fits with the themes of the OWS they are using. Gold, jewels and magical artifacts are all fine and good for a swords-and-sorcery fantasy game, but changes in setting or genre would make them feel out-of-place.

The key to rewards is to base the concept of the rewards closely on the details of the setting. What features of the setting confer power? In some worlds, material wealth grants power, while in others connections and reputation outweigh gold. Ancient or futuristic technology, land trusts and deeds, stocks and shares, digital currency, favors gained and owed, rare information and lost knowledge; all of these can have value in someone's life, and grant them power even when they lack in something else. We recommend that you use several of these power channels in your game, having

value in constant flux with each other as the events unfolding your Story change the world around it.

Another important consideration with rewards is their equity of distribution amongst the Cast. Players will always know when they're not getting as much as everyone else, and it doesn't make for a fun time (for the player or the ST they are complaining to). A suggestion for keeping track of rewards is to mark each one as minor or major whenever a player ends up acquiring them in some form during the game. You should be able to quickly reference how many minor and major rewards each Cast member has obtained recently, and use that information to know what to include in future Scenes.

(4.5) Transferring Characters Between Other-World Settings

Stories can vary widely in length; Short Stories can be anywhere from one to three Chapters, while longer Stories may continue for dozens of Chapters before reaching their conclusion. But what happens beyond the end of a Story? Some groups may choose to start another Story in the same OWS, while others may want to start a new Story in an entirely new OWS.

An option that players have in the Sher'zade System is to move characters from one OWS to the next, rather than having to create new characters for each setting. How this works within the canonical narrative of the OWS is up to the Storyteller and the players; while some people may enjoy the concept of connecting disparate settings through some tropes like interdimensional travel, reincarnation or alternate realities, others may need no further explanation as to why their same character appears in a universe entirely disconnected from the one they originated in. The latter concept follows the traditions of alternate universe settings, or "AU"s in fanfiction communities, in which stories about characters from established franchises are written in settings that are strikingly disparate from the original material. The characters maintain their original personalities and sometimes their original relationships, but one purpose of these AUs is to explore the dynamics between characters in novel situations. How would your characters born in a dark fantasy world act in a modern high-school setting? Or what if your team of college-aged superheroes were officers aboard a starship in a galaxy at war? Finding out what new developments occur in these familiar characters is the gateway to a truly limitless roleplaying experience.

To move a character from one OWS to another, a player must create a "fork" of their character. This means creating a second Character Record that will be used in the new OWS. How many things change and how many stay the same is partially up to the player; they may take the opportunity to alter certain aesthetics of their character to better fit in with the new setting, such as changing physical features, Facets or Convictions. Other character features, such as Merits, Aspects and Equipment must be checked before the forking process is complete.

Rank: Unless the Storyteller has special reasons for doing otherwise, forks of characters should be of the same Rank as the Record they are being forked from, and keep the same amount of EXP.

Aspects: A character's Aspects should always feel relevant to the world they are in; when a character is forked into a new OWS, it's very likely that some of their Aspects will end up far less useful than before. *Only Trained Aspects may be changed*; Inherent Aspects remain with the character as part of who they are. The player may mark whichever Trained Aspects that they feel

are no longer relevant to the setting they are in and use the rules for Revealed Aspects (Section 3.5) to swap them out for new Aspects when the time is right during gameplay.

Merits: Some Merits, like Aspects, lose their relevance once they leave the OWS they were created for. Merits are divided into two general categories; General and World. General Merits can exist in any OWS, while World Merits tend to be genre-bound, or even specific to a single OWS. When forking, players should look closely at any World Merits that their character has and consult with the ST to determine if they should remain with the fork. World Merits may be switched out for other Merits that share at least one Quality with it (Body, Mind, Connection, Supernatural, Reputation, Universal).

Equipment: Most Equipment that a character has will likely need to be changed when forking; the simplest way to do this is to exchange each piece of Equipment with something of the same Value and similar function in the new OWS. For example, a leather cloak in a fantasy OWS can become a raincoat in a modern OWS, or a pistol in a modern OWS can be a laser gun in a futuristic OWS. Wealth should generally remain unchanged, but if there are any specific sources that are tied to a character's Wealth, they will need to be vetted for relevance to the new OWS.

The world just ain't like it used to be.

The Great War is over, and the Twenties have just begun to roar.
Skyscrapers claw their way upwards out of the smoky tangle of tenement blocks
Glutted by new-money men in new-money suits that spin through their doors.
It's the area of moving fast. Horses are slow, Ford automobiles are fast.
Bloated, weakened Unions are slow. New Captains of Industry are fast.
Money is grease, and the streets of Chicago are tar.

No honest person can even find a good drink to slip into, since the Temperance Movement dried up the cities. If you want to taste some liquor, you either gotta avoid the law, or be the law.
You are not the law.

It has to be said, though; there ain't nothing like oppressively-enforced contraband to bring people together. While every money-soiled socialite in the city is busy building their own modern castle, the rest of you are crowded into whatever spaces are left. Humans of all shapes and sizes barter with the dwarven bootleggers and rum-runners, applaud the dancer and diva elves on stage, and load ships on the docks with the orcs. Some might even be foolish or desperate enough to let a goblin fix up their car.

When great minds come together, nothing's out of reach, certainly not a bit of banned booze. Rumors are brought in with the barrels, too; despite the pulpit-talk that alcohol weakens the soul and corrupts the heart, it seems being filthy rich makes you immune to such harrowing side-effects. People claim to have snuck into fiendishly-ostentatious parties inside manors and onboard yachts, where the liquor they're drinking does more than ensorcel the mind. A single sip from a glass can let someone throw lightning, or melt away into the air. The upper class have discovered a way to distill magic into their medicine, and made sure they were the only ones with the prescription by tacking on an 18th amendment to the laws of the land.

Through deals, steals and some very fast wheels, small batches of Spirits trickle their way down into the mouths of more common folk. It's dirty and very dangerous work, but there's always grateful customers with fistfuls of cash waiting on the delivery end for these bewitched elixirs. The powers that be have come down hard, organizing street thugs into hunting parties called The Rowdies, who get paid by returning bottles and breaking bones (only the first one actually, the second is just a perk of the job). The Women's Christian Temperance Union (the "Wictus", they call 'em with hushed voices) have eyes searching every dirty corner of Chicago for tipsy sinners (despite relying on their own brand of "holy water").

Now the only question is, who are you in this picture? Everybody wants to be a somebody, because there's too many nobodies for one city to care about. And whether it's with bullets, bank notes or a bottle of supernatural sauce, you best not get caught empty-handed (unless it's by the authorities, of course).

Spirits of Temperance

Magical Booze-Running in The Age of Wonderful Nonsense:

A game run with the Sher'zade Roleplaying System

Written by Nagi

Intro (1.1)

Spirits of Temperance is an **Other-World Setting** (OWS) that uses the rules of the Sher'zade System to create Stories based on the details that this document provide. An introductory Story is included ready-to-run by anyone who is familiar with the SHZS rules, with a group of players who need only enthusiasm.

Background - Spirits of Temperance is set in an alternate-history America somewhere in the mid-1920's. In this universe, other fantasy races live and work alongside humans; while each being a minority within general society, the four most common non-human races are elves, dwarves, orcs and goblins. Each race has their own customs, culture and entangled history with the others, creating generational grudges in some places and unlikely alliances in others. With few exceptions, humans occupy the top positions of all power structures, including politics, corporations and clergy. Many humans end up putting prejudices before people, so those in high society build walls and moats while calling them fences and bridges, leaving the poor of their own kind to mingle with the rest.

The 18th Amendment was pushed through Congress as an act to ban the production and sale of alcohol nation-wide, with its proponents claiming that the absence of liquor would promote happy, healthy families, workplaces and communities. While there were many in the movement who genuinely believed that, the money that pushed the bill through to ratification came from those with different motives.

For decades, groups of wealthy socialites had been experimenting with alternative methods of distillation and brewing, drawing inspiration from old alchemical texts. Finally, a breakthrough presented humanity with access to the wonders of magic through the medium of alcohol, produced in accordance with arcane procedures. Once they could reliably create these concoctions, commonly referred to as Spirits, they wanted to be sure that no one "unworthy" could get their hands on it and use its power to disrupt the social order. Thus, millionaires harnessed a sideshow political movement and approached the floor of Congress like the gates of Troy.

Once any form of liquor was wrested from the hands of the common folk, society's elite expected to maintain a monopoly on Spirits. Surprisingly few expected the networks of rum-runners and speakeasies that grew through the undergrounds of nearly every city in America, making strange bedfellows of races when a singular cause managed to bridge the many divides. Through bargaining, subterfuge and outright theft, bottles of Spirits have slipped away from the parties and cellars of the rich and famous, to be joyously shared amongst the commoners, with a stronger desire ever growing to get the secret recipe.

(1.2) Short Story: A Quick Delivery

A Quick Delivery is a Short Story for the Spirits of Temperance OWS, meant to be completed within 1 to 3 Chapters. Everything from here below is privy to the Storyteller only, as it contains the start of their Repertoire that they are encouraged to add on to and personalize with their own ideas before starting the game.

The Main Cast gathers as a bunch of misfits from various walks of life who share at least one common point of contact; Nedd Khosk, the orcish proprietor of Goldie's Bar, a speakeasy hidden

beneath an old theater, whose patrons are being lured away by the sensation of "talkies" in sparkling-new movie theaters. The players may decide amongst themselves if their characters have any additional ties to each other that would make for interesting interactions in the game. There are four Locations included below, with Hooks to guide players from one to the other in whatever way catches their interest.

At the moment, the resources provided below are only bare bones with which to tell this Story. The ST should take some time to consider what elements they would want to add or change, and what style of narrative they want to aim for in harmony with the players. There may be additional Locations, NPCs or Hooks they want to include based on their own inspirations for the Story, or based on potential they see within the characters that the group brings to the table.

Setup: All characters should have a connection with Nedd Khosk and a reason for accepting his invitation to "make some quick money by moving fast". He was helping a friend of his (Adrian Wilder) hide a batch of Spirits he stole until Adrian can move them to Dr. Douglass, a famous dwarven distiller that may be able to deduce the blueprint for creating Spirits by studying samples. However, Nedd just got word that Adrian turned up dead, so the bar owner sent out the call as quick as possible for people who can finish Adrian's job. Nedd is offering $100 up front for whoever is willing to take it on. According to Adrian, even if only a small amount of the samples are delivered, that will be enough.

(1.3) Locations

Goldie's Bar
~ A cozy speakeasy nestled below an old theater in a "historic" (dilapidating) part of Chicago. Rowdies will force their way in, having been tipped off about the smuggled Spirits.

Atmosphere: Casual yet refined, honor among thieves, loosen-your-collar kind of place.
Features: Large gas lamps lighting, dark wood panelling, everything noticeably clean
People: **Nedd Khosk** (Owner and bartender; orc who took over the bar after the death of his human husband Goldie in WWI).
Artie Dakrow (local college professor, Racial Diversity specialist who is feeling the pressure from humanist sympathizers)
Vignetta (Elven drag singer, wants to go see the ocean someday, not just the Great Lakes)
Paulie Pocket (Pool Shark, slightly addled in the head from bad Spirits. Former Rowdy, knows how they operate and about security detail at the Rachstein Gala)

The Rachstein Gala
~ A gala held by the elite Rachstein Family at their private residence in the (very) good part of town. Smugglers have attempted to break into the Spirit cellars to destroy them, but the resulting explosion will throw things into disarray.

Atmosphere: Wealthy. Everyone is trying to impress and establish a pecking order. Opulence is king.
Features: Shimmering chandelier lighting, live classical jazz, important people surrounded by their entourages. The power of Spirits are on full and free display here.
People: **Morris Emmanual Rachstein** (Gatsby-like fellow, heir to the family, but disgruntled with high society and fascinated by "other cultures").

Sister Cynthia (Organizer of Chicago WCTU chapter, trying to squeeze palms at this high-profile event)

Gundy Low'water (Dwarf who distills Spirits for the upper classes, knew Douglass but stole most of his work. Quite satisfied with his position amongst wealthy humans).

Minastrae A'tellya (Professional elven con artist from Glow Town who faked her way into the Gala, mostly here to pickpocket and take in the sights)

Glow Town

~ A squatter's city condensed in the abandoned tunnels of the CTA subway system. Someone will consume too much bad Spirit and go on a rampage.

Atmosphere: Crowded, dirty, but not unhopeful. Lots of arguing, but people learn to get along.

Features: hundreds of makeshift lanterns and firefly jar lights, makeshift market stalls, swift current of the regular crowd; if you don't know how to navigate it well, you will be pushed around. Whenever a train comes by, everyone in Glow Town hides or snuff their lights, in order to avoid detection. After the train passes, they all bring them out again.

People: **Roddy "the Rat"** (local grifter, bad Spirits left him with rat features. Old Dwarf who worked with Gundy and Douglass, knows their history).

Shrapnel Sam (a thoroughly-perforated arms hawker selling "refurbished" firearms and other destructive devices).

Kelly Cole (A disowned banker who slunk down here after being fired for trying to warn his bosses about the impending stock market crash. Has invites to the Gala but can't use them anymore).

The Shipyard

~ A foggy dock on the Great Lakes with clusters of warehouses for ships and their shipments. Sister Cynthia and WCTU will be coming by to make a deal with Douglass.

Atmosphere: Empty, echoing and a bit ghostly. Smells strongly of the port, lots of fog and damp.

Features: Occasional security patrols weave their way through the rows of warehouses. Heavy coils of rope and chains lie everywhere. Stacks of barrels and crates tower high above people's heads.

People: **Dr. Douglass** (old bootlegger who escaped the law many times, known for being aloof but peerless in his craft).

Sister Cynthia (her WCTUs sabotaged and grounded Douglass' submarine that he lives and works in, so he can't retreat out into the lake and is hard up for cash, which she's planning on offering in exchange for his exclusive work).

(1.4) Non-Player Characters

Blake Bollanger
Role: Leader of the Rowdies (Human)
Traits: P/4, M/2, S/2   Aspects: Bulky Brawler, Liecatcher, Interrogating, Leadership
Features: Easily Taunted, Compulsive Whistler, Doesn't Understand Sarcasm
Powers: Spirit (lets him throw magical punches over a distance.)
Goals: Get the stolen Spirits back, overpower fools who challenge him
Equip: 4 small bottles of Mage Hand Spirit, 1 small bottle of Darkvision Spirit, 1 small bottle of Mage Armor Spirit, bowie knife, pistol
History: Fought his way from New York to Chicago as an amateur boxer. Trying to raise money for his career by being a Rowdy.

Roddy "The Rat"
Role: Glow Town Grifter (Dwarf)
Traits: P/3, M/3, S/2   Aspects: Keen Hearing, Keen Smell, Deception, Looting, Distilling
Features: Very Rat-Like, Hoarder, Filthy
Powers: Well-Connected within Glow Town
Goals: Collect valuables to hoard or sell, stay out of danger
Equip:
History: A dwarf that used to work in a distillery with Douglass back in the day. Drank some poorly-distilled Spirit that transformed him into a rat and not quite back again, leaving him with very rat-like features.

Sister Cynthia
Role: WTCU Chicago Chapter Leader (Half-Orc)
Traits: P/3, M/4, S/4   Aspects: Social Graces, Leadership, People-Tracking, Self Defense (Parasol), Striking Deals, Malicious Implications
Features: Surprisingly Graceful, Velvety Speech, Doesn't do Dirty Work
Powers: Incites Temperance fanaticism in people already sympathetic to the cause
Goals: Gain control of the lost shipment of Spirits, increase her clout with the high society of Chicago
Equip: Bodyblock Spirit, reinforced parasol, rosary.
History: leader of a brigade of Wictus (WCTU, Women's Christian Temperance Movement). They are largely a shadow organization closely tied to the church, enforcing temperance for their own ends. She has an ongoing deal with Doctor Douglass to purchase his creations for a high sum of money; however, sensing potential rebellion, she sabotaged his submarine so he couldn't go anywhere, and desperately needed the money to get it repaired. The Wictu enforcers allow themselves the use of "holy water" when situations come to violence. She's a half-orc who was abandoned at a convent, but rose to power despite the natural prejudices that come with her half-breeding.

(1.5) Spirits and their Effects

1 - **Flamebody**: user's body is engulfed in magical flame. The fire doesn't affect the user's body or possessions, but acts as normal fire to any external source.

2 - **Frosttongue**: user's breath becomes intensely frigid. The cold doesn't affect the user's body. As an action the user can breathe out a blast of cold air that freezes the area it's aimed at.

3 - **Glamourgaze**: user's appearance changes to match that of the person they last made eye contact with (the change can be delayed for a few seconds). Sight, voice and smell are affected, but anyone who touches the user can see past the illusion.

4 - **Shadowslink**: the user may hide themselves within extraplanar space when they enter a shadow that can conceal their entire body. The user is incorporeal in this state, but only remains that way while fully in shadows. If the Spirit's effect ends in this state the user is instantly ejected back into reality.

5 - **Verdantverve**: user can take an action to control plant life within their vicinity. User can make plants move, grow and die within a Moment.

6 - **Bodyblock**: inanimate objects nearby user will fling themselves in the way of incoming attacks. If there are objects that are physically free to do this, user gains a level of Defense.

7 - **Midaslight**: inanimate objects and structures the user touches illuminate with magical light. For each Moment you spend touching the object you can spread the glow to cover more of it or adjust the brightness. The glow only ends when the Spirit's effects wear off.

8 - **Shocktouch**: anything the user touches besides themselves is electrocuted. Unless the target has proper protection, they suffer a level of Corpus damage.

9 - **Silvertongue**: Once the user physically touches the target, the target is more easily influenced by the user's words until the Spirit's effect ends. The target gains LPFF to any Social Challenges that focus on the target.

10 - **Mindwindow**: user may mentally place anchor points in any location they are physically in. While the Spirit's effect lasts, they can close their eyes and see that location as if they were still there, as scrying. The user may create a number of anchor points equal to their Mental Trait.

After each Minute, the user must roll a single die. If they get a Hit, the Spirit's effect continues. If they roll a Miss, the spirit's effect ends. If they get a Crown, the Spirit's effect evolves and the ST can decide upon an extra effect the user gains. If they get a Scratch, the Spirit develops a negative side-effect.

(1.6) Economic Profile

Relative Value:

Value 1 =	1c to 10c
2 =	10c to 30c
3 =	30c to $1
4 =	$1 to $5
5 =	$5 to $20
6 =	$20 to $50
7 =	$50 to $100
8 =	$100 to $200
9 =	$200 to $400
10 =	$400 to $800

Value 1: loaf of bread, pack of cigarettes, box of matches, newspaper, bottle of Coke
Value 2: gallon of gasoline, bottle of beer or glass of liquor, straight razor,
Value 3: pound of coffee, first aid kit, pocket knife, lockpick set, brass knuckles, smoking pipe,
Value 4: cotton sweater, leather shoes, box camera, compass, hand grenade, handcuffs,
Value 5: wool skirt, fedora, flashlight, briefcase, coil of rope, wristwatch,
Value 6: m1911 pistol, rapier,
Value 7: three-piece suit, evening dress
Value 9: Ford Model T

Value 10: Ford Model A

The average middle-class worker makes about $1500 a year.