

AGE OF AMBITION



Quick-Start



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Introduction

In which a preface is given, questions answered and a new journey begins

Chances are you've read books or played games where fantasy heroes set out in search of gold and glory, plundering tombs and battling dark lords.

This is not exactly one of those games.

It is a game about what happens afterward, when a fantasy world evolves beyond sword and sorcery, advancing culturally and technologically into a new age. This is a game of forward-facing fantasy, where heroes don't so much plunder the past as pioneer the future, braving a perilous and uncertain new era, filled with hope and trepidation. The answers won't be found in some musty old tomb. The answers are theirs to create.

So strap on your breastplate and pick up your pistol. There are discoveries to make, wrongs to right, tyrants to overthrow and new social orders to trial!

Quick-Start

This quick-start booklet is intended as an introduction to the *Age of Ambition* setting and the *Saga Machine* rules—something a GM can run and try out before committing to the full game. It contains a brief overview of the world, a stripped-down version of the rules and a ready-to-run scenario. Everything

you need to play the game is included, save for the players and a few decks of poker cards.

The first part of this quick-start is player-friendly. In fact, players are encouraged to read the “Oh, Perilous Age” setting overview, as it will contribute to their understanding of the game world. Potential players of the included scenario should not read anything from the beginning of that scenario onward, as it will spoil the plot twists and other surprises.

We hope you enjoy the game and support the full version of *Age of Ambition*, which is Kickstarting right now! (Jan. – Feb. 2020)

What is Saga Machine?

Saga Machine is the tabletop role-playing system used by *Age of Ambition*, *Shadows Over Sol*, *Against the Dark Yogi* and *Dime Adventures*. It combines an exciting action mechanic with meaningful consequences.

The rules of every *Saga Machine* game are tailored for that game's genre and themes, adapting a solid core and bringing in custom-made supporting subsystems. This strikes a balance between the ease of going from one *Saga Machine* game to another, and the rules being tailored to the genre.



Oh, Perilous Age

In which the gentle reader is first acquainted with a world on the cusp of a heretofore unknown era

Trystell is a world that is in the process of evolving beyond sword and sorcery, advancing culturally and technologically into a new age. It is home to a number of different peoples—from human and minotaurs, to ogres and gnomes. It is also the moon of a gas giant, with a hostile sister moon that once tried to colonize the world.

Most of all, Trystell is a world that's facing its future. It's beholden to shades of gray and intrigue. No one knows what this new era will bring, but with it comes great peril and great promise.

Forward-facing Fantasy

For much of its history, the fantasy genre has been mired in vast, unchanging worlds that have remained more-or-less the same culturally and technologically for hundreds or even thousands of years.

Age of Ambition is different. Its stories look to the future, at a world moving beyond the medieval fantasy milieu. A renaissance is in progress, both literally and metaphorically, and its tales confront both the good and the bad aspects of the changing world.

From Above

From the top, life on Trystell looks optimistic. Crop yields are up. The cities are growing. The economy is booming. The nobility and gentry are richer than their forefathers, better educated and well-traveled. Tradesmen have better tools. The ships sail farther. Windmills and waterwheels produce mechanical energy. There are magnetic compasses, printing presses and blasting powder. There's a renaissance in progress!

Those in power are not stupid, but they are likely complacent. From their perspective at the top, everything is going wonderfully. And if the ignorant peasants cannot see that, the social elite have no interest in hearing their complaints.

From Below

From the bottom, life on Trystell is terrifying and uncertain. Everything is changing. Better crop yields mean that farmers have more children, but no more land. So the dislocated youth swarm to filthy cities, where they die by the thousands of bad water and disease. The mills and foundries are a special sort of hell. Cutthroats pick off the unwary and gangs recruit the unscrupulous. The old order is being torn apart.

On the fringes, settlers press outward into forbidden lands, where dark things lurk in the forests and ancient ruins are better left undisturbed. Half the pioneers end up perishing of starvation in the brutal wilderness. Others are picked off by hostile natives or the unknown.

Trystell's progress is real, but it comes at a terrible cost in dislocation and suffering. While the upper classes may be insulated from this fact by coin and power, the peasantry do not have that luxury.

Change is Coming

In the long term, Trystell's current situation is untenable, and eventually something will have to give. The social order is teetering on the brink of collapse. It is a mass of contradictions—old versus new, rich versus poor, hostile nations and mutually-antagonistic religions. The old superstitions and folk beliefs are fraying, challenged by scholars and religious reformation. No one knows what to believe anymore.

The social hierarchy isn't as impenetrable as it used to be, and the ambitious may yet claw their way up. The feudal system is withering. It is hopelessly not up to the task of governing the changing place the world has become. Many nobles and knights, however, cling to their aristocratic trappings, still wishing the world's problems could be solved by a knight on a horse with a lance.



Player Characters

The world is in a state of flux. A new social order rises, and the player characters are at the forefront of this change. They don't just raid tombs, they foment rebellions, establish new colonies, fight the institution of slavery, break the power of guilds and invent new technologies.

The Party

In *Age of Ambition*, the player characters work together to make their mark on the world, or at least some corner of it. They might be escaped slaves, leaders of an expedition, members of a town council, partners in a new merchant company, a band of city watchmen or even an archetypal adventuring party.

Peoples

The world of Trystell is home to six peoples, some of which are further divided into different sub-groups:

- ✦ **Dwarves:** A short but durable people with an ancestral memory that passes down knowledge and prejudices through the generations in the dwarven subconscious.
- ✦ **Elves:** A long-lived and graceful people with keen olfactory senses and many secrets. Divided into: sea elves, true elves and wild elves.
- ✦ **Gnomes:** A small, impulsive people known for their quirks and prophetic dreams. Divided into: aqua gnomes, handler gnomes and tinker gnomes.
- ✦ **Humans:** A widespread people known for their hope and optimism.
- ✦ **Minotaurs:** A towering people with horns and fur. Known for their sense of social harmony and heard mentality. Divided into: canny minotaurs and brawny minotaurs.

✠ **Ogres:** Many diverse peoples with a fierce sense of independence and adaptability. Divided into: goblins, high orcs, trolls, hobgoblins, orcs and true ogres.

Society

Trystell is a world of intrigue and social change, street corner agitation and masquerade balls. Life has changed significantly in the past decades, as the world evolves beyond the medieval and into a new era of gunpowder and industry.

Social Strata

Many societies on Trystell are highly stratified—with the nobility desperately hanging on to their ancient privileges, with an upsurging merchant class displacing the power of the nobles and with teeming throngs of the common folk increasingly downtrodden and rebellious. The three strata are as follows:

- ✠ **Noble:** Royalty, nobility or other rulers of society, or the independently powerful.
- ✠ **Gentle:** Merchants, tradesmen or those in professions requiring skilled labor.
- ✠ **Common:** Peasants, laborers, ne'er-dowells and those in unskilled professions.

Language

Although regional languages exist, by far the most dominant language is Standard. Roughly one in four people know how to read.

Money

Coinage consists of gold pieces (gp), silver pesos (sp) and bronze pennies (bp), with a 1 : 20 : 200 exchange rate between them. A typical commoner makes about 2 bp per day, a merchant about 2 sp and a typical noble 2 gp.

Magic

Trystell is a world where magic works in accordance with established arcane principles. It is a force of nature whose energy can be measured and directed by anyone with enough discipline and the right education.

There are two magical traditions that have arisen, each based around extracting arcane energy from a different magical reagent.

Kalid Magic

Kalid magic is the oldest magical tradition. It is based on extracting arcane energy from dangerous and innately magical creatures called kalids. These beasts are hunted and their body parts preserved for later use. Kalid magic is considered to be the more subtle of the two magical traditions.

Lunar Magic

Lunar magic was introduced two centuries ago during the Lunar Occupation. It is based on extracting magical energy from small enigmatic devices manufactured in foundries left behind by the occupation. It is the showier and blunter of the two traditions, as its use frequently involves harnessing the raw elements.





Religion

Most religion on Trystell is polytheistic. Four major gods are worshiped, most with several sects. A handful of minor deities are revered as well. Finally, a rival pantheon—the Old Ones—is recognized, but not generally worshiped by any but the Blaugh’ocks, the invaders from Trystell’s sister moon.

The Four

The four major gods are:

- ✦ **Crono:** A god of nature, storms, fertility and repeated cycles. His religion doesn’t easily break down into distinct sects; each temple more or less operates on its own.
- ✦ **Eios:** A god of dreams, industry, prophecy and property. Small regional alliances between temples exist, bound together by wandering dream shamans.

- ✦ **Linquad:** A god of fate, life, death and duty. Formerly consisting of a single sect that a generation ago underwent a violent schism.
- ✦ **Zuraic:** A god of fire, cleanliness, purity and courage. Dominated by a single orthodox sect and organized along military lines.

The Old Ones

A common belief is that while the Four hold dominion over the world, they didn’t create it. That distinction belongs to an older pantheon of gods, forgotten by all but a few hidden sects and, of course, the Blaugh’ocks.

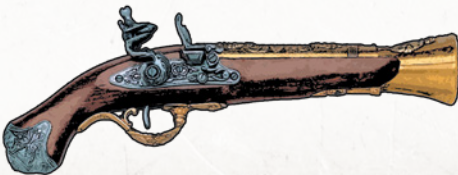
Other Religions

Other forms of religion exist, including: the worship of minor deities associated with each of the Four; ancestor worship and various forms of non-belief.

History

Many of the events and eras in Trystell's history still affect the modern day. The most important past epochs include:

- ✦ **Creation:** Legends say that the Old Ones created Trystell and in doing so became trapped inside. The world was then claimed by the Four, who set about creating its various peoples.
- ✦ **War of the Shattering:** Eventually, the Old Ones escaped their confinement and they fought the Four in a terrible war. The Old Ones lost this conflict, and taking their followers, they fled to the moon Blaugh'ock. But not before unleashing the Changeling Plagues on the world, which shattered many of the peoples into different sub-groups.
- ✦ **Golden Age:** The Golden Age was an era of relative peace and prosperity. During it, many things were standardized, including the calendar, language and currency.
- ✦ **Dark Ages:** A time of natural disasters, petty wars and strife that followed the collapse of the Golden Age.
- ✦ **Lunar Occupation:** People from the moon, Blaugh'ock, invaded Trystell, conquered kingdoms and established colonies. They also introduced lunar magic.
- ✦ **Present Day:** In the past century, Trystell has started to leave its medieval era behind. The year is 1518 and the world is in a state of flux. The old systems are breaking down or being challenged. The future is uncertain.



Cosmology

Trystell is the moon of a large gas giant known as Zipnocii. It is one of four moons and countless tiny moonlets. At least one of the other moons, Blaugh'ock, is populated, as several centuries ago it invaded Trystell.

There are also holes in the world that lead to other planes. The best known of these are the Kalid Gates, which lead to a pocket dimension called the Kalid Realm. This realm is the home of the magical creatures known as kalids.

Regions of the World

Trystell is a wide and varied world, with numerous regions that are ripe for exploration, adventure, intrigue and social change. The ones most likely to be mentioned in the included scenario are:

- ✦ **Eoris:** An oppressed, insular and fearful kingdom, where dissidents are whisked away in the dead of night to secret prisons run by the imperial spymasters.
- ✦ **Graundaur:** A commonwealth of goblins and gnomes, Graundaur is a land that is known for its skillful artisans and egalitarian, if somewhat anachronistic, culture.
- ✦ **Quaris Ocean:** An untamed body of water rife with pirates, slavers, deserted islands and dragon's lairs. Most of it remains uncharted, yet great profits stand to be made.
- ✦ **Yirdril Lands:** A vast and turbulent region of failed nations, roving bandits and abandoned villages, destabilized a generation ago by a wave of revolutions.



Saga Machine

In which is elucidated the rules and systems that govern the actions of all

Age of Ambition uses the *Saga Machine* system, streamlined and tweaked to suit the fantasy genre. Whether it's a tense social confrontation at a masquerade ball or a deadly fight with a tyrant's thugs—*Saga Machine* can handle it!

The core of the *Saga Machine* system boils down to two components: actions and consequences. The action mechanic is used to determine whether or not a particular action is successful. To help resolve this, it employs a deck of poker cards. The consequence mechanic, on the other hand, is used to represent the effect of actions on other characters or on the game world. It is used to model status effects, as well as obstacles and benefits.

Characters

Mechanically, characters consist of four parts: an array of stats, some skills, a few traits and derived scores. Each of these components are described in the sections that follow.

The Eight Stats

Age of Ambition divides a character's capabilities into eight different ratings, each representing how good the character is at a

broad category of actions. These ratings are called stats and are scored on a scale of 1 to 10. The higher the number, the better.

On this scale, the average human—entirely middling in all aspects—would be rated a 4 or 5 in each stat. Any rating higher than 10 is clearly superhuman, and is the sole domain of a few powerful monsters. These can go as high as 20.

The eight stats are divided evenly into two groups: physical and mental. Physical stats represent some physical aspect of the character, while mental stats represent some mental aspect. They are described below:

- ✦ **Strength (Str):** Your character's strength is a measure of her muscle and physical prowess. It helps determine how much she can lift and how hard she can punch.
- ✦ **Dexterity (Dex):** A measure of your character's coordination, flexibility and balance. It helps determine her athletic ability, aim and manual dexterity.
- ✦ **Speed (Spd):** Your character's speed is how fast she moves, her reflexes, agility, reaction time and her ability to get out of the way when enemies are trying to stab her.
- ✦ **Endurance (End):** A measure of your character's toughness, health, constitution and stamina. It helps her resist disease and keep from getting winded after a long jog.

- ✦ **Intelligence (Int):** Intelligence is an indicator of how quickly your character learns, how much she knows and what her capability is in terms of logical reasoning.
- ✦ **Perception (Per):** Your character's perception is a measure of how alert she is, how good her senses are and how quickly she processes new information.
- ✦ **Charisma (Chr):** Your character's charisma is her force of personality, presence and bearing. It's used when trying to make friends, influence others or strike a deal.
- ✦ **Determination (Det):** Your character's resolve, mental fortitude and grit. It's used when resisting fear or other mental effects, and in seeing things through to the end.

Skills

The eight stats represent innate capabilities. After all, everyone has some degree of strength, intelligence or perception. Skills, on the other hand, are the mechanical representation of capabilities that are learned.

When your character makes a flip, the action may have a relevant skill as well as the relevant stat. When this is the case, how skilled your character is in that particular area may modify the flip with a boon (+) or bane (−) (for Boons & Banes, see page 16).

Skill Ranks

Skills come in three levels of increasing expertise: proficient, expert and master.

- ✦ **Unskilled:** The character does not have experience in this area. The flip suffers −.
- ✦ **Proficient:** The character has basic training in the area in question.
- ✦ **Expert:** The character has extensive experience. The flip benefits from +.
- ✦ **Master:** The character is world-renowned in this skill. The flip benefits from ++.

Specialized Skills

Some skills are actually a set of related skills that are grouped together under one heading. Each related skill is called a Specialization, and is presented in parentheses afterward. For example, Vehicles (watercraft).

Skill List

There are eighteen general skills available in *Age of Ambition*. Below is a table of all skills. Specialized skills are denoted by an asterisk (*).

Skills		
Academics*	Expression	Stealth
Animals	Investigate	Streetwise
Athletics	Language*	Survival
Awareness	Medicine	Thievery
Deception	Persuade	Tradecraft*
Empathy	Socialize	Vehicles*

- ✦ **Academics*:** A broad skill with many specializations, each representing an area of formal education. Specializations include all of the liberal arts and sciences, as well as the humanities and natural philosophy.
- ✦ **Animals:** Covers interacting with animals in a variety of ways—from reading their warning signs to training them to do tricks. The skill also includes riding a mount, herding and recognizing animal calls.
- ✦ **Athletics:** Covers any number of athletic activities—from climbing to jumping, and from racing to tumbling. The skill includes both aerobic and anaerobic activities, as well as feats of strength.
- ✦ **Awareness:** A skilled alertness regarding your surroundings. Awareness allows you to notice an ambush, spot someone in a crowd or notice a strange smell when entering a building.

- ✚ **Deception:** Includes telling convincing lies, giving off inaccurate body language, sleight of hand, having a good pokerface and disguising yourself as someone else.
- ✚ **Empathy:** Used to read a person's body language and tone of voice. It's used to get an idea of a person's emotional state or to give some insight into her motivations.
- ✚ **Expression:** Covers musical and theatrical performance, as well as artistic expression and public speaking. Use it to play an instrument, create a painting, deliver a rousing speech or reenact a famous play.
- ✚ **Investigate:** Covers searching a particular area for hidden objects, as well as other aspects of investigation—such as questioning witnesses, checking informants or asking the right questions.
- ✚ **Language*:** Speaking, reading or writing a particular language. Characters who are proficient in a language can speak it, while characters who are expert at a language can read and write it as well.
- ✚ **Medicine:** Applied healing knowledge. It's used for first aid, treating injuries and other medical conditions, making practical diagnoses and performing surgery.
- ✚ **Persuade:** Covers a variety of tactics to get other people to see things your way or to otherwise comply with your requests. It covers sweet-talking, diplomacy, brow-beating, fast-talking and intimidation.
- ✚ **Socialize:** Use this skill to pick up rumors, put your rivals at ease, make a play at seduction or distract others with small talk. Additionally, it covers knowledge of the appropriate customs, slang and etiquette.
- ✚ **Stealth:** Covers hiding and sneaking around. It also includes any aspect of remaining hidden, from fitting into small hiding spaces to tailing people without notice.
- ✚ **Streetwise:** Includes knowledge of where to find illegal goods, which alleyways to avoid after dark and what might damage one's reputation.
- ✚ **Survival:** Covers the ability to live outside the bounds of civilization, as well as applied knowledge of the local flora and fauna, including the practical knowledge of both what's edible and what's dangerous.
- ✚ **Thievery:** This skill includes the ability to pick locks, breaking and entering, larceny, pocket picking and other sordid practices.
- ✚ **Tradecraft*:** Each specialization represents a particular trade—such as cobbling, tanning, weaving or stonemasonry—or an applied field of engineering or craftwork.
- ✚ **Vehicles*:** Used to operate vehicles, with each specialization being a different type. This includes anything from sailing ships to horse-drawn carriages, and from Blaug'ock skyships to balloon transport.

Fighting Styles & Arcane Lores

In addition to the eighteen general skills, there exist a number of other skills that represent extraordinary learned capabilities. These are Arcane Lores, which represent spell-casting ability, and Fighting Styles, which represent exceptional combat training.

Unlike general skills, Arcane Lores and Fighting Styles may not be used unless your character has the skill in question. In addition, proficiency in one of these skills grants access to a number of special capabilities. Arcane Lores grant access to spells, and Fighting Styles grant access to special maneuvers. Complete descriptions can be found alongside the pregenerated characters included with the quick-start scenario (see page 53).

Traits

In addition to stats and skills, your character may also have a number of other capabilities, such as being lucky, fleet of foot, intuitive or having a particular weakness. These types of abilities are modeled as traits: special features that apply to a character.

People

Your character's People is a special trait representing her species. It is chosen at character creation and does not usually change thereafter. This quick-start uses a simplified version of the People traits.

Ambitions

Ambitions are statements about what your character hopes to achieve, either societally or personally. In the full game they provide a way to earn experiences. For the purposes of this quick-start, achieving an ambition allows you to draw up to a full hand (see page 17).

Scores

Scores are the final component of your character. They are a variety of numerical values, most of which are derived from your character's stats. Your scores are as follows:

- Armor (Arm):** Your character's ability to resist damage. Usually two numbers. Use the first against cutting and piercing damage, and the second against all other damage.
- Attack (Atk):** The ability to land a hit by outthinking and outmaneuvering your foe.
- Defense (Def):** Your character's ability to avoid being struck by attacks in combat.
- Health Points (HP):** A measure of how much damage or exhaustion your character can suffer before being threatened by death.
- Luck:** Determines how many cards to draw at the beginning of a session and the value of face cards.
- Move:** How many yards your character can move per action taken in combat.
- Willpower (Will):** Your character's ability to avoid being overwhelmed by mental effects, such as fear or compulsions.



Actions

When an action might fail in an interesting way, the GM may call for a flip to determine the result. To do this, flip a card from the top of the deck and add its value to your character's relevant stat. The GM will decide which stat this is and may also call for a relevant skill.

The value of the stat and card added together is called the total. This is compared to a Target Number (TN). If the total meets or exceeds the target number, the action is successful. However, if it is less than the TN, the attempt was unsuccessful.

Yavu is trying to lift a heavy stone, which has pinned one of his companions. The GM calls for a Strength flip of average difficulty (TN 10). Yavu has Strength 7. He flips a card off the top of the deck, getting the 5♠. Adding these two values together gives him a total of 12. The action is a success and he lifts the rock, allowing his companion to escape.

Card Values

There are three types of cards found in the deck: value cards, face cards and jokers. Each is scored differently.

- ✦ **Value Cards:** Ace through 10 are worth the value printed on the card. This means that aces are low and worth one.
- ✦ **Face Cards:** Face cards (jack, queen and king) are worth a value equal to your character's Luck score (see page 17).
- ✦ **Jokers:** Any time a joker is used to resolve an action, the result is a critical failure. That means the GM gets to declare that something extra bad happens. Regardless, discard your hand, shuffle your discard pile into your deck and draw a new hand equal to your Luck. In this way, there are always two jokers in the deck. Jokers never sit in the discard pile.

Action Convention

Saga Machine uses a basic convention to convey the important aspects of an action when referencing them in the text. Examples of this convention are below:

- ✦ **Int-8:** Intelligence action with TN 8.
- ✦ **Dex/vehicles (land)-10:** This is a TN 10 action using Dexterity and the Vehicles (land) skill.
- ✦ **Per/awareness vs. Dex/stealth:** This is a Perception action with the Awareness skill opposed by a Dexterity action with the Stealth skill.

Target Numbers

The target number (TN) of an action is chosen by the GM and represents how difficult an action is to perform. She may or may not choose to share the TN with the players.

Difficulty	Target Number (TN)
Trivial	6
Easy	8
Average	10
Difficult	12
Daunting	14
Desperate	16
Absurd	18
Impossible	20

Margin of Success or Failure

Sometimes it might be necessary to figure out how successful an action was. This can be achieved by calculating the Margin. To do this, take the difference between the TN and the total.

While attempting to track a suspect, Carter makes a Per-10 flip, getting a total of 13. Since the Target Number was 10, he achieved a success with Margin 3.

Boons & Banes

Circumstances can make some flips easier or harder. Positive circumstances may grant one or more boons (+), while negative circumstances impose one or more banes (-). For each of these, flip an extra card off the top of the deck. Boons allow you to discard a card of your choice, usually leaving the better card remaining. Banes, on the other hand, force you to discard the most advantageous card, leaving the worse options remaining. If there is ever an ambiguity about which card is most advantageous, the GM decides, but usually this will be obvious.

No more than three boons and three banes may be applied to a single flip. This means that boons and banes do not cancel out! Instead, flip extra cards for each. Banes discard cards first, followed by boons.

Adom is attempting to decipher an ancient script, and the GM has awarded him + due to an earlier partial translation. Because of this boon, he flips an extra card off the top of the deck, getting 4♣ and 8♥. Adom chooses to discard the 4♣, leaving him with the 8♥ to resolve the flip.

Januk is attempting to convince a city guard to release his friends, but he is not familiar with the city's culture, so the GM has imposed -. Because of this bane, he flips an extra card, getting 7♦ and K♠ (worth 6 due to Januk's Luck score). Since the 7♦ is better, Januk is forced to discard it, leaving him to resolve the flip with the K♠.

Gorfang is attempting a tricky bit of negotiation with an elemental. The GM has imposed - due to past hostility, and Gorfang benefits from ++ due to both skill and a successful bribe. Gorfang flips four cards, getting A♦, 3♥, 7♣ and a Joker. First, due to the bane, he discards the 7♣ (the best card). Then, due to the two boons, Gorfang chooses to discard the A♦ and Joker (the worst). This leaves him with the 3♥.

Skills

A common source of boons and banes come from flips that require a particular skill. Not having the required skill imposes -, while being proficient in the skill means the flip is made as normal. Being an expert or a master in the skill provides + or ++, respectively. More information on skills can be found on page 12.

Ymir is trying to sneak into a city councilor's house and the GM calls for a Dex/stealth flip. Since he is an expert in stealth, Ymir benefits from + on the flip.

Flushes

If multiple cards are played due to boons and have matching suits, you may choose a suit and play all cards with that suit, adding their values together. This is called a flush.

Ayana is attempting to intimidate her foes and benefits from + due to her allies outnumbering the enemy. She flips the 10♥ and the 6♥. Because these suits match, she can play them both, adding their values together to get a total of 16!



Januk is trying to convince a group of bandits to let his friends go without paying a ransom. He gets ☹ due to skill, but also suffers ☹ from being outnumbered. He flips three cards and gets 9♠, 6♦ and 5♦. The bane discards the 6♦, preventing him from making a flush (which would result in the highest total). Instead, he's left with 9♠ and 5♦. He chooses the 9♠.

Opposed Actions

Many times a character will want to attempt some action that another character is actively trying to thwart. This is called an opposed action.

To resolve this sort of action, both players should make a flip. The party with the highest total succeeds in what she was trying to accomplish. Ties are broken in favor of the character with the highest relevant stat, followed by the character with the highest Luck.

*Sef is trying to sneak by a guard. The GM rules that this is a **Dex/stealth** vs. **Per/awareness** flip. Sef makes her flip and gets a total of 14, while the guard gets a total of 12. He fails to notice Sef sneaking by.*

Luck

At the beginning of each session, draw a hand of cards. These cards represent the subtle advantages your character has in the narrative or in the world at large—call it luck, fate or karma. As you draw or play cards from hand, you can think of this as being lucky or as your luck running out.

Drawing the Joker

If you ever draw a joker into your hand, discard it and redraw. Then shuffle the discard pile back into the deck. Jokers are never held in hand, nor do they sit in the discard pile. They always stay in the deck.

Setting up the Deck

At the beginning of every session, draw a hand of cards equal to your character's Luck. If you draw a joker, discard it and redraw, then shuffle the joker back into the deck.

The GM also gets a hand, which is shared by all NPCs. The GM draws a number of cards equal to the number of players present at the session.

If a joker is ever used to resolve a flip—that is, it's not discarded due to boons or banes—the result is a critical failure. When this happens, the GM gets to declare that something extra bad occurs. You also discard your hand, shuffle all cards into the deck and draw a fresh hand equal to your Luck score.

Playing Face Cards

Face cards have a value equal to your Luck score. If an effect causes your Luck to increase or decrease, the value of these cards will increase or decrease as well.

Pushing Your Luck

After any flip has been made, but before banes have been applied, you may opt to play a card from your hand as a boon (☺). Simply set the card down and discard your choice of card as normal. All the usual rules for boons apply. This is an excellent way to make flushes!

Do not redraw when you play a card from hand. Instead, you will refresh your hand when a joker is used to resolve a flip. Certain traits may also cause you to redraw cards when they apply.

Consequences

In *Saga Machine*, actions are just half the equation. The other half consists of consequences—the mechanical effects caused by actions. Consequences can represent many things, from experiencing fear or being on fire, to lusting after another character or being the life of the party. They are as many and as varied as the actions characters can take.

Effects of Consequences

Consequences can have a variety of effects, from imposing weakness traits to ongoing damage. When in doubt, however, consequences should apply + or - to relevant flips.

Duration of Consequences

Most consequences don't last forever. Many go away on their own, while others require some action to remove. When adjudicating consequences on the fly, the GM should use common sense. Being on fire might be removed by jumping into a lake. Bad rumors might be dispelled with good press. A mild case of lust might be removed with a cold bath. The consequences found on the pages that follow specify explicit removal conditions.

Stacking Consequences

Unless specified otherwise, your character may gain the same consequence multiple times. This represents a more severe or enduring effect. However, +'s and -'s from multiple instances of the same consequence are not additive. That is, for example, if you have three Hindered consequences, you only suffer - from being hindered; you do not suffer ---. Other effects, such as ongoing damage, are additive.

Each instance of a consequence is removed separately. For example, a character with two Fear consequences will have to Focus twice to remove them both (see page 29).

Consequence Examples

A number of example situations and their resulting consequences are given below.

Kahler is attacked by a group of hired thugs. He takes an action to dive for cover behind a passing wagon. This grants him the Cover consequence, which imposes - on the thugs' incoming attacks and provides either party with a + on attempts to slip away.

Jonzhon is attending a fancy party of Melanoc's most elite. Also in attendance is Nuri, a mining magnate who tried to have him assassinated. He takes an action to gossip with the attending dilettantes, undercutting Nuri's credibility in social circles. This gives Nuri the Humiliated consequence, imposing - on his social actions.

Rando, a skilled performer, tells a chilling tale about a king who was haunted by malevolent spirits. As he takes an action to tell his story, a hush falls over the crowd and the audience is granted the Spooked consequence. This provides + on attempts to startle or create fear in those present.

The Rule of Three

As a general rule of thumb, when a character gains three or more instances of the same consequence, something more severe should occur. For example, perhaps instead of losing HP, the character takes a Grave Wound, or perhaps instead of suffering - she instead suffers --. The effect is left to the discretion of the GM.

List of Consequences

The following is a list of common consequences referenced by the *Age of Ambition* rules. These can also be used as benchmarks when making up your own consequences.

Bleeding

You are suffering from an ongoing source of damage. This is usually literal bleeding from open wounds, but this consequence may also be used to represent ongoing damage from other maladies or environmental conditions.

- ✦ **Effect:** Take 1 damage at the beginning of each round. If you have multiple Bleeding consequences, take a damage for each. This does not cause the Dying consequence unless it reduces you to a multiple of your maximum HP—for example, $-1 \times \text{max HP}$.
- ✦ **Removal:** Lasts until someone performs the Staunch Bleeding action on you.

Bolstered

Your actions are bolstered through expertly directed tactics, improved morale, magical guidance or any other number of means.

- ✦ **Effect:** You may remove this consequence at any time to gain + on your next flip.
- ✦ **Removal:** Lasts until you remove the consequence or a minute passes.

Dying

You are teetering on the brink of life and death, and will expire unless you receive immediate healing.

- ✦ **Effect:** You may not have more than 1 AP. At the beginning of each round you must make an **Endurance** flip with a TN equal to the number of HP you are below zero (minimum TN 5). On a failure, you gain another Dying consequence. If this gives

you a third Dying consequence, you die at the end of the round.

- ✦ **Removal:** Remove a Dying consequence each time you succeed on your Endurance flip with Margin 5 or better. Lasts until you die or someone performs the Staunch Bleeding action on you.

Exhausted

You are physically exhausted. This might be caused by starvation, strenuous activity, exposure to the elements, etc.

- ✦ **Effect:** Halve your Move score and suffer ☹ on all physical flips. If Exhausted would be gained a second time, you instead gain the Dying consequence.
- ✦ **Removal:** Lasts until you get a good night's rest, unaffected by a source of fatigue.

Fear

Something is making you fearful. This reaction can run the gamut from solidly intimidated to sheer, mind-boggling terror.

- ✦ **Effect:** You may not voluntarily take an action that directly affects the subject of your fear or which moves you closer to the subject of your fear.
- ✦ **Removal:** Lasts until the Focus action is taken (see page 29).

Grave Wound

You are severely injured—perhaps you are badly burned, have a broken arm or are terribly bruised all over.

- ✦ **Effect:** Varies. See the Grave Wound table on page 28. If a Grave Wound would be gained a second time, you instead gain the Dying consequence.
- ✦ **Removal:** Lasts until the end of the included scenario. The full *Age of Ambition* rules contain other ways of healing Grave Wounds.

Hidden

You are concealed from sight, perhaps due to darkness, stealth, invisibility or similar circumstances.

- Effect:** Grants + on attacks and Defense. Targets attacked while you are hidden cannot use defensive reactions.
- Removal:** Lasts until you take a conspicuous action, such as shouting a warning or making an attack.

Hindered

You are physically impeded by protruding arrows, excessive encumbrance, tangling vines or other circumstances.

- Effect:** Imposes - on all Attack-, Dex- and Spd-based flips.
- Removal:** Lasts until an action is taken to remove the source of the hindrance. The nature of this will vary with the cause.

Prone

Your body is not oriented in a way that gives it easy mobility. You might be sitting, lying down or off-balance.

- Effect:** Your Move is halved and you suffer - on melee attacks. Melee attacks and point-blank ranged attacks made against you benefit from +, while other ranged attacks suffer -.
- Removal:** Lasts until an action is taken to stand up or regain balance.

Stun

You are stunned due to some effect—perhaps a sudden blow to the head, the blast of an explosion or sudden shock and pain.

- Effect:** You cannot take actions other than to end this consequence. This includes an inability to take reactions.
- Removal:** Lasts until the Focus action is taken (see page 29).



Status

Many societies on Trystell are highly stratified. Commoners are often left with little doubt as to their place, while the elite enjoy power and privilege that is often brutally enforced. These differences in social position are represented by the Status score.

Strata and Standing

Status consists of a Stratum, which is a descriptor representing social class, and a Standing, which is a numeric value representing your character's position within that class. Usually these are written together, such as Noble 3 or Common 1.

A character is of higher Status if she is of a higher Strata, or if she has a higher Standing within the same Stratum. The three strata are:

- ✦ **Noble:** Royalty, nobility or other rulers of society, or the independently powerful.
- ✦ **Gentle:** Merchants, tradesmen or those in professions requiring skilled labor.
- ✦ **Common:** Peasants, ne'er-do-wells and those in unskilled professions.

Bonds

Most folks on Trystell have a network of friends, family, contacts, patrons, rivals and enemies. These important relationships are represented by Bonds.

Calling Upon Bonds

Bonds may be called upon to gain a benefit. To do this, specify the Bond and explain how it aids your character, roleplaying as necessary. Each bond you possess may be called upon

once over the course of the included scenario. The full game has rules for refreshing Bonds.

In general, a Bond can be called upon to activate one of the following effects:

- ✦ Grant ⬆ on a flip or penalize an opponent's flip with ⬇.
- ✦ Activate a trait that requires a Bond.
- ✦ Glean information from a contact or gain a small favor. This is an excellent way to call on skills your character lacks!

Carter has found a mysterious pendant. Since he doesn't know much about artifacts, he calls upon his contact, Bralin, who is an expert on such matters.

Ayana is facing off against her sworn enemy, Kattanz. She calls upon her Bond to gain ⬆ to her initial attack, as previous experience allows her to predict what tactic he is likely to employ.

Tingernaut is about to compete in a wagon race against Kuzuk-zul, his long-time rival. He calls upon this Bond to gain ⬆ in the race, spurred on by their fierce competition.

Exploiting Bonds

An enemy's Bonds may be exploited if they become known. Exploiting a Bond works like calling upon a Bond, except that it hinders the character to whom the Bond belongs.

Each Bond may be exploited once over the course of the included scenario.

Senghor discovers that his foe, Yavu, has a young son. He decides to exploit this Bond by threatening the son's life. This grants ⬆ to his intimidation attempt.

Gorfang discovers that Jonas has membership in the Old Ones' cult. He exploits this Bond, spreading knowledge of this association, and imposing ⬇ on Jonas' next attempt to ingratiate himself in Melanoc.

Magic

Trystell is a world where magic works in accordance with established arcane principles. It is a force of nature whose energy can be measured and directed by a skilled mage. Although there are a handful of creatures who possess innate magical capabilities, for the peoples of Trystell, magical ability is a learned skill, not an inborn talent.

Traditions

Magical energy does not arise from the aether. To use magic, it must be extracted from a source and then willed into the form required by the spell. On Trystell, two major magical traditions have arisen, each based around extracting arcane energy from a different magical reagent:

- ✦ **Kalid Magic:** Centers around extracting energy from dangerous and innately magical creatures called kalids.
- ✦ **Lunar Magic:** Centers around extracting energy from small enigmatic devices manufactured in foundries left behind by the Lunar Occupation.

Magical Training

Students of the mystic arts don't begin by casting spells, they begin by developing an affinity, and then learning the basics of perceiving and harnessing magical energy.

Mystic Affinity

Mages say that you don't wield magic without the magic also wielding you. That is, repeated exposure to magical energy, aligns you to energy of that type, allowing you to shape it into spells, but making it harder or impossible to wield other types of magic.

This is called an affinity. It is the attunement of the mage to a particular type of magical energy. This is the first ability a new mage must develop, as it is what allows her to cast spells, use second sight or dispel magic.

Occasionally someone exposed to magical energy will spontaneously become attuned to energy of that type, gaining an affinity. This is called a wild affinity. While uncommon, it is a known phenomenon, granting the recipient the ability to manipulate magical energy, but with none of the training to do so effectively or safely.

Reagents

To cast a spell, magical energy must first be extracted from a reagent. This will be a kalid part for kalid magic or a lunar device for lunar magic. Regardless of the mystic tradition, the reagent must first be readied—usually by drawing it from a pouch and holding it in the mage's hand. Magical energy is then either released in a sudden burst or in a slow draw to maintain an ongoing spell.

Second Sight

One of the most fundamental skills in spellcasting is the ability to see magical auras. Called "second sight" or sometimes "the third eye," this is usually the first ability that new mages practice after developing an affinity.

To see auras, all you must do is close your eyes, focus on your affinity and then reopen them. This reveals ongoing magical effects, which appear as a faint aura around your target. The brightness of this aura increases with the potency of the magic. Second sight may also reveal magical residue left behind by recent spellcasting, and sometimes intangible or invisible creatures.

Maintaining second sight is strenuous. Auras have the potential to be overwhelming, obstructing your vision or even blinding you.



For every round after the first that you maintain second sight in an hour, you must make a **Per-10** flip. On a failure, you go aura-blind and are unable to see anything for the next hour.

Spell Casting

Casting a spell requires extracting magical energy from a reagent and then using your mind to compel that energy into a structured form. This takes practice, an affinity with the proper magic and concentration.

In combat, drawing a reagent requires an action. Extracting the energy and casting the spell requires a second action, which necessitates a flip. The specific flip varies with the spell (see the individual Arcane Lore descriptions).

On a success, the spell has been cast. On a failure, the energy fails to take the intended form and the reagent used to power the spell is ruined. On a critical failure, the energy assumes an unintended form.

Arcane Lores

All spells fall under the auspice of an Arcane Lore. These are special skills that allow you to cast the spells under their purview. Like all skills, arcane lores have three ranks—proficient, expert and master. Unlike most skills, Arcane Lores may not be used untrained.

Attack Spells

Attack spells conjure dangerous energy that can be hurled at a foe. They frequently require a third action to utilize: one to draw the reagent, one to cast the spell and then an attack action to direct the energy at the target.

This uses your Attack score and is otherwise identical to a normal attack, except that the weapon is conjured magical energy.

Spell Range

Unless a spell's description specifies otherwise, all spells have a range equal to your Perception in yards. This applies to both spells that directly affect a target and attack spells that conjure energy which is then hurled at a target.

As with all ranged attacks, targeting a foe at up to twice the range is possible, albeit with **–** imposed on the flip.

Maintaining Spells

Many spells last as long as they are maintained. This involves slowly drawing energy from the reagent in order to power the spell over an extended period of time. These spells also have a maximum duration, which is indicative of the reagent running out of energy.

To maintain a spell, you must keep hold of the reagent powering it. Maintaining the spell also requires some degree of concentration. In combat, you must spend an action each round after the first in order to maintain it. If this action is not taken, the spell expires at the end of the round.

Outside of combat, the concentration required to maintain a spell slows you down by about a third. It also imposes **–** on any activity that takes more than a minute to complete.

Combat

Sooner or later diplomacy will fail. Blades will be drawn. Blood will be spilt. Someone will decide that they would rather murder their opposition than stand aside. Times such as these call for the combat system.

Rounds

In combat, the action in the game is broken down into short increments of time called Rounds. Each round represents three seconds in the game world, and in every round each combatant gets a Turn.

Beginning of the Round

At the beginning of each round, before combatants take their turns, certain effects are resolved, marking the transition from one round to another. These are as follows:

- ✦ Reset to three Action Points (see below).
- ✦ Certain consequences, such as Bleeding and Dying take effect. These are resolved in whatever order you wish.
- ✦ Make a Defense flip. This will set your Defense and Willpower totals for the round (see page 26). The GM may either make a single flip for all enemies or opt to make individual flips for different enemies.
- ✦ Declare whether you are taking a Fast Turn or a Slow Turn this round.

Action Points

Most characters will gain three Action Points (AP) each round. These may be spent on your turn to take actions, or they may be spent during other parts of the round to take reactions. Every action or reaction will normally cost 1 AP, unless it is specifically described as free.

Fast Turns vs. Slow Turns

Both fast turns and slow turns come with their own tactical benefits. Players who take fast turns may act before the enemy does that round. Players who take slow turns, on the other hand, have the benefit of spending AP for defensive reactions before they act in the round. This means they will know exactly how many they have left.

We recommend tracking these points with physical tokens of some sort. Glass beads work well, as do poker chips.

At the beginning of the next turn, all unspent AP will be discarded—that is, Action Points do not carry over from round to round.

Turns

Each round, turns are resolved in order:

- ✦ **Fast Turns:** Players who chose to take a fast turn this round resolve their turns first, in whatever order the players decide among themselves.
- ✦ **NPC Turns:** All NPCs take their turns in whatever order the GM wishes. Certain enemies may have traits that allow them to take their turns outside of this phase.
- ✦ **Slow Turns:** Players who chose a slow turn resolve their turns at the end of the round. These, likewise, are resolved in whatever order the players decide.

Surprise

Taking the enemy by surprise gives you an initial advantage. Characters who are surprised cannot take a Fast Turn during the first round of combat and cannot take reactions that round.

Attacks

Ultimately combat is about violence, and attacking an opponent is likely to be one of the most common actions characters take. Unless a trait specifies otherwise, you may only take one attack action per turn.

Attack Score

When making an attack flip, your Attack score is used in place of a stat.

Making an Attack

To perform an attack, first choose a target and then make an attack flip. This will use your Attack score, with a Target Number equal to the opponent's Defense total or Willpower total this round (see page 26). Generally speaking, physical attacks will target Defense, while mental attacks will target Willpower.

To attack an opponent, she must be within range of your weapon. If she is not, you will need to move until she is within range (see page 29).

If the attack flip is a success, you have scored a hit. For most attacks this means you then deal damage to the target. If the attack's total is twice the opponent's Defense total (or Willpower total, if it was targeted) then you have scored a critical hit. This means you will deal extra damage and a Grave Wound consequence (see page 27).

Keep in mind that before a hit is resolved, the opponent may choose to employ a defensive reaction (see page 26).

Rusluk is attacking a bandit with his sword. He makes an attack flip, with Attack 6 and plays a 7♦. This gives him a total of 13. Since the bandit's Defense total this round is 9, Rusluk scored a hit. If his attack total had been 18 or higher (twice the bandit's Defense total), he would have scored a critical hit.

Damage

When you score a hit, use the card you played for the attack to look up the damage for your weapon. Damage will subtract from the foe's HP. If it reduces her below 0, you will also apply either a Grave Wound consequence, or a Dying consequence if she already has a Grave Wound.

✦ For more information, see page 27.

Critical Hits

If you score a critical hit, double the amount of damage you deal (before subtracting Armor). Your target also gains a Grave Wound consequence (see page 27).

Attack Options & Circumstances

Below are a variety of attack options or other circumstances that can affect attacks.

- ✦ **Area Effects:** Targets all characters within a specified area. A target caught this area may take a Dodge reaction to move a yard away or to dive for cover, if available. This might move the character out of the affected area. Having cover halves damage.
- ✦ **Called Shot:** To attack a specific location on a target's body, make an attack with ☹. On a hit, the attack has an additional effect determined by the GM.
- ✦ **Cover:** Targets behind hard cover are more difficult to hit because of the obstructing object. This imposes ☹ or ☹☹ for moderate or heavy cover, respectively.
- ✦ **Disarm:** By taking ☹ to an attack, you may attempt to disarm your target. On a hit, the target must make a Strength flip with a TN equal to your attack total. If she fails, she is disarmed, with her weapon falling to the ground near her feet.

Defense

Often one of the foremost goals of combat is to avoid being injured. The ability of a character to avoid physical attacks is represented by her Defense score.

Defense Flips

At the beginning of every round you will make a Defense flip. To do this, flip a card and add its value to your Defense score. This gives you your Defense Total for the round. This total is the Target Number to hit you with a physical attack. As with any flip, you may opt to play a card from your hand as a boon to your Defense flip for the round.

Boosting Defense

If you are aware of an attack, you may use either the Dodge or Parry reactions to boost your Defense against it (see right).

Willpower

A character's Willpower score is the mental equivalent of Defense. It is used to resist taunts, intimidation, terror and mental assaults.

Willpower Flips

At the beginning of the round, use the same card from your Defense flip to determine your Willpower Total. This is the Target Number to hit you with a mental attack this round.

Boosting Willpower

If you are aware of an attack, you may use the Resist reaction to boost your Willpower against it (see right).

Reactions

Reactions are maneuvers that a character may take outside of her turn. Usually they are triggered by the action of a foe. Each costs 1 AP.

Most reactions fall into one of two categories: offensive or defensive. To make either type of reaction, the character must be aware of the trigger. Additionally, defensive reactions must be declared before the attack flip is made, and only one may be made per attack.

Dodge

Sometimes moving out of the way of an attack is best. This defensive reaction may be used against a physical attack. Flip the top card of your deck; you may opt to use it in place of your Defense card against this attack.

Harry

When a foe moves to disengage with you, the Harry reaction allows you to attack with a readied melee weapon. Simply declare the reaction and make the attack flip.

Parry

Parry is a defensive reaction that allows you to use a weapon to deflect an incoming physical attack. For this attack, add your weapon's Parry bonus to Defense. This only works against melee attacks, unless using a shield.

Resist

The Resist defensive reaction may be taken to help repel mental attacks. Flip the top card of your deck; you may opt to use it in place of your Defense card against this attack.

Health Points & Grave Wounds

In *Age of Ambition*, your character's physical well-being and stamina are represented by your Health Points (HP). When you are damaged or become fatigued you lose HP; similarly, when you are healed, you regain HP.

Every character has a maximum HP, representing a state of good health and rest. Your current HP may never exceed this value.

Damage

When something harms your character's physical well-being, such as being struck with a weapon or suffering a great fall, you take damage. Damage reduces your current HP by an amount equal to the damage taken. So, for example, if you take 10 damage you lose 10 HP.

Damage Type

Damage comes in many different varieties—from the cutting of a sword to the toxins in a snake's bite. Often the type of damage is made clear in an attack's name or description, but if there's any doubt the GM decides the type.

Damage Arrays

Most attacks list their damage as an array of possible outcomes. Use the value of the card played in the attack to determine the damage. If multiple cards were used due to a flush, the attacker may choose which to use for damage.

An example damage array is shown in the upper right. To find the damage dealt, look up the value of the card in the top row; the corresponding damage will be listed below it.

NPC entries will often abbreviate this array by only listing the damage values, separated by a slash; for example: 8/7/6/5/4.

1 – 2	3 – 4	5 – 6	7 – 8	9 – 10
8	7	6	5	4

Yavu hits a bandit with his spear, playing the 7♣. Using the damage array for his spear (shown above), he notes that he deals 5 damage.

Armor

Armor may reduce the damage suffered from weapon strikes, spells or similar effects. Some creatures also have tough hide that mimics armor.

These provide an Armor value. Subtract this value from the damage dealt. Usually two values will be provided separated by a slash, for example: 8/4. Use the first value against Cutting and Piercing damage, and the second value against all other types of damage.

Ayana strikes a bandit with her hammer, dealing 8 smashing damage. The bandit, however, is wearing boiled leather armor (Armor 4/2). Since this is smashing damage, the second Armor value is used, meaning the bandit only takes 6 damage.

Grave Wounds

If you are struck with a critical hit, or are reduced below 0 HP, you take a Grave Wound in addition to damage. These consequences are many and varied. Use the Grave Wound table on the next page or the GM makes up a similar effect. Expanded Grave Wound tables are available in the full rules.

If you already have a Grave Wound consequence and would be dealt one again, you instead gain a Dying consequence (see below).

Dying

When you would take a second Grave Wound, you risk dying from the accumulated damage. This imposes the Dying consequence

(see page 19). When you are reduced to a multiple of your maximum HP—for example, $-1 \times \text{max HP}$ —you take an additional Dying consequence. Once you have accumulated three Dying consequences, you expire.

If you have the Dying consequence, you must make an **Endurance** flip at the beginning of every round, with a TN equal to the number of HP you are below zero. For example, if you took damage reducing you to -9 HP, the flip would be **End-9**. If successful, you stave off dying another round. If you fail, you gain an additional Dying consequence. A Dying consequence is removed if you succeed with Margin 5 or more.

Fatigue

Fatigue is a special type of damage that represents your character weakening or becoming tired. Fatigue imposes an Exhausted consequence in place of a Grave Wound consequence (see page 19).

Healing Damage






Most creatures have the ability to heal naturally over time. For each day spent resting and relaxing in a clean and safe environment, you regain a number of HP equal to your Endurance.

First Aid

First aid may be used to patch up damage shortly after it occurs. To perform first aid, make a **Dex/medicine-10** flip. On a success, the patient may recover a number of HP equal to the Margin, up to a maximum equal to her Endurance. This takes 10 minutes and a character may only benefit from first aid once per set of wounds received.

Healing Grave Wounds

Grave Wounds represent lasting injuries that take a long time to heal. Rules for healing them are included in the full game. For now, assume Grave Wounds last until the end of the included scenario.

Card	Quick-Start Grave Wounds
A - 2	The weapon nicks a vein in the foe's neck, causing heavy bleeding. She gains two Bleeding consequences.
3 - 4	The attack cuts into the flesh next to your foe's spine. She gains the Bleeding and Stun consequences. Additionally, until she receives first aid, she suffers  on all flips due to the pain.
5 - 6	The attack cuts a red slash across the foe's forehead as she ducks to avoid an eye being taken out. Beginning next round, she suffers  to all actions relying on sight, as blood gets in her eyes. This effect lasts until the wound is properly bandaged.
7 - 8	The blow crushes the foe's shoulder, dislocating the arm. The foe gains the Stun consequence. The arm is useless until it is popped back into place with a successful Str/medicine-10 flip. Even then, any attempt to use the arm suffers  until the wound is healed.
9 - 10	The blow slams into the side of the opponent's head, bursting her eardrum and making a small rivet of blood down her neck. She gains the Stun consequence and suffers  to all hearing-based actions until the wound is healed.
J - Q	Your attack shatters the foe's wrist, causing her off-hand to hang loosely at an odd angle. The hand is useless until the wound heals.
K - Joker	The blow slams into the foe's face, snapping her nose and smearing blood down her front. She suffers  to all Charisma-based flips until the wound heals.

Other Actions

Players are likely to come up with any number of other actions they wish to take in combat. For the most part, the GM should adjudicate these on the fly. However, some additional common actions are described below.

Aim

You may spend an action to aim, granting **+** to an immediately subsequent attack.

Cast Spell

Many spells are useful in combat. For more on casting spells, see page 23.

Draw

Drawing a weapon, magical reagent, ammunition or other item takes an action.

Focus

Many mental consequences—including Fear and Stun—may be removed by taking the Focus action. Each time this action is taken, remove one of these consequences. The Focus action may not be taken in the same round in which you make an attack.

Hide

If you have heavy cover or concealment, and are not engaged in melee combat, you may attempt to hide by making a **Dex/stealth vs. Willpower** flip, opposed by the highest foe. On a success, you gain the Hidden consequence.

Intimidate

Through a few choice words or posturing, a target may be intimidated as an action. To do this, make a **Str/persuade vs. Willpower** flip. On a success, the target gains the Fear consequence.

Using a Grid

Some GMs prefer to use a grid to track movement and position in combat. Both square and hexagonal grids are common. If playing with a grid, treat every space as a yard. In this way, your Move score is simply how many spaces you can move per action.

Move

Movement is a common combat action. Each action you take allows you to move a number of yards equal to your Move score.

Observe

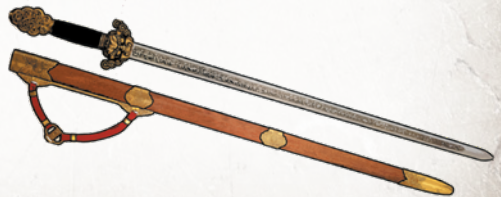
You may enter a state of heightened alertness by making a **Per/awareness vs. Dex/stealth** flip. On a success, you spot the nearest hidden foe, who loses the Hidden consequence.

Staunch Bleeding

You may use bandages or a poultice to remove a target's Bleeding or Dying consequence. Make a **Dex/medicine-10** flip (see page 19).

Trick

Once per combat, you may attempt to trick a foe, creating an opening that can be exploited. To do this, describe the trick and make an **Int/deception vs. Willpower** flip. On a success, the target gains a Stun consequence.





Questionable Refuge

In which Our Heroes aid a group of refugees in making a new home in the city of Melanoc

The remainder of this quick-start contains a scenario intended to introduce players to the *Age of Ambition* game. Also included are five pregenerated characters, ready to play. It's a quick and easy way to give the game a spin!

This adventure is intended run as a single session, consisting of about four hours of game time. It's designed with the five included characters in mind, although if the players have their own, they can easily be substituted. As this scenario requires little knowledge of the game world, it is also an ideal adventure to run at a convention or similar event.

Synopsis

The Yirdril Lands are a morass of petty states, warlords and armed conflict. Two weeks ago, the Warlord Kattanz sacked and burned the city of Gail, where the party resided. Escaping the city with a group of about twenty other refugees, they avoided Kattanz's army and made their way to the city of Melanoc, where the group hopes to begin a new life.

The scenario begins with the heroes and accompanying refugees waiting in line to be let past Melanoc's city walls. Unfortunately, they are soon turned away at the gates, as

the guards have orders not to let any more refugees into the city.

Leaving the gates to find a place to stay the night in the shanty town that has grown up outside the city, the group is soon attacked by a gang of thugs led by Hrolf the Fist. When the battle turns against him, Hrolf attempts to flee, mentioning "reporting to his boss."

The thugs defeated and a place to stay the night secured, Speaker Bandu—the de facto leader of the refugees—asks the party to help them make a new home here and become accepted into the city. To do this, the party will need to place three "Refugees Aided" consequences on Melanoc. Each one requires that they perform some significant task that aids the plight of the refugees.

Helping the refugees in this way forms the bulk of the adventure. How the party goes about doing this is up to them, although many ways are detailed in the pages that follow. These include: tracking down the "boss" Hrolf mentioned, finding jobs constructing a new aqueduct, defeating the Beast of Helix Peak and meeting with Bralin, a business leader in the city. The players are also sure to have ideas of their own.

Once three "Refugees Aided" consequences have been accumulated, the group will be

contacted by city officials and offered a place in Melanoc. The party will also receive a job offer with the city Legion. From here the group can finally begin their new life, with many more adventures to come!

Preparation

Before the game, each player should pick a character. Five pregenerated characters are included in the back of this quick-start. Players should each receive a copy of the pages with their character's information and have time to review it before the session begins. None of these pages have private information, so you can simply print out all of the characters and let the players read through each before picking one.

Players may optionally want to read over the "Oh, Perilous Age" section at the beginning of the quick-start. As the GM, you will definitely want to read over the entire quick-start before running it.

Ideally, each player will have her own poker deck, although decks can be shared in a pinch. Before the game, these decks should be shuffled and each player should draw a hand of cards equal to her character's Luck.

You will similarly draw a hand of cards equal to the number of players. Scratch paper and pencils will be handy as well.

Running the Session

Although the first couple scenes and the last couple scenes of the adventure are scripted, the rest of the scenario is wide open. The trick is to keep the events of the adventure moving along and to keep the players focused. If at any point the group feels lost, have them hear a rumor, offer a suggestion through Speaker Bandu or have one of the antagonists be proactive by attacking the group or overtly acting against them in some way.

Reading Stat Blocks

The stat blocks in this adventure are presented in a simplified format. Stats and associated scores are shown in a table, followed by attacks, important skills and traits.

Stat blocks do not list every skill an NPC possesses. When making a flip, the GM may decide whether a character is skilled or not by applying common sense.

An example stat block is below.

Commoner

Cottar (Common 2)

Ambition: Live a life without trouble.

Bonds: Family (ally)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
6	5	4	6	5	4	4	6
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	4	5	0/0	12	5	0	5

Dagger: +5 vs. Defense (8/7/6/5/4 pi). Close, Parry 2.

Skills 🍀: Animals, Tradecraft (varies)

The character's name, Title, Status and any Ambitions or Bonds the character possesses.

The character's stats and scores, including Attack (Atk), Defense (Def), Willpower (Will), Armor (Arm), Health Points (HP), Move, Size and Luck

Preferred attacks, damage and properties.
 The character's expert rank skills.

Melanoc

This adventure takes place in and around the independent city-state of Melanoc. It is a walled city of about 30,000 people, located in a mountain pass on the borders of Graundaur—a mostly gnome and goblin country to the south—and the Yirdril Lands, a turbulent morass of warlords and independent cities to the north.

History

Melanoc has only existed for about 40 years. It was founded by Graundaur, who planned to use it to tax trade caravans coming through the mountain pass and also as a buffer against the warlords to the north.

At first this was wildly successful and the town grew rapidly, giving it a boomtown atmosphere. A wall was even constructed, blocking off the pass for any who did not pay the tolls at the city gate.

About a decade into the city's history, however, the ruling council was overthrown and replaced by a new council who declared the city's independence from Graundaur. This prompted a brief military conflict, but in the end the separatists prevailed.

Populace

Melanoc is a cosmopolitan city, largely made up of two distinct populations. The first group are the Graundauran settlers and their descendants, who are a mix of goblins and gnomish peoples. The second group is comprised of both the original inhabitants of the region and the more recent refugees. This group consists of humans, elves and trolls. These two groups are differentiated both by height and usually by political leanings.

Finally, the boomtown years of Melanoc attracted a few settlers from afar who don't easily fall into either of these two camps. Minotaurs, dwarves and orcs are uncommon but not unheard of in the city.

City Authorities

The government of Melanoc is led by a city council, consisting of five permanent councilors and a speaker. Councilors serve for life and are not elected, but rather appointed by their predecessor. The speaker is the sole elected position, and serves to represent the citizens of the city and to break ties in the council.

The defense of Melanoc is divided between the Legion and the Guard. The Guard patrols the city streets, mans the walls and is generally charged with keeping the peace. The Legion, on the other hand, is a smaller, more elite force, consisting of several bands of legionnaires, who conduct special operations in and around the city.

Climate

Melanoc is located in the tropics in the southern hemisphere of Trystell. Its high altitude location in a mountain pass, however, makes the city much more temperate than the surrounding lowlands.

The seasons in Melanoc break down roughly into the wet season and the dry season, with surprisingly little temperature variation throughout the year. This scenario begins at the tail end of the wet season.

Areas of the City

Melanoc is a walled city with additional interior walls separating its three districts. This divides the city into Upper Melanoc, Lower Melanoc and the Market District.

Upper Melanoc

Upper Melanoc contains the townhouses and small estates of the city's most well-to-do citizens. It is well-tended and the Guard takes extra care when patrolling its streets. There are also guards at the gates of the district, and those who are not recognized as residents, or who do not have documentation showing that they are servants or guests, are not allowed into this part of the city.

Lower Melanoc

By contract, Lower Melanoc contains the homes of the city's poorest residents. Here the houses are in varying states of repair and the Guard patrols only irregularly. While this district is theoretically restricted to citizens of Melanoc, in practice the Guard rarely bothers to check those coming into or out of the district.

Merchant District

The center third of the city, stretching from the northern gate to the southern gate, is the Market District. Most of the trade in Melanoc happens here. It is also the location of the city's many inns. Visitors passing through the city are restricted to the Market District during their stay. The streets are well-patrolled during the day and the gates leading into and out of the city close down at night.

Shantytown

In recent years, a unofficial fourth distinct has grown up outside Melanoc's northern gate. Consisting mostly of tents, lean-tos and crude shacks, this community has been aptly named Shantytown. Here the truly desperate eke out a life begging from citizens and travelers passing through the city. The only sections patrolled by the Guard are the gate and the roadway immediately leading to it.

This has led many of the criminal enterprises in Melanoc to move their operations here.

Surrounding Sands

In addition to the city proper, Melanoc holds sovereignty over the surrounding mountains, a few nearby farming villages and a small port. These provide food for the city and supplement the trade coming through the mountain pass.

Justeel and Yed

Justeel and Yed are the two largest farming villages, with several hundred inhabitants each. Justeel is a day's travel from Melanoc by foot, and Yed is two days. Neither village has walls or other defenses.

Bruntal

Bruntal is the largest of Melanoc's surrounding communities, with a few thousand inhabitants. It is a small port town where the mountains meet the sea. A dirt road winds its way from Bruntal to Justeel, and then onward to Melanoc.

Other Settlements

Finally, there are a handful of hamlets and lone homesteads in the surrounding mountains. These either function as mining communities or help supply Melanoc with fresh water by transporting ice from the nearby snowcaps.

Shopping

The party may wish to purchase goods or services over the course of the adventure. Although several merchants occasionally trade with the refugees in Shantytown, the most prominent one is Cheryl Brut, who operates a storefront there (see page 41).

Entry Denied

When the scenario begins, Our Heroes are traveling in the company of about 20 refugees, having fled the city of Gail shortly before it was burned by Warlord Kattanz. Over the course of two grueling weeks on the road, they've managed to safely escort the refugees from Gail to the city of Melanoc, where the entire group hopes to find safety and start a new life. Unfortunately, things are about to get even more complicated.

Waiting in Line

As the first scene begins, the party has arrived at the shanty town outside Melanoc's northern gate. They are waiting in line to enter, as the guards inspect a merchant caravan that arrived shortly before them.

Take a moment to describe the vast mass of tents, lean-tos and shacks that surround the northern wall of the city in a chaotic jumble. Over a thousand refugees and other unfortunates eke out a life here, peddling what small goods they own and begging along the roadside.

A Little Local Gossip

As the party waits, some of the refugees have been gossiping with the Shantytown locals, excited to be back in civilization. As everyone queues in line, they'll happily bring the party in on their conversations.

This is a chance to have the players try out the action mechanic by making a basic flip. Have one or each of the players make a **Chr/socialize-10** flip, walking them through the process. On a success, that character gleans one of the rumors found in the table on page 40. On a failure, she receives only small talk and suspicious stares—the party's weapons make the locals uneasy.

✦ The refugees and locals both use the Commoner stats found on page 32.

Speaker Bandu's Thanks

This is also a good opportunity for Speaker Bandu to talk to the group. Explain that he's the de facto leader of the refugees that the party has been accompanying, then have him thank the group for their help on the road from Gail. The refugees likely wouldn't have survived without them!



Bandu needn't say much. The important part here is to cue the players in on his presence so that they know who he is when he makes a request of them later on.

✦ Speaker Bandu's stats are found on page 39.

Get Lost!

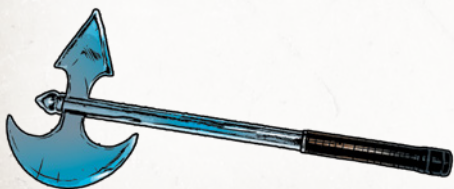
Finally, it's time for the party and refugees to approach the gate. As they do so, the guards will move to block their path and one of them will say, "Sorry, Melanoc's full. No entry. Orders of the City Council." If asked to explain, they will say that there isn't enough room, water or jobs in the city to accommodate all the refugees fleeing south these days, so the City Council has barred them from entry. The guards will then tell the group to move along, as they're blocking traffic.

If Yagmur is being played, he will recognize his old rival, Martha, as being among the guards. If she sees Yagmur, she will smile maliciously and yell, "come again!" If Yagmur's player wants to try something, this might be a good time to go over the Bond rules, otherwise that's best left for the next scene.

Nothing the party can say or do will convince the guards to allow them into the city. They don't make the rules, they just enforce them.

✦ Martha's stats are to the upper right.

✦ There are four other guards at the gate. Additional guards man the walls and can be called upon if a fight breaks out. These guards use the same stat block as Martha.



GM Goals

As the GM, your goal in this scene is to familiarize the players with the action mechanic, prevent them from entering the city and move them along elsewhere so that the next scene can unfold. If they pick up an extra plot hook through gossip, so much the better.

Martha the Guardsman

Troll, Watchman (Common 2)

Ambition: Protect the streets or at least protect those who pay bribes.

Bonds: City Guard (patron)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
5	6	6	5	4	6	4	4
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	6	4	4/2	10	5	0	5

Club: +5 vs. Defense (7/6/5/4/3 sm). Parry 3.

Skills 🟢: Investigate, Streetwise

Martha is a simple woman with simple pleasures—like beating people over the head or tackling a fleeing suspect. The Guard lets her do these things with legal protection, so she is a loyal member.

"Hi, I'm Kip."

As the party is being turned away from the gate, they'll be approached by a human adolescent of about 13 years old. He will introduce himself as Kip, say that he sees this a lot and offer to lead them to "a safe place to shelter for the night."

In truth, Kip has just identified them as easy marks. He plans to observe the group a bit, sizing them up, before betraying them to someone with power.

✦ Kip's stats are found on page 49.

Predator and Prey

As the party leaves the gate, they will cut through Shantytown, avoiding the stares of the guards. If they are following Kip, he will lead them through a series of narrow, twisting alleyways between the shacks and lean-tos.

Alleyway Ambush

As the group is traveling through a somewhat isolated alley between two ramshackle buildings, ruffians with clubs will emerge from the shadows, both behind and in front of the group. Hrolf the First, clearly the leader of the gang, will step forward and say with a malicious smile, “Looks like we got fresh meat! Hand over everything you own and you won’t get hurt... too much.”

If Selma is being played, she will recognize Hrolf as the thug who killed her brother some years ago. If so, this is a good time to go over the rules for Bonds (see page 21). For example, she might call on her Enemy Bond to gain + on an attack against him, to impose the Fear consequence on him after an appropriately threatening monologue about avenging her brother, or to force him to talk after the fight.

Combat

Unless the group immediately complies with the gang’s demands, things are likely to come to blows. This makes it a good time to go over the combat rules (see page 24). The gang will fight until it is obvious that they cannot win, after which they will attempt to flee. Hrolf will be the first to run, yelling “the boss will hear about this! You’ll be sorry!”

✚ Hrolf’s stats can be found to the right.

✚ There are a number of Ruffians equal to the number of PCs. They all share the same stat block, found on the next page. Note that they are all minions (see sidebar).

✚ The refugees who accompany the party will try to help, but they’re not fighters. Don’t worry about making flips or tracking individual actions for them. Instead, during the NPC turns, simply describe how as a group they’re trying to help—such as by pelting the ruffians with small rocks, shouting encouragement or getting in the way of the gang’s attempts to flee. This might grant + to attack a particular enemy, impose a – on a foe’s Defense flip for a round or simply stop fleeing ruffians from getting away.

✚ On his first turn, Hrolf will attempt to intimidate the nearest party member. To do this, he will give his most evil glare while yelling, “Oh, you really must be new here! You have no idea what trouble you’ve gotten yourselves into!” For a description of the Intimidate action, see page 29.

Hrolf the Fist

Troll, Whipjack (Common 4)

Ambition: Be feared and respected more than anyone else in Shantytown.

Bonds: Ackon Darko (patron)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
7	6	4	6	5	5	5	6
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	4	5	2/1	13	5	0	5

Club: +5 + vs. Defense (8/7/6/5/4 sm). Parry 3.

Skills +: Athletics, Persuade, Streetwise, Thievery

Hrolf is a hulking troll with a short temper and fists the size of hams. Despite his size, he has a fragile ego and always has to feel that he is the most feared person in the room. The fact that he is only second in command of the Darko Gang grates on him constantly.

Ruffians

Human, Scalawag (Common 1)

Ambition: Look tough in front of the others.

Bonds: Hrolf (patron)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
5	6	4	6	4	5	4	6
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	4	5	0/0	0	5	0	5

Club: +5 vs. Defense (7/6/5/4/3 sm). Parry 3.

Skills 🟢: Streetwise, Thievery

Traits: Minion (see sidebar)

The men and women following Hrolf are all members of the Darko Gang. They are bullies at heart and quick to turn tail when it appears the fight isn't going their way.

Aftermath

Chances are the ruffians will be quick to break and run. They're here for easy pickings, not because they want an extended fight. If any manage to flee the initial battle, the party can optionally chase them down with a successful **Per/athletics-12** flip.

Searching the bodies turns up their clubs, bloody clothes, 5 bronze pennies and the gambeson armor that Hrolf is wearing (too big for anyone except Danso, who has better armor anyway). One of the ruffians is also carrying an odd-looking metal tool with a spike. A successful **Int/tradecraft (machinist)-10** flip will identify it as a *pritchell*, a device used to dress millstones. This is a clue that the gang operates out of an old mill (see page 42).

If Hrolf hasn't yet spoken his threats about "the boss," he will croak them out as he lays there dying: "the boss will hear... you'll be sorry..." If he's captured alive, the party can persuade him to name or lead them to Ackon Darko by calling upon Selma's Bond or with a successful **Det/persuade vs. Willpower** flip.

Minions

Minions are weaker opponents that the party can cut down in large numbers. Being a Minion has the following effects:

- ✚ All minions use the same Defense card.
- ✚ Minions never take reactions, so don't bother to track minion AP between turns; any unspent AP is simply lost.
- ✚ A minion always begins with 0 HP, meaning that any damage dealt results in a Grave Wound. Don't bother using the table—just narrate some appropriately bloody result. Afterward, the minion either dies, falls unconscious or runs (GM's choice). Any further damage immediately kills the minion.

GM Goals

The players should face this scene as soon as they leave the gate and are somewhat isolated. Your goal is to familiarize the players with the combat system and to drop another potential plot hook relating to Hrolf's boss and the identity of the ruffians.



A Simple Request

If the group is following Kip, he will lead them to a clearing just west of Shantytown. Rocks surrounding the clearing provide cover and the contour of the mountains makes anyone approaching the clearing easy to notice. This, he says, is a safe enough place to spend the night.

If the group isn't following Kip, they can locate this spot with a successful **Per/survival-10** flip. On a failure, they'll find a spot which is much less comfortable (ignore any healing under "Resting for the Night" below).

The Request

Once the group is settled, Speaker Bandu will approach the party and make a request. He asks them to help solve the situation for the refugees. Maybe if they can prove their worth, the city officials will let them stay. Their situation might also be helped by showing that they won't be a burden or threat to the city.

If any of the characters suggest just sneaking into the city, Bandu will look grim and reply that doing so isn't a long-term solution—it doesn't help them become accepted in their new home.

- ✦ Bandu's stats are in the upper right.
- ✦ If at anytime the players seem lost, feel free to have Speaker Bandu track them down and make specific suggestions on what to do next. Perhaps they can make Shantytown safer by tracking down Hrolf's boss or call on their contacts to find work for the refugees?

Speaker Bandu

Human, Refugee (Common 1)

Ambition: Protect the refugees and make new home for them in Melanoc.

Bonds: Refugee Group (contact)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
4	6	5	4	6	4	7	7
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
6	4	7	0/0	8	4	0	5

Dagger: +6 vs. Defense (7/6/5/4/3 pi). Close.

Skills 🟢: Expression, Language (Standard)

An elderly human man with a slight limp, Speaker Bandu is the de facto leader of the refugees. He helped the group flee Gail before it was sacked and burned by Kattanz.

City Consequences

For the group to become accepted and make a new home in the city, the players will need to accumulate three "Refugees Aided" consequences. These can be acquired by performing tasks that help the plight of the refugees—for example, obtaining sponsorship from Bralin the Merchant, finding the refugees work building an aqueduct or proving their worth by defeating the Beast of Helix Peak.

How the party goes about doing this is up to them. The next few scenes cover many of the possibilities and can be approached in any order. The players are also sure to have ideas of their own. As the GM, you should explain to the players how acquiring "Refugees Aided" consequences works, and go over the relevant rules.

Resting for the Night

If anyone in the party is injured and chooses to rest for the night, she will recover a number of HP equal to her Endurance.

Word on the Street

Players looking for ways to help the refugees will likely start by asking around Shantytown. If they don't think of this on their own, have Speaker Bandu suggest it.

Tracking Down Bonds

Each of the five pregenerated player characters has two Bonds, most of which can be found in and around Melanoc. It is likely that at some point the players will want to seek them out.

Locating most Bond NPCs requires several hours spent asking around Shantytown and a **Chr/socialize-10** flip. Success results in either directions to the NPC or an idea of how to contact them. Failure results in a complication of some kind, such as

tipping off the party's enemies or a required bribe to find the character in question.

Of note, Warlord Kattanz isn't in the area and Bralin the Merchant makes her home within the city walls (see page 44).

Rumors

The party might hear any number of rumors as they go about their business in Shantytown. Alternatively, they may seek out rumors by making a **Chr/socialize-10** flip. Choose a rumor or flip on the table below.

Shopping

If the party wants to do some shopping, their options in Shantytown are limited. The only full-time shopkeeper outside the city walls is Cheryl Brut, although other merchants

Card	Rumor
A – 2	“I hear there’s some sort of monster living up on Helix Peak. It’s been preying on the aqueduct workers, and recently drunkards at the fringes of Shantytown have been disappearing in the night!” (Partially true, see page 47)
3 – 4	“If you want to move goods into or out of Melanoc without the Guard knowing, then Ceren Azam is the one to see.” (True, see page 44)
5 – 6	“The problem with building a city in a mountain pass is that it’s not on a major river. During the dry season, fresh water is always in short supply. That’s why they’re building an aqueduct. Unfortunately, I hear its run into some problems.” (True, see page 46)
7 – 8	“Careful in Shantytown, friend. The Guard doesn’t patrol here, so the gangs have taken over. The Darko gang pretty much runs things right now.” (True, see page 42)
9 – 10	“Tensions have been high between Melanoc and Graundaur, ever since Melanoc seceded. Unless Melanoc gives up its claim of sovereignty, I think war may be coming.” (The tension part is true; the rest is speculation)
J – Q	“Melanoc has two organizations that keep the peace: the Guard and the Legion. If you have to report something to the authorities, try tracking down a band of Legionnaires. The Guard are all corrupt.” (Partially true, see page 33)
K – Jo	“I hear that some warlord attacked Gail a few weeks ago and burnt most of the city to the ground. I hope he doesn’t come this way.” (True, see page 53)

occasionally visit the refugees and might be accosted entering or exiting the city.

Below is a table of goods, representing what Cheryl has in stock when the scenario begins. How many she has of each item is up to you.

✦ Cheryl Brut's stats are to the right.

Item	Cost
Ale (keg)	120 bp
Arrows (bundle of 12)	6 bp
Backpack	30 bp
Black Powder (12 charges)	25 bp
Boots	50 bp
Bread (loaf)	2 bp
Cloak	60 bp
Eye Patch	1 bp
Hat	30 bp
Hood	10 bp
Kalid Part	15 bp
Lunar Device	20 bp
Mask	20 bp
Oil (1 flask)	3 bp
Paper (1 sheet)	2 bp
Rope (10 yards)	20 bp
Sack	1 bp
Wine (bottle)	25 bp

Money and Labor

Common coins include the bronze penny (bp), silver peso (sp) and gold piece (gp). These trade at the rate of 10 bp per silver and 20 sp per gold.

A day's wages is based on a character's Status—bronze for commoners, silver for gentry and gold for nobility. For example, a Common 2 peasant usually makes about 2 bp per day, while a Gentle 3 merchant makes about 3 sp per day.

Cheryl Brut

Tinker Gnome, Shopkeeper (Gentle 2)

Ambition: Become wealthy and prosperous.

Bonds: Lanstrin League (membership)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
4	4	5	4	6	6	6	5
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	5	5	0/0	8	4	0	5

Dagger: +5 vs. Defense (7/6/5/4/3 pi). Close, Parry 2.

Skills 🍀: Persuade, Tradecraft (merchant)

Cheryl Brut is a struggling merchant by day and an enthusiastic inventor by night. At first she moved her business outside the city walls because of the tendency of her inventions to explode, but then she found her niche selling goods to the residents of Shantytown.

Kip's Angle

As the party goes about its business, Kip will attempt to tag along, occasionally asking questions or offering basic suggestions. If the party insists on leaving him behind, he will instead follow the group subtly, keeping to the shadows as much as possible.

While he first singled out the refugees as easy marks, the party's defeat of Hrolf the Fist has captured his interest. Clearly, new arrivals as capable as the characters will make waves in Shantytown. He wants to know as much about them as possible. He figures this information ought to be worth something to someone. He plans to sell them out to either Ackon Darko or the Guard at his first opportunity.

During the night Kip will sneak away and report to Ackon or, if the party has done anything blatantly illegal, the Guard. His reports will include anyone who the party has spoken with or who aided them significantly. In the days that follow, the characters may notice that their contacts start disappearing.

The Darko Gang

In his earlier attack, Hrolf the Fist mentioned working for “the boss.” This boss is Ackon Darko, a notoriously cruel bandit leader who has left the wilderness to prey on the hapless residents of Shantytown.

In the past few months, his gang—the Darko Gang—has taken over most of Shantytown and started to extort protection money and favors from the locals. Ackon hopes to join the Modin crime syndicate and sees his control of Shantytown as a means to buy his way in.

Meeting the Gang

The party may decide on their own to seek out this mysterious “boss.” If they do, they can make an **Int/streetwise-10** flip to ask around. On a success, one of the characters learns that Hrolf worked for the Darko Gang. With Margin 2 or more, the character also learns that the Darko Gang controls much of Shantytown and that the gang operates out of an old mill northwest of the city.

If the characters don’t seek out the Darko Gang on their own, it is only a matter of time before the gang comes looking for them, hoping to get revenge for Hrolf’s defeat. If two days into the scenario Kip is still in the party’s good graces, he will return one morning and offer to lead the group to the mill under the pretense of finding jobs for the refugees. There the Darko Gang will be lying in wait for the characters.

Should Kip be discovered, or should the party simply not take the bait, the gang will instead leave the mill to track the characters down on their own. They will approach under the cover of darkness, as the refugees get ready to bed down for the night.

Threats & Offers

Unless the party has done something to anger him above and beyond defeating Hrolf, Ackon Darko will first attempt to make a deal with the group. After all, his primary concern is maintaining control of Shantytown by projecting strength. If he can turn their presence to his advantage, then so much the better.

Ackon begins his pitch with: “Welcome to Shantytown. Your arrival has made quite a splash. I apologize for the actions of my man, Hrolf. He often gets ahead of himself... I hope there’s no bad blood between us. In fact, I want to extend to you an offer. I’m a man with a great deal of sway in Shantytown, and with connections throughout city. As such, I’m always on the lookout for new talent. Come work for me as enforcers. Together there’s much wealth we can wring from Melanoc.”

The players are free to make counteroffers, following them up with a **Chr/persuade-10** flip, if they wish. However, Ackon won’t accept an offer unless it either results in the party being subservient to him or they appeal to his Ambition and offer something that he feels will let him buy his way into the Modin crime syndicate.

If Candan is being played, his Bond with Ackon might be called upon to gain + on an attack against him, see through any false promises he makes in the negotiation or glean insight into Ackon’s current Ambition.

Kip’s Betrayal

If Kip hasn’t yet overtly betrayed the party, he will as soon as it looks like the group won’t take Ackon up on his offer. Kip begins by drawing a dagger, stabbing the nearest character and then fleeing the scene.

✦ Kip’s stats are found on page 49.

Combat

If the team angers Ackon, takes hostile action against him or outright rejects his offer, he will mutter “Disappointing...” and then direct his gang to attack.

- ✦ Ackon Darko’s stats are to the right. Note that he is a Villain (see sidebar).
- ✦ There are a number of Ruffians equal to the number of PCs. They all share the same stat block (see page 38). Note that they are all Minions.
- ✦ To begin with, Ackon will let his gang soften the party up while he draws an arquebus, aims and fires at the most heavily armored character. After this, he will switch to his handaxe and join the fray.
- ✦ If the players are having too easy of a time in the fight, a couple more Ruffians may join the fray at the beginning of the second round.
- ✦ If Hrolf the Fist escaped earlier, he will be present as well. His stats are on page 37.

Villains

Villains are particularly dangerous opponents intended to challenge the entire party. The Villain trait has the following effects:

- ✦ Double the villain’s maximum HP (already factored into Ackon’s stats).
- ✦ Villains are not restricted to one attack per turn, and may use the Focus action in the same turn as an attack.
- ✦ At the beginning of her turn, a villain gets to remove one consequence for free. This does not apply to long-lasting consequences, such as Grave Wounds or Exhausted (GM’s discretion).

Ackon Darko

True Elf, Bosman (Gentle 4)

Ambition: Join the Modin crime syndicate.

Bonds: Darko Gang (ally)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
5	6	6	6	4	6	6	4
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	6	5	4/2	22	6	0	6

Arquebus: +5 🟢 vs. Defense (8/7/6/5/4 pi).

Firearm, Hands 2, Range 12, Reload 10.

Handaxe: +5 🟢 vs. Defense (10/9/8/7/6 cut). Parry 3.

Skills 🟢: Deception, Persuade, Survival

Traits: Villain (see sidebar)

Ackon Darko is a hardened bandit who has grown tired of the wilds and now aims to dominate Melanoc’s criminal underworld. He has a scar over one eye where he was once bitten by a monkey. He claims that the scar was from a duel, but to this day he still hates monkeys.

Aftermath

Searching the bodies turns up the ruffians’ clubs, bloody clothes, 10 silver pesos and Ackon’s personal gear: an arquebus, handaxe, armor and a key. His arquebus will still have powder and bullets for another 5 shots. His boiled leather armor will fit either Candan or Yagmur (although it just barely fits in the latter case).

If the team searches the old mill, have someone make a **Per/investigate-10** flip. On a success, that character finds a steel lockbox that the gang uses to store its ill-gotten gains. Ackon’s key opens it. Inside is a gold piece, 12 silver pesos and 22 bronze pennies.

Defeating Ackon, either by killing him or otherwise eroding his power base in Shantytown, results in a “Refugees Aided” consequence, as it helps provide safety. This gets the party a third of the way towards the refugees being accepted.

Into the City

There are a variety of reasons why the party might want to make it past the walls and into the city itself, even if only temporarily. Among these are looking for housing or other opportunities, contacting Bralin the Merchant and better shopping.

Ways Past the Walls

Several ways the party might circumvent the city walls are noted below:

- ✦ Scaling the walls might seem like the obvious solution, but this is more difficult than it seems. After all, walls exist specifically to make this hard. Climbing the walls requires three consecutive **Str/athletics-10** flips. The difficulty increases to TN 14 if the characters don't have a rope and grapple. Failure results in a fall and 3 damage.
- ✦ Stealthy characters might be able to sneak their way past the walls by hiding in a merchant's wagon or other vehicle entering the city. This requires waiting for the right opportunity and a successful **Spd/stealth-12** flip.
- ✦ Characters of a more social nature can achieve the same thing by bribing those same merchants with 3 sp and making a successful **Chr/persuade-12** flip.
- ✦ Players wanting a legal way into the city might be able to accomplish this by calling upon Bonds. Yagmur could hire a messenger (for 2 bp) to request an audience with Bralin the Merchant, and by calling upon that Bond, obtain a writ allowing him one day in the city. Mina might also be able to accomplish something similar by calling upon her Lanstrin League Bond.
- ✦ Finally, a smuggler's route into the city exists (see right).

Smuggler's Route

Characters looking for someone with an illicit way into the city or seeking criminal connections will eventually be pointed at Ceren Azam. She lives in a shack adjacent to the city wall, with an attached stage and space for seating. During the day she performs puppet shows here that call for revolution or ridicule the city council. At night she's a smuggler, moving goods under the wall

Both Selma and Mina have Bonds with Ceren—Selma as a contact and Mina as a rival. If both are being played, this can make for a complex and interesting interaction.

Ceren can be convinced to smuggle the party into the city with a 3 sp bribe and a successful **Chr/persuade-10** flip. Alternatively, Selma could call upon her Bond and skip the need to make a flip entirely.

✦ Ceren Azam's stats are below.

Ceren Azam

Tinker Gnome, Puppeteer/Smuggler (Gentle 1)

Ambition: Create clockwork puppets with real skin!

Bonds: Thieves' Guild (membership)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
5	7	6	4	5	4	6	3
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
6	5	4	2/1	9	5	0	5

Dagger: +6 vs. Defense (8/7/6/5/4 pi). Close, Parry 2

Skills 🎭: Streetwise, Tradecraft (clockwork)

Ceren is a smuggler in the guise of a traveling puppeteer. She works with the Melanoc Thieves' Guild and in her free time designs clockwork puppets. However, she wishes her puppets were more lifelike and dreams of one day creating a puppet with real skin!

Obstacles Inside

Unless the group is there legally, once within the city walls they will need to avoid discovery. As long as they remain in the Merchant District this will be as easy as avoiding attracting attention to themselves. Should they attempt to cross into Upper or Lower Melanoc, however, they will need to avoid the guards at the inner gates. Depending on the approach the characters are taking, this could be achieved with either a **Chr/deception-10** or **Spd/stealth-10** flip.

Kip Acts

If the party is in the city illegally and Kip has managed to follow them, he will see this as his opportunity to betray them, slipping off and find the Guard as soon as possible. He will claim that the party are ruffians who forced him into the city. He will give the Guard the characters' names, descriptions, where he last saw them and how they managed to make it into the city. In return, he will ask the guards for asylum because he fear's the team's reprisal should he be sent back to Shantytown.

It won't be long after that before the Guard comes searching for the team.

✂ Kip's stats are on page 49

Business Deals

Anyone seeking business connections or jobs for the refugees will be pointed to Bralin, a prominent merchant in the city. She invests in many businesses and projects around Melanoc, including the aqueduct which is currently being constructed west of the city (see page 46).

Securing a meeting with Bralin requires either calling upon a Bond or succeeding at an **Int/socialize-10** flip. Have the players roleplay making a pitch to Bralin. Can the party vouch for the refugees? What are their skills? What are

their plans for the future? If the players make a good pitch, Bralin will agree to speak for the refugees and offer them employment working on the aqueduct. If their pitch wasn't that good, have the player who did the most talking make a **Det/persuade-10** flip. On a success, Bralin will hesitantly agree to employ the refugees.

Securing a deal with Bralin results in a "Refugees Aided" consequence, as having a prominent merchant vouching for them carries a great deal of weight. This gets the party a third of the way towards the refugees being accepted.

Bralin the Merchant

Human, Merchant (Gentle 4)

Ambition: Maintain her upstanding reputation in and around Melanoc.

Bonds: City Council (contact)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
4	5	5	5	6	5	6	6
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	5	5	0/0	9	5	0	5

Dagger: +5 vs. Defense (7/6/5/4/3 pi). Close, Parry 2

Skills 🟢: Persuade, Tradecraft (merchant)

Bralin is one of the most influential merchants in Melanoc, responsible for the import of numerous goods into the city. She maintains a reputation for dependability and high quality merchandise.



The Aqueduct

Melanoc needs fresh water. The combination of its growing population and the fact that the city isn't located on a river, makes this need increasingly urgent. Things may be easier now during the wet season, but if the dry season arrives and its water requirements aren't met, the city may suffer riots or worse. This is one reason that refugees are being turned away at the gates.

To meet the growing demand for water, a new aqueduct is being constructed west of the city. Once completed, it will channel snowmelt from the mountains down to the gates. Unfortunately, construction of the aqueduct has run into difficulties and is significantly behind schedule.

Finding Jobs

Since the aqueduct is in need of workers, it is an ideal place to find jobs for the refugees. If the party has already spoken with Bralin the Merchant, those jobs may have already been secured (see page 45). If not, the group will need to trek out to the construction site and convince the foreman.

Characters volunteering to work for a day can impress the foreman with a successful **End/athletics-10** flip. Otherwise, have the players roleplay their request for jobs, then have one of them make a **Det/persuade-10** flip. A good pitch provides +, while a badly thought out pitch imposes -.

Making Progress

The aqueduct is behind schedule and its construction is facing a number of setbacks. Not only is it short on workers, but several faulty

trestles have been installed and a ridge stands between the aqueduct and the city, meaning large amounts of rock will need to be removed before its construction can be completed.

Thankfully, the party has skills that can help overcome these problems! A few ways that the characters can help are detailed below.

- ✦ The faulty trestles can be identified by taking a look at the aqueduct and making a successful **Int/academics (architecture)-10** flip. Once pointed out, the problem is obvious and the workers can shore them up.
- ✦ The ridge in the way of construction can be mostly removed with a few barrels of gunpowder and a successful **Int/tradecraft (sapper)-10** flip, made to pick the best spot and detonate the powder without incident.
- ✦ Alternatively, magic could be used to remove the excess rock or provide extra support. This requires a few lunar devices and a **Det/lore of earth-10** flip.

Gossip

While at the aqueduct's construction site, the workers may gossip with the group, telling them about the attacks in the night by the Beast of Helix Peak (see next page). Other topics of gossip might include Bralin's investment in the aqueduct (see page 45), the Darko Gang (see page 42) or any of the rumors found on page 40.

Outcome

Getting the refugees jobs working on the aqueduct and helping to overcome the its current difficulties, grants a "Refugees Aided" consequence. This gets the party a third of the way towards the refugees being accepted.

The Beast of Helix Peak

For several months, the aqueduct workers have been suffering intermittent attacks at night. Several have reported seeing some sort of large creature—like a mountain lion, with metallic, knife-like teeth and a jerky gait—descending the mountain. They’ve taken to calling it the Beast of Helix Peak.

More recently, vagrants sleeping at the edges of Shantytown have reported attacks by the same creature. This has prompted the Guard to place a 5 sp bounty on the Beast.

Tracking the Beast

The summit of the mountain directly west of Melanoc is known as Helix Peak. Those who ascend the mountain can look for tracks that might lead them to the Beast. This requires a **Per/survival-10** flip. On a success, the character finds tracks, but they don’t look anything like those of a large cat or any other creature she’s encountered.

From here, an **End/survival-10** flip will allow the party to follow the tracks back to the Beast’s lair—a cave a couple miles up the mountain. Failure results in the party taking a number of fatigue equal to the Margin of failure; the party still finds the Beast’s lair, but the trek up the mountain turns out to be exhausting (see page 28).

The Beast’s Lair

Once inside the creature’s lair, the party may notice that there are no droppings or other usual signs of habitation. Instead, a few gears and a large turnkey are scattered in one corner. Shortly thereafter, a clanking, whirling

quadrupedal figure lunges out of the darkness and attacks the group.

✦ The Beast’s stats are below.

Beast of Helix Peak

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
9	6	5	6	1	6	5	5
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
4	4	5	3/3	16	6	+1	5

Frightening Whistle: +5 🟢 vs. Willpower. All foes within hearing distance gain a Fear consequence.

Knife Claws: +5 🟢 vs. Defense (12/11/10/9/8 cut).

♥♦: When making a successful attack using a heart or diamond, the target gains a Bleeding consequence.

Construct: This creature is a clockwork construct. It is immune to metabolic hazards and mental effects. In addition, it doesn’t heal, although an appropriately skilled craftsman might be able to repair it.

Resistance (piercing): The Beast takes half damage from piercing attacks.

Weak Point: If a character makes a successful **Per/tradecraft (clockwork)-10** flip, she may spot a weak point in the beast’s joints. This spot may be targeted by making a Called Shot (see page 25). Successfully hitting this weak point results in double damage.

The Beast is a quadrupedal clockwork construct, covered in some sort of taxidermied animal hide.

Aftermath

Defeating the Beast of Helix Peak gives the party a moment of fame that they can use to advocate for the refugees. Doing so grants a “Refugees Aided” consequence. This gets the party a third of the way towards the refugees being accepted.

By inspecting the remains of the beast and making an **Int/tradecraft (clockwork)-10** flip, Mina can recognize its design as the handiwork of her rival, Ceren Azam (see page 44).

Promised Land

By the time the party has acquired three “Refugees Aided” consequences, word of their exploits will have gotten around, both throughout Shantytown and to the Legion. The party has managed to impress the right people, and they are about to be given a chance to make their case for being allowed into the city.

Come Quickly

Shortly after the party acquires the third “Refugees Aided” consequence, Speaker Bandu will come seek them out. “Come,” he says, “There’s someone important who wants to speak with all of us.” Bandu will then lead them back to whenever the refugees have been staying.

❧ Speaker Bandu’s stats are on page 39.

Meeting the Marshal

Waiting with the other refugees is Marshal Tralif, the head of Melanoc’s Legion. He has come here personally because he’s heard about the party’s exploits and he wants to size them up for a possible job offer (see the next page).

Once the characters have arrived, Tralif will begin by introducing himself, saying that he’s received word of the things the party has done to aid the refugees and he’s heard that they are looking to make a permanent home in Melanoc. He will then ask the characters what they can offer the city that merits a change in policy.

This is the chance for the players to make their case for the refugees. Have them roleplay their reply. Players may also want to call upon Bonds to somehow cement their arguments. This is unnecessary, but let the players make what effort they will. There are few opportunities left to use them in the scenario, and this is a good dramatic moment.

Assuming they make half an effort, Tralif will nod and say, “You make a compelling case. I’m impressed! Let me then formally welcome all of you into the city as citizens of Melanoc.” He will then hold out his hand to shake each of theirs, as well as the hands of all the other gathered refugees.

If the players completely botch their pitch or don’t even try, you can always fall back to calling for a **Chr/persuade-10** flip to smooth things over. Success means that Tralif similarly welcomes them into the city, while failure means that some stipulation is attached, such as a probationary period before citizenship is granted.

Marshal Tralif

Troll, Marshal of the Legion (Gentle 5)

Ambition: Protect the Legion and also the city.

Bonds: The Legion (membership)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
6	5	4	6	5	4	6	7
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	4	6	6/3	12	4	0	5

Staff: +5 ☺ vs. Defense (7/6/5/4/3 sm). Parry 4.

Skills ☺: Empathy, Investigate, Persuade

An elderly troll, Marshal Tralif has long been the leader of the Legion in Melanoc. Joining it decades ago after the coup, he quickly rose through the ranks, becoming the Legion’s second Marshal ever. Since then, he has had a significant hand in ensuring the continuation of the Legion and guiding it to become the sort of organization it is today.

Kip’s Final Gambit

If Kip is still with the party and hasn’t been able to betray them yet, he will have a judgment call to make:

If he’s observed the characters doing anything immoral or blatantly illegal, he may

take this opportunity to out them in front of the Marshal, loudly decrying each such act he's witnessed. This would be a desperate and ill-conceived attempt to make himself look good in front of the Marshal, while making the party look bad.

On the other hand, Kip may decide that the party's star is on the rise, and that he would be better served by riding their coattails to acceptance and glory. In this case, he may still be looking for opportunities to betray them, but for the time being he will play the part of a grateful toadie.

"Kip" the Kid

Human, Urchin (Common 1)

Ambition: Make it out of Shantytown and become someone important.

Bonds: Darko Gang (contact)

Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
3	6	7	4	5	5	6	4
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	6	5	0/0	7	5	0	5

Dagger: +5 vs. Defense (7/6/5/4/3 pi). Close, Parry 2

Skills 🍀: Deception, Thievery

Kip is a human adolescent in his early teens. Tall for his age and lanky, he still has a bit of a childish face. He's been an orphan now in Shantytown for a little over a year. In this time, he's come to the conclusion that the ruthless rise to power and that no one should ever trust anyone. He's resolved to steal, swindle and backstab his way into a position of importance.

Job Offer

With the good news for the refugees given and Kip possibly having made a final gambit, Marshal Tralif has one more offer for the player characters in particular. They've impressed him with their acts in and around Shantytown, and he wants to offer them jobs with the Legion.

Tralif will explain that the Legion is an elite group within Melanoc, separate from the city guard (see page 33). He will also explain that the organization is divided into bands of "legionnaires" and that he wants to recruit the party to be one of these bands. If the players have questions he will try to answer them, but he doesn't have time to answer more than a few. It's fine if the characters don't have an immediate response; he will give them a day or two to mull his offer over.

✦ If the party accepts, each character will receive a new title: **Legionnaire (Gentle 1)**. The full *Age of Ambition* rules has more information on titles.

Many Thanks!

Once the party has had a moment to consider Tralif's job offer, they will be thanked by each of the refugees, who are overjoyed at the prospect of having a new home in the city. There will be hugs and cheers and celebration. The characters have just saved lives and changed the city for the better!

Ending the Session

It's time to bring the scenario to a close. Resolve any dangling threads and then thank everyone for playing.

In the full *Age of Ambition* rules, players would now have a final opportunity to claim Ambitions and you would then hand out experiences. Succeeding at making a new home for the refugees is also probably worth handing out a free Favor to each of the players, as the refugees are grateful and the party may be able to call upon them in the future.

That concludes the "Questionable Refuge" scenario. We hope that you have enjoyed it and support the full game!

Further Adventures

The end of this quick-start scenario doesn't have to be the end of your adventures. Many more are possible with the purchase of the *Age of Ambition* core rules. It includes a full Lifepath-style character creation system, expanded social rules, more combat options, inventions, fighting styles, arcane lores, traits, equipment and more!

To help get you started, below are a variety of plot hooks that can be used to expand this scenario, providing additional challenges or following up on loose threads introduced in the course of the adventure.

✦ Marshal Tralif's job offer with the Legion is an obvious jumping off point for future adventures. Should the party accept, they will find themselves tasked with protecting the city of Melanoc from enemies both within and without—criminals, spies and villains of all stripes. In particular, they will find themselves tasked with defending those whom the Guard refuses to protect. This allows the GM to play up the bitter rivalry between the Legion and the Guard, as the party exposes the corruption that runs rampant in the city.

✦ One looming question that remains unanswered is: Why was the Beast of Helix Peak preying on aqueduct workers? Why was it there at all? Clearly it was a clockwork creation of Ceren Azam, but that doesn't explain its presence. Is Ceren some sort of sinister mastermind? Does she want to bankrupt rivals who invested in the aqueduct? Did she sell the Beast to someone else who set it against the aqueduct? Or was it stolen? Furthermore, how was it able to act so autonomously? Is it just the cutting edge of clockwork technology, or was the Beast possessed by a spirit or similar entity?

✦ The party may have defeated Ackon Darko and removed his gang from power, but the underlying conditions that let them seize control of Shantytown—the fact that the Guard doesn't patrol it—remain. It may only be a matter of time until the next gang steps in to fill the power vacuum. If Hrolf survived the scenario, he will see this as his golden opportunity. To begin with, he will rally what remains of the Darko Gang and seek a new hideout. If the Beast of Helix Peak's former lair is empty, it makes a good candidate. Once his power is secure and he has a rebuilt the gang under his command, he will seek his revenge on the party.

✦ If Kip survived the scenario, he is sure to show up again while in pursuit of another scheme. He might be using a different name or have changed his appearance, but he will remember the characters and their actions during the adventure. What he wants of the party largely depends on how he was treated. He might want anything from making amends to cold-blooded murder. If the party never uncovered his treachery, he might still be tagging along with them, biding his time until he can profit from his access to the group!

✦ There's a war brewing in Melanoc's criminal underworld between the Thieves' Guild and the Modin crime syndicate. The party may already have encountered each of these organizations: Ceren Azam being a member of the Thieves' Guild, and Ackon Darko being a prospective candidate for the Modin. How the characters are viewed by these criminals depends on the actions they took over the course of the adventure. Regardless of whether they made friends or enemies of each organization, the party may soon find themselves caught in the crossfire.

- ✚ The party has just made life better for the refugees in Melanoc, but not everyone is happy about this change. The truth is that there are vested interests in the city who benefit from a have large and desperate labor force with few employment alternatives. These include the Bronzebeard Mining Company, which both has allies on the city council and more shady connections. The company may seek to make an example of the party, or of the refugees they helped, in order to cow others from following suit.
- ✚ Ceren Azam really, really wants to create a puppet made from real skin. In fact, she's taken a liking to the of skin of one of the heroes! All she needs to do is come collect it. The only problem is that the character is still using her skin. Of course, Ceren has never let a little thing like that stop her. And she has plenty of connections in the Thieves' Guild to call upon!
- ✚ The party may have helped solve the aqueduct's current woes, but the project is still far from completed. In fact, a whole new set of troubles seem to have cropped up almost overnight. Is the problem just shoddy engineering or is something more sinister at work? Does someone out there want to undermine the security of Melanoc by undermining the aqueduct's completion? Graundauran spies, perhaps?
- ✚ Bralin the Merchant did the party a favor when she vouched for the refugees, and now she wants a favor in return. One of her business rivals, Ye, has recently acquired an exclusive contract to import a rare drug called Aguam from the country of Eoris. She wants that exclusivity voided. It's up to the party whether this means convincing the Eorans to renege on their deal, convincing Ye that cutting Bralin out of the Aguam market isn't in his best interest, or whether it means acquiring a steady supply of Aguam from elsewhere.
- ✚ For the most part, the refugees helped by the characters have been content to sit on the sidelines as the party figured out how to become accepted in Melanoc. Most of the refugees were simply too overwhelmed or exhausted to be of much help, but at least one, Petri Kallio, stayed in the background because he has something to hide: He's the scion of a noble family from Gail who long ago made war on the region now claimed by Melanoc. There are old-blooded families here who may not be happy to have a Kallio inhabiting the city.
- ✚ Cheryl Brut has a new invention—a way to transport workers and cargo up the mountain using a sort of carriage and a long, metallic cable. Now she just needs several brave souls to climb the mountain, install an anchor point for the cable and then test it all by riding the carriage down. Who does she know that's brave and has the right skills? The party, that's whom!
- ✚ This scenario begins with the party fleeing Warlord Kattanz. Danso, at the very least, is concerned that it may only be a matter of time until Kattanz turns his attention westward towards Melanoc. To bring things full circle, the party could receive word that Kattanz and his army are on their way. The characters may need to convince the powers that be to take the threat that Kattanz represents seriously. Otherwise, when his army lays siege the city, the party may find themselves fleeing as refugees yet again. If the group took Marshal Tralif up on his job offer, they may even be put in charge of defending the city.



The Party

In which five heroes of sundry disposition are presented and their capabilities explained

Two weeks ago the Warlord Kattanz sacked and burned the city of Gail, where Our Heroes resided. Rising to the challenge and helping a score of refugees escape the city, the party deftly avoided Kattanz's army and led the refugees across the wilderness to the city of Melanoc, where the group hopes to find safety and begin a new life.

Before the start of the scenario, each player should choose one of the included characters and have time to familiarize herself with that character's abilities. None of the information is private. The GM can simply print out the following pages and let the players read through their options before each settling on a character to play.

If the group owns the full *Age of Ambition* core rulebook, it is possible to run this scenario with custom characters, just alter the NPCs that match the party's Bonds.

A Note About Character Gender

The following player characters are all written in second person. As such, they have no assigned gender, and it shouldn't matter for the purposes of the included scenario. Just pick a character and use whatever pronouns you most feel comfortable with.

Weapon and Armor Properties

A variety of weapons and armor appear in the included scenario. These frequently have a number of properties listed alongside the attack.

- ✦ **Armor X/Y:** Indicates how much to subtract from damage. Use the first value against cutting and piercing attacks, and the second value against all other types of damage.
- ✦ **Close:** This weapon may be used in a grapple or other close combat without penalty.
- ✦ **Firearm:** Damage from firearms always uses the second Armor value, despite being piercing damage.
- ✦ **Hands 2:** This weapon requires two hands to use effectively.
- ✦ **Parry X:** The listed bonus is added to Defense when the Parry reaction is taken.
- ✦ **Range X:** May attack targets up to the listed range in yards. Attacking at up to twice the this range is possible, but imposes ☹ on the attack flip.
- ✦ **Reach X:** This weapon is designed to attack targets at the indicated distance in yards, and cannot attack targets at a lesser distance—those who have moved within the weapon's reach—unless the wielder first takes an action to adjust her grip.
- ✦ **Reload X:** Requires the indicated number of actions to reload.

Candan Torres

Unlike most of the refugees, you're from this area—a small farming village named Yed—although you left so long ago that you suspect that no one there remembers you.

Once upon a time in Yed, you were apprenticed to an elderly kalid mage, but you just weren't that good of a student. After your second year, you ran off with a group of kalid hunters and never looked back.

The last couple decades you've spent mostly in the wilderness, hunting game and occasionally contracting as a guide. Along the way you even rescued Chichi, your pet monkey, who was locked in a cage and being abused by bandits.

You had just decided to retire in Gail, when Warlord Kattanz sacked the city.

Candan Torres							
Human, Kalid Mage/Pioneer (Common 4)							
Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
5	5	5	6	4	7	3	6
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
4	6	4	2/1	11	5	0	5

Attacks

Dagger: +5 vs. Defense.					Close, Parry 2
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
8	7	6	5	4	pi
Sword: +5 vs. Defense.					Parry 4
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
10	9	8	7	6	cut

Ambitions

- Find something strong to drink and gossip with the locals.
- Purchase a new set of clothes for yourself and your monkey.
- Help the refugees find a permanent home in Melanoc.

Bonds

Chichi (ally): A small pet monkey that rides on your shoulder and wears a hat. He has been trained to perform simple tasks.

Ackon Darko (enemy): A bandit leader who preys on travelers in this region. You rescued Chichi from abuse at the hands of his gang.

Skills

- Academics (kalid magic)
- Animals
- Athletics
- Awareness
- Language (Standard) + (literate)
- Lore of Divination (see next page)
- Stealth
- Survival +

Traits

Danger Sense: You have a sixth sense when it comes to danger. You gain + to notice ambushes. When surprised, you may also take defensive reactions as normal.

Human Hope: Humans possess a sense of hope that can get them through even the most difficult situations. When you play a card from hand as a +, you gain a +1 bonus to the flip.

Mystic Affinity (Kalid Magic): You have received training in kalid magic. You may draw arcane energy from kalid parts, call upon second sight and learn arcane lores. See page 22 for the magic rules.

Equipment

Backpack, Bandages ×10, Bedroll, Belt pouch, Bronze pennies ×4, Dagger, Gambeson (Armor 2/1), Handaxe, Kalid parts ×10, Rations ×1, Sack, Tattered clothes, Tent.

Lore of Divination

Divination is the magical ability to gain insight into a situation through arcane means. This ranges from fortune telling by reading palms, to prophetic dreams, to reading the omens written in the entrails of slaughtered animals or astrological alignments.

To target a person or other subject with divination, you must first have a sympathetic connection to the target. This involves obtaining a physical piece of the target or a prized possession. For example, a lock of the target's hair or a piece of stone from the city whose omens you are reading. Having the subject present is also acceptable, such as with reading the target's palm when fortune telling.

Dreaming

✦ **Action:** Per/lore of divination-10

✦ **Time:** 10 minutes.

To use this spell you must prepare a sleeping space for dreaming, first meditating on a particular subject or question. You, or a willing target, then go to sleep in the prepared space.

Make the required flip. On a success, the target dreams about the subject, gleaning insight into the matter at hand. The GM should come up with the contents of the dream, which should be relevant, albeit still somewhat cryptic.

Fortune

✦ **Action:** Per/lore of divination-10

✦ **Time:** 10 minutes.

This spell allows you to tell the target's fortune. Doing so provides insight into the target's personality and potential

future. To perform this spell, you need access to a suitable chaotic pattern created by the target. Common patterns include a deck of cards shuffled by the target, tea leaves at the bottom of a cup drank by the target or lines on the target's palm.

On a success, the GM should pick a personality trait or Ambition of the target, as well as a likely future event and tell you these.

Omens

✦ **Action:** Per/lore of divination-10

✦ **Time:** 1 hour

This spell allows you to interpret whether the omens are especially auspicious or inauspicious for a particular subject or course of action. Reading an omen always involves either observing the natural world—such as by observing flights of birds—or involves slaughtering an animal and reading the spots on its entrails.

On a success, you witness a relevant omen. The GM should let you know whether the omen favors or disfavors the particular subject or course of action.

Scry

✦ **Action:** Per/lore of divination-10

✦ **Time:** 1 action to cast. May be maintained up to 24 hours.

With this spell you may see events happening far away. First you need a sympathetic connection to the target, and either a reflective or translucent surface in which to gaze. Usually this takes the form of a mirror, crystal ball or bowl of clear water.

On a success, you see reflected in the surface an image of the target as well as what is happening around her. With Margin 5 or more, you may hear events as well.

Danso Noori

You never wanted to be a soldier. You wanted to be a scholar, a philosopher, a poet. But you were conscripted the moment you became an adult, and off to war you went.

The years that followed you don't like to remember. It was bad. You never did become a scholar, but you did eventually become a chaplain, which is as close as you could manage—you'd always been devout.

When Warlord Kattanz attacked Gail, you were in the city between mercenary contracts. Your services weren't paid for, but you saw desperate people who needed help. So along with Speaker Bandu, you helped them escape with their lives. The two of you also organized the group that's now headed to Melanoc.

Danso Noori							
Canny Minotaur, Sellsword/Missionary (Common 3)							
Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
7	5	3	5	5	6	6	4
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	4	5	4/2	18	4	0	5

Attacks

Arquebus: +5 + vs. Defense. Firearm, Hands 2, Range 12, Reload 10					
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
8	7	6	5	4	pi
Dagger: +5 + vs. Defense. Close, Parry 2					
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
9	8	7	6	5	pi
Horns: +5 + vs. Defense. Close, Parry 2					
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
9	8	7	6	5	pi
Pike: +5 + vs. Defense. Hands 2, Parry 2, Reach 3					
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
10	9	8	7	6	pi

Ambitions

- ✂ Give an inspiring speech to the refugees.
- ✂ Warn someone with power about the danger that Warlord Kattanz poses.
- ✂ Help the refugees find a permanent home in Melanoc.

Bonds

Speaker Bandu (patron): The de facto leader of the refugees with whom you are traveling. His wisdom has been indispensable on the road from Gail.

Warlord Kattanz (enemy): Attacked and conquered your home city. (Unlikely to appear in this adventure, but this Bond may be called upon to emphasize the threat he represents.)

Skills

- ✂ Academics (theology)
- ✂ Athletics
- ✂ Empathy
- ✂ Expression
- ✂ Language (Standard) + (literate)
- ✂ Persuade
- ✂ Tactician-style + (see next page)
- ✂ Tradecraft (sapper)
- ✂ Vehicles (land)

Traits

Minotaur Horns: Minotaurs possess a set of horns which can act as makeshift weapons. Stats for these have been listed under "Attacks."

Toughness: It takes a great deal of injury to fell you in battle. Your maximum HP has been increased by 50%.

Equipment

Arquebus, Backpack, Boiled leather (Armor 4/2), Bronze pennies ×3, Bullets & powder ×10, Dagger, Holy symbol of Zuraic, Pike, Rations ×1, Sack.

Tactician-style

A skilled tactician is well-versed in the optimal application of numerous forms of combat. To use any of these maneuvers, the tactician must be able to communicate freely with her target.

✦ **Compatible Weapons:** Any weapon

Coordinate

✦ **Action:** Chr/tactician-style-10

✦ **Costs:** —

A team fights better when coordinated. Pick an ally within a number of yards equal to your Charisma. On a success, the ally gains a Bolstered consequence. If you do not make an attack this turn, you also gain a Bolstered consequence at the end of the turn.

Evaluate Foe

✦ **Action:** Per/tactician-style vs. Willpower

✦ **Costs:** Bolstered consequence

Sometimes the best way to defeat an enemy is to know her capabilities. Spend a Bolstered consequence and take an action to observe a foe within a number of yards equal to your Perception. On a success, pick two statistics. The GM reveals the value of the

chosen statistics. These might include stats, skill ranks, traits, weaknesses, combat scores or the foe's Defense card for the round.

Rousing Words

✦ **Action:** Focus action

✦ **Costs:** Bolstered consequence

Sometimes inspiring words can mean the difference between victory and defeat. By spending a Bolstered consequence and saying a few rousing words while taking a Focus action, an ally of your choice within a number of yards equal to your Charisma may immediately take a free Focus action (see page 29).

Teamwork

✦ **Action:** Attack/tactician-style vs. Defense

✦ **Costs:** —

Successful teams fight as a coordinated unit. Pick an ally within a number of yards equal to your Charisma. If you and that ally attack in the same phase—that is, you both take fast turns or slow turns—that ally gains + on the attack. Additionally, if you did not use a defensive reaction this round, gain a Bolstered consequence at the end of the round.



Mina Nacklebell

You love new technology and you love puppets. And you love combining the two! But ever since Warlord Whats-his-face attacked your city, you've been on the run with the other refugees and haven't had time to work on your inventions. This is all very inconvenient!

You're looking forward to everyone beginning their new lives in Melanoc so that you can get back to what's really important: creating creepy clockwork puppets and putting them to work, both as entertainment and the guardians of your abode.

Mina Nacklebell							
Tinker Gnome, Engineer/Entertainer (Gentle 1)							
Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
4	5	6	5	7	4	6	3
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
7	6	4	0/0	8	4	-1	5

Attacks

Arquebus: +7 + vs. Defense.					
Firearm, Hands 2, Range 12, Reload 10					
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
8	7	6	5	4	pi
Dagger: +7 vs. Defense. Close, Parry 2					
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
7	6	5	4	3	pi
Sling: +7 + vs. Defense. Range 8, Reload 2					
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
6	5	4	3	2	sm

Ambitions

- Find the necessary parts and craft a new clockwork puppet.
- Perform a puppet show to enrich the lives of the unfortunates in Shantytown.
- Help the refugees find a permanent home in Melanoc.

Bonds

Ceren Azam (rival): A rival puppeteer who always said that your creations weren't good enough. She is as slimy as they come, with shady connections and dubious loyalty.

Lanstrin League (membership): You're a member in good standing of the Lanstrin League of Technology. While the League doesn't have a chapter house in Melanoc, you've met Cheryl Brut, a shopkeeper who is a fellow member.

Skills

- Academics (architecture)
- Deception +
- Expression
- Investigate
- Language (Standard) + (literate)
- Persuade
- Skirmisher-style + (see next page)
- Tradecraft (clockwork) +
- Vehicles (land)

Traits

Gadgeteer: Once during this scenario you may decide to retroactively have been working on an invention. The GM will call for an appropriate flip. Assuming it is successful, you have the prototype already on hand.

Scrounge: You are exceedingly skilled at scrounging up old and discarded goods. By exhausting a Bond and explaining how the connection relates to what you're attempting to find, you may locate a common item.

Equipment

Bowl, Creepy puppets x3, Dagger x1, Hammer, Rations x1, Sack, Silver peso x1, Spare marionette parts x10, Toolkit (clockwork).

Skirmisher-style

You have trained at making the most of your mobility in a fight, moving across the battlefield and keeping your distance from the enemy lines.

✦ **Compatible Weapons:** Any ranged

Duck & Weave

✦ **Action:** Move action; start of round

✦ **Costs:** —

You are well-practiced at ducking and weaving across the battlefield to find a better position. Declare that you are ducking and weaving at the start of the round, giving yourself + on your Defense flip and +2 Move this round. Gain a Bolstered consequence at the end of your turn. However, you may not attack, nor take the Parry or Harry reactions this round.

Nimble Dodge

✦ **Action:** Dodge reaction

✦ **Costs:** Bolstered consequence

You are skilled at nimbly dodging out of the way of your opponent's attacks. By spending a Bolstered consequence, you gain + to a Dodge reaction.

Quick Shot

✦ **Action:** Attack/skirmisher-style vs. Defense

✦ **Costs:** Bolstered consequence

You are skilled at attacking quickly, before your foe has time to knock your weapon aside. By spending a Bolstered consequence when attacking with a ranged weapon, you may use that weapon, even when engaged with an enemy. In addition, you may take a free draw action immediately after the attack.

Triple Draw

✦ **Action:** Draw action

✦ **Costs:** Bolstered consequence

You are practiced at drawing and holding up to three shots at once—for example, holding an arrow between each pair of fingers in your draw hand or holding several sling bullets in your palm. Draw these extra shots when you spend a Bolstered consequence while performing a draw action. This means that the following two attacks require one fewer action to reload.



Selma Asik

Too many cities suffer under the bootheels of kings and strongmen, forced to toil in support of an unjust system! True power derives from the masses, and it is those masses who must rise up and tear down the very system that keeps them oppressed!

You proclaimed this in Gail before the sack and you will proclaim this in Melanoc when you arrive. You've read the history: the Ruling Council of Melanoc are little more than thugs who seized power from their predecessors and who cower behind a veil of respectability.

The watch might call you a thief and a miscreant, but you know that you are the vanguard of a new era. If you redistribute some of the wealth of the oppressors, then who's to say that you are in the wrong? Certainly it shouldn't be the tools of the state!

Selma Asik								
Goblin, Agitator/Ne'er-do-well (Common 3)								
Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det	
3	6	6	4	5	5	7	5	
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck	
6	6	6	0/0	6	8	-1	6	

Attacks

Dagger: +6 vs. Defense. Close, Parry 2					
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
7	6	5	4	3	pi

Ambitions

- Make contact with the local underground and inquire about joining.
- Distribute leaflets proclaiming the virtues of representative government.
- Help the refugees find a permanent home in Melanoc.

Bonds

Ceren Azam (contact): A traveling puppeteer and smuggler who used to make the rounds between Gail and Melanoc. She would attend your orations about the injustices of monarchy while in town.

Hrolf the Fist (enemy): A thug who several years ago killed your brother while attempting to steal from his home. He fled the hangman's noose and you've heard rumors that has since turned up in Melanoc.

Skills

- Academics (history)
- Expression
- Language (Standard) + (literate)
- Shadows-style + (see next page)
- Socialize
- Stealth +
- Streetwise
- Thievery

Traits

Goblin Dash: As a goblin, you are faster than your small size would indicate. Your Move score has been doubled.

Lucky: You are known for your astonishing luck and good fortune. Your Luck score has been increased by +1.

Equipment

Bronze pennies x3, Boots, Cloak & hood, Crowbar, Daggers x3, Flask, Leaflets, Lockpicks, Rations x1, Sack.

Shadows-style

You are adept at fighting from the shadows, using stealth and misdirection to ambush and confound your foes.

✦ **Compatible Weapons:** Any ranged weapon or one-handed melee weapon

Melt Into Shadows

✦ **Action:** Move action

✦ **Costs:** Bolstered consequence

You've learned how to fade into the shadows, remaining hidden until you launch your next attack. By spending a Bolstered consequence when moving, you gain +2 Move. In addition, if you do not attack this turn and end your movement in a location with cover or concealment, gain the Hidden consequence.

Hit & Run

✦ **Action:** Attack/shadows-style vs. Defense

✦ **Costs:** Bolstered consequence

You are adept at attacking swiftly and withdrawing to strike again later from the shadows. By spending a Bolstered

consequence when making an attack, you make take a free Move action immediately afterward. In addition, if the attack hits its target, this Move action does not provoke the Harry reaction from that target.

Sneak Attack

✦ **Action:** Attack/shadows-style vs. Defense

✦ **Costs:** —

You are adept at exploiting an opponent's openings. Gain a Bolstered consequence immediately after attacking a foe that is surprised, has the Stun consequence or which is unaware of your attack.

Vital Strike

✦ **Action:** Attack/shadows-style vs. Defense

✦ **Costs:** Bolstered consequence

An oblivious enemy is an enemy that is easy to observe for vulnerable points. By spending a Bolstered consequence when making an attack, you gain +2 damage. This increases to +4 damage if the target is surprised, has the Stun consequence or is unaware of your attack.



Yagmur Olgun

Things were going so well before Warlord Kattanz attacked Gail. You finished your apprenticeship as a lunar mage, then saved up a good deal of coin and had just fulfilled a lifelong dream: opening up your own business to sell your magical services.

You grew up in a trading family and always had a keen sense for business. Your plan was that your magical training might be useful in mining, quarrying or even excavation.

Alas, it wasn't to be. Your shop was burned to the ground, your business partners killed. Now you're poor and have been fleeing for your life along with the other refugees, hoping to start anew in Melanoc. Thankfully, you still have a head for business and a few contacts here.

Yagmur Olgun							
Orc, Lunar Mage (Gentle 3)							
Str	Dex	Spd	End	Int	Per	Chr	Det
6	5	3	5	5	6	4	7
Atk	Def	Will	Arm	HP	Move	Size	Luck
5	4	5	2/1	11	4	0	5

Attacks

Dagger: +5 vs. Defense.				Close, Parry 2	
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
8	7	6	5	4	pi
Sword: +5 vs. Defense.				Parry 4	
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	Type
10	9	8	7	6	cut

Ambitions

- ☞ Come up with a business plan and pitch it to Bralin the Merchant.
- ☞ Find a way to one up or humiliate Martha the Guardsman.
- ☞ Help the refugees find a permanent home in Melanoc.

Bonds

Bralin the Merchant (contact): A successful merchant from Melanoc. You know Bralin because your family did business with her in years past.

Martha the Guardsman (rival): She grew up in the same neighborhood as you and later moved to Melanoc to join the city watch. While you are friendly to each other's faces, the two of you are fiercely competitive.

Skills

- ☞ Academics (lunar magic)
- ☞ Academics (politics)
- ☞ Awareness
- ☞ Investigate
- ☞ Language (Standard) + (literate)
- ☞ Lore of Earth + (see next page)
- ☞ Socialize
- ☞ Survival
- ☞ Tradecraft (machinist)

Traits

Mystic Affinity (Lunar Magic): You have received training in lunar magic. You may draw arcane energy from lunar devices, call upon second sight and learn arcane lores. See page 22 for the magic rules.


Orc Healing: Orcs have a truly impressive natural healing ability. You heal each night, regardless of the environment. In safe clean conditions, you heal twice your Endurance in HP.

Equipment


Belt pouch, Boots, Dagger, Gambeson (Armor 2/1), Lunar devices x10, Rations x1, Sack, Silver pesos x3, Smudged robes, Sword.


Lore of Earth

Under the auspice of the Lore of Earth is the ability to manipulate soil, sand and stone. It is considered the most unyielding of the four elemental lores.



The earth spells below assume that you are affecting an area up to Size +1 (up to two yards across). Affecting a larger area is possible but more difficult. You may affect an area up to Size +4 (16 yards across), albeit with  on the spellcasting flip.

Earth Manipulation

 **Action:** Det/lore of earth-10 or varies


 **Time:** 1 action to cast. May be maintained up to 1 hour.


This spell allows you to manipulate the surrounding earth in various ways, such as by causing the ground to shift under a charging attacker, causing sand to flow away from a buried doorway or shifting stone blocks.

When casting this spell, you should describe to the GM what you are attempting to achieve and the GM will determine the results. Often, the effect will be to impose a consequence, or give  or  on a single flip. This spell will usually be TN 10, but depending on the effect, it might be opposed by a target's Willpower or even Defense. This spell may be maintained for effects that require a lasting duration to provide their benefit, such as with slowly moving large stones.




Earthquake

 **Action:** Det/lore of earth-10

 **Time:** 1 action to cast.

This spell causes the earth to buckle and quake, knocking over nearby objects and hindering foes. Pick a target epicenter. This spell affects everything within 3 yards of it. Within that area the ground shakes, causing general havoc. Anyone caught in the blast—friend or foe—must make a Dexterity flip with a target number equal to your total to cast this spell. On a failure, the target gains the Prone consequence.


Earth Shield


 **Action:** Det/lore of earth-10

 **Time:** Reaction to cast

Assuming you already have a lunar device in hand, you may cast this spell as a reaction to an attack. It pulls a column of earth upward from the ground, imposing itself between the target and the incoming attack. This adds your Determination to to the target's Defense against the attack. It also leaves behind a column of earth or stone.

Stone Throw

 **Action:** Attack/lore of earth vs. Defense

 **Time:** 1 action to cast.

This spell allows you to hurl loose nearby stones at a target. It deals damage equal to your Determination. Most stones apply smashing damage, however, at the GM's discretion, particularly sharp rocks might apply piercing or cutting damage.

If no loose stones are available, this spell is usually preceded by the Earthquake or Earth Manipulation spells, in order to break up the ground.

Welcome to a brave new age of promise or peril...

Age of Ambition is a fantasy roleplaying game set in a world rapidly leaving the traditional fantasy milieu behind. It's the game of forward-facing fantasy! Where the heroes help guide the world into a brave new era of promise or peril.

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- All of the game rules necessary to play the included scenario, as well as to give players a taste of the world of Trystell and the *Saga Machine* system.

