

FINAL HOUR
OF A
STORIED AGE
A ROLEPLAYING GAME OF EPIC FANTASY

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REV 0.6

Introduction

Final Hour of a Storied Age is a roleplaying game of Epic Fantasy. Using these rules, some dice, and pencil and paper, you and some friends can experience a story like those found in your favorite epic fantasy novels: stories of heroes struggling against adversity in the face of world-changing events. This game combines ideas and techniques that fantasy authors use when crafting their stories with elements that fantasy readers enjoy when reading them. By channeling the creative, collaborative energy of the entire group this game produces a story for you all to enjoy.

Collaborate At The Table

A *Storied Age* story is created collaboratively at the table by all of the players. Collaboration works best in an environment where everyone feels comfortable putting lots of ideas on the table with the recognition that not every idea is going to work. It's easy to derail a creative effort by fixating on one idea, so resist that temptation. The best way to prepare for a *Storied Age* game session is to get yourself into the right frame of mind. Think about big fantasy ideas, get excited by fantasy tropes, or be inspired by a fantasy mood. Be careful not to get too specific too early, though, or you may find it difficult to make your ideas work well with the ideas that your friends contribute!

This is a Playtest Version of the Game

Changes to Rev 0.6

Completely redesigned the chapter framing mechanics

Substantially redesigned the dice mechanics within chapters

Part I: Creating the Plot and the World

In *Final Hour of a Storied Age*, the setting is created around the story. Although epic fantasy novels sometimes *read* like history, they rarely *created* that way. Instead, the world, the events, and the characters are all created to serve a story. Epic fantasy nearly always speaks to eternal themes like duty, love, or truth. These themes form the basis for the *seeds* from which a *Storied Age* story grows.

Setting up a *Storied Age* game is an eleven step process. Each player works through the first four steps on their own, in parallel, and then the creative contributions of the individuals are combined together as the start of a collaborative process.

1. Roll on the theme table to generate a list of words
2. Break the list of words into groups
3. Generate *seeds* from the groups of words
4. Cast the *star charts* for each seed
5. Identify the Protagonist and Antagonist
6. Figure out the Plot Axis
7. Begin creating a map
8. Determine plot segments for Antagonist and Protagonist
9. Select Supporting Characters for the other players
10. Figure out Subplots for the supporting characters
11. Complete the map

The next few sections go into each step in depth, followed by a long example that demonstrates the process.

Generate a List of Words from the Theme Table

The first step in creating a *Storied Age* story is for each player to independently create some *seeds* from which the story will grow. To begin creating the seeds, roll 2d12 and find the corresponding entry on a Theme Table, such as the one below. Note down the word on a piece of scratch paper (note down the number, too, since it will make casting the *star chart* easier in later steps). Roll the 2d12 again, and count down the table that many spaces from the first word, wrapping around to the beginning if you step off the end. Note this word and number as well. Keep going like this until you land on one of the words already on your list. (Think of this like moving a piece around a game board, if that helps you keep track of what is going on).

Theme Table

1. Noble	11. Male	21. Ambition	31. Ring
2. Responsibility	12. Female	22. Family	32. Throne
3. Power	13. Corruption	23. Division	33. Crown
4. Greed	14. Prophecy	24. Return	34. Mountain
5. Rich	15. Learning	25. Truth	35. Forest
6. Poor	16. Old	26. Lies	36. Sea
7. Farm	17. New	27. Belief	37. Underground
8. Inherit	18. Fire	28. Love	38. Gold
9. Small	19. Ice	29. Hate	39. Star
10. Large	20. Duty	30. Sword	40. Blood

Break The List of Words into Groups

It's possible to generate a *lot* of words in the previous step, so you may need to break your list down into manageable groups. No group can have more than eight words. If you have nine or more words on your list, use the first six for your first group. If you still have nine or more, use the next six to create a second group. Keep creating groups like this until you have eight or less words on your list, and put those in your final group. Once the groups are separated take them through the next steps independently.

Transform Your Groups of Words into Seeds

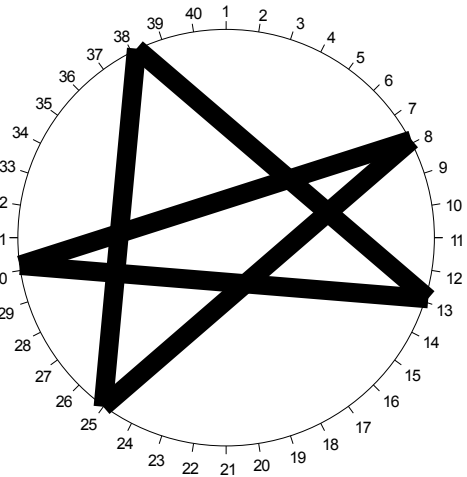
For each group of words you have, arrange the words in an order that inspires a sentence or two that describes a character (and possibly a situation that the character is involved in), a fact about the world, or a fact about magic. The sentences should be phrased in either the past or present tense. While these sentences should be evocative, be careful not to invest too much emotion into what you think each sentence means yet – future steps in the world creation process might lead you to interpret them in a different way than you originally intended. You don't have to use the words exactly as they appear in the list, but someone who reads your sentence along with your list of words should be able to say, “Yeah, I can see how that sentence came from those words”. Write the ordered list of words and the sentences on a *seed sheet*.

Ask the group to help if you have trouble coming up with a seed from the words you have, but make an effort to create it on your own first. A lot of creative sparks will fly when fully formed seeds play off each other in the next step; there is a risk of blandness if the seed creation process is *too* collaborative. Try just arranging the words in random order to see if a particular sequence of words inspires you. Usually you'll be able to find two or three that work well together easily, and the rest will fall into place around them.

Cast the Star Charts

Each seed sheet has a circle with the numbers from 1 to 40 evenly spaced around it. These numbers correspond to the numbers from the *theme table*. For each seed, draw a line from the number that corresponds to the first word to the number that corresponds to the second word, from there to the third word, and so on, and finish with a line from the number that corresponds to the last word back to the first word. (Often this will create a shape that looks like a star).

Note down the number of *intersections* between the lines that you have drawn on your star chart, as well as the number of *points* on your star (the number of points will be the same as the number of words in the list).



Use the Seeds to Generate the Starting Situation and Plot Axis

Once you have the star charts for the seeds you can figure out the *Plot Axis*, the central conflict around which the story will turn. This is a collaborative process that every player should participate in. In an epic fantasy story, a *community* is threatened with a *change in the world* and the story follows the protagonist as he or she tries to thwart that change (sometimes effecting a positive change for the world instead). The seeds generated in the previous steps will help determine this main plot.

First, identify a *Protagonist Seed* and an *Antagonist Seed* by comparing the number of intersections on the star charts for each seed:

- The seed with the *most intersections* will determine who is the *Protagonist* of the story as well as inform the status quo at the start of the story.
- The seed with the *next highest number of intersections* determines the *Antagonist* of the story.
- If there are multiple seeds with the same number of intersections, use the number of points in the star to break the tie. If that is tied as well, use dice or some other fair method to break the tie.
- If the same player created both the Protagonist and Antagonist Seeds he or she must pick one and hand the other off to another player.

The *Protagonist Seed* will be used to determine a *Protagonist* character and a *community* that he or she represents. The *community* is the frame of reference through which the world of the fantasy story can be understood (in *The Lord of the Rings*, this *community* is The Shire). In *Final Hour of a Storied Age*, the protagonist must *represent* that community. That doesn't mean that the protagonist must be a completely typical member of the community (Frodo Baggins was an uncommonly adventurous hobbit, for example), but it does mean that he or she should not be an outcast or outsider. He or she may not think the community is perfect, but he should feel (or, at least, be willing to be convinced) that the community is fundamentally worth protecting. Positive change in the community might or might not happen as part of a *Storied Age* story, but the protagonist's goal will always be preventing the *negative* change that will occur if the antagonist is not stopped.

At the start of a *Storied Age* story, the antagonist character is doing something (or will do something soon) which will cause the world to change in a way that the *community* would perceive in an extremely negative light (think of words like: destroy, conquer, enslave, exterminate). The antagonist will generally either think

this change is positive (such as bringing order to a chaotic world) or be unconcerned about the negative repercussions or side-effects of his or her true goals.

As a group, use the *Protagonist* and *Antagonist Seeds* as the main guidelines (sometimes supported by other seeds) and figure out who the protagonist is, where he or she comes from, who the antagonist is, and what he or she is doing that will threaten that community (although this is a collaborative process, give some deference to the players that created the protagonist and antagonist seeds since they will need to roleplay the protagonist and antagonist characters). Sometimes the evocative sentences from the two seeds will seem to fit together in a way that seems obvious – that's great! Sometimes an evocative sentence from another seed will help serve as a “bridge” between the protagonist and antagonist seeds. Sometimes, you'll need to use some creative interpretation to get them to fit together (this is why it is important not to get too locked-in to any specific interpretations for your evocative sentences during the seed generation process – if you think it can mean only one thing you'll have a harder time getting it to work well with all of the other sentences). If you need to, add additional factors that go beyond the sentences written on the seed sheets as long as you don't negate anything that's written there – the seed sheet may say that “a man” is doing something, and that will still be true if you add the detail that the man is a powerful sorcerer.

Begin Drawing a Map

Many of the seeds will include geographic features, like cities, kingdoms, mountains, deserts, etc. Draw these on a piece of paper that represents the geography of the story. If there are any geographical features necessary for the *Plot Axis* to work, add them, too. The geography of the world is often an important part of an epic fantasy story, so developing a map in tandem with the plot outline can be helpful.

Detail the Antagonist's and Protagonist's Plot Segments

With the characters identified and the major *Plot Axis* determined, the Protagonist and Antagonist need to outline the competing *plots* that each of them will go through. Each plot has three *plot segments* (each *segment* will cover multiple *chapters*). Each segment should lead up to a significant turning point in the story. Some groups will prefer to figure out the details of these turning points before play so that they know how to guide the individual chapters, other groups will find that putting too much detail into these plots before play will rob them of the enjoyment of discovering the story as they go. If you are unsure, err on the side of using the bare bones outline and only fill in the details if and when you get to them in the act of playing out the story. It is usually easiest to figure out the Antagonist's plot first, since it is largely determined by the *Plot Axis* – you just need to flesh out the details of *how* the Antagonist will cause the change that threatens the *community*. The Protagonist's plot determines how he or she will stop the Antagonist. It is tempting to think about simply standing in the Antagonist's way at every step of his or her plan, but that's not how an epic fantasy story works. The Protagonist's plot is usually either an “end run” around the Antagonist to defeat him or her in an unexpected way, or else a long preparation for a climactic showdown.

Even though the overall plots of the Protagonist and Antagonist are in direct conflict, be careful not to make the first two segments of either plot contingent on the other player's plot progress. You can't know ahead of time how fast either player will progress through their plots, so don't make events in one plot dependent on events in the other. Since the story will end if either third segment completes it is fine to make these a direct conflict (say, one person wants to perform a magical ritual with an artifact that the other wants to destroy) because only one will ever be completed before the story reaches a conclusion.

Some good goals for individual plot stages or subplots

Travel. Epic Fantasies are often world-spanning adventures, and just getting from one place to another is an important part of the adventure. Huge mountain ranges, dark forests, and trackless deserts are all great sources of adversity.

Get the Artifact. Is there a special magic sword that can defeat the villain? Maybe an ancient scroll with a spell that will strip him of his power? Searching for an important object is a well-loved part of many epic fantasy stories.

Search out the Wise. Similar to Traveling or the Artifact quest, maybe there is some person who has the secret knowledge necessary to defeat the Antagonist. Some prophetic crone in a cave? A reclusive wizard? An old foe of the Antagonist who went into hiding?

Escape the Chaos. Sometimes the hero needs to be convinced that action is necessary before pushing back against the antagonist. This kind of plot stage is an opportunity to showcase the status quo of the world and how it will change if the Antagonist gets his way. Perhaps the Protagonist's home is ravaged by the Antagonist's army and he needs to escape from their patrols. Maybe the social structure of the Protagonist's home has been undermined or corrupted, and the Protagonist must feel the weight of that before being driven to action.

Alliances. There are often powerful forces in the world who can help against the Antagonist, once they are convinced to move to action. Be very careful with this one – the Protagonist should be the hero of the story, and shouldn't be calling in someone to do his job for him.

Gather forces. A good choice for an Antagonist's plot, it's often necessary to gather lieutenants and armies before you can put your world-shaking plan into effect.

Assault on the Enemy. Sometimes the best way to deal with an antagonist is with cold steel. Probably best to put this one at the last stage of your plot...

Destroy the Artifact. Maybe the key to the antagonist's power is like... a magic ring. And you can destroy it by... throwing it into a volcano? That would probably work as part of an epic fantasy plot.

Massive Battle. World-shaking events often include wars, and massive fantasy battles add excellent spice to stories.

Unlocking your potential. Fantasy characters often have untapped potential that they never knew about until the dramatic events of the story bring it forth. This is a great choice for characters that have raw magical power that needs to be harnessed.

Identify Supporting Characters

The rest of the players should use the seeds to identify *Supporting Characters* for each of them to control (generally these characters will be sympathetic to the goals of the Protagonist, but that isn't a requirement). Try to pick from one of the seeds you created first. If there are no viable characters there (for example, if all of your seeds are facts about the world that don't imply the existence of any particular people or groups) then pick a seed that someone else created. If the other players don't have seeds to can be used to create characters, repeat the seed generation step.

Supporting characters get a single-stage subplot. If completed it should either complicate or simplify one (or more) of the plot segments of either the Protagonist or Antagonist. The plots should interact, but shouldn't be interdependent. Since you can't predict the order that the plots will completed, you shouldn't make subplots dependent on events happening in the plot segments of the Protagonist or Antagonist, or vice versa. For example, if one of the Antagonist's plot segments involves waging war, a Supporting Character's subplot of being crowned king could *complicate* that plot by giving him control over the kingdom's army.

During the game, Supporting Characters will have an opportunity to align themselves with either the Protagonist or Antagonist. If a Supporting Character completes their plot, they win the right to narrate *how* the world changes if the protagonist or antagonist they support completes *their* plot.

Complete the Map

Now that the story is more fleshed out, there are probably more details to add to the map. Make sure that each player contributes at least one geographic feature to the map. Give the geographic features names. Whenever you can, try to name these features evocatively – “The Swamp of the Dead” instead of just “swamp”. Don't worry about figuring out too many details about these locations, save that for when you visit them during the story.

Create Plot Tracks

As in a novel, different characters will be “in the spotlight” at different times based on their role in the story. In *Storied Age*, this is modeled by having different combinations of Spotlight Dice for each character at different stages of their plot or subplot. **Part III: Playing Out Chapters** will explain how these dice are rolled and interpreted in more detail, but the Plot Track determines which dice you roll. At most, players will be rolling a single d20, a single d12, and a single d10 for their Spotlight Dice, and will often be rolling less than that. The character sheet contains a grid indicating whether you can roll the d20, d12, or d10 for each plot stage that your character is progressing through. At the start of the game each player will have only a single die available per stage, but it will be possible to earn more dice through play.

On the Protagonist's character sheet, mark the d20 available for the first six stages and the d10 available for the final three. Mark the d12 available for all nine of the Antagonist's plot segments. Mark the d10 available for the three segments of each Supporting Character.

Record Adversity Dice

In a novel, we get to know characters by watching them overcome adversity. Sometimes this adversity is outright antagonism from an enemy, sometimes it is a complicated situation introduced by a well-intentioned friend, sometimes it is simply the character's own emotions and limitations that must be overcome. In *Storied Age*, players will take turns providing adversity for the other players' characters. Providing good adversity is an important task in *Storied Age*, because heroes and villains can only prove they are worthy of the name by overcoming adversity.

Each player's Adversity Dice are determined by their character's role in the story. On the Protagonist's character sheet, mark down two d10s for Adversity Dice. The Antagonist should mark down three d12s. Each Supporting Character should mark down a d20 and a d10.

Example Plot and World Creation

Fred, Annie, Peter, and Susan have all gathered together to play Final Hour of a Storied Age. They all start rolling their d12s and start consulting the theme table to generate their list of words.

Fred rolls up his list of words: Corruption, Truth, Underground, Small, Fire, and Throne. He sees “small” and “underground” and immediately thinks of dwarves – small guys that live underground. He figures he can add in “throne” by talking about the king of the dwarves. He thinks that Corruption and Truth link together well, too, since that implies some sort of deception. And that leaves Fire, which is presumably the thing that the deception is about. He decides that a volcano could easily be the kind of “fire” that dwarves care about. So he arranges his words as Small, Underground, Throne, Corruption, Truth, Fire. He writes down the sentence: “The king of the dwarves has deceived his people about the true threat of a volcano”. He casts the star chart, getting two intersections and six points.

Annie goes through a similar process. She has two groups of words. She decides to arrange Old Throne Inherit Lies Gold Corruption as Gold Corruption Throne Inherit Old Lies for the sentence: “A man who bought his way onto the throne must face the consequences of the lies and deceptions of the previous king”. She casts the star chart and gets five intersections and six points.

Annie's second group of words is Hate Noble Female. She arranges them as Female Noble Hate to justify the sentence “Female nobles are agitating for war.” She casts the star chart and gets zero intersections and three points.

Peter rolls up a group of eight: Ambition Truth Power Prophecy Lies Noble Old Crown. He decides to arrange them as Noble Ambition Truth Power Lies Prophecy Old Crown to justify the sentence: “A nobleman seeking the power of Truespeaking has lied about the prophecy of the Old Crown”. The star chart gives eight intersections and eight points.

Susan has rolled up seventeen words total, and will need to make three seeds to take care of them all. Her first group is Ice Lies Sea Star New Underground. She arranges them as New Star Lies Underground Sea Ice to justify: “A fallen star lies buried underground across the Sea of Ice”. This has two intersections and six points.

Susan's second group is Farm Hate Rich Return Greed Male. She arranges them as Male Return Farm Hate Greed Rich and writes: “A politician has returned to the simplicity of his farm, having been disillusioned by the greed and selfishness of the ruling class”. This gives her two intersections and five points.

Susan's third group is Division Sword Inherit Family Blood. She arranges them as Inherit Sword Family Blood Division and writes: “A man has inherited a sword, thrusting him into the middle of an ancient family's blood feud”. The star chart yields five intersections and five points.

[Peter looks around the table at the completed star charts]

Peter: So, it looks like I'm the Protagonist.

Annie: And I'm the Antagonist.

Peter: And if I say that I'm the nobleman who lied about the prophecy, that can hook into your thing about the previous king having lied and deceived.

Annie: So you're the old king?

Peter: Well, since I'm seeking the Power of Truespeaking, that feels more like I'm a young person, so maybe I'm the son of the old king, or a brother or something.

Annie: OK. And I can be the guy who bought his way onto the throne.

Fred: Do we want to tie in mine? I've got a lying king, too.

Peter: Sure, if we put everything into a dwarven kingdom you can be the displaced king, I can be your son, and Annie can be the usurper.

Annie: That makes sense. So it looks like we've got our community, right? The dwarven kingdom?

Peter: Yeah, I like that.

Fred: So is this, like, an above-ground kingdom or are we going hardcore Moria style?

Peter: Moria!

Annie: Definitely! If I'm going to be usurping a kingdom, it's got to be a cool one.

Susan: So how are you threatening the community?

Annie: Well, we've got this volcano thing going on, it feels like it ought to have something to do with that.

Peter: And Fred and I have been lying about it, presumably we've got a good reason for that. It's got some kind of forbidden power that we don't want people to use.

Annie: OK, I think the volcano is the forge of our dwarf god, and I want to seize control of it, which will let me do something cool.

Susan: Like make some kind of super-weapon or something?

Fred: Hey, don't think small. If it's where the dwarf-god works, it's probably where he forged the dwarves themselves, right? So she can reforge dwarves to be the way she wants.

Annie: Ooh, I like it!

Peter: OK, that seems like a pretty strong threat to the community.

Susan: Let's start working on this map. We've got a volcano, this dwarven mining kingdom, a sea of ice, some farmland...

[they draw a map]

Annie: OK, let's work out this plot segments. It seems like I've only recently seized power, so I probably need to consolidate that first. Then I'm thinking that I've got to find this forge, like it's some secret chamber inside the volcano. Is that cool with everybody?

Peter: Yeah, makes sense to me.

Annie: OK, then I think there's some ritual I need to perform once I've taken control of the forge.

Peter: OK. My seed says I'm seeking the Power of Truespeaking, which I assume is some kind of magic. I think I want my first segment to be about unlocking that power. Then I need to find somebody who will tell me how to stop you, which is Seeking Out the Wise. Then how do I actually stop you?

Annie: Hmm, do you want to just have our characters fight?

Peter: No, this seems like it ought to be a bit more mythic. Like I need to end the power of the god's forge.

Susan: You haven't done anything with your Prophecy of the Old Crown yet. We can combine that with my fallen star thing, and say that the crown of the dwarf god fell to earth, and if

you get it you'll be able to control the power of the forge.

Peter: That's cool. So my final segment will be to get the crown.

Fred: Cool.

Susan: So, Fred's the displaced dwarf king? I guess I'm the last one to pick a character. I've got a few to choose from here. I think I like this farmer guy, since we've established that we've got issues with people buying their way to political power.

Annie: So what are your subplots?

Fred: I want to reclaim my throne.

Peter: That kind of undermines Annie, though. If you reclaim the throne, how could she consolidate her power?

Fred: Oh, yeah. Let's see, maybe I can work with the female warmongers to set up an opposition to Annie's rule.

Annie: So the war they're agitating for is a civil war?

Fred: Heh. Yeah.

Annie: OK, that's cool, that complicates my consolidate power thing without making it impossible. Susan, what's your subplot?

Susan: I was thinking I could be the wise person that Peter is seeking out. Is that cool with you, Peter?

Peter: Sure.

Susan: OK, so I think my guy is more like a philosopher or sage, and he's kind of disillusioned with the current state of dwarf society. So I want to rediscover the true teachings of our dwarf god, something like that.

Annie: That's cool, we can do some great stuff with that.

Fred: Cool. Is there anything else we need to add to our map? And let's make sure we record our plot stuff on our character sheets...

Part II: Characters

There are two different kinds of characters in *Storied Age*: Player Characters and Non-Player Characters. Player Characters (called PCs) are the Protagonist, Antagonist, or Supporting Characters that the players will control directly. These will be the most important characters in the story, and their actions are always under the control of the player that they belong to. Even when someone else is narrating the action, they are not allowed to describe your character feeling, thinking, or doing something that is contrary to your vision of the character. Other characters in the story, from bit parts to important secondary characters, are Non-Player Characters (called NPCs). These characters have many similarities to PCs, but they don't have a specific connection to any particular player.

Characters have a *name*, four *traits*, and a *friendship track*.

Name

The way that your characters are named can have an important impact on the “feel” of your world. Name your own character, but work with the group so that the names are harmonious, especially for characters that are supposed to come from the same culture.

Traits

Traits are *things a character is*, *things a character has*, or *things a character knows*. They are the way your character solves problems. They may be personality traits, special skills, signature weapons, loyal subordinates, or anything else that would contribute to characterization in a story. Traits should be broad enough to be useful in many adventurous situations, but not so broad that they are useful in every situation. If it takes you more than a few seconds to think of a situation in which you'll be able to use the trait, it's probably too narrow. Similarly, if it takes you more than a few seconds to think of a situation in which you *couldn't* use the trait, it's probably too broad.

Be careful not to over-specialize – if all of the traits are about how the character fights, will the character be able to deal with adversity like climbing a mountain or crossing a desert?

The traits should be relatively brief. “Master Swordsman” is fine. “Trained by Master Maksim Terrakovsky in the Royal Academy of Fencing, specializing in sabers but also proficient with rapiers” is too much.

Be true to the character, but also keep in mind that these traits need to be useful in an adventurous epic fantasy tale. If the character is a farmer, it's probably better to give him a trait like “level headed” rather than “encyclopedic knowledge of potatoes”. They're both things that might be true about a farmer, but one is much more likely to be relevant to the kind of story you're going to tell. That doesn't mean that these other minor details aren't true about a character, just that they generally aren't central to the way he overcomes adversity in the story

Don't be afraid to make the character a somewhat broad archetype – the epic fantasy literature that inspires this game is full of characters like that.

Trait Dice

Each trait has some dice associated with it which will be used when the character participates in exchanges. Mark one of the traits as d8, two as d6, and one as d4.

Friendship Track

Supporting Characters and NPCs use the Friendship Track to indicate where their loyalties lie. Characters can be Personally Aligned with the Protagonist, Ideologically Aligned with the Protagonist, Neutral, Ideologically Aligned with the Antagonist, or Personally Aligned with the Antagonist. Being Personally Aligned indicates a friendship or alliance between characters. Being Ideologically Aligned indicates that the characters generally agree

about whether they would prefer the Protagonist or Antagonist to succeed in their plot. For example, a character's family member is probably Personally Aligned with them, unless there is some established rift between them in the fiction. A character who opposes the Antagonist but who has not yet met the Protagonist is likely Ideologically Aligned. A troll menacing the countryside is probably Ideologically Aligned with the Antagonist (since he wants to make life difficult for the Protagonist) but probably isn't Personally Aligned.

Supporting Characters start at Neutral on the track. The Friendship Track for an NPC should be set at the time he or she is created, at whatever value the group feels is most appropriate (start them at Neutral if there is no strong reason for them to favor one side or the other). Supporting Characters and NPCs can have the setting of their Friendship Tracks changed when they are involved in the action of a chapter. See **Ending a Chapter** for more details.

Existing and Being Established

When a character is written down on a character sheet, he or she *exists* for the purposes of the game mechanics. Even though characters *exist* as soon as they have a character sheet, they aren't considered part of the story until they are *established* (see **Establishing an Existing Character into a Chapter**). Establishing a character lets us know their location and situation. Until a character has been established, you can think of them as disembodied dramatic potential – they don't become real characters in the story until they are established. At the start of the game, all of the PCs *exist* but are not yet *established*.

Flesh Out the PCs

If you haven't already, choose a name for your character, select four traits, and assign dice to the traits. Mark the Protagonist and Antagonist's Friendship Track as Personally Aligned with themselves. Mark the Supporting Character's Friendship Track as Neutral.

Part III: Playing Out Chapters

Just like a novel, a *Storied Age* story plays out in a series of *chapters*. Each chapter is played out by going through a few steps:

1. Determine the Spotlight Player
2. Set the location where the chapter begins
3. Determine the Adversity Player
4. Play out a series of *exchanges*
5. Resolve the chapter

Selecting a Spotlight Player

Final Hour of a Storied Age is played in a series of *chapters*. The first step is to determine the Spotlight Player for the chapter, which will determine the main character of the chapter. Each player rolls a set of Story Dice based on their story role and which stage of the plot their character is moving through. Whoever rolled the die with the highest number showing becomes the Spotlight Player. (If there is a tie, use the next highest die that the tied players rolled to break it. If all of the dice are exactly equal, the player that has gone the longest since being the Spotlight Player wins. If that still doesn't break the tie, the Protagonist wins, followed by the Antagonist. If there's *still* a tie, use some fair method like a dice-off to break it). That player should leave all the dice they rolled on the table – the numbers that are on the will be important once the action of the chapter begins.

Describe How the Chapter Begins

The chapter will revolve around the character played by the Spotlight Player (called the Spotlight Character for short). The Spotlight Player describes the setting or location of the chapter and gives a rough guide for the kind of thing he wants the character to accomplish in the chapter, informed by his plot stage goal.

Selecting an Adversity Player

Next, the Adversity Player is determined. Every player except the

Spotlight Player rolls Story Dice based on their role. Protagonists roll two d10s, Antagonists roll three d12s, and Supporting Characters roll a d20 and a d10. The die with the highest number showing determines the winner (break ties using the same method as for the Spotlight Player), who becomes the Adversity Player. The numbers on the Adversity Player's dice will be important once the action of the chapter starts, too, so keep them on the table.

Playing out a Chapter

The Spotlight Player and Adversity Player will describe what's happening in a series of back-and-forth *exchanges* and will roll *Action Dice* in order to determine the path that the story takes. First, the Adversity Player will spend the Story Dice they rolled to describe the problems or obstacles that the Spotlight Character is facing, and the Spotlight Player will spend their own Story Dice to describe how their character attempts to overcome these obstacles. Spending the Story Dice will give each player Action Dice to roll, and the winner of the die roll will describe the outcome of the exchange. They'll then continue the story in another exchange, and then another, until one player is unable to continue and the chapter will conclude.

Exchanges

Keep track of how many exchanges have occurred in a chapter. The exchange that you are on is an important factor in interpreting the result of rolling the Action Dice.

Introducing Adversity

The first step in an exchange is for the Adversity Player to put forward some adversity, either stemming from the environment or from the traits of other characters. Mechanically, they do this by spending the Story Dice that they rolled earlier. A die showing 16 to 20 can be used to activate up to four traits on a character (see Using Characters in a Chapter). A die showing 10 to 15 can be used to activate up to two traits on a character, or to introduce an

Active Environmental Threat such as a nameless monster or a raging storm (see Using Environmental Threats in a Chapter). A die showing a 1 to 9 can be used to activate a single trait on a character, or to introduce a Passive Environmental Threat. As they spend their Story Dice, the Adversity Player should describe what is happening and why it is a problem that the Spotlight Character must overcome. As they narrate they should take the Action Dice for the relevant traits into their hand and prepare to roll them, building it to a “crisis point” or “decision point” in the fiction where it is unclear whether the Spotlight Character will overcome the obstacle or not.

Spotlight Character Responds to the Adversity

After hearing the adversity they face, the Spotlight Player decides how their character responds, using their own Story Dice to activate the traits of the Spotlight Character or any friendly characters who might be appearing in the chapter with them. The Spotlight Character must have at least one trait involved in every exchange (the chapter is about them, after all, not about their friends). As the Spotlight Player describes how their character is addressing the adversity they should take the dice from the relevant traits into their hand. When narrating, describe only up to the “crisis point” or “decision point” – the Action Dice will tell you whether the character succeeds at overcoming the obstacle or not. Once you're satisfied with the dice you are rolling, indicate to the Adversity Player that it's time to roll the dice.

Using Environmental Threats in a Chapter

The Adversity Player may introduce problems stemming from the location or environment where the chapter takes place. A *passive* environmental threat (such as a chasm that needs to be crossed, or bitterly cold weather) may be introduced as a d4 trait. An *active* environmental threat (such as nameless monsters that don't warrant a full set of traits of their own, or a raging windstorm) may be introduced as a d6 trait (these are also subject to plausibility objections from the group). Once introduced into the chapter an

environmental threat must be included in every exchange until it is exhausted.

Using Characters in a Chapter

Both the Spotlight Player and Adversity Player can use characters in a chapter. A character has multiple traits and each one can either be *Active* or *Exhausted*. If a trait is exhausted you can't use it for mechanical effect in the chapter (unless you activate it). If a Story Die that is used to bring a character into a chapter can't activate all of the character's traits, the player that spent the die decides which traits to activate. The first time that a character is used in a chapter you may not be able to activate as many traits as the Story Dice normally allow due to the *Distance Tax*, *Plausibility Tax*, and *Creation Tax*. You may use multiple Story Dice to activate traits on a character, but if the taxes are so high that none of the traits would be activated than you may not introduce that character. Once a character is introduced into a chapter at least one of their traits must be included in every exchange until all of their traits are exhausted.

Distance Tax

The Distance Tax is required whenever a character is introduced into a chapter and was established in a different location in a previous chapter. If the character was previously *nearby*, there is no Distance Tax. If the character would have needed a *short journey* to get to the current location, activate one less trait than usual. If the character would have needed a *long journey* to get to the location, activate two less traits.

Plausibility Tax

The Plausibility Tax is required whenever a character appears in a chapter where you wouldn't normally expect. If it is *reasonable and expected* for the character to appear in this chapter (such as a king in his throne room) there is no Plausibility Tax. If it is *plausible but unexpected* for the character to appear (such as a king

in the woods on a hunting trip), activate one less trait than usual. If it is *possible but surprising* for the character to appear (for example, a king in the dungeon of his worst enemy), activate two less traits. If it would be impossible for the character to appear, they may not be introduced into the chapter.

Creation Tax

The Creation Tax is required whenever a character is introduced into the story that hasn't previously had their traits defined. Since all of the Player Characters are defined before the first chapter this tax will only ever need to be paid to create new NPCs. If the new NPC is one that is *directly mentioned* in one of the seeds then one less trait than usual is activated. If the NPC isn't mentioned directly on the seed, but is *implied* by a seed, or has been mentioned or implied by the story that has been developed so far, then two less traits than usual are activated. For example, if one of the seeds mentions a prince, that *implies* that there is a king. If the character has been facing adversity from a tribe of barbarians, it is *implied* that there is a barbarian chieftain character that can be created. If the character being introduced is a Dark Mirror of an existing character (See **Dark Mirrors** below) activate two less traits than usual. You can introduce any character you want, without relationship to the established fiction, by activating four less traits than usual.

Dark Mirror

In lots of fantasy fiction, themes are explored by having characters who are in some ways identical but in other ways are polar opposites. This contrast helps showcase the theme. *Dark Mirrors* aren't doppelgangers, they are independent characters that happen to have strong points of comparison and contrast with other characters in the story. In order to introduce a Dark Mirror Character into a game of *Final Hour of a Storied Age*, select an existing character as a starting point. Copy some of his traits over exactly, but replace one or two of the traits with a thematic opposite. For example, the player of the Dark Lord Soros character

has been annoyed at how effective the Wizard Randolph character has been at foiling his plans, so he decides to introduce a Dark Mirror of Randolph. Randolph's traits are *Powerful Wizardry*, *Has Wandered to Many Lands*, *Man of Action*, and *Old and Wise*. Soros likes the wizardry and wisdom traits, so he decides to copy those directly. Instead of *Has Wandered to Many Lands*, Soros decides that *his* wizard has stayed in one place and takes the trait *Lives in a Powerful Fortress*. He decides *Man of Action's* thematic opposite is to act through others rather than directly, so he takes *Persuasive Voice*. He gives his new wizard a name, Harriman the White.

Introducing PCs Into Chapters

Only establish a PC into a chapter if the player that controls that PC consents to it. The Spotlight Player is only allowed to establish NPCs that have Friendship Tracks that are Neutral or that indicate they are on the same side as the Spotlight Character. The Adversity Player is only allowed to establish NPCs that are Neutral or that are on the opposite side from the Spotlight Character.

Roll the Action Dice

Both the Spotlight and Adversity Players will roll Action Dice to determine whether the Spotlight Character overcomes, makes progress against, faces a setback from, or is overcome by the adversity they are confronted by. Both players should roll at the same time.

Whoever has the die with the highest number showing got the better of the exchange. If the highest die is a tie between the players, compare the next highest, and so on. If all of the dice tied then neither player wins. However, if *any* of the dice that a player rolled in the exchange show a number less than or equal to the current exchange number (e.g. a 1 on the first exchange, a 1 or 2 on the second exchange, etc.), that means that *every trait* that the player *used in that exchange* is *exhausted*. A player may not use an exhausted trait until the trait is *activated* again. (Remember that only the traits that *contributed dice to the exchange* can be

exhausted).

Whichever player wins the exchange should narrate events to advance the story, showing their side of the exchange in a positive light. Use the traits that were involved in the exchange (and whether they are exhausted or not) as a guideline for the narration. Whoever is narrating the results must respect the continued relevance of traits or characters that are still mechanically available for future exchanges. For example, the Spotlight Player should not narrate himself killing all of the orcs that are attacking him if the Adversity Player is still allowed to roll a d6 for them on the next exchange – you can kill *some* of them and look cool doing it, you just can't use narration to undercut something that you or your opponent paid Story Dice to introduce into the story.

In addition to describing the action, the winner of the exchange may improve the die size of one of their active traits (up to a d8) or reduce the die size of one of the other player's active traits (down to a d4). Both individual character traits and environmental threats can be modified this way, and traits can be modified again on later exchanges. If there are no available traits for this modification (either because of a lack of active traits or because all of the active traits are at the final possible die size) then the player should record one Bonus Point which can be used at the end of the chapter for a variety of special options if the player wins the chapter.

Ending the chapter

If it is time for an exchange to begin but the Adversity Player has no active traits from which to draw Action Dice and no Story Dice to spend to activate more traits, the chapter is over and the Spotlight Player wins. They should narrate the conclusion of the chapter. If the Adversity Player begins an exchange but the Spotlight Player has no active traits to respond with and no Story Dice to spend to get more then the Adversity Player wins the chapter and should narrate the conclusion.

Advancing A Plot or Subplot

If the Spotlight Character wins the chapter, they may advance one stage along their plot. It takes three stages to complete a plot segment or subplot. If the Spotlight Character completes the third stage of the plot or subplot include the details of completing this part of the story when you describe the the chapter conclusion.

Add Spotlight Dice

If the Adversity Player wins the chapter, they may mark another Spotlight Die available for one of their uncompleted plot stages. Any stage can be advanced, but the d10 must be selected before the d12, and the d12 before the d20.

Modify Character Traits

If the Spotlight Player wins the chapter, they may spend a Bonus Point to modify the traits of their character. This can either be a complete rewrite of one trait or minor changes to any number of traits. Whenever this option is used the player may rearrange the dice assigned to the traits, but must always have one trait at d8, two at d6, and one at d4.

Move Along the Friendship Track

Any player who wins the chapter may spend one Bonus Point to move the Friendship Track of any one character that was involved in the chapter by one step in any direction. Whenever the Friendship Track is adjusted this way, the player may declare that the characters have started or stopped Traveling Together. If two characters are Traveling Together, whenever one of the characters is *established* into a chapter, the other may be introduced without paying any Distance or Plausibility tax.

Impeding, Thwarting, or Killing NPCs

If the Spotlight Player wins the chapter, they may spend Bonus

Points to make it harder to bring particular NPCs back into the story. For one Bonus Point an NPC may be *impeded*. It is automatically considered at least *unexpected* for an impeded NPC to be established in a later chapter. Make sure to include justifying narration, such as the NPC being stuck on the wrong side of a collapsed bridge, when you do this.

For two Bonus Points, an NPC may be *thwarted*. It is automatically considered *surprising* for a thwarted NPC to be established in a later chapter. Make sure to include justifying narration, such as the NPC appearing to fall into a bottomless chasm, when you do this. When you narrate something happening to the NPC, make sure to include enough ambiguity so that it is only a *surprise* if they come back, not a continuity-killer.

For three Bonus Points, an NPC may be killed or otherwise permanently defeated. The NPC can no longer be established into a chapter.

Example Chapters

Role: Protagonist
Player: Peter

Role: Antagonist
Player: Annie

Role: Supporting
Player: Susan

Plot	x										
d20	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
d12											
d10								x	x	x	

Plot	x	x									
d20											
d12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
d10	x										

Plot											
d20											
d12	x										
d10	x	x	x								

Praxiteles

d8 Blademaster
d6 Razor's Edge
d6 Steely Gaze
d4 Tender Hearted

Queen Arachnia

d8 Spider Queen
d6 Cold Beauty
d6 Magical Weavings
d4 Poisonous Lies

Sorcia Moonsinger

d8 Enchanting Song
d6 Elven Grace
d6 Imperious Manner
d4 Lore of her People

[Peter rolls 12. Annie rolls 8. Susan rolls 8, 5.]

Peter: OK, it's my chapter. Praxiteles is working on the "Find the Crown of Ages" plot, and he's heading into the Dreadwood.

[Annie rolls 12, 12, 3. Susan rolls 10,2.]

Annie: I'm playing the adversity. The Dreadwood, eh? Let me think for a minute... So, you start to head into the Dreadwood but you quickly discover that the path is blocked by thick, sticky spiderwebs. I'm spending my 3 to put that in as a passive environment, a d4.

Peter: I'll spend my 12. We were right on the edge of the Dreadwood in the last chapter, so I don't think I need to pay any tax. That gives me two traits. Let's go with Blademaster and Razor's Edge. A few spiderwebs will be no match for Praxiteles' razor sharp blade! I've got a d6.

[Peter rolls a 3. Annie rolls a 4.]

Annie: You try to slice through the webs, but they're soft and stretchy so they're harder to cut through than you realized. I'll advance them to a d6.

Peter: Undaunted, Praxiteles slashes the webs faster and faster. Still d6.

[Peter rolls 1. Annie rolls 2.]

Annie: Hmm, it's the second round, so we both exhausted... Sweat streaming from his brow, Praxiteles cuts a clearing around himself, but his sword is covered in a gummy, sticky mess from the webbing. I'll reduce your Blademaster to a d6. Plus, I'll spend a 12 to introduce an active threat, Giant Spiders, d6. You hear the swishing and clicking of chitinous legs as the spiders crawl down from the trees toward you.

Peter: Even with the stuff on my sword, I'm still a master with the blade, so I'll be making short work of them. That's a d6.

[Peter rolls 5. Annie rolls 2.]

Peter: So I win and you exhaust... Praxiteles charges the spiders, slicing off legs, splitting open abdomens and spilling out their guts. I'll advance Blademaster back to d8.

Annie: OK. I'll spend my last 12 to introduce Queen Arachnia herself. She was over in Cloudkeep the last time we saw her, so I think that's a short journey, and we know that the Dreadwood is one of her places of power, so it's not really unexpected, right?

Peter: Yeah, I fully expected her by this point.

Annie: OK, start with two, reduce by one for the distance tax... that leaves me with only one trait, and I'm going with Spider Queen. She calls out to you, "Foolish man, do you not know that my minions are beyond number?" You hear eight thousand legs scuttling through the forest toward you. I've got a d8.

Peter: Well, I don't scare easily, and I won't pass up this opportunity. Blademaster, coming at you. I've got a d8, too.

[Peter rolls 3. Annie rolls 2]

Peter: Let's see, I win but we both exhaust... Arachnia stumbles backwards under a rain of blows, barely able to defend herself. She turns and runs into the forest, humiliated, slipping through her minions' webs. Praxiteles, already tired from fighting the spiders, stops and stares daggers at her as she disappears out of sight.

Annie: I'm out, so that's the end of the chapter.

Peter: Sweet. I'll advance my plot.

Susan: Is everybody ready to roll for the next chapter?

Role: Protagonist
Player: Peter

Role: Antagonist
Player: Annie

Role: Supporting
Player: Susan

Plot	x	x																	
d20	x	x	x	x	x	x	x												
d12																			
d10															x	x	x		

Plot	x	x																	
d20																			
d12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								
d10	x																		

Plot																			
d20																			
d12	x																		
d10	x	x	x																

Praxiteles

d8 Blademaster
d6 Razor's Edge
d6 Steely Gaze
d4 Tender Hearted

Queen Arachnia

d8 Spider Queen
d6 Cold Beauty
d6 Magical Weavings
d4 Poisonous Lies

Sorcja Moonsinger

d8 Enchanting Song
d6 Elven Grace
d6 Imperious Manner
d4 Lore of her People

[Peter rolls 19. Annie rolls 11,10. Susan rolls 9.]

Peter: OK, it's me again. I'm still in the Dreadwood, and if I win this chapter that will complete my Find the Crown of Ages segment. Who's the Adversity Player?

[Annie rolls 11, 5, 5. Susan rolls 17, 10]

Susan: Looks like it's me. OK, I'll start off by using that 10 to introduce a group of wood elf hunters, an active environmental threat, d6. In the distance you hear arrows piercing the bodies of the rest of Arachnia's spider minions, and a group of tall elves with tattoo-covered skin enters the clearing with their bows drawn.

Peter: And I use my 19 to activate all four of my traits. I'm Tender Hearted, so I don't want to fight them if I can help it. Instead, I'll fix them with my Steely Gaze.

[Peter rolls 5, 4. Susan rolls 2.]

Peter: They pause, clearly seeing that Praxiteles is a formidable warrior. I'll advance my Tender Hearted to d6.

Susan: They may have paused, but they're still surrounding you with bows drawn. They say, "Your kind are not allowed in these woods." Still a d6.

Peter: I'm still staring them down, but I hold up my sword showing them I mean business. "I don't want to fight you, but I will if I have to." That's d6 from the gaze, and d6 from Razor's Edge.

[Peter rolls 5,2. Susan rolls 3.]

Peter: OK, I win, but I'm exhausted. They lower their bows and I sheath my sword. I'll reduce them to a d4.

Susan: OK. But I'll spend my 17 to bring in Luanna the Elven Huntmistress. I think that qualifies as implied by the fiction, right? The leader of these elves?

Peter: Sounds fair to me.

Susan: OK. Let's say she's got Piercing Warcry d8, Elven Grace d6, Humble Steward d6, and Peerless Tracker d4. With a creation tax of two, I've still got two traits to activate. I'll go with Elven Grace and Humble Steward. You try to step past the hunters, but they part before you and this savage yet beautiful elf woman steps forward from behind them. She says, "We do not wish to fight you if we can avoid it, but caring for the wood is my responsibility, and I won't allow you free rein here." That's her Humble Steward at d6, and the hunting party is still there as a d4.

Peter: OK, Praxiteles is Tender Hearted so he can see that she's clearly just doing her job. I hold up my sword, and say, "I've given you fair warning. Don't try to stop me." That's d6 from Tender Hearted and d8 from Blademaster.

[Peter rolls 5, 4. Susan rolls 6,2.]

Susan: This is the third exchange, right? That means I exhaust, but at least I win. She tells the other elves that she will deal with you herself and they disappear back into the undergrowth. You can see that she isn't willing to back down. You're going to have to deal with her to go deeper into the woods. Reduce your Blademaster to d6. She says, "You're not the only one with a weapon, outsider." She flicks her wrist and some sort of vine whip comes at you. She's using her Elven Grace in her attack. That's a d6.

Peter: I say, "I won't be beaten that easily." Never breaking eye contact, I slash out with my sword to cut the whip in half. That's Steely Gaze d6 and Blademaster d6.

[Peter rolls 4, 2. Susan rolls 6]

Susan: Gaze and Blademaster exhausted, huh? Well, you certainly *try* to

slice it, but the whip seems to come at you from every direction as she's moving around you like a dancer, almost faster than you can track, delivering shots you can't predict. She gets the whip wrapped around your wrist and yanks, and your sword falls to the forest floor. I'll bump her Elven Grace up to d8, and it's still coming at you.

Peter: Yeah, but I'm out, so we end the chapter there.

Susan: OK, Praxiteles feels a quiver of fear in his stomach, wondering if he's finally met a foe that he can't beat. She smiles confidently, waiting for his next move.

Peter: Nice.

Susan: I'll take the d20 Spotlight Die for the plot stage I'm working on.

Annie: Everybody ready to roll for the next chapter?

Role: Protagonist
Player: Peter

Role: Antagonist
Player: Annie

Role: Supporting
Player: Susan

Plot	x	x																	
d20	x	x	x	x	x	x													
d12																			
d10															x	x	x		

Plot	x	x																	
d20																			
d12	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								
d10	x																		

Plot																			
d20	x																		
d12	x																		
d10	x	x	x																

Praxiteles

d8 Blademaster
d6 Razor's Edge
d6 Steely Gaze
d4 Tender Hearted

Queen Arachnia

d8 Spider Queen
d6 Cold Beauty
d6 Magical Weavings
d4 Poisonous Lies

Sorcja Moonsinger

d8 Enchanting Song
d6 Elven Grace
d6 Imperious Manner
d4 Lore of her People

[Peter rolls 3. Annie rolls 11. Susan rolls 10, 9, 2.]

Annie: I'm up. I'm working on my "Unlock Hidden Power" plot. I was just in the Dreadwood, and that still works for me. Who's Adversity?

[Peter rolls 4,2. Susan rolls 12, 7.]

Susan: OK. I'll spend the 7 to introduce the passive threat of your humiliation at the hands of Praxiteles a few chapters back. That's d4. You're still fuming at being so powerless against him.

Annie: I'll spend my 11 to activate Spider Queen and... Hmm... Let's go with Poisonous Lies. Because she can lie to *herself*, too. She only lost because she was conserving her power for the task in front of her. I'm rolling 1d4.

Peter: Heh heh, nice.

[Annie rolls 3. Susan rolls 2]

Annie: I'll raise Poisonous Lies to d6. She's still upset, but she's nearly convinced.

Susan: Nearly, but not completely. She's walking through the forest, and she sees some spiders that were wounded in the combat. They're dragging themselves along the ground, and she's reminded that this only happened because she failed. The d4 from the humiliation.

Annie: Their blood paves the way for her ascension. Still using Poisonous Lies, so 1d6.

[Annie rolls 5. Susan rolls 1]

Annie: Arachnia puts the loss behind her, a mere triviality in the grand scheme of things. I'll raise her Lies to 1d8.

Susan: Some of her spider minions walk out of the forest toward her. I'm spending my 12 to bring them in as an active threat, which is a d6. In their chittering language, they explain that they're completely devoted to you, but fear that they don't have the strength to do what you demand of them, as demonstrated by their losses to the elves and the swordsman.

Annie: Their fears are irrelevant! I am the Spider Queen and demand complete obedience! I stare at them, waiting for them to submit to my authority. I'm rolling 1d8.

[Annie rolls 6. Susan rolls 6.]

Susan: Tie! I guess there's a bit of a staredown. I'm still rolling a d6.

Annie: And I'll stick with my d8.

[Annie rolls 5. Susan rolls 3.]

Annie: They bow before my obvious authority, and I order them to carry me to the center of the forest, basically giving them a really demeaning task as punishment for questioning my will. I'm already at max, and you're completely exhausted, so I get a Bonus Point.

Susan: Yup. And I'm out, so you win the chapter.

Annie: Nice. I advance my plot, which finishes off my "Unlock Hidden Power" segment. They take me to the center of the forest, and all of the spiders from the entire forest gather there. They all milk their venom into a ceremonial fountain in the center of the forest, and I bathe in it. I'll use my Bonus Point to rewrite my stats, and I'll change Spider Queen to Spider Goddess.

Peter: Awesome!

Susan: Yeah, that was good. Ready to roll for spotlight?

Role: Protagonist
Player: Peter

Role: Antagonist
Player: Annie

Role: Supporting
Player: Susan

Plot	x	x									
d20	x	x	x								
d12				x	x	x					
d10							x	x	x		

Plot	x	x	x								
d20											
d12	x	x	x	x	x	x					
d10	x						x	x	x		

Plot											
d20	x										
d12	x										
d10	x	x	x								

Praxiteles

d8 Blademaster
d6 Razor's Edge
d6 Steely Gaze
d4 Tender Hearted

Queen Arachnia

d8 Spider Goddess
d6 Cold Beauty
d6 Magical Weavings
d4 Poisonous Lies

Sorcja Moonsinger

d8 Enchanting Song
d6 Elven Grace
d6 Imperious Manner
d4 Lore of her People

[Peter rolls 5. Annie rolls 11. Susan rolls 11, 10, 3.]

Susan: Woohoo, I get a chapter. The Dreadwood seems to be where the action is, and there are elves there, so I may as well go there too. I'm working on my "Gather The Elven Army" subplot.

[Peter rolls 8, 4. Annie rolls 9, 7, 4.]

Annie: OK, I'll use my 7 to activate one of Luanna's traits. Let me see the sheet you wrote up... I think I'll go with the Piercing Warcry. You hear a wood elf battle cry as she charges at you, ready to take vengeance for the wrongs she thinks your people have committed against hers. That's d8.

Susan: I'll use my 3 so I can activate my Imperious Manner, so I can intimidate her into not fighting.

Annie: Wait a second, I think there's some tax here. The last time we saw Sorcja she was way over in the Golden Halls of Highgarden.

Susan: You're right, let's call that a long journey. That's a distance tax of two, so I'll use my 10 to cover it.

Peter: Yeah, and the wood elves hate the high elves, so I think it's at least unexpected for her to be here. Maybe even surprising.

Susan: But I'm trying to build an army of all elves, not just high elves.

Peter: OK, that makes sense, but I think it's still unexpected that she'd start here rather than with her own kind of elves.

Susan: Yeah, that's fair, let's call it unexpected. I'll use my 11 instead of my 3, and that will cover the tax and still give let me activate Imperious Manner for a d6.

Annie: OK, let's roll it.

[Susan rolls 3. Annie rolls 7.]

Annie: That imperious manner isn't so impressive when you're cowering in fear from Luanna's warcry. Reduce it to d4. And she's still screaming as she's bearing down on you.

Susan: Well that's not good... Hey, Peter, you want to help me out?

Peter: Sure. What did you have in mind?

Susan: I'll spend my 3 to activate Praxiteles' Blademaster. The last time we saw Luanna she was right there with Praxiteles and they hadn't exactly settled things. I figure that I came in an interrupted that.

Peter: OK. I say to Luanna, "You would fight an unarmed woman? Have you no honor? Face me instead!"

Susan: Great. I've got a d8 from his Blademaster, and I've got a d4 from my Imperious Manner.

[Susan rolls 1,1. Annie rolls 8.]

Susan: Ouch!

Annie: Oh, wow. I clobbered you *and* you're exhausted. She uses her vine whip to wrap up your legs and pulls you off your feet, and you go head over heels and land in an undignified lump. Praxiteles, still unarmed from the earlier chapter, can only stand there, powerless to stop it. I can't raise my d8 any more, and you're exhausted, so I get a Bonus Point.

Susan: And you win the chapter, I'm out of dice to spend.

Annie: Cool. Luanna stands over you, gloating about how easily she bested you. I'll take the d10 Spotlight Die for my fourth plot stage, and I'll use my Bonus Point to move Luanna to Ideologically Aligned with me. She may not be a spider worshiper, but she certainly hates the humans and high elves.

Part IV: Ending the Game

When either the Protagonist or Antagonist completes his or her third plot segment the game is over. In order to narrate the ending, determine the progress that other players made on their plots and subplots. A supporting character aligned with the victorious Protagonist or Antagonist may state one positive (from their perspective) change that happens in the world. If the Antagonist's plot completed, he or she gets to narrate the aftermath of the story. If the Protagonist's plot was completed, he or she gets to narrate the aftermath, but the Antagonist may get to impose some conditions based on how much progress he or she made on the Antagonist's plot. If the Antagonist wasn't able to complete any plot segments, it's a happy ending for the Protagonist and no concessions are required. If the Antagonist successfully completed one plot segment, it's a slightly bittersweet ending. One minor concession regarding either the Protagonist or the Protagonist's community is required (as an example, the Protagonist has been changed by the experience and can not longer be happy in his own community). If the Antagonist successfully completed two plot segments it is a bittersweet ending, and either a major concession or two minor concessions are required.

Future Revisions

I have a number of ideas for enhancing the game that have not yet been incorporated into the design:

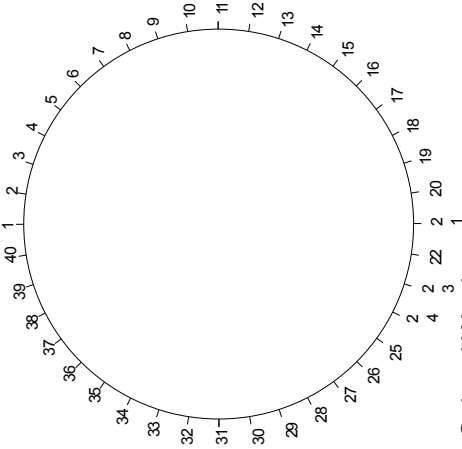
- More Theme Tables (e.g. Star Wars-style space opera)
- Instructions for creating your own Theme Tables
- Mechanical rewards tied to the plot segments
- Make supporting player's friendship track have more mechanical weight
- Do “characters” *have* to be people, or can something like a mountain be a character?
- Different types of NPC s with different dice for their traits?

Rules Summary

Story Die	Activated Effect
15 to 20	4 character traits
10 to 14	2 character traits OR Active Environmental Threat
1 to 9	1 character trait OR Passive Environmental Threat

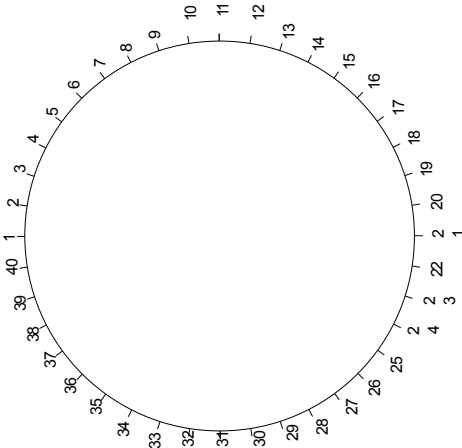
Distance Tax	
0	Nearby
1	Short Journey
2	Long Journey
Plausibility Tax	
0	Reasonable and Expected
1	Plausible But Unexpected
2	Possible But Surprising
Creation Tax	
1	Character mentioned on seed
2	Character <i>implied</i> by seed or previous fiction
2	Dark Mirror
4	Whatever character you want

Player	Cost	Bonus Point Effect
Either	1	Modify Friendship Track/Traveling Together
Spotlight	1	Modify Traits
Spotlight	1	Impede NPC (Unexpected to see NPC in future)
Spotlight	2	Thwart NPC (Surprising to see NPC in future)
Spotlight	3	Kill NPC (Won't see NPC in future)



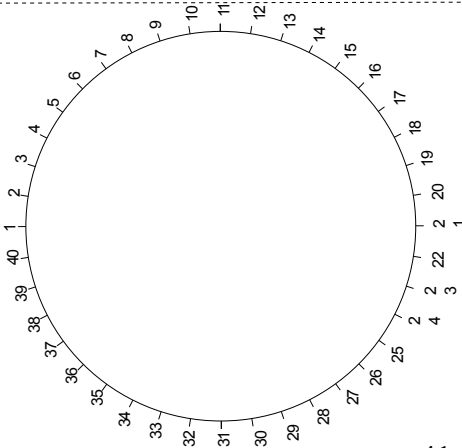
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Sentence: _____



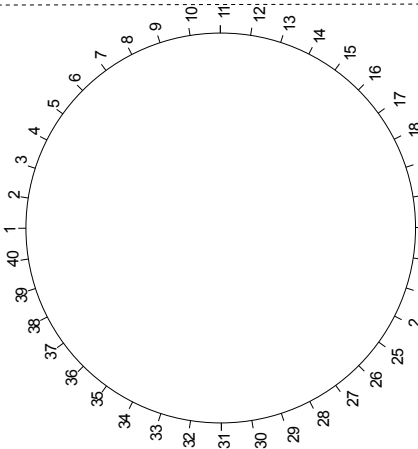
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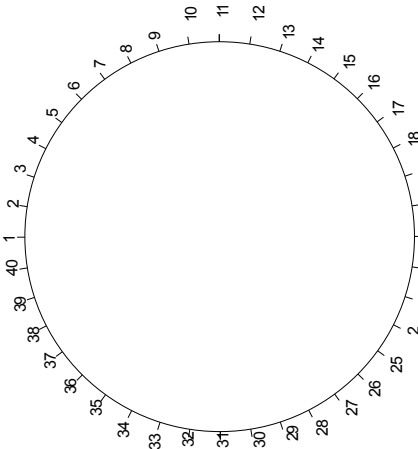
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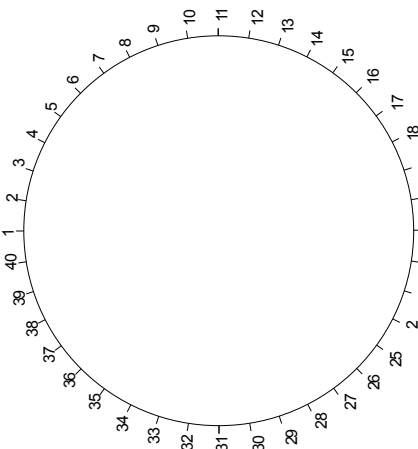
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Ordered Words: _____

Sentence: _____



Ordered Words: _____

Sentence: _____