

DOGS IN THE VINEYARD

A ROLE-PLAYING GAME

WRITTEN BY D. VINCENT BAKER

AD MMIV

Dogs in the Vineyard
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a lumpley game

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THE SHOPKEEPER FROM BACK EAST? HIS WIFE ISN'T REALLY HIS WIFE. He's the procurer and she's the available woman. Their marriage is a front.

Your brother's son, your nephew, is fourteen years old. He's been stealing money from his father, your brother, and taking it to visit this woman.

Your brother is in a bitter rage, humiliated by his son's thievery and grieving his son's lost innocence. He's going to shoot her.

What do you do?

DOGS IN THE VINEYARD

A ROLE-PLAYING GAME

INTRODUCTION

Dogs in the Vineyard is about God's Watchdogs, young men and women called to preserve the Faithful in a hostile frontier territory. They travel from town to isolated town, carrying mail, news, and doctrine, healing the sick, supporting the weary, and pronouncing judgment upon the wicked. One early playtester said what she loves about the game: a town welcomes you with celebration and honor, but what you're there to do is stir up its dirt and lay bare its sins.

The setting is a fantasy inspired by pre-statehood Utah, the Deseret Territory, in the early-mid 19th century. Picture a landscape of high mountains, icy rivers and cedar woods, falling away westward into scrublands, deserts, buttes and swells. The summer skies are heartbreaking blue, but the winters are long and killing.

Picture religious pioneers, fleeing persecution and violence in the East. They're trying to establish a society based on faith and righteousness out in this frontier. They've made the long trek westward but they're still in danger: their towns are small and isolated, vulnerable to attack from without, sin and corruption within. Under pressure, their pride becomes sin, their anger becomes violence, their resentments become hate. Winter and the demons howl...

Picture God's Watchdogs, holding the Faith together.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO PLAY?

It's episodic. A town per session, a town per two sessions if it's a big deal town. A good model here is a traveling TV series, like *THE FUGITIVE*

or *FARSCAPE*: each town presents a situation for the characters to deal with and becomes part of their ongoing story.

IF YOU'VE NEVER ROLEPLAYED BEFORE

You and your friends sit around a table or the living room, talking. You're collaborating on a story about these characters, these Watchdogs of God, their adventures and the challenges they face. Each of your friends acts for one of the characters, making decisions and taking action and speaking pretty much for that character alone. Anybody can suggest anything to anybody, but when it comes to that character, the buck stops with that player.

You're the GM, though, and that means you don't have just one character: you have everything else. You play all the supporting characters and antagonists, you have final say over the imaginary sets where the action happens. You set the pace, push the characters into conflict and crisis, and describe the consequences of their decisions.

Sometimes the characters' stories are funny, sometimes exciting, sometimes frightening or intense— it's all good. Sometimes you'll sit back from the table just shaking your head at how cool. The characters can't help but be transformed by the challenges they face and their changing relationships. Sometimes they even die. Your game will have an overall story, made up of the interwoven individual stories of your characters.

If it's not as fun and engaging as the best TV shows, I haven't done my job.

The game works best when the players all contribute, all the time. You should all call out suggestions, kibitz, laugh, digress, ooh and aah, say what's cool and boo the villains. I'm serious, just because your character's out of the scene doesn't mean you have to sit quiet.

Along the same lines, if you're the GM, feel free to tell the players things their character's can't know. "You cut out across the field toward the smoldering wagon. There's a gang of robbers hiding in the grass and behind a couple of nearby trees. You haven't seen them yet. What do you do?"

Furthermore, the game calls for a pretty particular division of power between players and GM, one you might not be accustomed to. For instance, it's never the GM's job to plan what'll happen. The GM's job is to create a town at a moment of crisis (which I'll tell you how to do in good detail) and from then on, only respond. Play the NPCs up to your elbows but then be willing to let them die.

I don't provide too much setting; that's by design. I'll give you some broad strokes, geography, an outline of the Faith and its enemies, some color. But as you play, you'll fill in the rest, details of how the people live and what they care about, their rituals, their demons and culture and politics. Own the world! It's yours.

It may seem odd at first, but the rules are there to support you and make it easy. The payoff is terrific—blood, passion, judgment, fire. Real, gripping drama all the way around the table.

BEFORE YOU PLAY

You'll need a GM. You'll need some players— the game works well with as few as two, and I wouldn't go over say four, plus you the GM. There are other games that really rock with a big group, so if you've got a big group, try one of them.

You'll need to read the rules. Get a picture in your head of how they play out.

You'll need to get your fellow players to buy into the game. If you tell them it's a western and they look at you like, a western? what's THAT about? then this isn't their game. It's okay, I've been there. Maybe TROLLBABE, UNIVERSALIS or MY LIFE WITH MASTER is more to their taste.

You'll need to create a town. Follow the rules upcoming. Once the game gets going, creating towns is the GM's big responsibility, since the characters'll visit a new town practically every session. Fortunately it's easy and fun.

You'll need a big ol' pile of mixed dice. At least a dozen d6s, better fifteen or twenty, plus six or eight each of d4s, d8s and d10s. Pool everybody's if you've got to and put them in a bowl on the table.

ALL THIS AND PLATONIC TOO

Here's about the funky dice.

- A d4 is a 4-sided die. It's shaped like a pyramid. If its numbers are marked in the corners, when you roll it you read the number at the top point (they'll be the same whichever face you look at). If its numbers are marked on the edges, read the number at the center bottom (ditto).

- A d6 is a normal square 6-sided die like you know and love.

- A d8 is an 8-sided die. It's shaped like two pyramids pasted back to back. When you roll it, read the number on the top face.

- A d10 is a 10-sided die. Its faces are kite-shaped; it's the only die that's not a platonic solid. Read the number on the top face.

- There are no d5s, d7s, or d9s. Only even numbers.

- There are, however, d12s and d20s. You won't need any of them for Dogs in the Vineyard, but you might want to pick some up anyhow. Many fine games use d12s and d20s!

1d6 means one six-sided die. 3d8 means three eight-sided dice. 4d6 1d10 means four six-sided dice and one ten-sided die.

The game's rules sometimes say to "add a die" or "increase the die size":

- If you add a die to 1d6, you get 2d6.

- If you add a die to 3d8, you get 4d8.

- If you increase the die size of 1d6, you get 1d8.

- If you increase the die size of 3d8, you get 3d10.

They also sometimes say to add a particular die or dice:

- If you add 2d10 to 1d6, you get 1d6 and 2d10.

- If you add 1d8 to 3d8 1d10, you get 4d8 and 1d10.

Much as you'd expect.

AT THE FIRST SESSION

It's best if all your friends read the game book and come prepared, isn't it? Already invested and psyched to play? Too bad we so rarely get that.

At the first session, you need to:

- Get a group hit on the setting and setup of the game. If you want you can just read out the "Background" section in the character creation chapter.
- Create characters. Follow the procedure, out loud, at the table. Don't anybody come with a character already made.
- Play through an initiatory conflict with each player. This a) introduces the game's dice; b) introduces the players' characters; and c) begins to establish you, the GM, as the author of the adversity in the game. This is a real big deal.
- Introduce the first town and launch into play proper.

FROM THEN ON

From then on, you follow the characters' stories where they go.

In every town the characters visit, there's something wrong, and their job is to figure out what it is and put it right. Sometimes what's wrong is just a minor thing with the potential to become much, much worse; sometimes it's worse already. Either way the characters will uproot it, judge it, and enact upon it the will of God. God's mercy, God's justice, God's vengeance? That's theirs to decide.

The game's rules' job is to help you, the GM, reveal the pride, sin and corruption in the towns you create, and provoke the characters' judgment. They work a) by helping you create congregations in turmoil, then b) by seizing conflicts and relentlessly escalating them, then c) by bringing the consequences back home to the players. I can't wait to show you them in action.

Over time, the players will reveal their characters in depth. The characters might grow in faith, they might fall by the side, they might struggle with doubts and misgivings. You'll find each one fascinating, maybe noble, pure, maybe good-intentioned but weak, maybe flawed, maybe fatally flawed. Some will die. They'll choose where to stand and where to give way and what's worth killing, dying for.

You'll get to see sides of your friends you haven't before. It's wicked cool.

READY?



A LAND OF BALM AND VIRTUE

I WILL PREPARE FOR YOU A GARDEN ON THE MOUNTAIN, I WILL PREPARE A LAND OF BALM AND VIRTUE.

SETTING

I'm just making stuff up! I have an image in my head, a picture of what the characters look like, what the towns and landscapes look like, and my thoughts in this chapter follow from it.

As you play the game, you'll form your own picture of its world. Make up details to fit your picture, don't worry about sticking to mine.

It's especially important to note that everyone playing will form a slightly different picture, leading to slightly different details. That's fine! As GM, it falls to you to draw the other players' details into the confirmed, consensus "reality" of the game. When a player asks you, "is there a [whatever] here?" you should either say yes outright, or turn the question back to the group: "I dunno, does it make sense to you all that there'd be a [whatever] here?" Similarly, if you think that a detail you're introducing might be at all surprising or controversial, take it to the group: "I want there to be a [whatever] here. Does that make sense to everybody?"

If you've GMed many other roleplaying games, you're probably accustomed to creating a consistent world by adhering strictly to one person's vision— either your own as GM or else the game designer's. I don't intend *Dogs* to play that way. When you play *Dogs*, you create a consistent world by actively building one out of the bits and pieces of each player's own vision.

All of which to signify only: when I go on and on about what shape the guns are, but don't say a single word about the horses, don't take it as gospel. It's just what I care about.

THE LANDSCAPE

The mountains are really tall. They peak above the snowline. They have deep canyons, smashing waterfalls, some rivers with ice in them year-round. Winters even in the foothills are fierce and long.

There's a broad fertile range— hundreds of miles broad— on the west of the mountains, with lakes and good land, rolling down westward and southward to a vast scrub desert. The lower mountains and the fertile range are the home of the Faith.

The capital of the Faith is called Bridal Falls City, for the four beautiful waterfalls— the Four Brides— you can see if you look up to the mountains. It's still quite a small city, pretty much dominated by its temples and temple compounds.

The scrub desert is not sandy, dune-y or Sahara-like at all. It's all buttes,

swells, canyons, and deep-cut valleys. It's got lots of scrub oak, sagebrush, and those hardy little cedars. In places the sandstone has been carved by wind and rain until it looks like the ruins of some prehistorical kingdom - mile after mile of twisting, eery natural monuments.

THE FAITH

The whole name of the Faith is the Faith of All Things in the King of Life, Reborn.

The whole name of the Dogs is the Order Set Apart to the Preservation of Faith and the Faithful. Casually, the King's Dogs or Life's Watchdogs. Dogs are always called Brother or Sister by their first name: Brother Jeremiah, Sister Patience.

The Faith is the only true religion in the world. All other religions are a) actively demonic, cults created by Faithful leaders fallen into sin; b) corrupt and decadent, like the majority religions of the East; or c) idle nonsense, like most of the religions in the wider world.

TOWNS

In a typical town, there might be:

- Mostly farmers;
- A blacksmith;
- A barrel-maker;
- A shoemaker;
- A miller;
- A carpenter;
- A midwife;
- A Faith meeting house;
- A one-room town hall;
- A one-room schoolhouse;
- A town square and market;
- A dry goods store.

In the larger towns, there might also be:

- A potter;
- A baker;
- A mason;
- A glassblower;
- A wheelwright;
- A harness maker;
- A doctor;
- A lawyer;
- A theater;
- A hotel;
- A courthouse;
- A schoolhouse or two;
- Competing dry goods stores.

FOOD AND FASHION

The staple foods are dairy and wheat.

Common foods include beef, chicken, pork, game (elk, rabbits, fowl), fish, eggs, milk, cheese, fruit (apples, plums, apricots, various berries), vegetables

(corn, squash, tomatoes, carrots, onions, peas, beans, beets, spinach), herbs, honey.

The Faithful don't drink coffee, black tea, wine or liquor. They do drink herbal teas, various brewed soft drinks like lemonade, spruce beer and root beer, and— although it's going out of fashion— mild barley beer. Only old people use tobacco at all, and they get some grief for it from their families and their Stewards.

Clothing's made from cotton and wool, mostly. Finer wools and linen are luxury materials. Silk's used for handkerchiefs and neckties, but more silk than one small item in an outfit would be ostentatious or even decadent.

Dress is simple and modest. Men wear mostly black, gray and dark brown, with generally white shirts. Women dress more colorfully, but for a woman to show her ankle, wrist or throat in company would be risqué.

Throughout the faith, practicality trumps decorum, though: a woman won't show her wrist in company, but in the kitchen? She rolls her sleeves.

GUNS

I mentioned the guns, right? We're talking pre-Civil War revolvers, which means they're before the Colt Navy and that distinctive six-gun look. They're heavier-slung guns with lower profiles and big, big bores.

To load them you slide out the rod or break them open at the hinge, take out the cylinder, put the cartridges in the front and caps in the back. You make your own cartridges: a lead bullet and a measure of powder in a twist of (nitrate-soaked) paper. You have to pull back the hammer with your thumb; pulling the trigger doesn't advance the cylinder or cock the hammer.

They're slow, loud, smoky, and sometimes the cap misfires or the cartridge jams the cylinder, but they're quite accurate and when they hit you they smash great big holes into you. You've seen a Colt Dragoon? They're scary monsters.

THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

The land here wasn't uninhabited when the Faith arrived, not precisely, but its natives are nomads and at the time they were elsewhere. While the pioneers were establishing themselves at Bridal Falls and the lush valleys around it, various accidents of history, the travels of the elk herds, agreements between family groups, and perhaps the will of the King of Life all kept the natives away. By the time their paths brought them back, Bridal Falls City and a dozen other towns already stood.

As the Faithful have expanded, it's been easy for them to push the natives— the Mountain People— out in front of them. The Faithful have guns, work animals, organization, and everywhere they go they make roads and walls. The Mountain People, on the other hand, are accustomed to packing up what they own and moving on.

Now the Mountain People live only at the edges of the Faith's territory, in the scrub, the desert, and higher in the mountains.

The Mountain People don't have any social or political unity. Each family group is autonomous, forming alliances and agreements with other families at need or convenience. Consequently the towns at the edges of the Faith have to negotiate ongoing relations with nearby Mountain People as best they can. Sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's not. In some places it's violent; in other places the Mountain People are more likely to trade, or even beg, than to raid.

Their clothing and architecture both use a wide even chaotic variety of materials: hide, bone, wood, stone, clay, woven reeds, antlers, snakeskins and lizard skins, volcanic glass, thorns. Clothing usually breaks up the silhouette; buildings usually blend in. They don't do agriculture or husbandry at all, not even dogs or chickens or anything. Their diet includes all available game, from elk down to chipmunks, lizards and songbirds, plus wild herbs, vegetables, nuts, roots, and a variety of insects. They supplement all of these with goods they've begged, bought or stolen from the Faithful.

According to the doctrines of the Faith, the Mountain People are a fallen remnant of an ancient Faithful civilization. Out of respect for the antiquity of their covenant, the Faithful don't fight with them or murder them without cause, and whenever a man or woman of the Mountain People repents and comes to the Faith, it's joy and celebration. Beyond this, though, the Faith's position is that the Mountain People today are sinners and idolaters no different from any other.

But folklore inevitably springs up. According to some, the Mountain People are uniquely beloved of the King of Life and destined for a glorious renaissance, despite their present wickedness and idolatry. A few Faithful even say that the Mountain People possess secret true doctrines! These hold that one of the most important duties of the Faith is to restore the Mountain People to their rightful place in the Book of Life.

Others say instead that their fall from righteousness makes them especially vulnerable to demonic influences, easily possessed and naturally sorcerous, and that they serve the demons by raiding and murdering the Faithful. Extreme versions even make them out to be wholly unredeemable. They're dedicated absolutely to the downfall of the Faith, just as the demons are absolute in their rage against the King of Life.

You can guess which stories arise in towns where relations with the Mountain people are hard, and which in towns where relations are easy.

Regardless, sometimes individual Mountain People do convert to the Faith. Sometimes orphans of the Mountain People are adopted by a Faithful family and raised righteously. Sometimes they even serve as Dogs!

THE TERRITORIAL AUTHORITY

Representatives of the Territorial Authority will generally be either a claims officer or other bureaucrat, or a circuit rider not unlike you Dogs. Only larger towns will have any sort of Territorial law enforcement— a sheriff— but he's most likely to be Faithful, elected to the job by his congregation. The Territorial Authority's real concern is that taxes are paid and nobody interferes with the mail— it worries about "keeping the peace" only insofar as lawlessness interferes with taxes and mail.

It's worth pointing out that the Dogs are authorized by the Faith to do some things— like shoot sinners in the street— that are against the law. Exercise your authority cautiously.

BACK EAST

Back East is all decadence, sin, cruelty and occultism. It has huge cities, each with a population bigger than the entire body of the Faith, and they're foul, stinking places. The few wealthy practice unspeakable vice and violence and bribe the law to look away. The majority suffers poverty, disease, filth, crime, slavery— and even still are too blind to turn to the King of Life.

Small communities of the Faith remain Back East even now, although fewer and fewer.

Occasionally, a Faithful family will send a child Back East to college. THOSE are perilous years.

NONBELIEVERS

Lots of people other than the Faithful profess to serve God. Some even call Him by His true title: the King of Life. Obviously, they don't truly serve Him— if they did, they'd join the Faith! Instead:

- Atheists believe that there is no God, or that if there is a God, He doesn't participate in our lives. If they follow a religion— and practically all of them do— they don't follow it with heart or faith.

- Dogmatists believe that what matters is obeying scripture or dogma, not obeying God. They analyze their faith for legalistic adherence to precedents or rules, and thus don't recognize the true promptings of their souls.

- Spiritualists believe that some spirit, or some class of spirits, is God. They follow pagan superstitions or ask the ghosts of the dead for guidance. The Mountain People are Spiritualists, of course, worshipping their dead ancestors and the spirits of the landscape. Back East, more contemporary forms of Spiritualism are currently in vogue.

There aren't many nonbelievers out here among the Faithful, but there are some. It might be, for instance, that the claims officer is a stodgy old churchgoing Atheist, while his faddish wife holds séances or reads Tarot.



CREATING CHARACTERS

You are one of God's Watchdogs, a young man or woman called to service in the Faith. Your duty is to travel between the Faith's isolated congregations— its branches— and hold the Faith together. You'll face danger, sin, betrayal; you'll represent God's mercy to the sinner and God's justice to the downtrodden; you'll root evil out and balance the line between divine and secular law.

You have a badge of office: a long coat, colorful, beautiful, hand-pieced and quilted by your friends and family back home. To you, it recalls their love and your duty; to others, it's a powerful symbol of your authority.

OVERVIEW

Starting characters are all young men and women at the end of their teens or the beginning of their twenties. They've just spent two months or more in training, education and ceremony to prepare them for their duties. They know one another, although they didn't necessarily choose one another as companions. They are, to a one, unmarried virgins. They're allowed to travel mixed and unchaperoned, because of the strength of their devotion and duties.

For more, see the "Background" section, upcoming.

Create your character the first time you meet to play. Take a copy of the character sheet in the back of the book and fill it out using the procedure in this chapter. Please don't make your character in advance! Come to the table with nothing particular in mind, pass the book around, kibitz, and see what comes out at the end.

Most of the process is informal: several decisions to make and you can wing it. Poll your friends, call out suggestions and just make stuff up. The last step, though, introduces the game's resolution rules. We'll take each player in turn and work through it in good order.

At the end of the process you'll have a character uniquely capable, strong and weak, primed to face and be transformed by the challenges to come.

PROCEDURE

FIRST STEP: BACKGROUND

Choose one of the following:

WELL-ROUNDED: Choose this if you want your character to be straightforward, balanced and effective. It's a good choice for men born in the Faith. **ON YOUR CHARACTER'S SHEET:** 17d6 in Stat Dice; 1d4 4d6 2d8 in Trait Dice; 4d6 2d8 in Relationship Dice.

STRONG HISTORY: Choose this if you want your character to have had a good education, lots of experience, or specialized training. **ON YOUR**

CHARACTER'S SHEET: 13d6 in Stat Dice; 3d6 4d8 3d10 in Trait Dice; 1d4 3d6 2d8 in Relationship Dice.

COMPLICATED HISTORY: Choose this if you want your character to have overcome a troubled, dangerous, or challenging upbringing. It's an especially good choice if you want your character to be convert to the Faith. **ON YOUR CHARACTER'S SHEET:** 15d6 in Stat Dice; 4d4 2d6 2d10 in Trait Dice; 5d6 2d8 in Relationship Dice.

STRONG COMMUNITY: Choose this if you want your character to be socially adept and from a strong, caring family. It's a good choice for women born in the Faith. **ON YOUR CHARACTER'S SHEET:** 13d6 in Stat Dice; 1d4 3d6 2d8 in Trait Dice; 4d6 4d8 3d10 in Relationship Dice.

COMPLICATED COMMUNITY: Choose this if you want your character to be socially vulnerable or from a broken, in-crisis, or destructive family. **ON YOUR CHARACTER'S SHEET:** 15d6 in Stat Dice; 6d6 2d8 in Trait Dice; 4d4 2d6 2d8 2d10 in Relationship Dice.

Let's say that you choose Well-rounded. In the space for Stat Dice on your character's sheet, write 15; in the space for Trait Dice, write 1d4 4d6 2d8; in the space for Relationship Dice, write 4d6 2d8.

SECOND STEP: STATS

Divvy your character's Stat Dice between the four Stats. Don't roll the dice now! Your character's Stats (and everything else) are rated in dice: "my character has 4d6 in Will," you might say. When any particular Stat comes into play, that's when you roll its dice.

The minimum for each Stat is 2d6; there's no maximum.

Let's say you divvy your 17 Stat Dice like this: Acuity 4d6, Body 6d6, Heart 5d6, Will 2d6.

ACUITY: More dice in Acuity means a character who's perceptive, alert, educated, clever, savvy or well-read.

BODY: More dice in Body means a character who's big, healthy, strong, wiry, muscular, tall, graceful, quick, or steady.

HEART: More dice in Heart means a character who's compassionate, attractive, charming, gentle, courageous, enduring, faithful, or likeable.

WILL: More dice in Will means a character who's tenacious, aggressive, confident, unflinching, strong-willed, or unshakable.

You won't usually roll any Stat alone. Usually you roll them in pairs:

- If your character's just talking, roll Acuity and Heart;
- If your character's doing something physical but not fighting, roll Body and Heart;
- If your character's fighting hand to hand, roll Body and Will;

- If your character's gun fighting, roll Acuity and Will.

Now you might already have a sense of who you want your character to be when you start assigning the Stats their dice, but you might not. If you don't, that's just fine. Divvy the dice however seems good at the moment. Once they're assigned you'll have a good basis for figuring out who your character is.

Body and Heart are your character's high Stats, so that implies a physical, athletic character. A rangy young man, let's even say, good-looking, strong, and well liked.

THIRD STEP: TRAITS

Create some Traits for your character and divvy your character's Trait Dice between them.

WORDS VS. DICE: You can create your character's Traits as tidbits of history: "I used to break horses with my dad." You can phrase them as simple facts about your character: "I've worked with horses and I know how they think." You can phrase them as skills: "horsemanship." You can phrase them as attitudes: "I'm very comfortable working with horses."

You can't give your character more Traits than you've got dice to assign, but you can double up (or even triple up) dice on a single Trait if you want. The only limit is that all the dice you assign to a given Trait have to be the same size: "horsemanship 2d6" is fine, "horsemanship 1d4 1d6" isn't.

I prefer to write four or five Traits and then divvy my dice between them, rather than assigning dice as I go, but you might prefer the opposite. Either way, assign more and bigger dice to the Traits that are most important to your idea of your character. You don't have to assign dice to match competence at all: you might take "I'm a masterful rider, at one with my mount 1d4" and "I can't see well without my glasses 2d10," for instance. That'd just mean that it's more interesting to you that your character's nearsighted than that your character's a good rider.

If you can't think of any Traits to start with, try this trick: write "I'm a good shot" on your character's sheet. ("I'm a good shot" is always a safe take.) Now ask yourself: where did my character learn to shoot? From whom? What were the circumstances? Tease a second Trait out of those circumstances, something like "I used to hunt with my brother" or "I once killed a wolf that was killing my family's calves" or "I fought a year in the Territorial Army." For your character's third Trait, choose something unrelated but opposed, for balance: "I'm a good cook, too," maybe, or "I'm well-read," or "I know the names of the constellations." Now you're underway, and it should be no problem to come up with a couple more Traits as you need them.

d4 TRAITS: Because most of your character's opponent's dice are going to be d6s and better, rolling d4s makes it more likely that your character'll

suffer consequences in conflicts. The most straightforward approach to d4 Traits is to take them as disadvantages: “I’m scared of horses” or “I get winded easily” or “my eyesight isn’t too good.”

But consider taking them as seeming strengths, too. “I’m a good shot 2d4” means that yes, your character’s a good shot, but when guns come out, your character’s life gets even more complicated than usual.

I’M A DOG: Since your character’s a Dog, “I’m a Dog” makes a very reasonable Trait. (If you prefer “I’m God’s Watchdog” or “I serve in the Order Set Apart to the Preservation of Faith and the Faithful,” that’s just fine, and perhaps revealing.)

If you don’t give your character “I’m a Dog” as a Trait, you have to give him or her a Relationship with the Dogs in Step Four.

So at the end of step three, here are your character’s Traits: I’m a good shot 1d6. I’ve never shot a gun at a living thing 1d4. I’m pretty handy with a knife 1d8. I’m good looking 1d6. I’ve got a very good, but completely untrained, singing voice 2d6. I’m a Dog 1d8.

FOURTH STEP: RELATIONSHIPS

Name a couple of people with whom your character has a relationship, and assign some of your Relationship Dice to them.

Don’t create very many, and leave most of your character’s Relationship Dice unassigned! You can assign them to the people your character meets after play begins, so save a bunch of them for that.

If you like, you can give your character a Relationship with the Dogs. If you didn’t give your character “I’m a Dog” as a Trait, you have to.

Otherwise just name a person or two, say who they are to your character, and give them dice. In play you can give your character Relationships with institutions, demons, places, and even sins, but for now stick with people.

BLOOD: Whenever your character meets a blood relation, you can write that person as a Relationship on your character’s sheet at 1d6 for free. You never need to spend Relationship dice on your character’s kin, in other words, unless you want the Relationship at some other dice than 1d6.

LIKE TRAITS: Like with Traits, the number and size of the dice you assign to your character’s Relationships don’t have to reflect the closeness or significance of the person to your character. You might write “my older brother, whom I worship and with whom I’ve always been close and caring 1d4” and “this old man I saw once across a field in Bowers Draw 2d8.” Assign the dice based on how interesting you think the relationship is.

Only assign a single size die, like Traits. 2d8 is fine, 1d4 1d6 isn’t.

And also like with Traits, a d4 Relationship will complicate your character’s life.

Let's say: My brother Hiram 1d8. This old ranch hand Ned 1d6. That leaves you 3d6 1d8 to write in your character's Available box.

FIFTH STEP: BELONGINGS

Name some things your character owns, and give them dice if they warrant 'em.

The Stewards at the Dogs' Temple make certain that every Dog owns a horse, a coat, a copy of the Book of Life, a small jar of consecrated earth, and a gun. They won't insist that your character take the horse or the gun, if for some reason he or she chooses not to.

Your character might also own other weapons, other books, pen and stationary, some distinctive article of clothing like a hat or a fine dress, keepsakes, or anything else you think's interesting— provided it fits the game's setting and a person could reasonably travel with it on horseback.

THINGS: Write a belonging as you would a Trait or a Relationship: "big knife 1d8" or "excellent horse 2d6." Only bother with possessions you actually care about; you don't have to write down the provisions you're carrying or anything like that.

Here's how you give a thing dice:

- 1d6 if it's normal.
- 2d6 if it's excellent. It's only excellent if people meeting your character would notice and comment on it: "ooh, that's a mighty fine horse."
- 1d8 if it's big. Similarly: "holy smokes that's a big knife."
- 2d8 if it's excellent plus big.
- 1d4 if it's crap. Crap plus big is still just 1d4.

This is true of everything in the world, horses, dogs, knives, hats, boots, rakes, hoes, forks, spoons, houses, fences, you name it. If it needs dice, it gets 1d6 if it's normal, 1d4 if it's crap, 2d8 if it's excellent plus big, and so on.

There's just one exception: guns. All guns get an extra 1d4. Thus an excellent plus big gun gets 1d4+2d8, a normal gun like anyone might carry gets 1d4+1d6, and a crap gun gets 2d4.

You can give your character as many belongings as you like, of whatever quality you like. The only limit is that the rest of your group thinks it's reasonable for him or her to be carrying it around on horseback, in the wilds, in the weather.

YOUR COAT: Also write what colors and patterns are in your character's coat. Most characters' coats start out worth 2d6 for excellence, but see the "Background" section for more.

Your character has: a revolver 1d4+1d6, a rifle 1d4+1d6, a horse 1d6, a fearsome big razor-sharp knife 2d8, and a coat 2d6: kind of a smoky gray, white and blue, with bars of deeper blue across the shoulders and a gold eight-point star in the center back.

SIXTH AND FINAL STEP: ACCOMPLISHMENT?

Up until now, you've been building your character in public at the table, but while you've (I hope) been open to suggestions, nobody else has had any actual say what goes onto your character's sheet. This final step, that changes.

Say that I'm the GM for your game. I call on each of you— the players—in turn:

1: Say something that you hope your character accomplished during initiation. "I hope that my character won distinction in the eyes of the teacher of scripture," you might say, or "I hope that my character overcame his fear of blood," "I hope that my character exorcised a demon," "I hope that my character learned to curb her temper," "I hope that my character solved a serious problem without resorting to violence," or whatever grabs you. That accomplishment is *WHAT'S AT STAKE*.

Don't choose something that'll break your character if it goes the wrong way. "I hope that my character survived initiation" or "I hope that my character didn't get sent home in disgrace" aren't good.

2: Now we take sides. This calls for a little bit of examination and judgment, so bear with me.

2A: If your accomplishment for your character is straightforward, that's cool and easy! You take your character's part and I take the part of your character's opposition. "I hope that my character won distinction in the eyes of the teacher of scripture," for instance: you take your character's side and I take the side of your rivals. "I hope that my character exorcised a demon": you take your character's side and I take the demon's. Or "I hope that my character solved a serious problem without resorting to violence": you take your character's side and I take the other side of the problem, whatever it is.

2B: If, on the other hand, your accomplishment for your character is growth, learning, or a change of habits, then we play a little trick: you take the part of your character *AS HE OR SHE IS*, and I take the part of whatever forces or pressures are on your character to change. "I hope that my character overcame his fear of blood," for instance: you take the side of your character in fear, and I take the side of your character's teachers, who see his weakness and want to help him overcome it. "I hope that my character learned to curb her temper": you take the side of your character's temper, her reluctance to be changed, and I take the side of her teachers.

I'll give examples of each kind in a bit.

3: We set a stage. Between us we figure out a pivotal moment with regard to your accomplishment for your character. We say who's there and what's going on. "I hope that my character exorcised a demon" and we create a possessed person, we put her in a locked room, we have your

character led there and put inside, with practiced exorcists outside the door in case things go badly. They might.

4: We've launched a conflict! We play it out between us using the game's Conflict & Resolution rules. I'll explain them in full blood and bones detail in an upcoming chapter. Don't forget to roll Fallout!

You'll roll dice based on your character's Stats, Traits, etc., same as you will in ongoing play.

I'll roll 4d6+4d10.

5: Win or lose, you get a new d6 Trait. If you win the conflict, the Trait should match your side; if you lose, it should match my side. "I hope that my character won distinction," for instance: if you win, write "I won distinction 1d6" on your character's sheet. If I win, write "I didn't win distinction 1d6." "I hope that my character exorcised a demon": if you win, write "I've exorcised a demon 1d6," but if I win, write "I've failed to exorcise a demon 1d6."

Remember how with "I hope that my character learned to curb her temper," you took the side of your character's temper and resistance to change? If you win that one, write "I haven't learned to curb my temper 1d6," but if I win, write "I've learned to curb my temper 1d6."

Either way, you're allowed some editorial spin on your new Trait. "I hope that my character exorcised a demon," say. Depending how the conflict goes, you might write "I handily exorcised a demon 1d6," "I've exorcised one demon and I never want to face another 1d6," or (if it went the other way) "a demon handed me my butt 1d6."

Once you've gotten to really play, you'll find that "I learned to read 1d6" and "I haven't learned to read 1d6" are both valuable, interesting Traits. For now you'll have to take my word for it: losing your initiatory accomplishment doesn't disadvantage your character.

EXAMPLE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT: I come around to your turn and you say, "I HOPE MY CHARACTER HEALED SOMEONE DYING." We take sides: I'm the dying person's illness or injury, and you're your character. We set a stage:

Your character's just seen a boy trampled by an ox and she's the first person to him. He's thrashing and puking blood. Conflict: go!

You Raise: "I put my hands on him to calm him down and examine him." I Take the Blow to See: "Cool. He's still shuddering and burbling but you can get his shirt open." I Raise: "His ribs are all smashed and floating, and now he's drowning. He stops breathing." You Block or Dodge to See: "Oh no he doesn't. I mark his forehead with consecrated earth to hold him in Life." You Raise: "I whisper to him, 'what's your name?'" I Block or Dodge to See: "He can't draw in enough breath. His mouth moves but no voice." I Raise: "His eyes go wide and his body starts to relax." You Take the Blow to See: "He's seeing Heaven." You Raise: "Child, don't go, you have work yet here." I'm out of dice, I can't See your Raise, so: "He looks

so calm, and then the pain rushes back over him. He doubles over, trying to scream. Other people are joining you, one's a doctor and he takes over. The kid will live."

You roll Fallout for the Blow you Took, but let's just say that there's no lasting consequence.

You add "I healed a boy trampled by an ox 1d6" to your character's sheet.

Example of growth: I come around to your turn and you say, "I hope my character learned not to swear so much." We take sides: you're your character and his foul mouth, I'm his teachers who want him to knock it off. We set a stage: They call your character into council. Your character's most senior teacher, an imposing old man with an enormous gray beard and sharp eyes, on one side of the table, and your character on the other.

I'll Raise: "Brother Ezra, your profane and common language will not serve you in the vineyard. You've got to curb your tongue." You Block or Dodge to See: "I quote some scripture, something about 'when you see filth, call it filth.'" You Raise: "Is that all? Can I go?" I Reverse the Blow to See: "He says, 'in fact, that is all. You're dismissed.'" I Raise: "Two nights later, two men corner you behind the stable. They're big guys, one's your teacher's right-hand man. He has a bar of soap." You Block or Dodge to See: "Oh man. I don't let them back me against the wall." You Raise: "When one of them comes close, I lunge at him and then make a break the other way." I Block or Dodge to See: "The other one grabs you as you try to shove past." I Raise: "He holds you and your teacher's man comes up with the soap." You decide not to Escalate to a fight and instead Give: "jeeze, they wash my mouth out?" And I say, "oh yes indeed."

You didn't Take any Blows so you don't roll Fallout.

You add "I learned not to swear in public 1d6" to your character's sheet. And I'm like, "in public," very nice.

BACKGROUND

Here's what life is like from your character's point of view.

By the time you're 12 or 13, the Steward of your Branch is already considering whether you would make a good Dog. Some kids are so obviously unsuited that the Steward dismisses the idea at once, some kids show promise, some kids have destiny on them like a light. There's a spiritual-intuitive component, divine guidance, if the Steward is even remotely qualified— so the "obviously unsuited" kid might be the kid who's outwardly dedicated and actively pursuing service in the Faith, and the kid with destiny might be the town's delinquent troublemaker. From 12 or 13 to 17-19, the Steward keeps his eye on you and guides you as best he can, mindful always that he's not responsible for building you into a Dog-to-be. It's your own duty.

So at 18-20, the Steward formally interviews you and then calls you to be a Dog. You say your goodbyes, pack up a few things, and make the trek to the Dogs' Temple to be initiated. The whole process, starting at the interview and ending at your first assignment, is an initiation. You spend

two months in the Dogs' Temple at Bridal Falls City. The schedule there for training initiates is continuous and rolling. Usually there'll be a dozen, maybe fifteen initiates, but fewer in the winter and more in good years.

Your teachers at the Dogs' Temple don't necessarily love you, they love the people you're going to serve. Their goal isn't to make you a Dog; again, that's your own duty. Their goals are:

- To prove or cull you. They exhaust, humiliate, stress, hurt, disappoint, tempt, scare, provoke, and overwhelm you. By the end, you've proven yourself to them.

- To train you. They train you to ride, shoot, fight, preach, persevere, ask questions, be patient, notice, be discerning, and survive. By the end you're a capable and confident person, whatever you were before.

- To educate you. They teach you scripture, doctrine, ceremony, theology, cosmology and demonology. By the end you've got a solid grounding in those studies.

- To initiate you. They set you apart, invest you with the authority of the Prophets and Ancients, consecrate you to your service, receive your oaths, and sanctify you. By the end you've proven yourself worthy and taken on your duty.

- To inspire you. At some moment, some thing that someone says will make your soul light up. Nobody can predict when or what that thing will be, but without it, you won't make a Dog.

Your personal background, naturally, has a big effect on how long they spend on each of those things. If you can already ride, shoot, fight and survive, they notice right away and move on. If you're a scriptural scholar already, they'll put you to work teaching your fellows— maybe even just teaching them to read.

Meanwhile, while you're there learning and proving yourself, your family and your home town are making your coat. It's an honor and a point of pride to make a coat. Primary responsibility is your mother's, your grandmothers', your aunts' and sisters'. If your coat is poor, it reflects badly on them foremost. The boys and men in your family are expected to help and participate, but to do what they're told. The women are expected to have the skills necessary to oversee the project and coordinate the efforts of everybody else.

There's a traditional party where everybody in your extended community who can and will comes to your parents' house and puts a stitch in your coat. At the end of the party, all the men bless it (in whatever state of unfinish it is at the moment) with consecrated earth and laying on hands.

So toward the end of your two months' training and initiation, you receive the package from home containing your coat and letters of blessing and well-wishing.

You'll serve actively as a Dog for three or four years, usually, sometimes less and sometimes more— sometimes lots more— and your beautiful new coat won't hold up. It takes a fierce beating in the field. It becomes the responsibility of the communities you serve to maintain your coat, patching, piecing, repairing, even replacing it as you need. Some Dogs come out of their service with three or four coats, the earlier ones packed carefully away to preserve them. Some come out with only their original coat, and it's torn and battered and ruined. In later life, as you're called to higher and higher sacred offices, you are always allowed to replace whatever vestments accompany your office with your old Dog's coat, no matter how beat up it is. And if you end up in the Dogs' Temple training and initiating new Dogs, your old coat is powerfully significant.

(Picture one of the Dogs' teachers. His coat's so faded and stretched across his shoulders that you can see his shirt through it. It has an old stain and a crude patch under his left arm. The boyfriend of the woman he loved stabbed him, so long ago, and he had to stitch his coat back up himself. How high in the esteem of the new Dog initiates he is! He regards them all with love, hope, and very mixed feelings.)

All of the above: typical case.

Some Dogs' years of service are in communities where getting the people to stop murdering and screwing each other is hard enough, let alone them making you a beautiful piecework coat. These Dogs do the best they can. I imagine one with only a remnant of her original coat, reef-stitched to the back or around the arm of a normal wool or canvas coat like anybody might wear.

Some new Dogs don't have families who'll make them coats. They can't go without, so sometimes their teachers in the Dogs' Temple work together to make one. Sometimes such a coat will be made with just as much love as a family-made one, but often it'll be just thrown together. There are also people in the Faith who make coats and send them to the Dogs' Temple for whoever needs them, with a similar range of made-with-love to just-thrown-together. Rarely, a new Dog will fall through the cracks and not get a coat, and have to fend for her or himself, like a character in an early playtest who stitched the rough silhouette of a dog's head onto the back of his plain old wool coat. Again there's a spiritual-intuitive component: somebody in the Dogs' Temple watched this character do it, and let him be. It was as it should be, for reasons known to the King of Life.

The Stewards of the Dogs assign you a route and companions, based on needs and spiritual-intuition. (If you find yourself at the end of your initiation unassigned to companions and a route, you stay on, help out, and eventually they'll be inspired to assign you.) Over the course of your service, you return periodically to the Dogs' Temple, maybe twice annually. At those times, they might reassign you.

Some Dogs serve faithfully until they're released from service. At the

end of faithful service you can expect just about any local-level office you ask for, if you're a man, and given that you won't ask for an office where the person currently occupying it is doing a good job (why would you?). Non-Dog men can and do hold office in the Faith, but Dogs are always considered preferentially. Only former Dogs can initiate new Dogs, although non-Dogs can teach them skills and theology, technically, if no former Dog wants the job— which is not the case now. Every teacher at the Dogs' Temple today served as a Dog himself.

If you're a woman, you can expect prestigious suitors and far more say in your future than non-Dog women have. No suitor can demand that you marry him, for instance, where most women— even if nobody DOES demand them, there's always somebody who COULD. The Prophets and Ancients of the Faith, the seventy old men, when they want another wife, they always court and propose to just-finished Dogs, for instance, and you can turn them down if you want to. Which is a big deal, actually.

When you do marry, you can expect your husband's respect, and if you marry an office-holder, you can expect to participate in the administration of the office. You can expect to be regarded as a spiritual advisor and, if your inclinations run that way, a theologian in your own right. If your husband treats you badly, you can expect the Faith to take your complaints seriously.

Usually what happens is this: over the course of your service, you'll return periodically to visit the Dogs' Temple. If the Dogs' Stewards have decided that your service is complete, they release you then. However, if something urgent comes up in the field and you need to be released, you can send to them, they release you ceremonially by proxy when they receive your message, they send back confirmation, and you're supposed to wait for the confirmation before you go forward no longer a Dog. Unless you've done something dodgy already, ending your service this way is as honorable and faithful as waiting for them to release you. (The typical reason you'd ask to be released is: you've met a person you're going to marry, and you don't want to wait.)

Some Dogs leave service unfaithfully, though. You aren't punished at all; everybody knows that the job's hard-to-impossible and nobody expects you to do better than your best. If for whatever reason you need it, you are guaranteed a place in the Dogs' Temple, working in the kitchens, the stables, sweeping up, doing household chores, whatever, until you find your way to better. Often if you desert your calling, though, you don't choose to go back like that.

Some Dogs just stay Dogs. The Stewards of the Dogs don't release them— again according to spiritual intuition— and they don't ask to be released. Few Dogs in the field are in their thirties, but I suppose one or two might be.

CONVERTS

And here's how your life might be different if you're a convert to the Faith.

Most converts come from Back East; practically everyone born out here in the mountains is raised Faithful. Being from Back East means that you've left friends and family behind and made the trek westward to join the body of the Faith. One person out of ten dies on that trek.

How old were you when you converted to the Faith? The oldest Dogs in the field are men and women who converted as adults.

Or it might be that you're a Mountain Person. If you've been raised in the Faith, by convert parents or by an adoptive Faithful family, your life is only a little different from your fellow Dogs'. The Mountain People don't look like the Faithful: they're leaner built, they have different eyes, different faces, different hair, so you never quite fit in. You've been subject to prejudice, both the outrightly hostile kind— you're naturally wicked, superstitious, lazy, dirty, mean— and a subtler kind. Some see you as uniquely noble, admiring the antiquity of your Faithful heritage, holding you to a high standard and expecting you to be at once insightful, powerful and humble, with little compassion for you if you fail. If you've been adopted by Faithful parents, it's very likely that they see you this way themselves.

If you've converted more recently, you have to deal with not only those twin prejudices, but also an upbringing in a culture at odds with your new one. You used to take comfort from and find meaning in your people's worship— your ancestors looked after you, the spirits led and provided for you. How do you now understand your native religion? It might even be that the little thoughtless habits of your childhood, themselves innocent, bring evil to your mind and to the minds of the people around you. What balance can you find— if any at all— between serving the King of Life and remembering your own kind?

GOING FORWARD

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Whenever you want, you can write someone's name on your character's sheet and assign one or a couple of your available Relationship dice. It doesn't have to be someone your character knows well or feels strongly about; it should be someone that you yourself are interested in.

In addition to PEOPLE, your character can have Relationships with INSTITUTIONS, like the Dogs or the Faith; PLACES, like a particular branch, mountain, grove or river; SINS, whether that means habitually committing them, struggling with them, or being particularly resolute against them; and DEMONS.

Generally speaking, you get to roll the dice for your character's Relationships when the person or thing is a) your character's opponent in a conflict, or b) what's at stake in a conflict. See the Conflict & Resolution chapter for more.

CEREMONY

I'll say more about this in the Conflict & Resolution chapter too, but meanwhile you should have an idea what the ceremonies of the Faith look like. Your character's initiation included investing him or her with the authority to perform all of these:

- **ANOINTING WITH SACRED EARTH.** Sacred Earth is consecrated river clay. All Dogs carry a jar of it. You anoint someone with it by marking it on his or her forehead.

- **CALLING BY NAME.** When you call someone by their full, whole name, with authority, their soul can't ignore you.

- **INVOKING THE ANCIENTS.** This means simply declaring your authority as a Dog and an office holder of the Faith.

- **LAYING ON HANDS.** Generally you put both your hands on the top of someone's head, but any contact between the palm of your hand and someone else's skin will do.

- **MAKING THE SIGN OF THE TREE.** The Faith's most sacred symbol is a stylized tree, the Tree of Life. You make the Sign of the Tree by holding your right hand up at shoulder level, palm forward, with your fingers wide spread.

- **RECITING THE BOOK OF LIFE.** The Book of Life is the Faith's scripture.

- **SINGING PRAISE.** Lots of the Faith's rituals incorporate sung hymns.

- **THREE IN AUTHORITY.** Whenever possible, have at least two other Dogs or office holders of the Faith perform ceremony with you. (Dogs are generally sent out in groups of three or four, although two is acceptable because most branches have a Steward who can make the third.)

When you perform a ritual, incorporate whichever elements of ceremony suit your needs. Here are a few of the Faith's most common rituals:

- **TO NAME A BABY:** Hold the baby on your left arm. Mark the baby's forehead with Sacred Earth. Say something like, "by the authority given me by the Ancient Prophets of Life, I name you..." and say the baby's name. If you're moved to do so, you can give the baby some specific blessing or make some prophecy about the baby's life.

- **TO SOLEMNIZE A MARRIAGE:** Have the couple hold hands before you. Mark both of their foreheads with Sacred Earth. Call upon the authority of

the Ancients and recite one of the many relevant passages from the Book of Life, declaring them wed. Call the wife by her new name.

- **TO HEAL A SICK PERSON:** Lay hands on the sick person and anoint him with Sacred Earth. Calling him by name, command him to health. If he's able, have him sing one of the healing hymns with you.

- **TO DRIVE DEMONS OUT OF A HOUSE:** Make the sign of the tree. Declare the authority you have from the Ancients and command the demons to depart. Bolster your commands— and make the place less hospitable to them— by reciting scripture and singing hymns. If you know the demons' names, use them!

- **TO DEDICATE A PERSON TO OFFICE:** Lay hands on the person. Call him by name. Give him his new office, call upon the Ancients of the Faith to give him their authority, and charge him to serve faithfully until such time as he is released from duty.

- **TO SANCTIFY A CORPSE:** Mark the corpse's forehead with Sacred Earth, reciting the Passages for the Dead from the Book of Life. If you know the person's name, use it. According to the folk beliefs of the Faithful, after you've died, each minute that passes before someone sanctifies your corpse presents a temptation to remain on earth as a ghost, which is a sin and will count against you at Judgment. The Faith has no such official doctrine.

A DOG'S DUTIES

As your character travels from branch to branch, here are some things he or she will routinely be called upon to do:

- Carry mail and news.

- Officiate or participate in holy ceremonies: naming babies, dedicating children to the Faith, solemnizing weddings, blessing the sick, anointing and sanctifying the dead. Most branches will have a Steward who can perform these, but the Faithful will be honored by your participation.

- Deliver doctrine and new interpretation as needed to the branch's Steward and other office holders, and consult with them about the challenges the branch faces.

- Preach.

- Participate in, but hold yourself apart from, the branch's social functions and celebrations.

- Help the branch out with physical work, like bringing in a harvest or digging out from a blizzard, only when the need is immediate and acute.

In a perfect world, your character would mostly shake hands and kiss babies. Too bad it's not a perfect world, huh?

When things go wrong in a branch, it looks like this:

- Someone's PROUD.

- Pride, enacted, creates INJUSTICE.

- Injustice leads to SIN. Either the proud person becomes bold, or the victims of the injustice become resentful; either way, someone breaks the rules.

- Sin in a branch lets THE DEMONS ATTACK it. (A sin-free branch is protected from the demons by the power of the Faith.) The demons aren't themselves corporeal, so they have to use some intermediary to attack: raids by outlaws or Territorial Authority soldiers, disease, disaster, failing crops, drought, storms— whatever serves to threaten the branch.

- Sin and demonic attacks, over time, create FALSE DOCTRINE. The habitual sinner might fall into heresy to justify her sin, or the victim of demonic attacks might blame the Faith or the King of Life for his misfortune.

- False doctrine, enacted, is CORRUPT WORSHIP. Inappropriate ceremonies, incorrect observances, subtle changes to the order of things— or even blatant and outright demonism! (I'll point out also that when corrupt worship begins in a branch, the demons might immediately stop attacking it.)

- If a corrupt form of worship ever has three or more followers, it becomes a FALSE PRIESTHOOD.

- A false priesthood commands the attention and obedience of the demons. That's called SORCERY, when you tell the demons what to do and they do it.

- Sorcery will eventually lead to HATE and premeditated MURDER. That's the demons' ultimate goal.

So when you arrive in a branch, it'll be (rarely) just fine, or else it'll fall somewhere in this process. Maybe there's someone whose pride is causing some injustice, and that's it— nobody's sinned yet, and your character can deal with it just by taking the guy down a peg or two. Maybe that guy's been sinning, having an affair with his cousin's daughter say, and it's been a terrible year because the crops have blight— your character will have to find and resolve that hidden sin. Maybe all that's past and the niece has taken it into her head that women can have more husbands than one, just as that guy was her own secret husband, and she's gradually winning the support of her sisters in the branch— your character will not only have to deal with her somehow, but also find the sin behind her heresy. Maybe, worse, she's already won the support of her sisters, and now there are several women in the branch who have second, secret husbands, plus demons at their call! Leave that branch alone and soon they'll be killing each other and it'll be on your character's head.

Knowing just this makes your character a theologian! Most Faithful will know that people shouldn't sin, because when people sin they lose the blessings of the Faith, but honestly they'll think more and harder about

whether it'll be a bad winter and they hope their horse isn't coming down sick and isn't it getting to be time to bring the apple harvest in? Keeping the Faith in order is YOUR job, Dog.

A DOG'S AUTHORITY

When your character is acting to preserve the faith of a branch, he or she can take whatever steps are necessary, and no one can justly complain. Your character acts on behalf of the King of Life; if anyone has a problem, they can take it up with Him.

Check this out:

Brother Zachary is the worst thing in Brother Joseph's world. It's not just that he's a sinner, it's that he's unteachable, unreformable. Too mean and too proud.

Brother Zachary is single-handedly destroying Brother Joseph's branch. But when Brother Joseph goes to the King of Life for guidance, it's all: see to his needs, call him to repentance, cultivate him, serve him, help him, show him compassion. That, after all, is Brother Joseph's job: look after each person in his care. The King of Life tells Brother Joseph what's best for Brother Zachary. Brother Joseph has invested more time and care and worry in Brother Zachary than in any other single thing in his life.

Your character comes to town. The branch has a septic wound. A thousand resentments, sins waiting to burst free. If you leave it as it is it'll tear itself to pieces. Brother Joseph's doing his very best by everyone, but it's stone clear: Brother Zachary will become too much for him to carry. Brother Joseph will do something terrible, with lots of people caught up in it, and it'll be bloodshed, sorcery, and damnation.

Your character doesn't care what's best for Brother Zachary, he cares what's best for the branch. You have him drag Brother Zachary out of his house and shoot him in the street.

Brother Joseph comes in a rage. "All my work, all my time, all my investment in Brother Zachary's salvation! And for what, you kill him!"

"Your job is to heal the wound," your character says. "My job is to save the body."

YOUR CHARACTER'S CONSCIENCE AND YOUR OWN

Does this mean that your character can't sin?

No. But it does mean that no one's in a position to judge your character's actions but you yourself. Your character might be a remorseless monster or a destroying angel—I the author of the game can't tell the difference, your GM and your fellow players can't tell the difference, only you can.

As play progresses, you'll have the opportunity to consider your character's actions and change your character's Stats, Traits and Relationships to reflect them. That might mean that you give your character

Relationships with sins and demons, problematize his or her Traits, and burn out his or her Relationships with the Faithful— or it might mean no such thing. Sin, arrogance, hate, bloodlust; remorse, guilt, contrition; inspiration, redemption, grace: they're in how you have your character act, not (just, or necessarily) in what's on your character's sheet. Those moments, in play, are what matters.

Your character's conscience is in your hands.

LEAVING PLAY

At any moment in the game, you can choose to have your character leave play. "That's it," you might say. "I'm not gonna put up with this any more. I retire to be a dirt farmer." Being a Dog isn't easy and you don't really know up front when your character will quit. Or sometimes, a character's story is finished and it's time for you, the author, to move on to a new one.

Also, occasionally, your character will get killed. The conflict resolution rules will keep it from being pointless or arbitrary: it'll happen only when you've chosen to stake your character's life on something.

Either way, take some time to wrap up— work with your GM and your fellow players to give your exiting character an epilogue or a eulogy. The moments leading up to the end will probably be some of the highlights of the game, so don't rush over them or hurry past.

But when it's all said and all done, you've collectively given your character's story the recognition it deserves, and you're satisfied, you can stay in the game! Just go ahead and make a new character:

- Grab a blank sheet for your new character.
- However many dice in Stats your old character had, divvy that many dice among your new character's Stats, plus 1d6 for your trouble. You definitely do not have to give your new character the same number of dice in any given Stat as your old character had.
- However many dice in Traits your old character had, give your new character that many dice in Traits, plus 1d6 for your trouble. Make up all new Traits and assign the dice to them however seems good.
- However many dice in Relationships, assigned or available, your old character had, give your new character that many dice for Relationships. Don't assign them all now! Just like when you made your old character, name a couple of people and then write the rest of the dice in the "available" slot on your character's sheet.
- If you like, you can shuffle dice one-to-one between your pool for Traits and your pool for Relationships. You might have emphasized Traits for your old character, for instance, but you want to emphasize Relationships for your new character. That's fine, just shift some Trait dice over.
- It's up to you whether your new character's a new Dog or an experienced

one. If new, say something you hope your character accomplished during initiation, same as for your old character. If experienced, say something you hope your character accomplished during his or her service so far. Either way, set a stage, roll dice, resolve the conflict, and give your character the outcome as a 1d6 Trait.

- Equip your character as appropriate. Don't forget his or her coat.

Then work with your GM and fellow players to get your new character introduced. You might have to play a piece of the game with no character, sitting at the table and contributing as usual but not so directly represented in the game, but I hope you all figure out a way to minimize that. If nothing else, it's within bounds for your character to just show up: "The Stewards at Dogs' Temple sent me here, I've ridden straight through the night, and can somebody tell me why?"

GMING CHARACTER CREATION

While your fellow players are creating their characters, you need to stay on top of four things.

1. Are we developing characters who're **COMPETENT TO SERVE**? If we aren't, you need to redirect us. Try asking questions like, "and how would this person make it through initiation?" and pointing out the Dog's responsibilities and what initiation entails. I've noticed that some players' impulse is to create clowns. Clowns are fine, but make sure there's some hardness, some will, underneath.

2. If we lose our characters' initiatory conflicts, will we be out of the game? "I hope my character makes it through initiation" isn't an **ACCEPTABLE CONFLICT**, whatever specific form it takes. We already know that all our characters are going to be Dogs, that's the game.

Instead, suggest a conflict that cements a Trait the character already has. Like if my character has "I'm good with horses," suggest that I try to accomplish something related: teaching a new initiate to ride well, winning the admiration of the hostlers, or arranging for my companions to all have excellent mounts when we leave.

(I'll remind you here that you roll 4d6+4d10 for initiatory conflicts.)

3. How much **SUPERNATURAL EFFECTIVENESS** are we building into our characters? Don't judge whether it's too much or too little— you're to keep an open mind and follow our lead. The supernatural in the game will be somewhere on a continuum. At this end, barely any, where the demons are really just bad luck and the pressures a town has to struggle with to survive, and the ceremonies of the Faith only reassure the Faithful and remind them of their commitments to one another. At the other end, lots and lots, with the Dogs as powerful exorcist-gunslingers battling demons, sorcerers and ghosts, where calling a person by name can restore him to life and bullets slide off a Dog's coat, striking sparks. Look at the Traits we give our

characters, and you'll begin to see where on that continuum this particular game will fall.

....But "follow our lead" doesn't mean keep your mouth shut. If one of us is stuck for Traits, feel free to suggest "I've exorcised a demon," "the King of Life speaks to me in dreams," or "I'm a healer." When it comes to initiatory conflicts, be SURE to suggest some supernatural ones, along the same lines. If we don't respond, THEN follow.

4. What's up, I mean REALLY WHAT'S UP, with our characters? Does mine have some sort of love-hate thing going on with his family? Does Em's have a mean streak? Does J.'s have secret doubts?

Don't act on them yet— in fact, it's way too early to draw any conclusions a'tall— but file them away. Now's the time to start going "mmhmm" like good Dr. Freud.

RECAP

CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

Your character's initiation took two months at the Dogs' Temple in Bridal Falls City. The teachers there **PROVED**, **TRAINED**, **EDUCATED**, **INITIATED**, and **INSPIRED** him or her. The Dogs' Stewards then assigned your character to companions and a route.

It's your responsibility to create a character suited to service and within the genre of the game.

1. Choose one:

- **WELL-ROUNDED**: 17d6 for Stats, 1d4 4d6 2d8 for Traits, 4d6 2d8 for Relationships.

- **STRONG HISTORY**: 13d6 for Stats, 3d6 4d8 3d10 for Traits, 1d4 3d6 2d8 for Relationships.

- **COMPLICATED HISTORY**: 15d6 for Stats, 4d4 2d6 2d10 for Traits, 5d6 2d8 for Relationships.

- **STRONG COMMUNITY**: 13d6 for Stats, 1d4 3d6 2d8 for Traits, 4d6 4d8 3d10 for Relationships.

- **COMPLICATED COMMUNITY**: 15d6 for Stats, 6d6 2d8 for Traits, 4d4 2d6 2d8 2d10 for Relationships.

2. Divvy your character's Stat dice between **ACUITY**, **BODY**, **HEART** and **WILL**. Give every Stat at least 2 dice.

3. Create some **TRAITS** and assign your character's Trait dice to them.

4. Create a couple of **RELATIONSHIPS** and assign some of your character's Relationship dice to them. The rest of your character's Relationship dice are Available.

5. Write down your character's **BELONGINGS** and assign them their dice. Remember to describe your character's coat.

- It's normal: 1d6.

- It's excellent: 2d6.

- It's big: 1d8.

- It's big and excellent: 2d8.

- It's crap: 1d4.

- All guns get an additional 1d4.

6. When your GM comes around to you, say something that you hope your character **ACCOMPLISHED** during initiation. Make it what's at stake in a conflict, set a stage, roll dice, See and Raise, and at the end give your character the outcome as a new Trait at 1d6.

GMING CHARACTER CREATION

Are the characters suitable Dogs?

Are their accomplishments appropriate?

How supernaturally effective are they?

What are their interesting underlying issues?



CONFLICT & RESOLUTION

The shopkeeper from Back East? His wife isn't really his wife. He's the procurer and she's the available woman. Their marriage is a front.

Your brother's son, your nephew, is fourteen years old. He's been stealing money from his father, your brother, and taking it to visit this woman.

Your brother is in a bitter rage, humiliated by his son's thievery and grieving his son's lost innocence.

He's going to shoot her.

What do you do?

OVERVIEW

We'll use dice to resolve the conflicts the characters get into. The dice determine not just how the conflict turns out at the end— who wins?— but also how the conflict goes throughout. They provide reversals, escalation, daring advances and desperate retreats, broken bones, cutting betrayals, and all the other juicy goodness a conflict should have.

All the players who have an interest in a particular conflict roll their own dice. Your dice represent your bargaining position in the conflict: the more dice you roll, the more say you have in how the conflict goes. This is because your dice give your characters' actions and reactions weight, consequence. When you have a character throw a punch, you use your dice to back it up. When your character takes a punch, your dice determine whether he shrugs it off or down he goes.

To launch a conflict, we begin by establishing what's at stake, setting the stage, and figuring out who's participating. Every participating player takes up dice to match the circumstances and throws them down all at once. From there on, the conflict plays out kind of like the betting in poker. One player "raises" by having a character act and putting forward two dice to back it up, and all of the other players whose characters are affected by the act have to put forward dice of their own to "see." When you use dice to Raise and See they're gone: put them back in the bowl and don't use them again in this conflict.

Depending on how effectively you See, you might have to take Fallout Dice: dice representing blows your character took— hard words or punches or knives in the ribs or even bullets— and when the conflict's over you'll roll them to see how badly your character is hurt.

If you're losing, you can get more dice by escalating the conflict. Someone's getting the better of your character in an argument? Pull a gun. That'll shut 'em up.

Anyone who has too few dice to See when they have to— and can't or won't escalate— is out of the conflict. Whoever's left at the end gets to decide the fate of what's at stake. Everybody deals with their Fallout Dice, and then the conflict's done!

THE SIMPLE CASE

1. Establish what's at stake. Any player can make suggestions, and everybody should feel free to toss it around until you arrive at the right thing.

WHAT'S AT STAKE IS: DOES YOUR CHARACTER'S BROTHER SHOOT THE WOMAN?

2. Set the stage. Say where the conflict's taking place, what's around, maybe mention where the conflict might range or what features of the environment might come into play. Also have someone say how the conflict will start.

Your character meets his brother on the twin-rut road between his farm and town. The nearest building is his tool shed, a hundred feet behind; otherwise it's all around swaying gold wheat. The sky is insane summer blue and it's before noon. Your character's brother has his old smoothbore carbine and his jaw is clenched. You'll start with just talking, you say.

3. Who's participating?

Just me and you, for now. You're taking your own character's side, of course, and I'm taking your character's brother's.

4. Take up dice. You'll take dice from your character's sheet, as appropriate to this conflict as it opens. I'll take dice from your character's brother's sheet. Here's how it works:

STATS: Which Stats you roll depends on what arena the conflict is currently playing out in. Just talking: roll Acuity + Heart. Physical, but not fighting: roll Body + Heart. Fighting hand-to-hand: roll Body + Will. Fighting with guns: roll Acuity + Will.

Since we start out with our characters just talking, you roll d6s equal to your character's Acuity plus d6s equal to your character's Heart: let's say 6d6 together. I roll d6s equal to your character's brother's Acuity plus his Heart: let's say 7d6.

RELATIONSHIPS: You roll the dice listed for your character's Relationships under pretty limited circumstances: when your Relation is your character's opponent or when your Relation is what's at stake.

Since your character's brother is your opponent, you get whatever dice you have listed for him on your character's sheet. Recall that for blood relations, if you don't specify any dice you get a d6. Let's say that for this particular relationship you have 1d8 listed and I have nothing. You roll your 1d8 and I roll the default 1d6.

TRAITS: You roll the dice listed for your character's Traits when you bring them into play as part of a Raise or See. You roll a Trait's dice only once per conflict, the first time you use it; you can use it subsequently, but you don't get its dice again.

THINGS: You roll the dice listed for your character's Belongings, as for Traits, when you bring them into play in a See or a Raise. You get each thing's dice only once in a conflict. If you bring something into play in a See or a Raise and it's not on your character sheet, you get its normal dice if you're using it as it oughta be used, and a d6 or a d4 otherwise.

Since neither of us has Raised or Seen yet, neither of us get dice from our characters' Traits or Belongings.

All told, you take up 6d6 plus 1d8, and I take up 8d6.

5. We roll all our dice. Leave 'em out on the table where everybody can see. You can push them around into order if you want.

You roll: 1 2 2 3 4 4 7. I roll: 1 1 1 3 4 5 6 6.

6. Now we take turns Raising and Seeing. Here are the ground rules:

Your **BEST ROLL** is the sum of your two highest dice.

Your Best Roll is 11, mine is 12.

To **RAISE**, say what your character does and put forward two of your dice.

You Raise always with two dice. When you Raise, have your character do something that his opponent can't ignore. We'll call it an "attack" for now, but of course it doesn't have to be violent.

(You can Raise with one die under two particular circumstances: when you've HELPED someone else, and when it's your Raise and you have only one die left.)

Your Raise is **BOTH** what your character does and the dice you're using to back it up. Don't put dice forward to Raise without describing your character's action.

To **SEE**, say how your character responds and put forward one or more of your dice.

You See by putting forward dice to equal or exceed the standing Raise. You See with as many dice as you need.

Your See is **BOTH** your character's response and the dice you're using to get it. Don't put dice forward to See without describing how your character deals with the Raise:

If you See with one die, that's **REVERSING THE BLOW**. Say how your character turns the attack back onto the attacker, and don't discard the die you used to See, hold on to it for a minute. When it's your turn to Raise, use that die as one of your two dice to Raise. It counts twice, in other words: you See with it and then immediately use it again to Raise before you discard it.

If you See with two dice, that's a **Block Or Dodge**. Say how your character defends against the attack.

If you See with three or more dice, that's **TAKING THE BLOW**. Say how the attack lands and how your character reacts.

When you Take The Blow, you always get FALLOUT DICE. Take a number of dice equal to the number you used to See— so if you Saw with three, take three, if you Saw with four take four, and so on up— and set them aside until the conflict ends. The size of the Fallout Dice you take depends on the nature of the blow: d4s if it's not physical, d6s if it's physical but not a hit with a weapon, d8s if it's a hit with a weapon but not a bullet, and d10s if it's a bullet.

And finally, if you don't want to play through to the end of a conflict, you can GIVE instead. It's just the same as losing, but without all the Fallout you might've gotten if you'd stayed in.

And here's the procedure:

a. Whichever character's opening the conflict, that player makes the first Raise. Say what your character does and put forward two of your dice to back it up.

You're opening the conflict, so you start: "Hey, 'Zeke, you don't just go shoot people," you have your character say. "Let's talk about this." You Raise with a 4 and a 3, for 7.

When it's not clear who's opening the conflict, it's the player with the highest best roll.

b. Everybody whose character is affected by your Raise has to See. Remember that you Raise with two dice and See with as many as it takes.

I put forward my own 4 and 3 to See. "Get out of my way, boy," I have my character say.

c. Now whoever's next gets to Raise. In this case, me.

"In fact, if you had any conscience of your own, you'd be with me." That's my Raise, so I put forward a 5 and a 6, for 11.

d. Again, everybody whose character is affected by my Raise has to See. Notice that with only two opponents, we simply trade back and forth: you Raise, I See then Raise, you See then Raise, I See then Raise ... and on until one of us is out of dice and the conflict ends.

You have my 11 to See, so you slide forward your 7 and your second 4. "Don't try to tell me about my conscience," you have your character say; that's your See. Here's your Raise: "you go home and see to your son." Raising with your best dice left: two 2s.

I see with my last 6, Reversing The Blow. "Ha! I remember how he used to look up to you! Maybe if you'd been in his life he wouldn't have gone this way." Because I Reversed The Blow, I get to keep the 6 for my Raise. I add one of my 1s to it.

So now you only have the one 1 left. You can't See my Raise, so I win the stakes. Your character stands there with the wind out of his sails and I have my character push past and on into town, where he murders the shopkeeper's supposed wife.

ESCALATING

...And that's pretty grim, no? Let's look at something you can do about it.

When you **ESCALATE**, you get to roll Stat dice for the new arena. Let's take it from my Reversal:

"...Maybe if you'd been in his life he wouldn't have gone this way." I put forward my 1 to go with my 6, so you have a 7 to See.

"Forget this," you say. "I punch you."

Now your character isn't just talking any more! He's fighting, and that means you roll Body plus Will. Take up those new dice, throw 'em down, and add them to whatever's still left on your side.

Let's say that your character's Body plus Will is 7d6. You roll: 1 3 4 5 5 6. Also, let's say that your character has "Fistfighting 1d8" as a Trait, so you roll that d8 as soon as you say "I punch you." You roll a 4 on the d8 and you still have that 1 left from before too.

So you See my outstanding 7 with your 4 and your 3, and put forward two of your 5s to Raise.

Now I get to decide if I'll Give or Escalate to match. Of course I want to Escalate!

Let's say that my character's Body plus Will is 6d6. I roll crap: 1 1 2 2 2 5. I have no immediately relevant Trait and my two leftover 1s aren't much comfort.

I have to See your 10. I See with my 5, two 2s and a 1. Because I'm Seeing with more than two dice, I'm Taking The Blow: "I'm surprised and you catch me right in the jaw," I say. I take four Fallout Dice, the number of dice I used to See, and since I took a punch they're d6s. I set 4d6 aside for after the conflict.

Now all I have left to Raise with is a 2 and some 1s, and you have a 6, a 5, a 4 and some stuff. If I stay in the fight, you'll beat the crap out of me. Instead I Give. Now you get the resolution of what's at stake: you have your character take my gun away and send me home, bruised and grumbling.

You don't need to wait for the Raise you can't See to Escalate. You can Escalate as soon as you want.

In any given conflict, you can roll each of your Stat's dice only once. In a gunfight, we roll Acuity plus Will— but we both rolled our Acuity when we were just talking, and we both rolled our Will when we started punching, so having my character raise the gun wouldn't give me any new Stat dice.

USING TRAITS AND THINGS

Escalating to gun fighting would, however, give me dice for the gun itself— 1d4 plus 1d8, as it happens— plus dice for any gun fighting Traits I might bring into play. It works like this:

Use one of your Traits to Raise or See and you get to roll its dice. Use one of your Belongings to Raise or See and same thing, you get to roll its

dice.

Roll the dice after you say your action, but before you put dice forward.

Like Stats and everything else, you can roll a Trait's or a Belonging's dice only once in a conflict. After that, you can still use the Trait or Belonging to See or Raise, but you don't get more dice for it.

So let's see how that could go. Let's take it from the punch.

Now all I have left to Raise with is a 2 and some 1s, and you have a 6, a 5, a 4 and some stuff. If I stay in the fight, you'll beat the crap out of me. Instead ... I have Zeke raise his gun.

"I can't believe you hit me," I say. "I pull the trigger."

First thing first: I'm Escalating to gun fighting. If I hadn't already, I'd roll Acuity and Will. I have so I don't.

Then I roll the dice for the gun, 1d4 plus 1d8. I roll a 3 and a 7. I also have a Trait: "I'm a good shot 2d6," so I roll those dice: a 3 and a 4.

I look at your dice: your highest two are still a 6 and a 4. If I put forward my 7 and my 4, I'll force you to Take the Blow— but I don't want that, as it happens. That's Fallout in d10s and you're my brother, after all. I put forward a 3 and my 4; I know you can Block or Dodge a 7.

Your character has a wicked handy Trait, though: "disarming enemies 2d8." So when you say (Seeing with 6 and 1, Block or Dodge), "I grab the barrel of the gun and shove it upward so you shoot into the air," and then you say, "and I jerk it out of your hands," things take a bad turn for me. You roll a 3 and an 8 on your 2d8. You Raise with the 8 and your 4, so I have to Take the Blow. I See with a 7, a 3, and a 2. Your character gets the gun and I get 3d6 Fallout. (We've escalated to gun fighting, yes, but the blow I took was merely rough physical treatment, not a gunshot.)

Anyhow we struggle over the gun but if you've been paying attention to our dice, you'll see that I can't win.

Now your character does send mine home, humiliated and gunless.

Is the potential for bad, bad Fallout— inflicted and received, remember; when one gun comes out, others often follow— anyway is it worth those dice? Depends on the circumstances and your personal will.

IMPROVISED THINGS: Sometimes you'll have your character use a tool or weapon not listed on your sheet. If your character's using it to its intended purpose— shooting a gun, looking through a spyglass, hitting things with a hammer— you get its normal dice. If your character's using it for something unintended— hitting someone with a pistol's butt, wedging a hammer into a doorjamb to hold it shut— you get 1d6, or 1d4 if it's a dumb, desperate or dangerous thing to do. There's an example in passing below, so keep an eye out for it.

TIMING TRAITS AND THINGS

- Say your See or Raise, incorporating the Trait or Thing. This brings it into play.

- Roll its dice and add them to whatever dice you've already got.

- Put forward the dice you're using for your See or Raise.

If you say "I shoot you" for a Raise, for instance, you get to roll your gun's dice and THEN assign dice to your Raise. The dice you roll for the Trait or Thing are available to you.

Remember that you can roll a Trait's or Thing's dice only once in any conflict, no matter how many times you incorporate it into a See or Raise.

FALLOUT

But what about those blows my character took? Here's how Fallout Dice work:

a. Roll all your Fallout Dice. If you Took more than one Blow, you might have Fallout in different sizes; that's just fine. Roll 'em all and add the two highest together; that's your Fallout Sum.

I roll my 7d6 Fallout: 1 1 2 4 5 5 6. I'm hurtin' at 11.

b. Is your Fallout Sum less than 8? If so, your character suffers only short-term consequences. Choose one of these things:

- Subtract 1 from one of your character's Stats for your next conflict.

- Take a new trait rated 1d4 for your next conflict.

- Change the dice of one of your character's Relationships to d4s for your next conflict.

- Have your character leave the scene and spend some time alone. Only choose this one if nobody else launches a follow-up conflict.

(This is the short-term list.)

c. Otherwise, if your Fallout Sum is 8 or higher, your character suffers lasting harm. Choose one of these things:

- Subtract 1 from one of your character's Stats.

- Take a new trait at 1d4.

- Take a new relationship at 1d4.

- Add 1d to an existing d4 trait or relationship.

- Subtract 1d from an existing d6+ trait or relationship.

- Change the die size of an existing trait or relationship to d4.

- Erase a Belonging from your character's sheet.

- Change the description of your coat to include bad damage. Reduce your coat's dice as appropriate.

(This is the long-term list.)

d. In addition, is your Fallout Sum 12 or higher? If so, your character's injured. Choose again from the long-term list.

Injured how badly, though?

e. Is your Fallout Sum less than 16? If so, Roll dice equal to your character's Body. If you can See your current Fallout Sum in 3 or fewer dice, your character will recover without medical attention. Stop here. Otherwise, bump your current Fallout Sum up to 16 and continue.

f. Is your Fallout Sum 16 or higher? If so, your character's badly injured. With medical attention he might live, but without it, he won't.

- If your character gets medical attention, launch a new conflict. You roll your character's Body plus the healer's Acuity, plus any relevant Relationships, Traits and Tools, of course. (If your healer is a fellow Player Character, have that player roll the dice.) I roll all your Fallout Dice again plus the Demonic Influence (about which, more later). What's at stake is whether your character will live. Your healer takes any Fallout from this roll. If you and your healer win, your character will live; stop here. Otherwise bump your current Fallout Sum up to 20 and continue.

- If you don't get medical attention, bump your current Fallout Sum up to 20 and continue.

g. Is your Fallout Sum 20 or higher? If so, your character's dead. Choose one of the following:

- Die now.

- Set up your death scene, during which you'll die.

Notice that since only guns inflict d10 Fallout, only a gunfight can kill your character outright, and then only if you roll two 10s on your Fallout Dice. Otherwise, your character will at least have the opportunity to survive with medical care.

Notice also that since just talking inflicts only d4 Fallout, only if you roll two 4s will an argument give your character long-term consequences.

h. While your Fallout Dice are still there on the table, check to see: did you roll any 1s?

If so, your character gets something good out of the conflict. Choose one of these things:

- Add 1 to one of your Stats.

- Create a new Trait at 1d6.

- Add or subtract 1 die from an existing Trait.

- Change the d-size of an existing Trait.

- Create a new Relationship at 1d6.

- Add or subtract 1 die from an existing Relationship.

- Change the d-size of an existing Relationship.
- Write a new Belonging on your character sheet and give it its usual dice.

(This is the experience list. Choose only one per conflict, no matter how many 1s you rolled in Fallout.)

i. All of these many choices you get to make, whatever you choose, you have to justify it out of the events of the conflict. If any of your fellow players can't see it, you have to explain better, say more, and win that person over.

My Fallout Sum, as you remember, is 11. My character suffers lasting harm but isn't injured. From the long-term list I choose to change the die size of my character's Relationship with your character, his brother, to d4. Is it justified? I'd be surprised if anyone even asked.

Also I did, in fact, roll at least one 1 on my Fallout Dice. From the experience list I choose a new Relationship for my character: the shopkeeper's purported wife, 1d6. I explain that while he's not gonna go shoot her, his hate isn't resolved, it's festering. He thinks about her all the time. Everybody agrees that that makes sense, so there we go.

FOLLOW-UP CONFLICTS

A follow-up conflict is simply a new conflict that follows on the one just ended. In general you treat it exactly as you would any other. As the GM, though, I get one extra option, and it's a good one: if nobody cares about my NPCs' Fallout, I don't roll my Fallout Dice. Instead, I give them to you to roll straight into your side of the new conflict. They're the advantage you carry into the follow-up.

Later on, I have your character's brother hire some thugs to go burn down the shopkeeper's store. We play it out as a conflict and your character fends them off and manages to corner one in a nearby stable. There's lots of hitting and even a couple of shots fired during the conflict, so I have some ugly Fallout Dice: 6d6 and 3d10. You launch a follow-up conflict where what's at stake is whether this captured thug reveals that your character's brother is behind the attempted arson.

Since none of the players really cares what happens to the thugs, instead of rolling their Fallout Dice I give them to you for the follow-up conflict. You roll them with your character's Acuity and Heart; they're all there available for you to Raise and See with.

Frankly? I don't like my odds.

USING RELATIONSHIPS

Because rolling your character's relationship depends on who your character's opponent is and what's at stake, you'll roll them at the beginning of the conflict, with your Stats.

WITH A PERSON: A relationship with a person contributes its dice to your side of a conflict when a) the person is your character's opponent, b)

the person is what's at stake, or c) the person comes to your character's active aid in a conflict.

WITH AN INSTITUTION: A relationship with an institution (like the Faith or the Dogs) contributes its dice to your side of a conflict when a) your character's opponent is a person with authority in the institution, or b) what's at stake is your character's status with regard to the institution.

WITH A PLACE: A relationship with a place contributes its dice to your side of a conflict when a) your character's at the place, or b) the place is what's at stake.

WITH A SIN: A relationship with a sin contributes its dice to your side of a conflict when a) your character has committed the sin and it's relevant to the conflict, b) your character's resisted committing the sin and it's relevant to the conflict, c) what's at stake is someone's commission of the sin— your character's, your opponent's, or someone else's.

WITH A DEMON: A relationship with a demon contributes its dice to your side of a conflict when a) the demon is your character's opponent, via a sorcerer or possessed person, or b) the demon is what's at stake.

If your character has a Relationship with a demon, he or she can ask the demon for help at any time. Add the situation's Demonic Influence to your side, with supernatural special effects. This makes your character a Sorcerer; what that means to your character's soul is, as always, in your hands.

TIMING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

If you have unassigned Relationship Dice, you can put a new Relationship on your character sheet at any time. Just name the relationship and assign dice to it.

If you assign a new Relationship during a conflict, and the Relationship is with either your opponent or what's at stake, roll the newly applicable dice right away.

MULTIPLE OPPONENTS

The Raise-See-Raise rhythm is very easy when there's only you and me, but what if there are more of us?

a. Whenever you Raise, everybody whose character is affected has to See.

b. Break it into Rounds and Goes if that helps. In every Round, every player gets one Go; your Go is when you Raise.

c. You get your Go in order of highest Best Roll.

So here's a little outline of how it works, stripped down to the bones:

ROUND STARTS.

Order by Best Roll is: Player 1, Player 2, GM, Player 4, Player 3.
Boldface marks each go.

Player 1: I Raise, GM is affected.

GM: I See.

Player 2: I Raise, Player 3 and GM are affected.

Player 3: I See.

GM: I See.

GM: I Raise. Player 1, Player 2, Player 4 are affected.

Player 1: I See.

Player 2: I See.

Player 4: I See.

Player 4: I Raise. GM is affected.

GM: I See.

Player 3: I Raise. Player 2 is affected.

Player 2: I See.

Round Ends

Next Round, everybody still in the conflict gets one Go again, but the order may have changed.

In play, you should make explicit who you expect to See your Raises, but usually it'll be obvious from your description of what you do.

The other PCs have had enough of your character's brother. They've decided to beat sense into him. You see their point but, well, he's your brother, and you'll stand with him. They corner the two of you in a hay barn.

You're Player 3; I'm the GM. Zeke's your character's brother, recall; I'm playing him. We join the fight in progress:

Round starts.

Order by Best Roll is: Player 1, Player 2, me, Player 4, you. Boldface

marks each go.

Player 1: I grab Zeke from behind and hold him for you to punch [to Player 4].

Me (Block or Dodge): He twists out of your grip. You can keep hold of his jacket if you want.

Player 1: Cool. I throw it down in the hay.

Player 2: I hook your ankle and throw you over into Zeke [to you].

You (Taking the Blow): Oof. I windmill my arms and go down on my butt.

Me (Block or Dodge): ...But Zeke jumps out of the way.

Me: In fact he jumps over to the wall and pulls down a big ol' hay rake. Since you're down [to you], he swings it freely, chest high, like whaa! at all of you [to Players 1, 2, 4]. (I roll a d6 for the improvised weapon, by the way.)

Player 1 (Taking the Blow): You knock the wind outa me.

Player 2 (Block or Dodge): I throw myself down. Whish!

Player 4 (Block or Dodge): I catch the rake, like hah!

Player 4: ...And jerk it out of your hands [to me].

Me (Taking the Blow): All yours.

You: Hey, you're down in the hay with me [to Player 2]? I roll over onto you and get you in a head lock.

Player 2 (Taking the Blow): Ow! Get off! Urk!

Round ends.

HELPING

If you and a friend are in a conflict together, you can help one another. It works like this:

On your friend's Go, you can give one of your dice to your friend's Raise. You have to have your character do something that would a) clearly and directly contribute to your friend's character's action, and b) be obviously something your character could do, given everything else going on. If anyone objects that your character's too busy or in the wrong part of the scene, you should graciously withdraw. Given that everybody thinks it's reasonable, though, just slide one of your dice over to go with your friend's.

On someone else's Go, you can give one of your dice to your friend's See. Again, you have to have your character do something both clearly helpful and clearly possible, and again if anyone objects, don't insist.

Either way, however, you've spent the die, and moreover, you've borrowed against your own next Raise. On your next Go, Raise with only one die.

You can't help two people between your Goes. If you could, you'd have to Raise with no dice, and that doesn't make any sense.

Player 4's character has reversed the rake in his hands and brings it crashing down on your character's back. Player 4 puts forward a big Raise, and you've only got small dice: you'll be out of the conflict.

I've been holding a good die in reserve, though. "Zeke shouts and shoves you out of the way," I say, and I give you my die. With it, you're able to See and stay in the fight.

I've spent it from my next Raise, though, so when it comes around to my Go, I'll Raise with only one die.

When you give a die to a friend for a See, it doesn't count against her for Fallout. In other words, if your friend is able to See with one die plus yours, that's a Reversal; with two dice plus yours, that's a Block or Dodge; with three dice plus yours, that's Taking the Blow for three dice of Fallout.

USING CEREMONY

Sorcerers, demons, the possessed, and the souls of the Faithful can't ignore ceremony performed with authority. That means that when your character's in conflict with one of those sorts of opponents, you can use ceremony to See and Raise!

Your character can perform an entire ceremony, including many ceremonial elements, as a single See or Raise, or each See and Raise can be a single element of ceremony. Choose whichever better serves the pace of the conflict. I call upon the Authority of the Ancients! I make the Sign of the Tree! I command you By Name to depart! Raise 9! Or, if you'd rather: I call upon the Authority of the Ancients! Raise 6! I make the Sign of the Tree! See 7! I command you By Name to depart! Raise 9! Either is, as I say, valid.

In addition, the elements of ceremony that your character uses determines the Fallout dice that your character's opponent receives when Taking the Blow. Ceremony is like a weapon, in that way.

CEREMONIAL FALLOUT

- Anointing with Sacred Earth: d8s.
- Calling by Name: d4s.
- Invoking the Ancients: d4s.
- Laying on Hands: d6s.
- Making the Sign of the Tree: d6s.
- Reciting the Book of Life: d4s.
- Singing Praise: d6s.
- Three In Authority: d8s.

If you're creating a multiple-element ceremony as a single Raise, inflict the highest die-size Fallout of all the elements you're including. If, for instance, your ceremony includes Calling by Name, Invoking the Ancients, and Making the Sign of the Tree, it inflicts d6s for Fallout.

Strictly, bringing ceremony into a conflict is NOT escalating. You don't get to roll new dice— unless you've got a Trait or Belonging that now applies. No, ceremony is useful only because it lets you Raise against demons and sorcerers on their own terms.

Remember the supernatural continuum? If your game is at the low-supernatural edge, you might go the entire thing without using ceremony a'tall.

DEMONIC INFLUENCE

Some conflicts call for me as the GM to “roll Demonic Influence,” that is, to bring to bear the sort of generalized badness of what's going on in the town. Demonic Influence depends on WHAT THE DOGS HAVE DISCOVERED

about the town, not what's actually going on. What's the worst “something wrong” manifestation the PCs have seen here?

- Injustice: the Demonic Influence is 1d10.
- Demonic Attacks: the Demonic Influence is 2d10.
- Heresy: the Demonic Influence is 3d10.
- Sorcery: the Demonic Influence is 4d10.
- Hate and Murder: the Demonic Influence is 5d10.

There are three cases in particular:

WHEN A CHARACTER'S CRITICALLY INJURED BUT GETS MEDICAL ATTENTION, I scoop up all of the Fallout Dice the player just rolled, add the Demonic Influence, and roll the lot. If the character's dying but didn't roll any Fallout— if the character's life was named as what's at stake in a

conflict, for instance— I roll 4d6 plus the Demonic Influence.

WHEN A CHARACTER LAUNCHES A CONFLICT AND THERE'S NO CLEAR OPPOSITION, I roll 4d6 plus the Demonic Influence.

WHEN A SORCERER CALLS UPON THE DEMONS FOR HELP, I add roll the Demonic Influence into the sorcerer's side of the conflict, as though it were a Trait or Thing.

RECAP

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

First, say WHAT'S AT STAKE.

Second, SET THE STAGE and the opening arena.

Third, ROLL STAT DICE, depending on the arena:

- Just talking: Acuity + Heart.
- Physical, not fighting: Body + Heart.
- Fighting hand to hand: Body + Will.
- Gun fighting: Acuity + Will.

Fourth, ROLL RELATIONSHIP DICE if they apply. Relationships apply when your relation is your opponent, or your relation is at stake.

Fifth, TAKE TURNS RAISING:

- A Raise is an action your opponent's character can't ignore.
- Whoever opens the conflict does the first Raise.
- In every round, everyone Raises once, in order of Best Roll.
- For every Raise, everyone affected has to See.
- If your Raise or See brings one of your Traits or Belongings into the conflict, roll its dice.
- If you See with one die, that's Reversing the Blow. If you See with two dice, that's Block or Dodge. If you See with three or more dice, that's Taking the Blow.
- When you Take a Blow, you get Fallout Dice equal to the number of dice you used to See.
- If you Escalate the conflict to a new arena, roll your appropriate Stats.
- If you Help someone, give her a die, and Raise with only one die when it's your go.

Sixth, WHEN SOMEONE CAN'T SEE A RAISE, that person's out of the conflict. The last person in the conflict gets to say what happens with what's at stake.

Seventh, everybody rolls FALLOUT:

- If you roll any 1s, choose something from the experience list.
- If your highest two dice sum to less than 8, choose something from the short-term list.
- If they sum to 8 to 11, choose something from the long-term list.
- If they sum to 12 or more, choose two things from the long-term list, and your character's injured.

- If they sum to 16 to 19, your character's badly injured. Launch a follow-up conflict where what's at stake is whether he dies.

- If they sum to 20, your character's dying.

Eighth, somebody launch a FOLLOW-UP CONFLICT, or move on to the next scene.

TIMING DICE

- Roll Stat dice at the beginning of the conflict and when the conflict escalates to a new arena.

- Roll Relationship dice at the beginning of the conflict, only.

- Roll Trait and Thing dice when you bring the Trait or thing into play, incorporated into a See or Raise. Roll the dice AFTER you say the See or Raise, but BEFORE you assign its dice.

- Roll each Stat's, each Relationship's, each Trait's and each Thing's dice at most once per conflict.

FALLOUT DICE

Whenever you Take a Blow, you get one Fallout die for each die you used to See. The size of the dice depends on the blow you took:

THE BLOW WAS...

- Not physical, not ceremonial: d4s.

- Physical: d6s.

- A weapon: d8s.

- A gunshot: d10s.

CEREMONIAL:

- Anointing with Sacred Earth: d8s.

- Calling by Name: d4s.

- Invoking the Ancients: d4s.

- Laying on Hands: d6s.

- Making the Sign of the Tree: d6s.

- Reciting the Book of Life: d4s.

- Singing Praise: d6s.

- Three In Authority: d8s.

- If the ceremony included more than one of these, take the highest die size.

INTERPRETING FALLOUT:

- Did you roll at least one 1? Choose something from the experience

Fallout list. Continue.

- Did your two highest dice SUM TO 7 OR LESS? Choose something from the short-term Fallout list. Stop.

- Did your two highest dice SUM TO 8-11? Your character's injured: choose something from the long-term Fallout list. Stop.

- Did your two highest dice SUM TO 12 OR MORE? Your character's badly injured. Choose two things from the long-term Fallout list. Continue.

- Did your two highest dice SUM TO 12-15? You might need medical attention. Roll your Body. Consider your two highest Fallout dice to be a Raise; if you can See in three dice or fewer, you'll recover without medical attention; stop. If you can't, bump your Fallout sum to 16; continue.

- Did your two highest dice SUM TO 16-19? Without medical attention your character will die: bump your Fallout sum to 20 and continue. With medical attention, your character might live: launch a follow up conflict: your Body + the healer's Acuity vs. your Fallout dice (rerolled) + the Demonic Influence. What's at stake is: does your character live? If you lose, bump your Fallout sum to 20 and continue; otherwise stop.

- Did your two highest dice SUM TO 20? Your character's dying. Stop.

THE SHORT-TERM FALLOUT LIST:

- Subtract 1 from one of your character's Stats for your next conflict.

- Take a new trait rated 1d4 for your next conflict.

- Change the dice of one of your character's Relationships to d4s for your next conflict.

- Have your character leave the scene and spend some time alone. Only choose this one if nobody else launches a follow-up conflict.

THE LONG-TERM FALLOUT LIST:

- Subtract 1 from one of your character's Stats.

- Take a new trait at 1d4.

- Take a new relationship at 1d4.

- Add 1d to an existing d4 trait or relationship.

- Subtract 1d from an existing d6+ trait or relationship.

- Change the die size of an existing trait or relationship to d4.

- Erase a Belonging from your character's sheet.

- Change the description of your coat to include bad damage. Reduce your coat's dice as appropriate.

THE EXPERIENCE FALLOUT LIST:

- Add 1 to one of your Stats.

- Create a new Trait at 1d6.
- Add or subtract 1 die from an existing Trait.
- Change the d-size of an existing Trait.
- Create a new Relationship at 1d6.
- Add or subtract 1 die from an existing Relationship.
- Change the d-size of an existing Relationship.
- Write a Belonging on your character sheet and give it its usual dice.

DEMONIC INFLUENCE

What's the worst "something wrong" manifestation the PCs have seen here?

- Injustice: the Demonic Influence is 1d10.
- Demonic Attacks: the Demonic Influence is 2d10.
- Heresy: the Demonic Influence is 3d10.
- Sorcery: the Demonic Influence is 4d10.
- Hate and Murder: the Demonic Influence is 5d10.



SOME COOL APPLICATIONS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

You can see how the conflict rules apply to arguments, chases, fistfights, shootouts, preaching to a crowd, exorcising a demon— but they're more flexible even than that. Here are some subtler cases to get you thinking.

SPLIT SECONDS

What's at stake: DO YOU OUTSHOOT THE SHOOTING INSTRUCTOR?

- The stage: the shooting range outside the Dogs' Temple. You've been shooting at cans and scarecrows; now someone flips a nickel. Do you hit it? All the Seeing and Raising has to come between when the person flips the nickel and when you pull the trigger.

- You roll Acuity + Will. I roll 4d6 + 4d10 (this being your initiatory conflict).

- My Raises might include the sun's glare, the distance to the shot, the nickel's flickering in the light, the fact that you'll hurt the instructor in front of your fellow initiates, your grandfather's insistence to you as a kid that you never take a shot you can't hit.

- Your Raises might include stilling your breath, stilling your mind, leading your target, remembering your grandfather's hand on yours as he taught you to shoot, fear that if you miss the shot you'll look presumptuous and foolish.

What's at stake: WHO DRAWS FIRST?

- The stage: the dusty street through town. The big town clock has just made that click noise it makes before it strikes noon. All the Seeing and Raising has to happen in the instant before the first gong.

- We roll Acuity + Will.

- Our Raises might include flexing our hands, narrowing our eyes, a bird flying across the sun, our fear of death, stilling our thoughts, little flinches and hesitations, doubts about our rightness in the fight.

OTHER TIME TRICKS

What's at stake: DO YOU LEARN TO RIDE?

- The stage: the hills and brooks and scrubland above the Dogs' Temple. You've never ridden a horse before you came here. Our Seeing and Raising will take place in snapshots over the months of your initiation, like a montage sequence in any movie.

- You roll Body + Heart. I roll 4d6 + 4d10, again.

- My Raises might be the challenging riding situations you find yourself in.

- Your Raises might be riding challenges you set for yourself, but each time, you start with “on the next day that I go out riding...”

I gave an example way back in the Character Creation chapter:

What’s at stake: DO YOU LEARN TO STOP SWEARING?

- The stage: your teachers bring you into council and take you to task.

- You roll Acuity + Heart. I roll 4d6 + 4d10.

- We Raise and See back and forth, but somewhere in the middle I Raise with this: “two nights later, two men corner you behind the stable...”

Cool, huh? Two nights pass between my See and my Raise.

How about flashbacks?

What’s at stake: DO I LOSE YOU?

- The stage: you’ve tracked me into the mountains up above Bowers Draw. My hideout is up here somewhere. I’ve killed some people and you aren’t inclined to let me get away.

- We roll Acuity + Heart.

- We Raise and See back and forth, but somewhere in the middle you Raise with this: “flashback to me at the scene of the killings. I’m bent down, looking at something on the corner of the doorframe: some red mud. I do it like this between my fingers. It’s the same red mud as up here in the creek bed!”

BODYGUARDS

What’s at stake: DO YOU GUN ME DOWN?

- The stage: you’ve tracked me into the mountains up above Bowers Draw and run me to ground. I’ve got a couple of my thugs with me. You aren’t in the mood to talk.

- We roll Acuity + Will and start shooting.

- The interesting thing here is that I can have one of my thugs take the bullet as a Block or Dodge, if I want. You Raise with “I creep up along the ridge until I’ve got a shot at you” and I Take the Blow, “I keep shooting where I thought you were.” Then you Raise with “I draw careful sight at the side of your head ... BAM!” and I Block or Dodge, “my thug Billy sees the glint of your barrel and dives! You splatter me with his gore!” Billy’s dead, poor jerk, but it was still a Block or Dodge because you didn’t hit me.

AMBUSH

What’s at stake: DO YOU GET MURDERED IN YOUR BED?

- The stage: your room at night. A possessed sinner creeps into your room without waking you.

- You roll only Acuity, because you’re asleep. I roll Body + Will.

- My first Raise will be to hit you in the head with my axe. I get my axe dice too! I'm rolling a lot more dice than you, so probably you have to Take the Blow. But check it out— that means you take Fallout and get to say how, it doesn't mean you're dead. You aren't dead unless the whole conflict goes my way.

- So let's say that you take the blow: "I hear him coming even in my sleep, but he gashes me bad..." Then it's your Raise, and you can escalate: "...I come awake already in motion, with blood in my eyes and my knife in my hand!" Away we go!

I should tell you, in an early playtest I startled one of my players bad with this very conflict. In most roleplaying games, saying "an enemy sneaks into your room in the middle of the night and hits you in the head with an axe" is cheating. I've hosed the character and the player with no warning and no way out. Not in Dogs, though: the resolution rules are built to handle it. I don't have to pull my punches!

(You've GMed a bunch of RPGs before, right? Think about what I just said for a minute. You know how you usually pull your punches?)

LIFE OR DEATH

What's at stake: ARE YOU DEAD?

- The stage: you've been hit in the head with an axe. You Took the Blow and rolled an 18 for Fallout. Your companion's rushing to your side to provide first aid.

- Your friend rolls your Body plus his own Acuity. I roll all of your Fallout Dice again, plus the town's Demonic Influence.

- My Raises might include you falling unconscious, you hearing the voices of angels, your blood spurting, your pulse failing, your deceased loved ones welcoming you among them.

- Your friend's Raises might include medical attention, exhortation, and ceremony.

There's another way to die than by taking bad Fallout. What's at stake is: does my character kill yours? It's possible for you to lose the conflict without taking any Fallout a'tall, let alone rolling a 16+.

When that happens, treat it exactly as though your attacker hit you with four dice Fallout, of the size appropriate to his weapon— d10s for a gun, d8s for an axe, etc.— and you rolled a 16. If you get medical attention, we roll over into this new conflict: are you dead? If you don't, we don't: you're just dead.

For instance, I have a possessed person hit you in the head with an axe, what's at stake is does he murder you, I put forward a fat Raise and you don't have the dice to See ... so you have to Give. You're dying of an axe in the head. Ouch. Your companion rushes to your side. So now we roll

forward into this conflict where what's at stake is: are you dead? I roll 4d8 + Demonic Influence, just as though you'd taken 4d8 Fallout.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Think back to that supernatural continuum. Let's say that we're playing somewhere in the middle of it: not flashy, not colorful, but creepy...

What's at stake: DO YOU FIGURE OUT WHO MURDERED HER?

- The stage: you're bending over her body, cold, where it lies in the tool shed. She's got a rake through her.

- You Roll Acuity + Heart. I roll 4d6 + Demonic Influence.

- Your first Raise is to Call her by Name and ask her ghost to answer your questions.

Sweet! Now we get to incorporate the chills, the disembodied voices, the reenactment of the crime, the pain, the hate of talking to a ghost into our Raises and Sees.

What's at stake: DO YOU CONTROL THE DEMON?

- The stage: this is another initiatory accomplishment. Your teachers take you to a prepared place outside of Bridal Falls City, where there's a consecrated grove of trees and a huge marble box. The box is carved with prayers and inside it there's a demon. Your teachers give you a crowbar and wait among the trees.

- You roll Acuity + Heart. I roll 4d6 + 4d10.

- Naturally your Raises and Sees will be all ceremony.

- I decide at once that the demon's going to try to possess you, and if it succeeds it'll pantomime forcing itself back into the box, as a ruse to get your teachers to let it escape. So in my Raises I have it battering on you like wind, whispering into your ears, forcing itself into your mouth and eyes, anything to get inside.

I hope I win. I have a great follow-up conflict in mind.

Or let's say that we're playing way out on the other end of it, where the whole landscape of the game is magically charged. It's a Western version of A CHINESE GHOST STORY!

What's at stake: DO YOU STOP ME FROM MURDERING HER?

- The stage: I rode down on her in the middle of the town street, but you spooked my horse and it bucked me off. Now I jump up, swinging my wicked big repeater around and escalating to shooting!

- We roll Acuity + Will.

- My Raise is fanning the hammer. Bam bam bam bam bam!

- You put forward dice to Block or Dodge and say something like this:

“I sweep my coat around and the bullets spark off of it, like pang pang pang! I’m mighty with the power of righteousness!” Then you Raise with something like this: “I Call you by your Secret Name and command you to drop the gun!”

Fun, huh?



THE STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

If Dogs in the Vineyard were a board game, this would be the board.

1. CHARACTER CREATION

PLAYERS:

- Create suitable characters;
- Contribute to one another's characters;
- Contribute details to the game's landscape and culture, in the form of back story, Traits, et cetera;
- Get a handle on the game's resolution rules.

PCs:

- Get initiated.

GM:

- Contribute to the players' characters;
- Present the game's landscape and culture, incorporating the other players' contributions;
- Begin to establish your role as the primary author of adversity in the game, via conflict resolution.

NPCs:

- Support and/or oppose the PCs' initiations, as called for by the initiatory conflicts.

2. LONG-TERM PLAY: EACH CHARACTER'S SERVICE AS A DOG

PLAYERS:

- Show your character in action.
- Comment on each others' characters in action.
- Continue to contribute details to the game's setting.

PCs:

- Travel from congregation to congregation, facing danger and putting things as right as they can.

GM:

- Create and present towns and NPCs.
- Continue to develop and present the game's setting, with the players' contributions.
- Identify and challenge the PCs' moral grounds, by provoking their judgment.

NPCs:

- Variously oppose, support, and otherwise engage the PCs, to serve their own interests.

3. SHORT-TERM PLAY: EACH TOWN

PLAYERS:

- Play your character!
- Respond actively to your fellow players' play;
- Drive play toward conflict;
- Set stakes, follow up, and assign your character's Fallout, as called for.

PCs:

- Deliver mail and news;
- Bless babies, sanctify marriages, heal the sick and injured, participate in ceremonies and celebrations;
- Uncover the town's pride, sin, apostasy and hate, lay it bare, and pronounce judgment upon it.

GM:

- Play the town!
- Drive play toward conflict;
- Actively reveal the town in play;
- Follow the players' lead about what's important and what's not;
- DO NOT have a solution in mind, but be open to whatever solutions the PCs come to;
- Escalate, escalate, escalate.

NPCs:

- Try to get the PCs on their side;
- Try to undermine the PCs' authority;
- Reveal their troubles to the PCs, either directly or by protesting too much;
- Try to chase the PCs off with threats and violence;
- Offer to help the PCs in any way necessary;
- Try to murder the PCs in their sleep;
- Ask the PCs for special considerations;
- Ask the PCs for honest advice;
- Tell the PCs that it's no big thing, when obviously it's all that matters;
- etc.!

4. SHORT-TERM PLAY: BETWEEN TOWNS

PLAYERS:

- Assign your character's Experience for the town.

PCs:

- Decide: press on to the next town, return to a previous town, or return to the Dogs' Temple;
- Travel and reflect.

GM:

- Prepare the town the PCs are traveling to, by creating or updating it.
- Prepare a batch of proto-NPCs.

5. LONG-TERM PLAY: AT THE END OF A DOG'S SERVICE

PLAYERS & GM:

- Create an epilogue or eulogy for the exiting character.

PLAYER:

- Create a new character.

GOING FORWARD:

- If the exiting character comes back into play, he or she can be played as either a temporary PC, an NPC, or some combination.

If you like, you can think of this as the skeleton of the game, and all the other chapters as the meat.

During play, if you don't know what to do RIGHT NOW, check this outline first.



CREATING TOWNS

OVERVIEW

There's something wrong, of course. That's what makes the game interesting, otherwise you're just roleplaying being welcomed by the people and kissing their babies and shaking their hands. So when the PCs arrive, amidst all the baby kissing and being welcomed, some people are acting odd, or something bad has recently happened, or there's something just not right. Your job as GM is to reveal the wrongness, in all its dirty little glory.

"Something wrong" falls into a tidy progression, which looks like this:

PRIDE (manifests as injustice).

...LEADS TO ...

SIN (manifests as demons attacking from outside, in the form of famine, plague, raiding outlaw bands, or whatever).

...LEADS TO ...

FALSE DOCTRINE (manifests as corrupt religious practices and heresy).

...LEADS TO ...

FALSE PRIESTHOOD (manifests as demons within the congregation: sorcery, possession and active evil).

...LEADS TO ...

HATE AND MURDER.

When you create a town, you identify some key people in it, decide what's wrong with it and how it affects the people you've identified, decide how people will react to the PCs' arrival, and imagine what might happen if they never came.

SOMETHING'S WRONG

PRIDE

Pride means wanting something better, or more, or higher, than your fellows have. Pride doesn't value a thing for **ITSELF**: it isn't Pride to say "I want that because it's pretty." Pride values a thing only by contrast to what others have: it's Pride to say "I want that because I should have something **PRETTIER THAN YOURS.**"

1. STEWARDSHIP

THE FAITH'S ORGANIZATION is made of nested domains of spiritual authority, called Stewardship. Stewardship forms a hierarchy of responsibility from each individual Faithful up to the Prophets and Ancients of the Faith, who derive their Stewardship from the King of Life. You're

responsible for anyone who falls within your Stewardship, and you're responsible to whomever holds Stewardship over you. At the end, you'll be judged for how you fulfilled your Stewardship.

THE FAITH OVERALL looks like this, where “}” means “falls under the Stewardship of”:

LOCAL FAMILIES | LOCAL OFFICIALS | REGIONAL OFFICIALS | PROPHETS & ANCIENTS OF THE FAITH

FAMILIES look like this:

CHILDREN, ELDER PARENTS, RELATED UNMARRIED ADULTS IN THE HOUSE | MARRIED ADULTS | HUSBAND

LOCAL OFFICIALS look like this:

VARIOUS DUTY-SPECIFIC OFFICIALS, IF THERE ARE ENOUGH FAMILIES TO NEED SPECIALIZED OFFICES | COUNSELORS, IF THERE ARE ENOUGH FAMILIES THAT ONE STEWARD CAN'T DO IT ALL | STEWARD.

REGIONAL OFFICIALS look just the same. The duty-specific regional officials are to the local officials as the local officials are to the families:

VARIOUS DUTY-SPECIFIC OFFICIALS, IF THERE ARE ENOUGH BRANCHES IN THE REGION TO NEED SPECIALIZED OFFICES | COUNSELORS, IF THERE ARE ENOUGH BRANCHES THAT ONE STEWARD CAN'T OVERSEE THEM ALL | REGIONAL STEWARD.

And THE PROPHETS AND ANCIENTS OF THE FAITH have their own internal structure, but it's not relevant. They speak and act as one, from our point of view here.

Now, THE DOGS! The Dogs look like this:

CONGREGATION | DOGS ASSIGNED TO IT | STEWARDS AT THE DOGS' TEMPLE | PROPHETS & ANCIENTS OF THE FAITH

Notice that the branch Steward has Stewardship over the families in his congregation, while the Dogs assigned to that route have Stewardship over his congregation as a whole, including him in his official capacity. Dogs have no authority to solve the problems of families or individuals, that's the Steward's job, except as the problems spill over into the congregation as a whole. (Which they pretty much do, so that's okay.)

Oh, and AN INDIVIDUAL PERSON looks like this:

DAY-TO-DAY BEHAVIOR, OBEDIENCE, DESTINY, PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS | YOU

You do not have Stewardship over your role in your family, your congregation, or the Faith! Those belong to your Steward.

What Stewardship means in practice is: the King of Life will talk to you about what you have Stewardship over, and expect you to keep it in order.

An example: Brother Zachary is a man in Brother Parley's branch. He has a wife, six children (two of whom are unmarried adults), and his wife's aging mother in his family. The King of Life does not talk to Brother Parley about Brother Zachary's wife, kids, or mother in law. He talks to Brother Parley about Brother Zachary's family: "Brother Zachary's family is troubled," He might say. "See what you can do about that." Then Brother Parley goes to Brother Zachary and says, "The King of Life tells me your family is troubled; what's up?" And Brother Zachary might answer: "well, He tells me that my oldest is impatient and bored, which would explain why he's being so rude to his grandmother. I'm thinking I'll send him to my brother's out in Chapelon for a change of scenery." That's if Brother Zachary is lucky and on top of things. If he's not, he might answer: "yeah, the Living King only knows what's going on with them. Fight fight fight, and I can't keep anyone under control." Now Brother Parley has to say, "okay, well you'd better get right with the King and quick, so He'll help you get your family in order."

Stewardship applies to interpreting doctrine! The King of Life tells the Prophets and Ancients the Truth Immortal. The Prophets and Ancients derive from Truth Immortal specific doctrines, as It applies to the here and now, which they tell to the regional Stewards. The regional Stewards apply the doctrines to the circumstances of their regions, and tell their branch Stewards. The branch Stewards apply these interpretations to their own congregations, and tell the families. The husbands apply the interpretations to themselves and their wives, and with their wives apply them to their children and other family members. Responsibility for following doctrine goes back up the line: if family members don't, the husband has to answer to the branch Steward; if a branch doesn't, the branch Steward has to answer to the regional Steward; if a region doesn't, the regional Steward has to answer to the Prophets and Ancients.

PRIDE CAN ENTER INTO STEWARDSHIP WHEN:

- You think that you'd do a better job with someone than that someone's Steward, like if you think you know better what's good for Brother Zachary's wife than Brother Zachary does.
- You think that your convenience is more important than your Stewardship, so you don't attend to it.
- You think that fulfilling your Stewardship obligations means you deserve recompense or special consideration.
- You think that the person with Stewardship over you is doing a bad job or doesn't deserve it, or you don't have to listen to him.
- You use your Stewardship over someone as though it were power, not responsibility.
- You favor some of the people over whom you have Stewardship above the others, seeing to their needs preferentially.

Stewardship probs will generate conflict in the game by themselves pretty much only insofar as your group is interested in the Faith's structure, order, and who has to obey whom. But it underlies everything that follows, so best to have a good grip on it.

2. WOMEN'S VS. MEN'S ROLES

GIRLS are expected to:

- be retiring, demure, quiet, polite, patient, and deferential.
- do boring, repetitive, menial work without complaining.
- be afraid of spiders, mice, guns, horses, climbing, falling, and swimming.
- not be afraid of blood.
- tend their younger siblings.
- help make meals, keep the house clean, and keep the animals fed.

BOYS are expected to:

- be obedient, energetic, respectful, enthusiastic, smart, and confident.
- do hard physical work without complaining.
- not be afraid of anything.
- take on increasingly adult male responsibilities.
- not be too hard to clean up after.

UNMARRIED WOMEN are expected to:

- keep to their families.
- be receptive to courtship.
- fight to keep their courtships proper.
- overcome their girlish fears.
- continue on essentially as girls, otherwise.

UNMARRIED MEN are expected to:

- aggressively court multiple women (intending to marry only one of them, until called to marry another by the Faith, which may never happen).
- travel.
- work as men.

MARRIED WOMEN are expected to:

- bear and raise children.
- serve their husbands.
- keep house.

MARRIED MEN are expected to:

- provide for their families.
- educate their wives and children.
- defend their homes.

OLD WOMEN are expected to:

- help their daughters raise their grandchildren and keep their houses.
- be sweet, patient, indulgent and wise.

OLD MEN are expected to:

- help educate their grandchildren.
- be clear-spoken, opinionated, stern and wise.

PRIDE CAN ENTER INTO GENDER ROLES WHEN:

- you aren't satisfied with the roles of your gender: you want more freedom, or the roles of the other gender.
- you want someone of the other gender to act outside her or his roles.
- you deny someone full access to her or his roles (by locking your unmarried adult daughter in the house or overprotecting your son, for instance).

People, especially women, who want to transcend their gender roles are sympathetic. Lots of good, interesting, very satisfying conflict possibilities there.

3. LOVE, SEX, & MARRIAGE

HERE'S THE FAITH'S POSITION ON LOVE, SEX AND MARRIAGE:

- Between husband and wife, all sex and all love is virtuous.
- Between two men or two women, no romantic love is virtuous (although familial and comradely love can be) and sex is a sin (and, coincidentally, a crime).
- Between two people married to others, no romantic love is virtuous and sex is a sin.
- Between an unmarried man and a married woman, no romantic love is virtuous and sex is a sin.
- Between a married man and an unmarried woman, romantic love might be virtuous, and sex is a sin.
- Between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, romantic love is virtuous, and sex is probably a sin.

Except in the unfortunate case of a husband and wife who don't love one another, sex is never virtuous without love.

Now, see that “probably”? That’s because the King of Life is, occasionally, a realist. Sometimes, when it matters, He prefers a loving family to official recognition.

Especially because getting married isn’t just a Faith thing. It’s also a Territorial Authority thing. Not all people who should marry are able to, legally, be it because of fees, corrupt Territorial representatives, or various other difficulties— all the result of the unrighteousness of the non-Faithful and the corruptness of the Territorial Authority and the other religions.

PRIDE CAN ENTER INTO LOVE, SEX & MARRIAGE WHEN:

- you demand the love of, or impose your love upon, someone who doesn’t love you.
 - you act as though you love someone when you really don’t.
 - you consider your love to transcend sin and virtue, like when you’re in love with someone inappropriate.
 - you want sex, without considering love, virtue or sin.
 - you pursue marriage with someone who reflects well on you or who can advance you, not whom you love.
 - you buy the affection and loyalty of your intended spouse with money or prestige.
 - you demand that your suitor buy your affection.
- And you know? That stuff’s all rare bloody story meat.

4. POLYGAMY

Polygamy (technically polygyny; polyandry isn’t allowed a’tall) is, in the Faith, a reward to men for long-term service and dedication. No man under, say, 30 has a second wife, and no man under 40 has a third (or fourth, or fifth, or sixth...). To get official allowance to court a woman after your first wife, you must:

- have been called upon by the King of Life to do so, as confirmed by the person with Stewardship over you.
- be fulfilling the Stewardship of your office in the Faith in an exemplary fashion (or have retired from a lifetime of doing so).
- have a woman in mind.
- be able to support the addition to your family, including the inevitable children and elder parents.

AND PRIDE CAN ENTER INTO POLYGAMY WHEN:

- you consider polygamy to be your right, instead of a reward you have to deserve.
- you think that you deserve polygamy when really you just want it.

- you're seeking a second or subsequent wife in order to display your worthiness and faith.
- you're a wife and you don't welcome a righteous subsequent wife.
- you're a second or subsequent wife and you resent the wives before you.
- you put your relationships with your fellow wives over your relationship with your husband.
- you're pursuing or part of a polygamous marriage unapproved by the Faith.
- you're a wife who wants an additional husband.

Polygamy is love, sex etc. times two. Or more. It puts people in complicated and high-pressure situations. Problematic polygamy can drive your game.

5. MONEY

Nobody in the Faith should be hungry when someone else is eating. The King of Life has said so, and it's maybe the Faith's most constant struggle.

Pride can enter into money when:

- you think you deserve more than someone else.
- you don't want to give up what you have when someone else needs it more than you do.
- you exploit the poor to buy community respect.

And that's pretty good story stuff, but, well, it just ain't sex.

PRIDE CREATES INJUSTICE.

When a person acts on pride, when a person's pride influences the workings of a community, injustice inevitably results.

1. MONEY: Someone is hungry when someone else is eating. Someone is cold when someone else has clothing and shelter.

2. ROLE: Someone is prevented from fulfilling his or her role in the community. A mother can't care for her child, a husband can't protect his family, one laborer has to do the work of two, a young man can't court a young woman.

3. RIGHTEOUSNESS: Someone has to choose between sin and suffering. A person must steal food or else go hungry. A child must lie to his parents or else be beaten. A young woman must see her fiancé behind her father's back, or not at all.

SIN

1. **VIOLENCE.** It's a sin to harm or kill another person, unless you have just cause. Self defense and war are just causes; "he slept with my wife" is

not.

2. **SEX.** It's a sin to have sex with someone you aren't married to, unless all of the following are true: your marriage is ordained in Heaven, you're prevented from wedding by inescapable circumstances, and you wed as soon as you are able.

3. **DECEIT.** It's a sin to lie, cheat, steal, or break promises.

4. **DISUNITY.** It's a sin to conspire against another person or to profit from another person's misfortune.

5. **BLASPHEMY.** It's a sin to call upon the King of Life in an unworshipful manner.

6. **APOSTASY.** It's a sin to worship the King of Life in any way not according to the dictates of the Faith, to call upon any god but the King of Life, or to turn to the demons for favors.

7. **WORLDLINESS.** It's a sin to dress immodestly, to smoke tobacco or drink hard liquor, to use vulgar language, to sleep in the same room as an unbeliever, to gamble for money, to work on a day set aside for worship, or to show comfort in the presence of sin.

8. **FAITHLESSNESS.** It's a sin to neglect the duties of your office in the Faith.

SIN ALLOWS DEMONIC ATTACKS.

The presence of sin opens a community to attacks from Demons. Since demons are non-corporeal, the demonic attacks take various material forms, some subtle, some overt. The demons will assess the character of the community and act on some or all of these goals: isolate the community, endanger the community's survival, exacerbate the community's injustices, prosper the community's sinners, oppress the community's faithful. The demons might see the PCs' arrival as a threat or an opportunity.

Should the specifics of the demons' attacks follow from the specifics of the sin? **MAYBE.** Consider:

Brother Zachary is having an affair with his neighbor's daughter, Sister Alise. a) The demons are able to attack Brother Zach, Sister Alise, and nobody else. b) The demons are able to attack Brother Zach, Sister Alise, and both of their families, interests, and holdings. c) The demons are able to attack anybody in town, except the exceptionally righteous. d) The demons are able to attack anybody in town, INCLUDING the exceptionally righteous.

And consider:

Brother Zachary is having an affair with his neighbor's daughter, Sister Alise. a) The demons' attacks are specifically sexual: inspiring lust, souring marital relations. b) The demons' attacks have to do with, y'know, fertility: blighting crops or herds, making women barren or too fecund. c) The demons' attacks are all about relationships: inspiring hate within families and between friends, inspiring distrust between spouses. d) The demons' attacks might be anything.

Choose what's best for THIS PARTICULAR TOWN. But you should know: what you choose now will constrain your choices later. Over time, your players will develop expectations about the rules the demons follow— and that's good. Defy those expectations with caution.

FALSE DOCTRINE

Sin causes guilt. If I'm a habitual sinner, adopting a false doctrine is a way to numb my conscience and justify the sin.

Alternately, if I see someone else sinning but don't see anyone stepping in to correct the problem, I might conclude that it's my Steward at fault, or some other office holder of the Faith. I might further conclude that there's some flaw in the Faith allowing the sin to continue. I might arrive at a false doctrine that way.

False doctrines are always concrete. Here are some examples:

THE KING OF LIFE ALLOWS A WOMAN TO HAVE MORE THAN ONE HUSBAND.

BROTHER PARLEY IS NOT THE TRUE BRANCH STEWARD.

WE SHOULD WORSHIP AT THE QUARTERS OF THE MOON, NOT ON THE SABBATH.

THE OLDEST SON SHOULD NOT WORK WITH HIS BROTHERS, HE SHOULD SERVE AS A SECOND FATHER.

MARRIAGE IS A CONVENIENCE; I NEED NOT MARRY MY LOVER.

GOD TOLD ME TO KILL HIM.

THE BOOK OF LIFE ISN'T SCRIPTURE BUT MERELY HUMAN WISDOM.

THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE HOLD THE TRUE KEYS TO HEAVEN.

FALSE DOCTRINE MANIFESTS AS CORRUPT RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.

The outward expression of false doctrine is false worship and corrupt ceremony. Holding to a false doctrine will corrupt your observances, even if— as in the case of “God told me to kill him”— the false doctrine isn't especially related to them.

As the GM, it's your job to create and present the corrupt religious practices of your heretics.

FALSE PRIESTHOOD

So far everything has been individual. One person is resentful of injustices, then commits sins, then adopts weird beliefs. False Priesthood is when the heretic develops a following. The followers may themselves be anywhere on the continuum— they might be heretics in their own right, they might just be sinners or proud, they might even be humble and decent but misled. The point is that now the heresy has the force of a (sub-)community behind it.

FALSE PRIESTHOOD IS SORCERY.

Organized worship has power. The power of an organized heresy is that the demons will serve it.

The false priest is a sorcerer. He or she will have demonic attendants— overt or covert, noticed or not. Since the false priest necessarily wants, at heart, to bring the congregation to ruin, the demons will give up their own agenda and adopt the cult's.

Members of a cult are also vulnerable to demonic possession. The demons take control of the person's will and act through the person directly.

Look ahead to the chapter on NPCs for more about sorcerers and possession.

HATE AND MURDER

And here I'm talking about something way more serious than passion and rage. Hate is an organized and deadly assault on the Faithful by the demonic, made wholly personal. Hate causes murder— and not the tidy “just a sin” murder that a love triangle or stolen cattle will cause. The murders that follow from false priesthood and sorcery have an entirely different tenor. They're senseless, or ritualistic, or their victims are innocent, perhaps good people who threaten the cult. When you dig into those murders, you find occult significance, motives that don't add up, dirt on the upstanding in the community. The murder is the tip of something big and sinister and it promises more murders to come or more murders already done and covered up. When the Faithful murder the Faithful, it means that things have gone as wrong as they can go.

PROCEDURE

SETUP

Before you start in earnest, there are three things you'll want to be sure to get out of the process: some NPCs with a claim to the PCs' time, some NPCs who can't ignore the PCs' arrival, and some NPCs who've done harm, but for reasons anybody could understand. In the following procedure I talk about whether the town “seems grabby enough” and whether there are “enough NPCs to keep the PCs busy”— those three things are what I'm talking about.

It can also be very useful to bring a secular authority figure into play, a person who represents the Territorial Authority in some fashion. Since the needs of the Territorial Authority are different from the needs of the Faith, you can thereby introduce a person who a) has legitimate reason to be involved in the situation, but b) is working at cross-purposes to the Dogs.

You can also repeat steps if you want. A town might have one situation going all the way up to murder, and a second, unrelated situation still at the sin level, and then four more budding prides. If I wanted a town to take more than a session or two to sort out, that's how I'd do it.

If you like, try starting with the step corresponding with the level of wrongness you'd like the town to have, and working backward. If it works, or if it spectacularly doesn't, write me! I'd love to hear about it.

STEP 1

1A: PRIDE. Scroll through the list of Pride problems above. Choose whichever one jumps out at you. Attach a name to it and write a (very short) paragraph.

1B: INJUSTICE. PRIDE creates injustice. How is somebody better off or worse off than everybody else, because of the pride? Attach a name or names to it and write a paragraph.

1C: If the situation seems grabby enough to you, which it probably won't but if it does, you can stop. Skip ahead to step 6.

STEP 2

2A: SIN. Unaddressed, injustice leads to sin. The advantaged person becomes bold or the disadvantaged person becomes resentful— either way, they break the rules. Choose an appropriate sin from above, and choose a sinner and a victim. Attach a name or names to it and write a paragraph.

2B: DEMONIC ATTACKS. Sin allows the demons to attack the town. What form does their attack take? Attach a name or names to it and write a paragraph.

2C: The demons want the sin to become habitual.

2D: If you've got enough NPCs to keep the PCs busy and you're happy with the situation, you can stop. Skip ahead to step 6.

STEP 3

3A: FALSE DOCTRINE. Habitual Sin and/or Demonic Attacks create false doctrine. Either the sinner invents false theology to justify the sin, or the victim or witness of the attacks creates false doctrines to explain or repair what seems to be a failure of the Faith. What's the false tenet? Attach names and write a paragraph.

3B: CORRUPT WORSHIP. False doctrine expresses itself in bad religious practice or an incorrect use of ceremony. What's the form it takes? Attach names and write a paragraph.

3C: The demons want the false doctrine to win over other people.

3D: If you've taken the situation as far as you want to, you can stop. Skip ahead to step 6.

STEP 4

4A: FALSE PRIESTHOOD. When a corrupt worship has three or more worshippers, it becomes a false priesthood. Who is the cult leader and who are the cult? Attach names and write a paragraph or two.

4B: SORCERY. A false priesthood commands the service of the demons. What does the cult have the demons doing? Attach names and write a paragraph or two.

4C: The demons want someone to kill someone, plus they want whatever the cult wants.

4D: If you're happy with the situation, you can stop. Skip ahead to step 6.

STEP 5

5A: HATE AND MURDER. Eventually someone kills someone. The demons especially like it when a) the very Faithful and b) possible threats get murdered. Attach names to the murder and write a paragraph.

5B: Stop now, or repeat 5a until the situation is grabby enough for you. Unresolved, murder leads to more murder.

STEP 6

6A: What does each named person want from the Dogs? Write a sentence or two for each.

6B: What do the demons want in general? What do they want from the Dogs? What might they do? Write a paragraph.

6C: If the Dogs never came, what would happen— that is, what's the next step up the "what's wrong" ladder? Write a sentence or two.

You're done!

EXAMPLE ONE: THE BOXELDER CANYON BRANCH.

Brothers Artax, Benjamin and Cadmus are the Dogs.

1A PRIDE: The Territorial Authority guy thinks he deserves his living without working. He's a Faithful who's been assigned to negligible civic

duties— keeping census info and reporting it annually— but he thinks that it's enough to warrant his family's maintenance.

1B INJUSTICE: Because he spends his time pestering the town for more money instead of working, he, his wife (Brother Artax's aunt) and their children are dirt poor.

1C: I need more people and more grief. I keep going.

2A SIN: The Territorial Authority guy's wife, Brother Artax's aunt, makes whiskey and sells it to the town's farmhands on the sly.

2B DEMONIC ATTACKS: The church meeting house burned down. Brother Benjamin's uncle was badly burned in the fire. He's healing but pissed off.

2D: The situation doesn't seem baked yet. I keep going.

3A FALSE DOCTRINE: Brother Benjamin's burned uncle blames the Steward for the fire, because the Steward's grandmother is a Mountain Person convert and she lives in the Steward's house. It's dumb bigotry, but he's decided that the Steward's Calling is invalid.

3B CORRUPT WORSHIP: Brother Benjamin's burned uncle has taken to ceremonially praying for the Steward's grandmother's death.

3D: I'm happy with the situation, but I want to hook Brother Cadmus in! How about Brother Cadmus' younger brother, a farmhand newly arrived in town. He's listening too hard to Brother Benjamin's raving uncle: he's a potential convert to the potential cult. Good, all done. I skip to step 6.

4, 5: skipped.

6A THE PEOPLE:

- Brother Artax's aunt, the Territorial Authority census guy's wife, wants the Dogs to stay out of her business. She wants to keep her whiskey a secret.

- Brother Benjamin's uncle wants the Dogs on his side vs. the Steward.

- Brother Cadmus' little brother wants the Dogs to tell him who to trust, but not to tell him to stop drinking whiskey.

- The Territorial Authority census guy wants the Dogs to side with him, that he deserves to be paid a living wage for his (negligible) civic office.

- The Steward wants the Dogs on his side vs. the uncle. He especially wants to convince them that his grandmother is a convert with no malice in her.

6B THE DEMONS:

- The demons want the farmhands to join the cult. They'll attack the town

where the Steward oughta be able to protect it, and undermine his authority where they can.

- They want the Dogs to join with the uncle.

- They want the whiskey to stay secret.

- If the Dogs get close to the whiskey, the demons'll work overtime to implicate the Steward's grandmother. They'll make it look like she's using them to attack the uncle— that's a good twist!

6C IF THE DOGS NEVER CAME:

- Sooner or later the cult would get its three members. Then they'd overthrow the Steward, and the demons would whisper to them that leaving him and his grandmother alive is dangerous to them. Eventually, murder!

EXAMPLE TWO: THE WHITECHURCH BRANCH.

Brothers Artax, Benjamin and Cadmus are the Dogs.

1A PRIDE: Brother Artax's niece is resisting the appropriate courtship of the Steward's son, for no good reason. She just doesn't like him.

1B INJUSTICE: Consequently, the Steward's son has become obsessed with her. He's buying her more gifts than he can afford, burdening his family.

2A SIN: The shopkeeper, not a Faithful, is marking up his prices. He doesn't consider it a sin to profit from injustice, but it is one. He and his wife— Brother Benjamin's cousin, young, pretty, Faithful— are getting way rich and are lording it over.

2B DEMONIC ATTACKS: The demons want to make the situation worse, so they're breaking tools and making them wear out faster. Brother Cadmus' aged uncle's farm is one of the worst hit. The old guy values his independence— whether that's Pride too is up in the air.

3, 4, 5: skipped.

6A THE PEOPLE:

- The Steward and his son want Brother Artax to talk sense into his niece. The Steward would be content if he talked sense into his son.

- The shopkeeper wants the Dogs to keep their noses out. They'll have to figure out how to deal with him given that he's not Faithful. (Is he a Spiritualist, an Atheist, a Dogmatist or what? Wing it!)

- His wife, Brother Benjamin's cousin, wants the Dogs to assuage her guilt. She doesn't especially want them to convert him to the Faith— she loves him how he is.

- Brother Cadmus' uncle wants the Dogs to stay over and help him get his farm back together, "just this harvest."

- Brother Artax's niece wants to marry Brother Benjamin or Brother Cadmus.

6B THE DEMONS:

- The demons want to drive prices and demand up, up, up!
- They want the Steward to pronounce that it's okay for the town to rob the store— which would be false doctrine.
- They want the Dogs to buy stuff, so they'll try to break their stuff too. They don't want the Dogs to pronounce that it's okay for the town to rob the store— because if the Dogs say it, it's probably not false doctrine. That's what Dogs do, after all.

6C IF THE DOGS NEVER CAME:

- eventually the Steward would declare the store to be the congregation's property and run the shopkeeper and his wife out. The demons would keep applying scarcity pressure— without the shopkeeper, how will the town restock the store?— until it all blows up.

EXAMPLE THREE: THE TOWER CREEK BRANCH

Brothers Artax, Benjamin and Cadmus are the Dogs.

1A PRIDE: The branch Steward has just taken, righteously, a second wife. His first wife, Sister Bethia (Brother Artax's cousin) is against it.

1B INJUSTICE: Sister Bethia is monopolizing her husband's attention, manipulating him so that he has little time for his new wife. By "time," of course, I mean both "sex" and "public regard."

2A SIN: The new wife— Sister Edie— turns to the town's deputy sheriff, Brother Cyrus.

2B DEMONIC ATTACKS: The demons make Sister Edie barren.

3A FALSE DOCTRINE: Sister Edie thinks, correctly, that she can't conceive because of her infidelity. She concludes, incorrectly, that she should marry her lover, Brother Cyrus. She thinks that women of the Faith can have multiple husbands.

3B CORRUPT WORSHIP: She talks a third woman, old Sister Wilhelmina (Brother Benjamin's aunt) into performing a secret wedding.

4A FALSE PRIESTHOOD: Sister Edie, Brother Cyrus, Sister Wilhelmina— that's three! They're a small cult but they're a cult. By performing the false wedding, Sister Wilhelmina has established herself as the false prophet.

4B SORCERY: Sister Wilhelmina's trying to sorcerously restore Sister Edie's fertility, by robbing other women of theirs.

5A HATE AND MURDER: Sister Wilhelmina sorcerously kills a child in the womb. Yesterday, the unborn baby was healthy. Today, it's stillborn.

6A THE PEOPLE:

- The Steward wants the Dogs to bless his second wife, Sister Edie, to conceive.
- The Steward's first wife, Sister Bethia, wants the Dogs to prevail upon her husband to put aside Sister Edie.
- Brother Cyrus, the deputy sheriff, wants the Dogs to solemnize his marriage to Sister Edie— he's skeptical of old Sister Wilhelmina's authority.
- Sister Wilhelmina wants the Dogs to leave. As they get closer to her, she'll call upon the demons to protect her and mislead them.
- The injured mother wants the Dogs to Name her stillborn baby, because "he wasn't meant to be born dead."

6B THE DEMONS:

- The demons want the Dogs to blame Sister Bethia, the first wife, for the stillbirth. They'll set her up as a sorceress, even though she's not one. Her Pride will be obvious even without their help.

6C IF THE DOGS NEVER CAME:

- Maybe the Steward could sort it all out and put it right— but no, you know that Sister Wilhelmina would talk poor Brother Cyrus into killing him first.

RECAP

SOMETHING'S WRONG

PRIDE, enacted, creates INJUSTICE

...which leads to...

SIN, allowing DEMONIC ATTACKS

...which lead to...

FALSE DOCTRINE, manifest as CORRUPT WORSHIP

...which grows into...

FALSE PRIESTHOOD, a SORCEROUS cult

...which leads to...

HATE AND MURDER.

CREATING A TOWN

1A: PRIDE. Stewardship, women and men, love, sex, marriage, polygamy, money. Who and which?

1B: INJUSTICE. Hardship: money, role, righteousness. Who and which?

2A: SIN. Violence, sex, deceit, disunity, blasphemy, apostasy, worldliness, faithlessness. Who and which?

2B: DEMONIC ATTACKS. Isolate the community, endanger the community's survival, exacerbate the community's injustices, prosper the community's sinners, oppress the community's faithful. Who and which?

2C: The demons want the sin to become habitual.

3A: FALSE DOCTRINE. The sinner invents false theology to justify, or the victim or witness of demonic attacks creates false doctrines to explain. What and who?

3B: CORRUPT WORSHIP. Bad religious practice, incorrect ceremony. What and who?

3C: The demons want the false doctrine to win over other people.

4A: FALSE PRIESTHOOD. Three or more worshippers makes a cult. Who is the cult leader and who are the cult?

4B: SORCERY. What does the cult have the demons doing?

4C: The demons want someone to kill someone.

5: HATE AND MURDER. Eventually someone kills someone. Who and how?

6A: What does each named person want from the Dogs?

6B: What do the demons want? What do they want from the Dogs, specifically?

6C: If the Dogs never came, what would happen?



BETWEEN TOWNS

REFLECTION

Did your characters do a good thing? Is the town better than when they arrived?

What did the events in the town reveal about your characters? Whose character do you like better than you did before? Whose don't you like as well as you used to?

What are you saying about people, in the actions of your characters? Playing Dogs will raise questions about duty, obedience, responsibility, sin, love— where do your characters come down on the issues?

It's also very appropriate for you to talk about the experience of the game as players— what you liked and didn't like, what went well, where the action bogged and where it was sharp.

REFLECTION FALLOUT

Choose one of these:

- Add 1 to one of your Stats.
- Create a new Trait at 1d6.
- Add or subtract 1 die from an existing Trait.
- Change the d-size of an existing Trait.
- Create a new Relationship at 1d6.
- Add or subtract 1 die from an existing Relationship.
- Change the d-size of an existing Relationship.
- Write a Belonging on your character sheet and give it its usual dice.

This is exactly the same as the experience Fallout list, so don't let that throw you.

Whichever you choose, justify it by your character's experiences in the town you're leaving.

In addition, choose one of these:

- Add any two dice to your unassigned Relationship dice.
- Add 2d4 plus any one die to your unassigned Relationship dice.
- Rewrite the description of your coat to reflect damage, wear, repairs or replacement.
- Choose again from the reflection / experience Fallout list.

DIRECTION

Where do the characters go from here:

- To the next town on their assigned route?
- Back to the Dogs' Temple, to make an accounting of their service so far?
- Back to a previous town, to follow up?
- Home or elsewhere, abandoning their service?

GMING BETWEEN TOWNS

Remember how, at the end of character creation, you went “mmhmm” like the good doctor? Here’s where you angle the game to hit those issues. In the town just past, what were the characters ABOUT? What positions did they take? Which sinners did they judge harshly, and which did they show mercy? What did they say, I mean really say, about themselves and others?

Your goal in the next town is to take the characters’ judgments and push them a little bit further. Say that in this past town, one of the characters came down clearly on the side of “every sinner deserves another chance.” In the next town, you’ll want to reply with “even this one? Even *THIS* sinner?” Or say that another character demonstrated the position that “love is worth breaking the rules for.” You can reply with “is *THIS* love worth breaking the rules for too? Is love worth breaking *THIS* rule for?”

But Dogs isn’t abstract or academic! *THIS* love, *THIS* sinner, *THIS* law—those are real people, real characters I mean, in real concrete situations. Create the people and the situations, don’t pose the question in some sort of theoretical way.

Most importantly, don’t have an answer already in mind. GMing Dogs is a different thing from playing it. Your job as the GM is to present an interesting social situation and provoke the players into judging it. You don’t want to hobble their judgments by arguing with them about what’s right and wrong, nor by creating situations where right and wrong are obvious. You want to hear your players’ opinions, not to present your own.



CREATING NPCs

An NPC has to have exactly the things a PC has: Acuity, Body, Heart, and Will, all rated in d6s; some Traits and some Relationships, rated in dice; and some Belongings, rated in dice as usual (1d6 if it's normal, 1d8 if it's big, 1d4 if it's crap, plus 1d4 if it's a gun, etc.).

PROTO-NPCs

However, you don't make your NPCs the way you do PCs, one by one and with individual intention. Instead, you make 'em in batches of six semi-formed proto-NPCs, which you then flesh out when you need to, in play.

Like this:

1. **COPY THE NPC SHEET** from the back of the book or make some boxes, lines and columns on a piece of paper.

2. **GIVE YOUR PROTO-NPCs STATS:** roll 6d10. Each d10 gives you one proto-NPC's Stats. Don't name the proto-NPCs, just give them Stats. Mix up which Stats get the high numbers and which get the low. Here's the table:

ROLL STATS

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

(Remember that Stat dice are always d6s.)

3. GIVE YOUR PROTO-NPCs TRAITS: for each one, roll 4d8. Each d8 gives your proto-NPC dice for one Trait. Don't name the Traits now, just write down the dice. Here's the table:

ROLL TRAIT

1	2d4
2	1d4
3	1d6
4	1d8
5	1d10
6	2d6
7	2d8
8	2d10

4. GIVE YOUR PROTO-NPCs RELATIONSHIPS: for each one, roll 2d10. Each d10 gives your proto-NPC dice for one Relationship. Don't name the Relationships now, just write down the dice. Here's the table:

ROLL RELATIONSHIP

1	2d4
2	1d4
3	1d6
4	1d8
5	1d10
6	2d6
7	2d8
8	2d10
9	3d6
10	3d8

In addition, each proto-NPC, like everybody, gets this Relationship: Blood 1d6.

5. GIVE YOUR BATCH OF PROTO-NPCs SOME FREE DICE: roll 3d6. Each d6 gives you some dice to assign to a Trait or Relationship for some NPC in the batch, whenever in play you want to. Write the dice down in the “Free Dice” box at the top of your NPC sheet. Here’s the table:

ROLL FREE DICE

1	2d4
2	2d6
3	4d6
4	1d8
5	2d8
6	1d10

That’s it! Your proto-NPCs are made. Don’t do anything else to them until you’re actually in the midst of play.

AN EXAMPLE OF A PROTO-NPC:

Name: _____

STATS:

ACUITY: 3d6 BODY: 2d6 HEART: 5d6 WILL: 5d6

TRAITS:

_____ 2d4
 _____ 1d6
 _____ 1d10
 _____ 1d10

RELATIONSHIPS:

Blood 1d6
 _____ 2d6
 _____ 1d8

All of the examples in this chapter are built on this proto-NPC.

NPCs IN PLAY

Going into a session of play, at one hand you have a town prepared with a list of named people, each one motivated toward or away from the incoming Dogs. At the other hand you have a list of unnamed proto-NPCs, each one with Stats and some undefined Traits and Relationships. In play, easy! Put them together. A named person plus an unnamed proto-NPC equals a whole NPC.

Until a person comes into a conflict, you don't need to know his dice a'tall. You can just play him along, based on what you do know: what he wants, what he's afraid of, how he's aligned with or against the PCs.

Then when he DOES come into a conflict, scan down your available proto-NPCs and choose one that'll do. Write his name in the space for it and pick up his relevant Stat dice. If it makes sense to name one or both of his Relationships now, do, and pick up those dice too. You can name his Traits now or when you need them. Give him Belongings (with their usual dice) if it's called for. And if you need to, you can pull dice from your Free Dice to add to his Traits or Relationships.

It obviously works just the same way for people you didn't name when you wrote up the town, but brought into play to meet the needs of the moment. Choose a proto-NPC and go to!

If you run out of proto-NPCs, just call a quick break and make a new batch. It takes only a minute or three.

AN EXAMPLE OF AN NPC:

Name: Brother Benjamin

Stats:

ACUITY: 3d6

BODY: 2d6

HEART: 5d6

WILL: 5d6

TRAITS:

Well-read 2d4

Wealthy 1d6

Good Shot 1d10

Argues 1d10

RELATIONSHIPS:

Blood 1d6

Sr. Hannah 2d6

1d8

GROUPS

Sometimes the PCs will get into a conflict with a group. You don't need Stats for each individual opponent! Instead create the group as one NPC.

How many people are in the group? Each person in the group gives the group +2d6 to its Stats, divvy as you see fit. Go ahead and change them on your NPC sheet.

Who are the people in the group? Write each one— or the notable ones if the group is large— as a Trait. First fill out the Traits you already have dice for on the NPC sheet. Then steal the NPC's listed Relationship dice, unless the group needs them for Relationships (which is up to you to decide). Then

you can pull as many of your Free Dice as you can spare, and after that each additional person gets 1d6.

List people by their role in the group, not (just) by name. That way it'll be easy to tell when you incorporate them into the group's Raises and Sees, so you'll know when you get to roll their dice.

Assign any Fallout the group gets to individuals in the group as plausible or, more likely, give Fallout to the players for follow-up conflicts.

AN EXAMPLE OF A GROUP:

Name: Brother Benjamin's 7 farmhands

Stats:

ACUITY: 7d6 BODY: 10d6 HEART: 8d6 WILL: 5d6

TRAITS:

Clumsy 2d4

Bully 1d6

Steady 1d10

Brick 1d10

Ringleader 2d6

Schemer 1d8

Voice of Reason 1d6

RELATIONSHIPS:

Br. Benjamin 1d6

WHEN AN NPC HELPS A PC

When an NPC takes a PC's side in a conflict, it's exactly as though the NPC were joining a group. Give the PC +2d6 to Stats, plus a Trait representing the NPC's role. You choose which Stats. For the Trait, pull from your Free Dice or make it 1d6, it's up to you.

POSSESSED PEOPLE

A possessed person must be either a) a willing, knowing heretic, that is a believer in false doctrine, but possibly acting alone; or else b) a sinner within the false priesthood of a Sorcerer. In the latter case the Sorcerer has to perform a ritual to make the possession happen, but the possessed person needn't be willing or informed.

Anyhow, assign one of the possessed person's Relationships to a demon. The number of dice in the Relationship indicates how chronically the person has been possessed.

Choose a number of Manifestations equal to the number of dice: Changes in body shape, changes in hands, changes in facial features, changes in hair

nails or teeth, changes in eyes.

Choose a number of Powers equal to the number of dice:

- Cunning: Apply the Relationship to every social conflict.
- Ferocity: Apply the Relationship to every physical conflict.
- Preservation: When the possessed person Takes a Blow, take one fewer Fallout dice than normal.
- Viciousness: The possessed person inflicts Fallout one die size higher than usual. Punches do damage like blunt weapons, blunt weapons like edged weapons, edged weapons like guns. It still maxes at d10.

A Dog in conflict with a possessed person can use ceremony to See or Raise.

AN EXAMPLE OF A POSSESSED PERSON:

Name: Sister Hannah

Stats:

ACUITY: 3d6 BODY: 2d6 HEART: 5d6 WILL: 5d6

TRAITS:

Sinner 2d4
Destitute 1d6
Beautiful 1d10
Black Hair 1d10

RELATIONSHIPS:

Blood 1d6
A Demon 2d6
Br. Benjamin 1d8

MANIFESTATIONS:

My hair moves even without wind. My pupils reflect light like a cat's.

POWERS:

Cunning, Preservation.

SORCERERS

A false prophet— that is, a believer in false doctrines who's developed a following— is automatically a sorcerer, even if he or she doesn't realize it. The demons attend to all false prophets and do their will. That being the case, sometimes you'll use a sorcerer's special abilities in a conflict, but have the sorcerer himself deny that anything non-normal is happening.

Give the sorcerer a Relationship to a demon at four dice of your choice, above and beyond the Relationships listed for the NPC.

A sorcerer can:

- Call on the demons. Add the current Demonic Influence to his preferred side of any conflict, as though it were a Trait, by introducing demonic special effects into a See or Raise.

- Become possessed at will (getting access, thereby, to all the powers available to a possessed person).

- Perform rituals to invite demons to possess his followers.

A Dog in conflict with a sorcerer can use ceremony to See and Raise.

AN EXAMPLE OF A SORCERER:

Name: Brother Calvin

Stats:

ACUITY: 3d6 BODY: 2d6 HEART: 5d6 WILL: 5d6

TRAITS:

Patient 2d4

Alert 1d6

Aggrieved 1d10

Imposing 1d10

RELATIONSHIPS:

Blood 1d6

The Dogs 2d6

1d8

A Demon 4d8

NAMES

SOME APPROPRIATE FEMALE NAMES YOU MIGHT NOT THINK OF:

Abiah	Cornelia	Obedience
Adelaide	Damaris	Patience
Adelia	Edwina	Permelia
Adeliza	Electa	Phidelia
Alexanderina	Eliphah	Philomena
Almena	Emeline	Prudence
Althea	Fidelia	Relief
Asenath	Hester	Submit
Augusta	Honora	Sybrina
Azubah	Kesiah	Temperance
Bedelia	Lavina	Theodosia
Bethia	Louvina	Tryphena
Clementine	Malvina	Tryphosia
Cleophas	Marilla	Waitstill
Constance	Mehetable	
Content	Mindwell	

SOME APPROPRIATE MALE NAMES YOU MIGHT NOT THINK OF:

Abijah	Eleazer	Nathaniel
Archibald	Elijah	Newton
August	Hamilton	Obediah
Azariah	Hezekiah	Phineas
Bartholomew	Hiram	Pleasant
Cornelius	Jackson	Thaddeus
Cuthbert	Jedediah	Theophilus
Cyrus	Jeduthan	Virgil
Derrick	Josiah	Wiley
Ebenezer	Malachi	
Edwin	Micajah	

DEMONS?

Demons don't ever get Stats or Traits or anything. Demons act in the world only through situations' Demonic Influence and people's Relationships to them. They contribute dice to conflicts in only two circumstances:

SPIRITUAL OPPOSITION: Whenever a PC tries to accomplish something

that calls for a conflict, but there's no clear opponent, roll 4d6+Demonic Influence. This doesn't really depend on an individual demon, it's just how it works.

It's the same when a PC launches a conflict with a demon directly: 4d6+Demonic Influence.

SORCERY & POSSESSION: As I've described.

In no case is any particular demon more powerful or more intent than any other. All demons are faceless and equal, except as empowered by a town's sin or individual sinners.

RECAP

BEFORE PLAY: Create 6 proto-NPCs at a time. For each, roll 1d10 for Stats, 4d8 for Traits, and 2d10 for Relationships, plus roll 3d6 for Free Dice for the whole batch:

ROLL	STATS	TRAIT	RELATIONSHIP	FREE DICE
1	4 3 2 2	2d4	2d4	2d4
2	4 3 3 2	1d4	1d4	2d6
3	4 4 3 2	1d6	1d6	4d6
4	5 4 3 2	1d8	1d8	1d8
5	5 5 3 2	1d10	1d10	2d8
6	4 4 4 3	2d6	2d6	1d10
7	5 4 4 3	2d8	2d8	--
8	5 5 4 3	2d10	2d10	--
9	6 5 4 3	--	3d6	--
10	6 5 5 4	--	3d8	--

IN PLAY: When you need dice for an NPC, choose whichever one fits best. Assign Traits, Relationships and Belongings as called for. Pull in Free Dice if you want.

GROUPS: Each person in the group a) gives the group NPC +2d6 to Stats, and b) is a Trait.

POSSESSED PEOPLE: Choose a number of Manifestations and a number of Powers equal to the number of dice in the person's Relationship with the demon.

Manifestations: changes in body shape, changes in hands, changes in facial features, changes in hair nails or teeth, changes in eyes.

Powers: Cunning (apply Relationship to social conflicts); Ferocity (apply Relationship to physical conflicts); Preservation (takes one fewer Fallout die than usual); Viciousness (inflicts Fallout one die size higher than usual).

SORCERERS: Give the NPC a Relationship with a demon at four dice. Sorcerers can: call on demons (roll the current Demonic Influence into any side of a conflict); become possessed at will (see possessed people); invite demons to possess their followers.



How To GM

PLAY THE TOWN

You made a town, right, you've got some NPCs, and each and every one of them wants something from the PCs. Right? So play them!

Don't play the PCs. Present the PCs with choices— by which I mean, have your NPCs come to them and ask them to do things, fix things, take care of things, make it right, make it better, tell them it's not their fault, tell them they're in the right, tell them not to worry— then back waaay off. “Sister Abigail comes to you and asks you to marry her to her lover, Brother Ezekiel. Yes, they've been having an illicit affair and he's already married. What do you do?”

Provoke the players to have their characters take action, then: react! Whatever the PCs do, your NPCs have to adjust to it. Figure out what they want now— it should be easy, they want what they always wanted— and have 'em work toward it.

Don't play “the story.” The choices you present to the PCs have to be real choices, which means that you can't possibly know already which way they'll choose. You can't have plot points in mind beforehand, things like “gotta get the PCs up to that old cabin so they can witness Brother Ezekiel murdering Sister Abigail...” No. What if the PCs reconcile Brother Ezekiel and Sister Abigail? You've wasted your time. Worse, what if, because you've invested your time, you DON'T LET the PCs reconcile them?

You've robbed the players of the game.

You can't have a hero and a villain among your NPCs. It's the PCs' choices that make them so. The PCs are empowered to turn sin into goodness sake DOCTRINE if they think it's the right thing to do. How are you gonna decide up front who comes out on top?

All I'm saying is, the PCs' stories aren't yours to write and they aren't yours to plan. If you've GMed many other roleplaying games, this'll be the hardest part of all: let go of “what's going to happen”. Play the town. Play your NPCs. Leave “what's going to happen” to what happens.

How, THOUGH? HERE'S HOW:

DRIVE PLAY TOWARD CONFLICT

Every moment of play, roll dice or say yes.

If nothing's at stake, say yes to the players, whatever they're doing. Just plain go along with them. If they ask for information, give it to them. If they have their characters go somewhere, they're there. If they want it, it's theirs.

Sooner or later— sooner, because your town's pregnant with crisis— they'll have their characters do something that someone else won't like.

Bang! Something's at stake. Launch the conflict and roll the dice.

Roll dice or say yes. Roll dice or say yes. Roll dice or say yes.

ACTIVELY REVEAL THE TOWN IN PLAY

The town you've made has secrets. It has, quite likely, terrible secrets— blood and sex and murder and damnation.

But you the GM, you don't have secrets a'tall. Instead, you have cool things— bloody, sexy, murderous, damned cool things— that you can't wait to share.

There's this interesting hump I have to get over every time I GM Dogs— maybe it'll go away eventually. It's like this:

The PCs arrive in town. I have someone meet them. They ask how things are going. The person says that, well, things are going okay, mostly. The PCs say, "mostly?"

And I'm like "uh oh. They're going to figure out what's wrong in the town! Better stonewall. Poker face: on!" And then I'm like "wait a sec. I want them to figure out what's wrong in the town. In fact, I want to show them what's wrong! Otherwise they'll wander around waiting for me to drop them a clue, I'll have my dumb poker face on, and we'll be bored stupid the whole evening."

So instead of having the NPC say "oh no, I meant that things are going just fine, and I shut up now," I have the NPC launch into his or her tirade. "Things are awful! This person's sleeping with this other person not with me, they murdered the schoolteacher, blood pours down the meeting house walls every night!"

....Or sometimes, the NPC wants to lie, instead. That's okay! I have the NPC lie. You've watched movies. You always can tell when you're watching a movie who's lying and who's telling the truth. And wouldn't you know it, most the time the players are looking at me with skeptical looks, and I give them a little sly nod that yep, she's lying. And they get these great, mean, tooth-showing grins— because when someone lies to them, ho boy does it not work out.

Then the game GOES somewhere.

FOLLOW THE PLAYERS' LEAD ABOUT WHAT'S IMPORTANT

You present an interesting situation to your players, a town. It's got a couple few conflicts already present in it, each with at least two sides, some facets and nuances to the moral questions it poses. You've made this cool, interesting thing, this town and its problems, so you show it to your players like, "look! What do you think?"

Then you step back and wait to hear what they think— and I shouldn't suggest that you have to actually wait at all. The truth is that they start taking sides the instant you start showing them what the sides are. It's

immediate and visceral.

If you've GMed other games, you've probably had this experience: You say, "...and the supervillain reveals his plan, which is to use armored laser sharks to destroy the world!"

Your first player says, "dude, Mr. Johnson didn't hire me to save the world, he just hired me to find his brother. I go back and tell him his brother's dead."

Your second player says, "I'm still talking to the pool girl, remember?"

And your third player's reading your old White Wolf magazines.

It's suck. But you're not going to get that with Dogs, and here's why: you haven't created a supervillain. There's not a plot the PCs have to foil. You're not providing judgment for the players the way you have to if you've pre-decided who the villain is. Instead, you've presented your interesting moral situation, the PCs can't walk away from it, they have to cut through its knot somehow and leave the town better off. So, what do they think?

They'll surprise you. They'll take sides you never expected. People just endlessly delight me and one of the reasons they do is because of their capacity to take surprising sides. Watch, you'll see.

ESCALATE, ESCALATE, ESCALATE

Does that mean that you just, y'know, sit? And watch? Not in the least. When the players take sides— from the first moment they begin to take sides— start complicating their lives.

It works exactly the same as it works between towns, but moment-to-moment instead of episode-to-episode. The dialog of play is all "my character does this, your character does this, they find this, this person ambushes them and starts shooting, this person shifts her eyes sideways and you can tell she's lying, what do you do? Where do you go now? What do you do then?" Just like any other roleplaying game. But if you take a step up from that, you'll see that the conversation's ABOUT something. It's ABOUT the moral judgments the players make on the situations you present. In the midst of conflict, you should be thinking, "really? Even now? Even now? Really?"

In concrete terms, this point and the point before are about setting conflicts' stakes. The point before says: let the players set the stakes. This point says: then, you set the stakes HARDER.

Here's an example:

I'm the GM. I present to my players a situation: Brother Cadmus' little brother wants the Dogs to tell him who to trust, but not to tell him to stop drinking whiskey. Brother Cadmus and Meg, his player, have noticed that there's something he's not saying, but they don't know what yet.

Meg has Brother Cadmus say, "I can't tell you who to trust until you tell

me what's really going on."

I say, "Sweet! Let's roll some dice. What's at stake is, does he spill?" Notice that even though I'm the one who SAID what's at stake, Meg's the one who CHOSE it.

We roll dice, Raise and See back and forth, and (unsurprisingly) Brother Cadmus is winning.

Now it's my turn to set the stakes harder. How badly do Meg and her character want to know? I say, "he says, 'y'know Cad, I come to you for advice and you grill me. Isn't that just like you.' He shoves past you. I'm escalating to physical." I roll some more dice. Meg has to choose: does her character physically stop him from leaving, or give? How far is she willing to go for this? What if he throws a punch, will she still be willing to push him?

Let's say that yes, she's willing to fight him for it. Then, what if he's beating her? Will she have Brother Cadmus draw on his own brother?

DO NOT HAVE A SOLUTION IN MIND

If you have a solution in mind, the game rules are going to mess you up bad.

I hope I've made that clear enough. If you're GMing by the rules, you have absolutely no power to nudge things toward your desired outcome. It's best for everybody, I mean especially it's best for you too, if you just don't prefer one outcome to another.

Your job is to present the situation and then escalate it. The players' job is to pronounce judgment and follow through. The solution is born of the two in action.

PLAYING GOD?

In most RPGs with religious content, the GM arbitrates the characters' morality. The GM plays God (or the gods) as an NPC, giving and withholding moral standing— whatever form it takes in the particular game: Faith Points, Alignment Bonuses, whatever— based on the characters' actions. Not in Dogs.

In Dogs, the GM has no opportunity to pass effective judgment on a PC's actions. Talk about 'em, sure, but never come down on them as righteous or sinful in a way that's binding in the game world. The GM can't give or withhold dice for the state of a PC's soul, and thus never needs to judge it.

Which is good! Which is, in fact, essential. If you, the GM, can judge my character's actions, then I WON'T TELL YOU WHAT I THINK. I'll play to whatever morality you impose on me via your rulings. Instead of posing your players an interesting ethical question and then hearing their answers, you'd be posing the question and then answering it yourself.

How dull would that be.

SOME ACTUAL PLAY

Here's how it works out. This is from one of the game's very earliest playtest sessions.

Setup: Brothers Artax and Cadmus are the Dogs, played by Tom and Meg, respectively. The branch Steward, Brother Zachary, is having an affair with Brother Cadmus' 15-year-old cousin Avigail. Brother Artax' aunt Elsa is best friends with Brother Zachary's wife Judith. Sisters Elsa and Judith and Brother Zachary all feel that Brother Zachary deserves, because he's such a good Steward, to be allowed by the Faith to marry Avigail.

Avigail is having sex with him willingly, but becoming his trophy isn't what she wants for her life— she's in love with a boy named Jonas. But whether Brother Zachary deserves her as his second wife or not, they're sinning and that gives demons access to the town. The demons want to maintain the status quo— inevitably, their affair will spawn some sort of false doctrine, probably where they'll marry without the approval of the Faith and Brother Zachary will become a breakaway cult leader. Maybe, because he's well-liked by the town, bringing the whole blessed congregation away with him.

So that's where we start and from that, I know how to play the NPCs. Brother Zachary is charming and effective, with just enough pride to make Meg and Tom suspicious but not enough to give him away. Sister Elsa will try to get Brother Artax' buy-in on the whole "Brother Zachary deserves a second wife" thing, and in the process give away that he has Avigail in mind. Sister Avigail will be willing to talk about Jonas but will try to hide her affair with Brother Zachary. (I improvised: Jonas is delighted and taken aback to hear from Brother Cadmus that Avigail has a thing for him, which I believe swayed the outcome-choices Meg and Tom made. If I'd made him a jerk, they'd have been a lot less sympathetic to her hopes, I think.)

Outcome: Brothers Artax and Cadmus fend off a possessed attacker, confront the principles, spill to Jonas that Avigail's in love with him, figure out (in a satisfying, shared "aha!" moment crossing two separate scenes) who's having sex with whom, and then bundle Brother Zachary and Sister Judith up and send them off to Bridal Falls City. They tell a convenient little lie to the branch that Brother Zachary's been such a good Steward that he's being Called to greater duties. It's important to Meg and Tom that Jonas not hear about the affair, to give Avigail the chance with him that she wants, so they can't risk shunning Brother Zachary or making his crime public. (Funny how they thought of it as "his" crime, when there were two of them in the bed...)

Later, Tom wrote me and said "Yeah, but your description implied that she was only doing it because he was the Steward and it was cast specifically as 'Brother Zachary is abusing his position.' So it was a pretty natural progression." In fact, in my description all I'd done is emphasize that he wasn't raping her. Meg and Tom between them had judged Brother

Zachary so immediately and so viscerally that they thought his guilt was objective and foregone. And then they lied to the whole congregation to protect a possible future between Avigail and Jonas!

Isn't that fascinating? And unbelievably cool? Friend, that's why I play this game.



DESIGN NOTES

RESOURCES

I've watched, as you would guess, one million Westerns. You should watch a bunch too, plus some Samurai flicks. Most of them won't be quite right, though: the protagonists usually want to be left alone, but get dragged into things despite themselves. Crime flicks are better for protagonists who come into a situation ready to pronounce judgment.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD is an exception. Ellen'd make a Dog.

TOMBSTONE is interesting for the way the principle townspeople fall all over themselves to line up with or against Wyatt Earp. NPCs in Dogs act that way.

You can't go wrong with THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE.

Good non-Westerns with Dogs-like stories: LA CONFIDENTIAL. DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS. THE UNTOUCHABLES.

Definitely watch GREEN SNAKE for inspiration if you're playing a high-supernatural game. A CHINESE GHOST STORY too.

But of 'em all, BRIGHAM CITY, a little indie flick by Richard Dutcher, is the most exactly right. When you watch it, consider that when Wes Clayton's the bishop, he's the branch Steward, and when he's the sheriff, he's the Dogs.

www.brighamcitythemovie.com/

The ideal Dogs in the Vineyard soundtrack includes some Johnny Cash, Slaid Cleaves, Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer, Alison Krauss, Lyle Lovett, the Stone Coyotes, and Cordelia's Dad (of the later shaped-note sort). Strike a balance between spirituals and murder ballads, and be sure to include "the Man Comes Around."

If you'd like to learn more about the LDS church, you can visit its official site: www.lds.org. For a (much) more critical picture, try www.lds-mormon.com.

And I've got a bunch of online resources going, from reenactment catalogs to old maps to landscape photos to "how a revolver works." Surf to:

www.septemberquestion.org/lumpley/dogs.html

COMMENT: RELATIONSHIPS VS. TRAITS VS. THINGS

The reason that the character background options aren't balanced across Relationships and Traits is that the two things serve very different purposes in the game. Your Traits contribute to HOW CONFLICTS GO, but your Relationships contribute to WHAT CONFLICTS ARE ABOUT. When you take "I'm a good shot" as a Trait, you're saying that you want to resolve conflicts by

shooting. When you take a Relationship with a person, you're saying that you want to be in conflict with him or her.

You drive a conflict, moment to moment, toward your Traits. You drive the game, scene by scene, toward your Relationships. When you choose your character's background, you're prioritizing: do you want more input into how conflicts turn out, or more input into WHICH conflicts?

Make sense? That's why you get more Relationship dice than Trait dice across the board. Input into WHICH conflicts is more important in the game overall.

Belongings, then, are just super-narrow Traits. I like it when my players put big dice in their Belongings, especially their weapons— every die in a weapon is a temptation to hurt someone.

ADAPTING THE FAITH

The Faith I've presented is based on early Mormonism. It may be that you want to play Dogs but the LDS and Utah flavor doesn't do it for you. That's fine; adapting the game to other religions is quite easy.

The Faith has a pretty much normal set of moral codes: don't do violence to one another, don't sleep around, don't lie, cheat, steal, break promises, conspire against one another, or profit from another's misfortune. It has the standard religious ones: worship the correct god in the correct way, don't turn to demons or false gods for favors. It also has a handful of "avoid the appearance of sin" and "separate people" ones: modesty rules, including who's allowed to be alone with whom, who's allowed to touch whom, what people are allowed to wear; consumption rules, dietary rules; and random conduct rules of the "no swearing" sort (although what's "swearing" and what isn't might still be working itself out, socially).

The laws of the Territorial Authority are based on the same core moral code: don't do violence to one another, don't sleep around, don't lie, cheat, steal, etc. The thing is, being made by the corrupt and decadent, the legal interpretation of the code differs from the Faithful interpretation in at least one key way. Maybe multiple marriage is allowed by the law but prohibited by the Faith. Maybe ritual tattooing is considered "violence" by the law but "correct worship" by the Faith.

So but within that framework, you can totally play around with the specifics. Does your Faith's understanding of "don't sleep around" permit or prohibit multiple marriage? Do its consumption rules permit or prohibit eating pork? What arrangements constitute "conspiring against one another" or "profiting from another's misfortune"? What makes "correct worship"? When are the holy days and what do you do on them? Come to think of it, is "the King of Life" God (if so, YHWH, Jehovah, or Allah?), or Jesus, or the head of a Pantheon, or the Earth, or what? Are "false gods" gods who don't exist, or real gods we oughta not be worshipping?

If you want to play Dogs with some other religious flavor, simply rewrite

the PROBLEMS IN THE FAITH section in the town creation rules to suit your religion of choice, and change the ELEMENTS OF CEREMONY to match. Consider:

- Seventeenth-century Massachusetts, with the PCs as witch finders.
- Thirteenth century Europe with the PCs as Dominican inquisitors, the black and white Hounds of God.
- A modern-day mob game, replacing the Faith with the Mafia's codes of silence and loyalty, with the PCs as enforcers.
- Or a game about the Untouchables, with the Law instead of the Faith, and the PCs as Eliot Ness and his people!

Any of those sounds interesting and fun to me.



THANKS

This game owes such a debt to Ron Edwards I can't even tell you. I mean, it'd probably be a better game if it were a *SORCERER* mini-supplement, that's how much. It's also heavily influenced by *TROLLBABE*, as I'm sure you can see.

www.sorcerer-rpg.com

www.adept-press.com/trollbabe

I got inspiration for the dice mechanic from *THE RIDDLE OF STEEL*: what would happen, I said to myself, if you were to roll the dice BEFORE you divvied them between attack and defense?

www.theriddleofsteel.net

UNIVERSALIS inspired my approach to Traits and Relationships in a big way.

www.universalis.actionroll.com

I'm not the first guy to use poker terms in an RPG's resolution rules. Neither was Matt Snyder, but I'd be remiss if I didn't mention *DUST DEVILS*.

WWW.CHIMERA.INFO/

I'm also not the first guy to quantify relationships as character effectiveness. *TROLLBABE* does, *My LIFE WITH MASTER* by Paul Czege does, I'm positive that many others do, and I understand that *HERO QUEST* is grandmother to us all.

www.adept-press.com/trollbabe

www.halfmeme.com

www.glorantha.com

Without the conversations and game designs at the Forge, this game would never have existed.

www.indie-rpgs.com

Jared Sorensen demonstrated, and Tom Russell explained to me, the difference between growth and achievement in Character Creation.

Luke Crane released me from an obligation so I could get this thing done.

Brennan Taylor ran the first ever independent playtests, with Jason Ang, James Hall, John Hall, Michelle Malloy, Caitlin Taylor and Krista White.

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And extra special thanks to Meg, who is sitting behind me patiently RIGHT NOW, and who played mechanics with me before there was even a game, who read every word of this before anybody else, and who even wrote a word or ten too.

