TOWER OF ADAMANT

..wall upon wall, battlement upon battlement, black, immeasurably strong, mountain of iron, gate of steel, tower of adamant…"

INSPIRATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Tower of Adamant takes its lead from a handful of fantasy novels I have enjoyed over the past 30+ years. In no certain order, these works include Tad Williams' Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn trilogy, Terry Brooks' early Shannara books, Byron Preiss and Michael Reeves' Dragonworld, Stephen R. Donaldson's Chronicles of Thomas Covenant series, and Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. Each of these works fired my imagination when I first read them and continue to do so. While all boast unique approaches to the genre, they employ many common elements that I have taken as inspirational when working on this game. Some of these are described below, although please note that I have crafted my own approach to many concepts presented in the novels.

DRAMATIC THINGS HAPPEN AT DRAMATIC MOMENTS

This is the most important theme of Tower of Adamant. Amazing acts of heroism, incredible feats of agility, and mighty deeds of prowess simply aren't special if they occur with regularity, or when fighting random mooks. This game posits that such moments should happen when it makes dramatic sense. Thomas Covenant never uses his white gold ring to do something amazing unless it happens *at the most dramatic moment*. Allanon keeps his power under lock and key until it becomes critically important that he use it. Consider the fiction that inspires this game and imagine you and your friends are writing a novel in concert with each other. How exciting would Lord of the Rings have been if Gandalf had used his Balrog-slaying skills against every foe he encountered? If Sam Gamgee had used Sting's power in every chapter, would the scene where Shelob impales her soft underbelly on his weapon have been nearly as climactic? Reflective of these sentiments, Tower of Adamant has a set of mechanics that encourage players to use their unique abilities when it counts the most. Using an extraordinary talent for a minor task or encounter may rob you of that potential for the most vital scenes.

One aspect of this philosophy may be a bit controversial: armor and weapons do not stand out unless the narrative benefits from their use. Your full plate armor is ignored until it becomes dramatically appropriate to invoke its properties. Your Sword of Magical Awesome is just like any other weapon until it's time to make it stand out from the crowd.

The key is to always think of the mechanics as something that serves the development of a story, *as if you were writing it.* What do you want to stand out in a given scene? When should that sword/armor/magical ring play a vital part in this chapter, if at all?

MAGIC IS ANCIENT AND RARE

Tower of Adamant assumes that magic is a dying art once practiced by people long since departed. Current forms of magic tend to be far less powerful than that of ancient days. Spells are not used in everyday life. On the contrary, most people will live their entire lives without witnessing any sort of arcana. Some even regard magic as corrupting and dangerous. More blatant implementations of magic are a 'shout out' to others familiar with its use. A wizard who manages to set alight a hillside will certainly attract the attention of anyone within many miles; other wizards will know the difference between a mundane fire and one summoned by a fellow practitioner. Thus, magic-weilding characters will want to use magic sparingly if they wish to avoid drawing attention from the wrong eyes.

THE GODS DON'T WALK THE EARTH

If any gods exist, they act in subtle ways. The stories that I have based this game on generally either ignore or discard religion altogether. Even in cases where it exists, the gods seem to have no direct contact with their worshippers. Faith requires belief in the absence of any concrete evidence, and Tower of Adamant takes that to heart. Perhaps higher powers do bring rain during droughts or punish the wicked. It is up to the

GM to determine whether those are divine acts or instances of random chance.

EVERY CHARACTER HAS AN ARC

Important characters exist for a purpose. Random death has no part in a respectable story; it must have significance. In The Lord of the Rings, Boromir's death is at once tragic and redemptive, and moves the narrative in a very dramatic direction. Frodo's injury on Weathertop has ramifications for the rest of the entire epic. To this end, characters in Tower of Adamant do not die meaningless deaths or suffer lasting injury if it does not drive the chronicle to interesting places. Moreover, characters must develop. The destined farm boy will grow in wisdom and stature, discovering things about himself that he never dreamed of. The lost king must claim his throne or fail in the attempt, perhaps rejecting his inheritance along the way. The conflicted hero will be faced with opportunities for betrayal and heroism alike.

Most importantly, players have complete control over when their characters exit the saga or continue to write its continuation. The GM will never 'kill you off', nor will a character meet his demise due to an unfortunate roll. Like an author writing an epic, characters leave the story only when it adds to the drama or when he no longer has anything to offer the tale.

CORE MECHANICS

Tower of Adamant utilizes a common mechanic for most tests. All tests use six-sided dice. The player first announces his intention. This can be anything from attempting to maintain balance on a slippery log, translating a difficult text, or attacking an enemy with a sword. Upon considering the player's goal, the GM determines the difficulty of the task as well as what skill will best serve the player's intent. Task difficulty generally ranges from 0 (easy) to 5 (damn near impossible). The player rolls a number of dice equal to his rank in an appropriate Theme, such as 'Rakish Swashbuckler' for attacking an enemy with a rapier. Any dice that result in a 4, 5, or 6 are called 'Boons'. Results of 1, 2, or 3 are called 'Banes', and are discarded. The player counts his Boons and compares that number to the difficulty as set forth by the GM. If the number of Boons *exceeds* the difficulty, the task succeeds. The difference between the number of Boons rolled and the difficulty is called the Effect. Effects are abbreviated

eX, with X being the Effect. Four Boons against a difficulty of 2 yields an Effect of 2 (e2). One Boon against a difficulty of 2 yields an Effect of -1 (e-1).
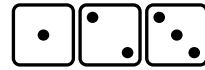
 BANES
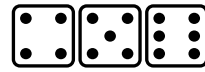
 BOONS

Paul is playing a hero named Pelagius. In this instance, Pelagius is attempting to climb a tree while being pursued by two ravaging wolves. He has a Theme called 'Mariner on the Seas of Gold' at rank 3. The GM agrees that a mariner would have good climbing skill, so allows the use of the Theme. She declares a difficulty of 1. Paul rolls three dice and comes up with 3,4,6. That is two Boons and one Bane (an Effect of 1), which beats the difficulty of 1. He climbs the tree before the wolves get to him.

OPPOSED TESTS

The example provided above assumes passive resistance; the tree Pelagius climbs is not actively trying to stop him. But there will be times when an NPC, creature, or even another character will oppose the acting character's goals. These instances require opposed tests.

When a character engages in an opposed test, such as a fight, debate, or race, he follows these steps.

1. Determine goal. The player announces his character's objective: *'Attack the bandit.'* He then describes how he will accomplish this goal: *'Pelagius will use his rapier.'*

2. The player describes what Theme the character will test: *'Rakish Swashbuckler'*

3. The GM announces how the antagonist will oppose the character: *'The bandit will attack with his scimitar.'*

4. The player determines his Momentum. Momentum is based on the preparedness of the character. The Momentum of an NPC or creature is usually predetermined by the GM.

Characters who are prepared for a conflict begin with a Momentum of 15.

Characters who are aware of impending conflict but

are not adequately prepared begin with a Momentum of 10.

Characters who are caught off guard begin with a Momentum of 5.

Momentum can be modified during a conflict by spending a Token to add the value of a Virtue to the tally. See page xxx for information on Tokens, and page XXX for information on Virtues.

My character, Pelagius, sees a bandit bearing down on him. He is aware of the foe but was not entirely prepared (his sword was not drawn). His Momentum begins at 10. The GM has fixed the bandit's at 12. Pelagius doesn't like those odds, so he spends a Token to add his Resolve of 3 to his Momentum, for a starting value of 13.

5. An opposed contest takes place, with each participant making a test roll *(Pelagius tests Rakish Swashbuckler while the bandit tests his melee combat).*

6. The participant with the highest number of Boons wins the exchange. The Effect is found by subtracting the loser's Boon tally from the winner's Boon tally. Every level of Effect damages the opponent's Momentum by 3 points.
Pelagius's attack yields 3 Boons, while the bandit gains only two. That's an Effect of 1 for Pelagius, or e1.

7. Damage is subtracted from the loser's Momentum.
The bandit's Momentum began at 12. It has now been reduced to 9.

8. If no one's Momentum has been reduced to 0, the exchange continues.

When Momentum reaches 0, the adversary/character has been defeated (knocked out, found guilty, lost the race, and other disappointments).

ADVANTAGE & DISADVANTAGE

There are times when a character has a clear advantage or disadvantage in a struggle. In such cases, the reading of test dice changes slightly:

Advantage: Boons are generated when the character rolls a 3, 4, 5, or 6 rather than the standard 4, 5, or 6.

Disadvantage: Boons are generated when the character rolls only a 5 or 6 rather than the standard 4, 5, or 6.

As noted on page xxx, players may spend a Token to declare an Advantage if the GM agrees.

Pelagius is wielding a knife against a thug. The thug has a cudgel. The struggle takes place in a narrow alley. Pelagius declares an Advantage because his knife is easier to use in a confined space than a cudgel. The GM agrees, allowing him to spend a token to have an Advantage. His test rolls will now generate Boons on a 3, 4, 5, and 6. He will lose this benefit if the fight moves to an open space.

Advantages and Disadvantages are always applied to the player characters; NPCs leave their abilities as is. Thus, when an NPC pushes a character into the mud, the NPC does not enjoy an Advantage, but the character must endure a Disadvantage.

SYNERGY BETWEEN THEMES (OPTIONAL)

There will inevitably be times when a character possesses multiple Themes that fit a situation. The standard rule is to use the Theme with the highest rank. It may not be realistic, but it is simple and easy to remember. But let's consider the following scene, where Pelagius throws a wrinkle into the standard rule:

Our young mariner finds himself defending The Angry Lass (the ship on which he is serving) from pirates of another ship, The Festering Boil. Aboard the Festering Boil is his nemesis, Duke Atrelia. He wants to leap from The Angry Lass across to The Festering Boil and land on the Duke by using a piece of hanging sail as a rope. Pelagius has a pair of Themes that would seem to address the attempt: Rakish Swashbuckler (3) and Must Kill the Duke (4). The former Theme reflects the derring-do of swinging across to the other ship, while the latter indicates his determination to end the Duke's life.

If the player isn't satisfied with using the better of multiple Themes, he can petition the GM to allow him to augment one Theme with another. The player states his case, and the GM either allows or denies the request. If allowed, the player then calculates his test dice based on the *full* value of the *lesser* Theme and *half* of the value of the *superior* Theme (rounded

down).

Pelagius's lesser Theme, Rakish Swashbuckler, has a rank of 3. His superior Theme, Must Kill the Duke, has a rank of 4. He takes half of his Kill the Duke Theme (4/2 = 2) and adds it to his Rakish Swahsbuckler Theme (3) for a total of 5 ranks.

Augmenting is good only for one use during a scene. Should the player want it to last the entire scene, he must spend a Token.

There will be times when augmenting one Theme with another yields no benefit, as in the case of a rank 3 Theme augmenting a rank 2 Theme.

But what should be done when two or more Themes indicate an ability that is always 'turned on?' For example, let's imagine Sylvia, a character whose life has been devoted to music. Of her various Themes, three of them relate to her study of singing: *Vistablue School of Voice (3), Traveling Minstrel (2), and Autumn Pool's Maiden of Song (4)*. While each one of these Themes has its own unique aspects, they all point to the continual development of the character's singing voice. When Sylvia assembles a dice pool to make a singing test, it seems unfair to restrict her to one Theme or force her to spend a Token to make her ability last an entire scene. When this happens, the GM has a few choices:

• Allow *permanent* augmentation of the lesser Theme using the augmentation rules previously described.
Sylvia's lesser Theme is Traveling Minstrel (2). She can add one point from Vistablue School of Voice and two points from Autumn Pool's Maiden of Song, for a final Theme dice pool of 5.

• Add one rank to the superior Theme for every other related Theme of rank 3 or higher.
Sylvia's superior Theme is Autumn Pool's Maiden of Song (4). She can add one rank from Vistablue School of Voice because it is rank 3. If Traveling Minstrel was rank 3 (or higher), she could have added a die from that as well.

• Give Advantage to any dice pools based on the common denominator relating the Themes together (in Sylvia's case, singing). Needless to say, base the pool on the highest ranking Theme.

Sylvia's dice pool scores successes on rolls of 3, 4, 5, and 6 whenever she sings (using her rank 4 Autumn Pool's Maiden of Song).

It is possible that these permanent augmentations can get out of hand. A character like Conan, who probably has combat training in every one of his Themes, could assemble a massive dice pool every time he swings a sword. In these instances, the GM should issue a cap on the size of augmented pools, no more than two ranks higher than the superior Theme.

TOKENS

Every game begins with a pool of Tokens available to all characters. Tokens are the dramatic currency players have to create moments of literary scale and importance. Think of them as a handful of tricks an author has to ply when writing a novel; they're exciting and dramatic but, if overused, become stale and predictable. Thus, there are a limited number available to use each session.

The initial number of Tokens available is equal to the number of players at the table. These Tokens may be represented by coins, glass beads, poker chips, or any other easily managed item. Tokens are often used to invoke Spotlight Moments, a mechanic allowing characters to accomplish feats beyond the normal scope of the rules. They may also be employed to invoke an item's special property, release an extraordinary burst of power from a spell, add 3d to a dice pool based on an existing Virtue, add 3 to Momentum, or Edit a scene (see page xxx). The Token pool refreshes at the beginning of every session of play.

To use a Token, the other players in the group must unanimously agree to the player's request. A character with the role of Leader may override the other players in this vote. A Conflicted Hero, another role, may use a Token even if the Leader doesn't agree, by purposely invoking a Trait to incur the anger, resentment or even wrath of another character (see below).

Brenden asks to spend a Token to invoke an Edit. He wants to reverse an instance where he drank a potion that made his character sick. Three of the four other players vote against this request, because the pool would be left with no Tokens for other players to use. The dissenting vote is from the party's Leader. He

overrides their vote, allowing Brenden to spend the Token. The pool is now empty.

• Spending a Token can allow a player to re-roll a die pool. The second roll must be accepted, even if it is worse than the initial roll.

In an attempt to draw an unsuspecting guard's attention away from a prisoner, Pelagius throws a stone. His attempt fails; the stone lands between the guard and himself, drawing the guard's attention in his direction. The guard sees Pelagius! Graham announces he will use a Token to re-roll the attempt. This time he succeeds. The stone clatters off a larger rock beyond the guard, who moves away from both the prisoner and Pelagius in pursuit of the sound.

• Spending a Token can allow a player to invoke a Trait. Traits allow the character to affect a story element in a minor way.

Pelagius is searching through the remnants of a burned down building. He is looking for a clue as to the whereabouts of a missing blacksmith and finds a plain bracelet. Paul spends an edit and announces Pelagius recognizes something significant about the bracelet, using his 'steadfast' Trait. The GM informs him that he recognizes the make of the bracelet as being from a rival blacksmith.

A Trait used to negatively affect a character replenishes one Token.

Upon entering a tavern, a patron of the establishment cracks a joke about the size of Pelagius's nose, causing the barmaid to chuckle. Pelagius has the 'prideful' trait. Embarrassed, he challenges anyone who thinks his nose is too big to a duel. Six patrons stand up in answer to the challenge. Pelagius replenishes one Token by causing himself trouble.

• Spending a Token can add a Virtue's rank to a die pool.

Pelagius ends up in a bar brawl. He's greatly outnumbered and needs all the help he can get. He spends an edit to add his rank 3 in Opportunity (virtue) to his rank 3 in 'Rakish Swashbuckler,' telling the GM that this Virtue reflects his ability to find even the smallest opening in his enemy's defenses. If the GM consents, Pelagius makes an attack with a pool of 6 dice!

• Spending a Token can invoke the protective properties of armor. Armor in *Tower of Adamant* comes into play only when dramatically effective; it is not treated 'passively' as in most other games. Like the literature that inspires this game, armor is a dramatic device. If it isn't doing something that adds to the excitement of the scene, it plays no part in it.

Pelagius takes a deadly thrust from a brigand's rapier, dropping his Momentum to 0. This attack will spell the end of the scene for Pelagius, allowing the brigand to escape with a valuable treaty. Pelagius spends a Token and invokes the protective quality of his mail shirt. The armor allows him to deny 6 points of damage. The brigand's thrust is turned aside by the hero's sturdy armor, quite possibly saving a delicate peace between two antagonistic kingdoms.

• Spending a Token can draw on the special properties of an item. This often involves magical qualities, such as that of a sword that bursts into flame at effective moments. As with armor, these qualities play a role strictly at critical junctures; they are not present for every exchange.

Baldigar is fighting an ogre. The great beast is a lot for one character to handle. His axe has a special Virtue that adds an extra e2 for one blow when a Token is spent. Baldigar's player, Brenden, asks the group if he can use a Token from the pool. They all agree.

• Spending a Token allows the player to declare an Advantage for his character (see next page), such as having high ground in melee combat. The GM must consent to the player's claim that he has achieved an advantage over his opponent. Advantage ends when circumstances change to negate the Advantage (for example, if the player loses the high ground).

EDITS

Every character has the ability to deny random chance and coax the hand of fate in his favor. By spending a Token, a player can Edit a scene.

An Edit can reverse a failed test or minor story

development *that happens to him*, such as reversing a failed attempt to leap off a building onto a horse, but there are consequences ("yes, but"). For example:

• A player uses an Edit to have an ally grab his character's foot after failing a roll to avoid falling off a cliff, leaving the character with a broken ankle.

• A character fails a test to win the trust of an evil cultist. His player employs an Edit to earn the cultist's trust, resulting in the character being invited into a dangerous back room *alone*.

• A PC intends to visit a sage who can provide crucial information, but instead goes to the wrong house. Disappointingly for him, the "wrong house" turns out to be inhabited by of a group of assassins having a clandestine meeting. The player obviously does not want to be cornered by a group as assassins, so he makes an Edit. Consequences might include finding the sage murdered, or playing the sage as a paranoid old man convinced the PC is out to kill him.

• In playing a deadly game of chance involving two levers, the character pulls on a lever that opens up a pit beneath him. The player Edits the scene to pull the other lever, avoiding the pit trap. A possible consequence of this Edit might involve the lever ringing an alarm as it releases a prize, or opening up a pit under one of his companions as his prize is delivered.

• A character is disguised as a town guard, using the uniform of a drunken, unconscious guard he stripped down. He is about to be exposed by a city official who has observed the character does not carry the badge of a city guard in his pocket, as required. The player uses an Edit to mention he did indeed procure such a trinket, noting to the GM he picked up the badge off the floor when stealing the guard's clothes. As a consequence, the GM rules that the real guard was already on notice for being drunk on the job. The town official, smelling the alcohol on the PC's uniform, orders the PC to be held in stocks in the public square for two hours.

SUCCESS IN THE FACE OF FAILURE
Tower of Adamant assumes the GM and player are working in a collaborative manner, rather than an antagonistic one. This means there is always room for improvisation and dramatic license. To that end, I

encourage GMs and players to occasionally suggest alternate outcomes over standard results. As long as it doesn't stretch the boundaries of believability to the breaking point, go with it. For example, the standard Effect of 0 would be failure. Yet a more interesting interpretation might be mild success with multiple drawbacks.

Baldigar grabs a hanging rope, attempting to swing across a chasm. His roll yields an e0. A traditional reading of this result would suggest the character fails to reach the other side of the chasm.

But what about if the same roll is looked at a different way?

Baldigar makes it to the other side, but cracks his knee on the ledge <u>and</u> makes a terrible noise, alerting nearby guards to his presence. He has achieved his goal, but is now hobbled and has enemies looking for him.

The player can accept, reject, or offer a revision to the GM's proposal.

CHARACTER GENERATION

1. Develop a concept and decide on your role
2. Develop a Treatment for your character
3. Create Themes based on the Treatment
4. Select Virtues
5. Select Traits
6. Choose Gear

1. CONCEPT & ROLE

Lay out the hero's essential elements in one concise sentence:

_____ (character's name) is a _____ _____ (adjective, noun) and _____ (role) from _____ (place) who _____(verb).

> **Pelagius' Concept**
>
> *Pelagius* is a *resourceful mariner* and *conflicted hero* from *the city of Manifest* who *sails the seas of vengeance.*

There are six different roles: destined hero, protector, companion, conflicted hero, guide, and leader.

• The Destined Hero is a character who is marked for greater things through pure happenstance. He may be the secret son of a dead king, the heir to a great long-dormant power, or the Chosen One of ancient legends.

• The Protector is the guardian of another character or perhaps an entire party. His job is to put himself on the front line in order to save his charge(s).

• The Companion is a specialist in one or two skills. He often has a close ally in the party who is also a companion. Acting in concert, the two friends can accomplish greater deeds than they could on their own.

• The Conflicted Hero is the wildcard of the group. He is equally capable of great heroism and great villany, and is constantly battling his demons. He walks a tightrope that will lead to redemption or betrayal.

• The Guide is a pathfinder, the character who scouts ahead to find the easiest and best route to take on a journey and avoid potential dangers. The guide is a secondary leader, and may take over that role in the absence of a leader.

• The Leader is the head of the party. He is the final word on the best course of action. He commands and inspires his fellows through example and the power of his bearing.

2. TREATMENT

A Treatment is a brief description of the character's history to the present day. The word 'Treatment' is a screenwriting term. It refers to a film's plot rundown and is created before the actual screenplay is written. It is effectively a detailed outline of what will happen in the film.

For Tower of Adamant, a Treatment is an outline of a character's background. It is generally broken down into a series of paragraphs, each describing a phase in the character's life. A good rule of thumb is to divide the phases into Adolescence, Young Adulthood, and Adulthood. The level of description and detail are entirely at the discretion of the player.

When developing a Treatment, consider only elements that you want to become important to the character's ongoing arc. Perhaps your character learned basket weaving. That's all well and good, but is it something you want to arise during gameplay? If not, best leave it out. Your Treatment is shorthand for 'These are things I want to influence my character in his adventures.' Your GM will read your Treatment and may even take notes. Doing so informs her plans for her campaign. If your Treatment includes the names of people who have had an important hand in your character's path in life, there is a good chance those people will pop up at some point during the campaign. If your Treatment notes that your character once killed a man, you're telling the GM that you want that act to affect your adventures.

It may be useful to pepper your Treatment with game terms. Specifically referring to the character's Complications, Virtues, and Traits can help connect the more narrative elements of the Treatment with the mechanical elements of the rest of character generation.

Pelagius developed a <u>bitter</u> streak because he learned to trust no one (Trait).

Pelagius's first great challenge was helping to repel an attack by two pirate ships, which informed his <u>resolve</u> (Virtue).

Adolescence

Pelagius was born in a brothel in the coastal city of Manifest to a prostitute and an unknown father. He was raised by his mother and her fellows. His early life was dangerous but loving. Pelagius' average day involved taking money from brothel customers, running errands, stealing from unsuspecting travelers, and playing with street urchins. The event that most informed his outlook on life was seeing his mother beaten almost to death by Duke Atrelia. Because of this, he hates all nobility and wants to kill the duke.

Young Adulthood

As Pelagius neared the end of his youth, he stayed in Manifest and worked with local sailors at the city's port. His days were generally spent loading and unloading ship cargo, and catching any gossip from willing (or drunken) sailors. The most pivotal event in these years was an attack by coastal raiders who kidnapped his mother and many of her friends. He developed a bitter streak, because he learned to trust no one.

Adulthood

As an adult, Pelagius became a mariner on the Seas of Gold. His first great challenge was helping to repel an attack by two Umbrian pirate ships, which informed his resolve. His most trusted ally is Petra, his lover and fellow mariner. Pelagius believes Duke Atrelia is behind the pirate attack. Pelagius is known for his determination, cleverness, and crooked smile. He has cultivated a sense of justice, because he has seen too many oppressed people on his travels. Pelagius will let nothing get in the way of finding his mother (be she dead or alive) and killing the duke. He also desires to captain his own ship.

3. THEMES

Themes are a collection of skills, knowledge, goals, reputation, and personality. While drawn from your Treatment, Themes are more concentrated, a sort of collated version of aspects of the character's Treatment.

Themes are not limited to predefined lists. They are entirely in the hands of the player. Try not to limit your Themes to one-word descriptors such as *Strong* or *Fast*. While those are perfectly serviceable, they do little to bring your character to life. Instead of *Strong*, why not use *Wrestles Bears*? Not only does that inform your character's great prowess, but it makes the GM aware that you know how to fight bears. It also suggests a certain knowledge of the wilderness (to wrestle bears, the character probably lives in or near the wilds). Taking it even further, perhaps your Theme points to a certain fearlessness, recklessness, and toughness. The character is also more than likely covered in nasty scars and may look intimidating. In comparison, *Strong* doesn't really tell us much.

If you have specific ideas about how you want your Themes to be used, go ahead and write down a handful of things you want to make certain are associated with your Theme:

Wrestles Bears (strong, brave, lives on the edge of the wild, find and stalk bears, mimic bear growl, covered in scars)

Characters begin play with a handful of Themes, usually five. Themes can be anything you want, but must abide by one strict rule: they cannot use comparative superlatives such as 'best', 'strongest, 'most feared', or 'greatest lover,' *unless* the superlative is purely in the mind of the character. Your character might *think* he's the greatest lover in the world, but the next time he attempts to win the heart of a fair maiden, he may find out differently.

Each Theme needs to have its basis in the character's Treatment. Beyond that, they are entirely up to the player to invent. Suggestions for Themes include:

- a motivation (Must Find the Wandering White Elk)
- an experience (Lone Survivor of the Battle of Red Ridge)
- a reputation (As Likely to Hit You as Look at You)
- a profession (Master Swordsman of Prince Llewand)
- a lineage (Lost Heir to the Line of Urgast)
- an item (The Black Finger Staff)
- an ally (My Old Pal Brutal Buck)

The significance of each Theme is for the player to make apparent to his GM before he uses the Theme in play. This may often involve the player informing her at the beginning of the first campaign session. Surprising the GM with "Oh yeah, I'm actually the missing heir of Urland you've mentioned as being the object of our quest" is really bad form.

With your character's Themes in place, assign ratings to

them. Theme ratings must begin play with a minimum score of 2. You have 10 points with which to buy ranks in five Themes, based on the table below.

Theme Rank	Point Cost
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5

Let's take a look at what Paul has developed for his character, Pelagius.

Pelagius's Themes	Rank
Thief From a Manifest Brothel (pick pockets, sneak around, sympathy for prostitutes, knows Manifest's underbelly, recognize a John)	3
Mariner on the Seas of Gold (navigate by stars, knows rigging and sails, rope tying, climbing, fight a storm, familiar with geography of Seas of Gold coasts)	2
Rakish Swashbuckler (rapier fighting, fancy footwork, taunt and frustrate opponents, witty quips, oodles of style)	3
Must Kill the Duke (recognize the Duke's men, learn Duke's location & secrets)	4
Petra (she has my back and I have hers, battle of wits, know what the other is thinking, treat with the upper crust of society)	3

Veteran Characters
Default characters begin play in their early 20's, just at the beginning of their adventuring careers. But traditional epic fantasy tales often portray companies of disparate ages and abilities. Gandalf journeys with Merry and Pippin, Allanon with Shea and Flick, Bannor with Thomas Covenant. Such disparities can prove difficult in a roleplaying environment, since the more powerful characters can overshadow their lesser companions to the point that the latter characters have little to do. *Tower of Adamant* addresses these issues by offering caveats to the more experienced starting character. These caveats are termed *Complications*. They are not usually ranked in any sort of mechanical way; they are character and plot devices designed to

provoke trouble for the character. Like Traits, they may be employed in negative ways to recover a Token. For each bonus advance taken, the player must select one Complication for his character.

To raise a Theme to a higher rank, the player pays the cost in *advancement points*, below. The cost for the new rank equals the value of the current rank. If you want to raise a Theme from rank 3 to rank 4, it costs 3 points. If you want to raise a rank 2 Theme to rank 3, it costs 2 points, and so on. If you want to raise a Theme by more than one rank, you must tally the cost of *each* new rank. Thus to raise a Theme from rank 4 to rank 6, it would cost 9 advancement points (4+5=9).

Opening a new Theme costs one advancement point for rank 2, three points for rank 3, six points for rank 4, and 10 points for rank 5.

The following advances may be taken by the veteran character at the cost of one Complication each:
• 10 advancement points
• raise two Virtues by one point each

Complications
The player may select Complications from the list below, or invent his own. The exact nature of each Complication must be agreed upon by the player and GM. Should a condition arise only in certain circumstances, those parameters need to be detailed before play begins. The following represents sample Complications, and is not meant to be comprehensive or restrictive.

Sickly the character is prone to illness. Roll a die at the beginning of each day. A roll of 1 indicates illness, giving the character Disadvantage for all physical test actions for that day.

Manipulated There is someone who has a degree of control over the character, to the point that the character may betray his beliefs, principles, or friends. The control may derive from the NPC knowing a dark secret about the PC, such as the knowledge that the character is not who he says he is. Or perhaps the NPC has kidnapped the character's wife, and is threatening to kill her if he doesn't do exactly what is demanded of him (if you have read *Dune*, this may sound familiar to you).

Emotionally Wounded the character is scarred from an event in his past. When confronted with something that reminds him of this tragedy, the character will

become unhinged. He may break down in tears, fly into a rage, or freeze in a stupor.

Hunted the character is being actively pursued by agents of the law, the criminal underground, the servants of darkness, or another large force. The pursuers are more than an inconvenience; they are a potential threat lurking around every corner.

Habitual Offender the character has a habit or urge that frequently obfuscates his life. He may fall in love with every woman he spends more than an hour with. He may be obsessed with collecting silver. He may feel the need to issue challenges to anyone who opposes him in any way. Try to avoid cliches such as alcoholism or carousing for prostitutes; those are too mundane for epic fantasy!

Code the character has a mantra he lives by, and will not betray it for any reason. Examples of codes include never harming animals, always accepting a challenge, or a commitment to protecting the honor of all women.

Reviled the character is, at best, disliked by his companions or, at worse, loathed by them. Any time he needs help from an ally, the ally must make a resolve test and score at least one boon to overcome his disdain and help the character.

Cross to Bear the character has something in his life that acts as an impediment to his happiness. It could be a sickly wife or child whom he cannot be away from for more than a day, an endless quest to find a missing hero, or often being called away to fulfill an obligation such as military service to a lord.

Paul wants Pelagius to begin play with a bit more experience under his belt. He opts to accept one Complication in return for 10 advancement points. He improves Mariner on the Seas of Gold from 3 to 4 (costing 4 points), and Rakish Swashbuckler from 2 to 3 (costing 3 points). That leaves 3 points remaining. Paul decides Pelagius has a vicious scar that runs from his temple to his chin, the result of a particularly deadly fight with a corsair. The scar lends Pelagius an intimidating appearance, lending him the Theme Fearsome Countenance at rank 2 (costing 3 points). The scar will also provide him with the Complication Easy to Identify, making it very difficult for him to assume anonymity.

4. VIRTUES

Characters each have their own unique brand of heroism. Some may be famous for last-second rescues, while others gain renown for refusing to surrender. By spending a Token, a hero may accomplish the types of deeds you read about in fiction and see in films.

When a player spends a Token to use a Virtue, he can add 5 to his Momentum when engaged in opposed conflicts, add 3d to a test roll, or make an Edit. Needless to say, the player needs to explain how such instances are based on the Virtue of choice.

Each character chooses two Virtues among the ones listed below.

Timeliness: the character manifests heroism at the last possible moment. Such heroes swoop in to rescue defenseless characters just before the pendulum slices across their bellies or enemies decapitate them on a block. Think of Han Solo arriving in the nick of time at the Battle of Yavin, allowing Luke to fire the shot that destroys the Death Star.

Redemption: the character accomplishes heroic deeds when he is redeeming past vices. Defending a character he has betrayed is the act of a hero seeking redemption. In the film *Excalibur*, Lancelot arrives in a fury at the final battle to redeem his past betrayal of King Arthur. Any player invoking Redemption must make it clear to the GM how the action is redeeming a past failing. The greater the failing, the greater the redemption.

Opportunity: in seemingly impossible situations, there are tiny windows of opportunity for heroism. Characters with this Virtue learn to take advantage of every fortuitous moment afforded them. Consider a scene from the film *Rob Roy*, where MacGregor is being lead away to his death. Using a momentary pause on a bridge, he grabs a rope and wraps it around his captor's neck, then leaps off the bridge to freedom. The Opportunity Virtue allows the character to interrupt the scene at any moment and accomplish a desired act.

Resolve: down to his final breath, the resolute hero issues one defiant stab before disaster strikes. Bard the Bowman, down to his final arrow, kills Smaug with one shot. Looking once again at *Excalibur*, Sir Percival refuses to surrender in his quest for the Holy Grail despite being hung by Morgana and later nearly drowned in a river. Using Resolve allows the character to shrug off injury, fatigue, low spirits, and other manner of temporary defeat.

Sacrifice: the most celebrated form of heroism is that of personal sacrifice. Such acts do not need to involve death. Less severe repercussions include

SKILLS (OPTIONAL RULE)

In *Tower of Adamant*, Themes are used as 'skill umbrellas,' with each Theme representing a collection of knowledge, experience, and ability. Themes are meant to be evocative, encouraging creativity in problem solving and storytelling. Still, some gamers may prefer a more concrete expression of character ability. If every character is measured by the same defined standards, it is easier for both players and the GM to assess how to tackle various problems. To that end, here is an easy skill system that fits easily within standard character generation.

Players should create a Treatment and Themes, assigning a rank to each Theme as normal. For each Theme, select a number of skills equal to the Theme's rank. Thus, a rank 3 Theme has three skills associated with it. Each skill begins at rank 2. Every subsequent time the skill is chosen, its rank increases by one. The skills are:

Athletics: climbing, swimming, jumping, riding
Command: inspiring, intimidating, ordering others
Diplomacy: dealing with others on an intellectual and/or political level
Fighting: melee combat
Guile: bribery, seduction, blathering, haggling
Healing: leechcraft, herbalism, bone setting, medicine
Insight: read body language, detect lying, read emotions
Physique: strength, endurance
Seamanship: sailing, navigating, repairing ships
Shooting: firing bows and crossbows
Stealing: picking pockets, filching, lock picking
Stealth: moving quietly, hiding
Survival: tracking, building shelter, finding food & water, hunting
Throwing: spears, javelins, knives, sling stones

You may note that there is no 'Perception' skill. This is because I believe a character's ability to notice something should be based on the character's expertise in the environment. That is, a character trying to notice an ambush by wolves should test his Survival skill, while a character trying to spy a pickpocket should test his Stealing skill. Anyways...

Palagius' skill list, *sans* Veteran advances, might look something like this:

Thief From a Manifest Brothel (3)
  Stealing 2
  Stealth 2
  Guile 2

Mariner on the Seas of Gold (2)
  Athletics 2
  Seamanship 2

Rakish Swashbuckler (3)
  Athletics +1 (for a total of 3)
  Guile +1 (for a total of 3)
  Fighting 2

Must Kill the Duke (4)
  Insight 2
  Fighting +1 (for a total of 3)
  Guile +1 (for a total of 4)
  Stealth +1 (for a total of 3)

Petra (3)
  Guile +1 (for a total of 5)
  Insight +1 (for a total of 3)
  Diplomacy 2

That gives Palagius a final skill list of:
Athletics 3, Command 1, Diplomacy 2, Fighting 3, Guile 5, Healing 1, Insight 3, Lore 1, Physique 1, Seamanship 2, Shooting 2, Stealing 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Throwing 1.

injury, banishment, capture, and willingly taking blame for another person's crimes. The classic Hollywood example is jumping in front of a friend to 'take a bullet.' In *A Game of Thrones*, Ned Stark accepts false blame for treason in order to save the lives of his daughters. When Sacrifice is used, the player must describe how he is sacrificing himself to achieve a greater good. Because this Virtue involves a caveat, *Sacrifice has the potential to accomplish the most heroic actions of any Virtue.* The greater the level of sacrifice, the greater the reward.

Spectacle: the most renowned heroes are often the

ones whose acts are big, bold, and brash. Spectacle is a flavor of heroism where the character accomplishes amazing feats that become the stuff of legend. Maximus, from the film *Gladiator*, slays five men in a matter of seconds before a worshipping crowd. Beowulf tears Grendel's arm off. Even those cliched rousing speeches you see in movies (*Scent of a Woman*, I'm looking at you) are a form of spectacle. This Virtue is used when the character has at least a handful of people present to witness his awesome.

Using Virtues

When a player wants his character to perform an act worthy of fictional heroism, he spends a Token and announces how he will use a Virtue to accomplish the act. The GM has final authority over the use of the Virtue, and may ask the player to revise his plan. When the request is finally accepted by the GM, the character accomplishes the action.

5. TRAITS

Traits are the best measure of a hero's personality and character. When the chips are down, Traits will often reveal the hero's true nature. They can be used to both benefit and hinder a character. When hindering, the Traits's initiation grants the Token pool a replenished Token. When benefiting a character, using a Trait costs one Token.

Each character begins play with two Traits.

The list below should not be considered definitive. Players are encouraged to invent their own Traits.

Examples are provided of how each Trait can be used to aid or burden the character.

• **Generous**: when a generous character notices some-one in dire need of assistance, he will give the shirt off his back. Whether giving money, food, clothing, or labor, the generous hero places his own comfort aside to better the life of his less fortunate brethren.

> **Burden**: a warrior loans his beloved horse to a pair of travelers, one of whom is pregnant, knowing he may never see the horse again.
> **Aid**: a character donates a purse of gold to a poor old man, who immediately rewards him with a family heirloom (a magic dagger, perhaps) or a piece of valuable information.

• **Honorable**: consequences be damned, the honorable hero will tell the truth and keep his oaths. His soul withers when he commits a foul deed, and only through pious reckoning and steadfast determination will he make up for his transgressions. The honorable character is committed to Doing the Right Thing. He will not cheat, lie, or deceive even the most heinous foe.

> **Burden**: a dwarf keeps an oath made to a man who has since proved to be a black-hearted knave. The act raises the ire of the villain's enemies.
> **Aid**: the hero swears to protect the honor of a woman disgraced by a local blaggard. When her plight threatens to leave her exiled, he marries her. This selfless and honorable act earns the lasting loyalty of her family, who will come to his aid whenever possible.

•**Just**: a just character is focused on fairness. Like the honorable hero, the just are dedicated to truth. When a just character sees acts of deception, he is willed to achieve some form of recompense for the victim, even if the victim 'deserved' such treatment.

> **Burden**: a warrior fights from his knees after his foe accidentally breaks his own ankle tripping over a rock during combat.
> **Aid**: a shield maiden is tasked with battling a supposed poisoner in a trial by combat. Her foe is a man with one leg and a crippled arm. She refuses to fight the man, regardless of his guilt or innocence. She spends a Token and announces her esteem in the eyes of all present, save the most wretched, increases.

• **Loyal**: through thick and thin, the loyal character will stay true to his charge. A character who possesses this Trait must select something to be loyal to, such as a companion, a cause, or a country.

> **Burden**: a knight refuses to denounce a longtime friend who has just killed a beloved village reeve, even though he suspects the friend did it out of jealousy. Defending the friend puts the knight under suspicion and may very well lead to his arrest.
> **Aid**: a protector refuses to leave the side of his charge, even after that latter falsely accuses him of stealing, and orders him home. The protector spends a Token and declares that his loyalty will override any command or guile test his charge makes to force him to leave.

• **Merciful**: even the most foul and devious villain deserves a second chance. A merciful character will often stay his sword when dealing with a defeated enemy, in the hope that the foe will return the mercy with some degree of honesty and submission. Merciful heroes are known for offering their enemies a chance at redemption.

> **Burden** a hunter allows a hated and thieving steward to escape the village's clutches because the latter has a young child. The hunter knows this will bring the wrath of the townspeople upon him.
> **Aid** a guide releases a bear from a trap. By burning a Token, he asks the GM to allow the bear to be his ally when in these woods.

• **Steadfast**: some heroes never give up. Their bones may be breaking, their backs burning, but nothing will steer a steadfast character from achieving his goal. When hope fails, these heroes dig deep to find a light in the darkness.

> **Burden**: a warrior with an infected hand wound refuses to rest or be treated because he must bring food to a starving family, even though this may result in the eventual amputation of his hand.
> **Aid**: during a lorewarden's investigation involving questioning street orphans about a murdered nobleman, it becomes evident that the urchins know nothing. The lorewarden has put in too much time for this to be worth nothing, so he spends a Token and proclaims one of the children overheard something at a public shaming about the crime.

• **Valorous**: some heroes aren't worried about their own lives when others are in need. A valorous character dives headfirst into the fray at tremendous risk to himself. This is above and beyond the normal courage displayed by a hero; this is bravery bordering on foolhardy.

> **Burden**: an archer runs into a flaming building to retrieve a potent artifact that can reverse a drought, though the flames may leave him badly burned.
> **Aid**: a barbarian sees a man standing on a rock in the midst of a swelling tide. Swimming around the rock is a large shark. The barbarian uses a Token to discover a pair of large rocks just under the surface, allowing him to jump across each rock, rescue the man, and make it back. He will still need to make a series of athletics checks.

• **Bitter:** the bitter character can't let go of past slights or misfortunes. Bitter heroes hold grudges, which can lead to unmatched determination, recklessness, or tragedy.

> **Burden**: a wronged knight sees the man who stole his fortune enter a tavern. The knight charges into the building, ignoring the fact that he is supposed to be keeping a low profile.
> **Aid**: an old loremaster has never forgiven his most promising apprentice for betraying his secrets to another wizard. He has spent years trying to find the apprentice and his new master. When returning to the village where it all happened, he spends a Token to discover information about where they have gone, and when.

• **Cowardly:** a cowardly character believes discretion is the better part of valor - to the extreme. Rather than risk any harm or chance of failure, a coward will turn the other cheek even in situations where his friends need his help.

> **Burden:** a cowardly character declines to defend his allies against false charges of helping a thief break out of gaol. The party's leader promises never to use any of his special abilities to benefit the character until he redeems himself.
> **Aid**: the party finds itself surrounded by bandits. The cowardly character's player spends a Token and declares his character runs off before the bandits have a chance to corner him. He is now outside the ring, running into the woods at top speed.

• **Cruel:** inflicting distress on others is the calling card of the cruel. Such acts are never necessary; they are, in fact, done for the pure pleasure of seeing others suffer. Cruelty can range from causing needless physical pain to issuing hurtful words at emotionally fragile people.

> **Burden:** the character brutally breaks an undeserving NPC's arm, terrifying him in an attempt to reveal an important secret. The PC's cruelty is seen by another NPC, who reports the act to local authorities.
> **Aid**: the brutal character's player spends a save to automatically break the will of a captive.

• **Deceitful**: some characters can make the most outrageous lie seem like gospel truth. Deceitful characters manipulate others to achieve their own ends, regardless of the consequences to the unlucky victim.

Burden: a highwayman is unable to get anyone to believe his (true) claim that he has no knowledge of some missing jewels.

Aid: spending a Token allows the highwayman to convince a sheriff that he couldn't possibly have participated in a local robbery.

• **Envious**: an envious character wants what others have. It might be a fine sword, a beautiful wife, a plot of land, or the admiration of others. No matter what the envious person accomplishes or what he owns, it is inferior to what his neighbor has. Resentment and jealousy are the constant companions of such people.

Burden: the envious character is caught leering at the beautiful wife of the king.

Aid: A character envious of a friend's reputation manages to take credit for something the ally did, making the ally look like a liar and the envious character look like a hero.

• **Greedy:** sometimes the lust for material possessions overwhelms common sense. Greedy characters will steal even from their own friends to procure the object of their desires. Any character who selects this vice must specify what things fan the flames of their greed.

Burden: the greedy character gets caught trying to pilfer a gem.

Aid: the greedy character notices the most valuable bauble in a heaping pile of dragon treasure.

• **Prejudiced**: one of the ugliest vices is that of prejudice. Prejudice is a largely irrational disdain of a wide group of people. Hating orcs or other obviously 'evil' races doesn't count as prejudice. Instead, a character bearing this vice must hold it against another seemingly civilized people.

Burden: a character prejudiced against gypsies can't hide his loathing of a one whose help he needs to get out of a pit. The gypsy leaves him to rot.

Aid: the same warrior later spends a Token and gains an automatic surprise attack on a passing gypsy wagon.

• **Prideful**: many heroes have inflated opinions of themselves. Prideful heroes perceive anything less than glowing compliments as a personal slight against their character and accomplishments. This often leads to unnecessary conflicts.

Burden: a prideful hero smacks his sword against a tree after being defeated in a duel. The sword breaks.

Aid: a character with an aggressive ego is defeated in a public debate. He spends a Token and declares he lets loose a loud guffaw, demeaning his opponent's winning argument. He is awarded another round of debate to get himself back on track.

GEAR

The last thing a player needs to do before setting off on his adventure is to equip his character with any gear that seems appropriate. There are no restrictions on what may be chosen for equipment as long as it fits with the character's Themes and is not magical or otherwise 'special' in its properties. Items may be as broad or specific as desired. Some players enjoy detailing every little bauble carried, while others may adopt a more 'hand-wavy' angle. Looking at Pelagius, here is what we might imagine:

Broad List:
Mariner's Tools & Clothes
Rapier & dagger
Keepsake of my mother (locket)

Detailed List
Swashbuckler's Boots
Puffy white shirt
Tight leather trousers
Telescope
Astrolabe
Bandana
Maps of the Sea of Gold & environs
Compass
Rapier & dagger
Rope
Bottle of rum
Hardtack
Belt with large buckle
Keepsake of my mother (locket)

ROLE

Every character selects a role that best describes his purpose in the ongoing saga. You are no doubt familiar with the RPG concept of class (fighter, wizard, thief, and so on). If class describes a character's function in the *plot*, then role portrays his function in the *story*. If you have ever taken a screenwriting class, you probably know the difference between plot and story. If not, then perhaps the example below will make it a bit clearer.

Plot of *The Hobbit*: Bilbo Baggins is hired as a burglar to help a group of dwarves reclaim some lost treasure from a dragon.

Story of *The Hobbit*: a destined Hobbit must discover reserves of courage and leadership he never knew he had. In the process, he learns about the larger world and the limitations of his own comfortable existence.

Role also helps define the character's job in the group. The Guide helps find a course through the wilds. The companion offers reliable support for most things. The protector... well, *protects*.

There are six roles in Tower of Adamant. Some roles may exist many times over within a group, while others will probably only exist once. Most of these structural elements will seem obvious; a group will usually only have one Leader, for example, but may have many Companion heroes. By selecting your role, you are making a deliberate statement as to the manner of importance you want your character to play in the unfolding saga.

DESTINED HERO

The classic epic fantasy protagonist is the Destined Hero. He is Frodo Baggins, Shea Ohlmsford, Garion, Rand al'Thor, and Simon Mooncalf. He is often the lynchpin around which the entire story evolves. The Destined Hero begins with little knowledge of the wider world and often has no desire to explore it. He has a secret power or ability he, heretofore, was unaware of. Rand al'Thor was possessed of legendary magical abilities while Shea Ohlmsford was the only one who could use the Sword of Shannara. A key element they all possess is astonishing will and luck. They, more than any other character, develop and learn as they progress.

Requirements: none.

Background: the Destined Hero must add a portentous anecdote to *each* stage of his history. These should hint at a larger story that will unfold through gameplay. The player may know exactly where he wants these instances to lead or may prefer to be surprised by the GM. As such, both may wish to collaborate on these elements during character creation. The GM chapter fleshes out this concept, starting on page xxx.

Below is an example of what these new background details could look like.

Adolescence:
As a lad of only six, I happened across a cave with strange runes engraved upon the walls. When I touched the runes, my hands glowed with a strange fire, yet I felt no pain. I have kept both the cave and my strange experience a secret.

Young Adulthood:
Sometimes in my sleep, I have horrific visions of people burning. When I awake, my hands are blackened with ash.

Adulthood:
The dreams are more vivid and occur more often. I sleep alone for fear that I may harm someone or be discovered as some sort of unnatural soul. I have not returned to the cave for many years.

Here are some other examples that may be used as inspiration:

• *As a young child I became friends with an old hermit who appeared at the edge of the woods. Over many moons, he taught me the meanings of stars and dreams. When I described him to my mother, she said that old man died ten years ago, stoned to death by frightened villagers.*

• *I was once chased into an old barn by a group of ruffians. As they cornered me with pitchforks and knives, I began speaking in a tongue I had never heard before. The ruffians looked terrified and ran. To this day I have no idea what I spoke.*

• *On the day of a full moon, I cast no shadow even in the brightest sun.*

• *My family and I were caught in a raging fire that burned our*

EXAMPLES OF DESTINED HERO SECRETS

Lost Heir: the character is an unknowing heir of significant heritage. The revelation of his identity will inspire swaths of oppressed peoples, yet lead to his constant peril. Enemies who do not wish to see the character claim his position will stop at nothing to find and possibly kill him. Proof of the character's lineage may be revealed by any means the player or GM deems appropriate for the campaign; a unique birthmark, possession of an ancient item, or a latent magical talent are popular signs.

Hero Reborn: the character is the reincarnation of a hero from another age. The GM and player should detail the dead hero's talents and allow them to manifest gradually through the character. The GM/player should not feel restricted to one class's abilities. Initially they should select a class ability that fits the legendary figure, and let the character discover this sudden talent. Such abilities should initially manifest in dramatic or ironic moments. Abilities should accrue over time and eventually paint a clear picture of the ancient hero. It may be instructive if the character has dreams of ancient deeds as seen through the hero's eyes. Speaking some of the hero's famous words while asleep may be overheard by other characters. The character may claim certain memories that would be impossible for him to have experienced.

The One Power: whether through some ancient heritage or having been born under an impossible series of astrological coincidences, the character holds within him the sole ability to affect a colossal change in the world. Perhaps he is the only one who can touch the Ghost King or wield the fabled Staff of Ronan. Such an ability should not be something the character can use at will. Many times when the character tries to invoke the ability, it may fail. A resolve test or an extreme emotional state may be required to work the ability. In *The Elfstones of Shannara*, Wil Ohlmsford has difficulty using the elfstones, three magical talismans that can unleash awesome power. In the *Thomas Covenant* series, the protagonist has no understanding of how his white gold ring works. In both cases, the ability to release the object's power seems to depend on the character achieving an overwhelming level of fear and anxiety. In that respect, a test that *critically* fails might let loose the power as well, albeit in potentially devastating ways.

Child of Prophecy: the character is the object of a world changing prophecy. Perhaps many ages ago, an infamous hermit made a prophecy of one who would either save or destroy the land. Or maybe some unearthed stone tablets contain signs of an oncoming doom revolving around a simple farmhand. Prophecies are one of the mainstays of epic fantasy literature. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Malbeth the seer made a prophecy concerning the lost king's ability to summon the dead. That lost king turned out to be Aragorn. In *The Wheel of Time* series, Rand al'Thor's coming as the Dragon Reborn was prophecied by Gitara Moroso, an Aes Sedai. As with *hero reborn*, the truth behind *child of prophecy* should be revealed slowly. The character himself should not be the person to identify this truth; that should be left to masters of lore to suspect and finally reveal.

Dreams of Darkness and Light: the character has been plagued by powerful dreams that herald both a cataclysm and a way to arrest its arrival. He should not understand what the dreams are about; they should offer glimpses of dual futures. Wiser minds may interpret these dreams for what they are, but only the naive hero will recognize the portents when he sees them. The images seen by Sam and Frodo in Galadriel's mirror are indicative of the kinds of dreams a character might experience.

house to the ground. My parents and siblings died, but I was pulled out of the fire by something I did not see. Its grip felt like the jaws of a great beast.

• My elder cousin left to me a curious ring. He said wearing it made him disappear, and he often used it to hide from unwanted visitors. It may prove useful, yet I feel unsettled when handling it.

Pros: the Destined Hero is meant for greatness, although he doesn't yet know it. At dramatic moments, hidden abilities and secrets will be revealed. This is expanded on in the GM chapter.

Destined Heroes are blessed with extraordinary luck. They begin each session of play with a Token only they can use. This does not count against the common pool of Tokens.

When invoking *Meatshield*, Destined Heroes are not restricted to using NPCs or henchmen. They may use any of their Companions to fill that function. See *Meatshield* description on page xxx.

When the Destined Hero is knocked unconscious or goes missing for more than 24 hours, his recovery strengthens the hearts of his allies. In such instances, add two Tokens to the Token pool. This benefit may be limited by the GM to a number of times per day, week, etc.

Cons: When enemies realize the Destined Hero's importance, they will invariably target him for capture or death.

PROTECTOR HERO
Often linked to the story of the Destined Hero is the Protector hero. More than just support, the Protector is often the one who keeps the Destined Hero going in the face of overwhelming adversity. Menion Leah, Sam Gamgee, and Bannor of the Bloodguard are all examples of different types of Protectors. Protector heroes never waver in their support and are willing to sacrifice everything to protect their charge.

Requirements: one Virtue must be Sacrifice.

The Protector must select one party member as his *charge*. This person's safety is the Protector's prime duty. He may choose another charge if the initial one is missing, dead, or otherwise leaves the adventure.

Pros: When directly defending or rescuing his charge, the Protector may change one Bane to a Boon for each roll of the dice. This ability must derive from his own dice pool, not from the opposition's dice.

Protectors may fly into a rage when his charge is knocked unconscious, captured, or tortured or when the party at large has been rendered helpless. Protectors must spend a Token to achieve this visceral state. Protectors in a rage deal an extra 1 damage for each Boon rolled in an attack. The effect lasts the entire scene.

When an ally is defeated within the character's field of vision, the character may make a free attack against the enemy who defeated the ally. The Protector must be within speaking distance if the attack is verbal, or easy moving/throwing/shooting distance if the attack is physical.

If carrying an ally, the Protector may deny any damage from physical attacks made against the ally. The damage is instead assessed against the Protector, even if the opponent is attempting to strike the ally being carried. This benefit applies only when the Protector is not being attacked from behind.

If the Protector is unengaged and within throwing range of his charge, he can move and be hit by an attack that would have struck the charge. He is now considered engaged with the charge's opponent if the latter was engaged in melee fighting. The Protector's player may announce this maneuver after the charge has been hit.

Cons: If a Protector spends a Token to help himself, his next use of a Token must be to the benefit of a charge.

GUIDE HERO
The explorer of the group and the person who navigates the party through the wilds, the Guide hero is also often a secondary Leader. He is in charge of executing the course selected by the Leader hero (below), and scouting areas for enemies and safe passage. The Guide is an experienced adventurer in his own right. In the absence of a Leader hero, the Guide will effectively fill both roles. Classic Guides from fantasy literature include Binabik, Aragorn, and Saltheart Foamfollower.

Requirement: the Guide must have a Theme of at

least 3 in some sort of survival or streetwise-related area.

Pros: when the Guide spends a Token, he may immediately inform the GM of a feature of the terrain that he may take advantage of. Examples of advantageous terrain might include
- discovering a wooded knoll overlooking an enemy camp
- finding a tree that towers over all others, allowing the Guide to climb to the top and gain a clear vantage point of the surrounding area
- finding scree on a hill that is easily kicked free to slide down onto enemies
- discovering an abandoned bear den that offers perfect shelter and hiding

Guides are trained to be alert. When scouting ahead of his party by at least 100 yards, he may change any Bane into a Boon when making a reconnaissance test.

When the Guide sniffs out an ambush, add one Token to the pool.

If the Leader is removed from play, the Guide assumes that role. Each new day he gains an inherent ability of the Leader role.

Cons: the Guide is always at the front of the party, often scouting ahead of his Companions. Because of this, most ambushes will target the Guide. Scouting ahead can result in the Guide being attacked by several foes while his allies are far behind.

CONFLICTED HERO
The true wildcard of the adventuring group, the Conflicted Hero is capable of both saving the day and ruining it. Conflicted Heroes are torn between decisions of equal magnitude; one represents a path of light, the other of destruction. Famous Conflicted Heroes include Thomas Covenant and Boromir.

Attribute Requirements: none

Background: two of the Conflicted Hero's Traits must, in some way, cause trouble for each other. A valorous Trait might be challenged by jealousy, making rescuing the rival for a lady's hand a difficult choice.

Pros: by using a Trait to create trouble for himself or the party, the Conflicted Hero gains a two Tokens: one Token he can use *for himself only* and another that can be used by anyone else in his company when the Trait was invoked. The nature of the trouble is up to the player and GM, but it must involve more than an inconvenience. It must generate hardship. Some examples include
• Temper: Insulting a local official who then orders the characters put in stocks in a public square
• Irresponsible: Spending money on ale that should have gone to paying back an important debt.
• Prejudiced: declining to warn a member of a hated clan that he is about to be stabbed by a thief... only to have his callousness witnessed by other members of that clan.

Even if his fellow players vote against him using a Token, the Conflicted Hero's player may still take one from the pool if he uses a Trait to anger at least one other character.

Burnham Two-Hands is a Conflicted Hero with the Cowardly Trait. He has been turned down for his request of a Token to invoke an Edit. Not willing to accept the vote of his friends, he takes one anyway by refusing to stand with an ally in the face of an intimidating group of ruffs. The ally is now on his own as Burnham skulks away and Edits the scene so that he finds an escape route!

When the Conflicted Hero makes an earnest attempt to redeem an act of vice that has affected his party, he may place a Token into the hands of each character he has failed. These Tokens may not be used by himself, as it is a symbolic gesture of good will.

When defending a person or cause he has slighted or betrayed, the Conflicted Hero may add the value of a Heroic Theme to any test without spending a Token. This ability may be used once per day until the original act has been redeemed (in the eyes of the GM).

Cons: For every ten Traits invoked, Conflicted Heroes must use five to gain a Token while the other five must be used to spend a Token. In other words, if the Conflicted Hero's first three Trait uses are used to gain a Token, five of the next seven uses must be *spent* on using a Trait in a positive manner.

COMPANION HERO
The easiest type of role to play is that of the Companion hero. They are the support characters, the stalwart

heroes who seldom stand in the spotlight but are reliable to the core. They are Durin and Dayal, Gimli and Legolas. Companion heroes seldom slay the mighty dragon or rescue the princess, but they rarely find themselves suffering life-altering wounds, corruption, or insanities.

Requirement: see below.

Pros: the Companion is highly skilled in one area. Improve the character's highest ranked Theme by one point, and reduce his second-highest ranked Theme by one point.

When two - and only two - Companion characters form a strong friendship, they work exceptionally well as a team. During conflict, if they are in the same zone, one Companion may transfer up to 3 points of Momentum to the other Companion. The exchange may occur once per round. They must be able to speak and hear each other.

When an ally achieves a higher Effect than the Companion when attempting to do the thing the Companion is best at, the Companion can burn a Token to achieve a success one effect higher than the ally.

Burnham's best Theme is rank 5 in Carnival Acrobat. While attempting to jump across a chasm, he achieves an uninspiring e1. His friend, Pelagius, manages an e2. Burnham spends a Token and boosts his attempt up to an e3; one more than Pelagius.

Baldigar's best skill is Mountain Hammerer at rank 5. He and his ally Enduradon are fighting an ogre. Enduradon's first attack scores an e3 using a sword, while Baldgar's attack manages an e0. He spends a Token to declare his attack achieves an e4.

Cons: Companions are generally not the heroes at the forefront of tales and legends. They must spend two Tokens to take a Spotlight Action (see page xxx).

LEADER HERO
The burden of Leadership must fall on the shoulders of someone in the party. The Leader is responsible for the well-being of the group as a whole, as well as the mission at large. A Leader is only as good as his decisions, and his ability to inspire is dependent on how far his resolve and charisma can take him. Should his charges defy his orders or lose faith in his command, the Leader's tenure is bound to be limited.

Like the captain of a ship, the Leader hero is expected to sacrifice himself for the good of the party should that time come. Leaders don't just delegate, they jump into the fray of the most intense battles and disputes. Authority and selflessness are their lifeblood.

Leader heroes from fantasy include Allanon, Gandalf, and Lord Morham.

Requirements: one Virtue must be Sacrifice.

Pros: When a Leader accomplishes a 3e or better in a conflict, his Companions may convert one Bane die into a Boon for their next action if taken within one minute

Once per session, the Leader may remove one Token from the pool and convert it to two Tokens, both of which must be given to allies. The Leader must be able to communicate with these allies.

The Leader can organize his allies to better coordinate their battle strategy. At the start of a struggle, the Leader's player can spend a Token and increase the Momentum of any ally within speaking distance by 5.

When the Leader or an ally suffers a defeat of any kind, the Leader can recover himself or inspire an ally to rise from defeat for one round by spending a Token. The recipient may take one action and convert one Bane die to a Boon in the process. The action may interrupt any other character/creature's action. An unconscious warrior may rise to hurl a weapon at an enemy about to kill a defenseless child. A humiliated debater may turn and make a devastating retort before his opponent declares victory, perhaps sending doubt rippling through the watching crowd.

The Leader may make an inspiring speech before a scene to boost his allies' Momentum. He makes a 4d roll. He adds the number of Boons rolled to 4 to determine how many points he adds to each ally's Momentum. He may also use this ability once *during* a scene to boost the Momentum of one character.

Cons: if a Leader's 4d inspire roll (see last paragraph in *Pros*) results in no Boons, he loses all Leader abilities for the rest of the session.

CONFLICT

Conflict in *Tower of Adamant* is defined as two or more opponents squaring off in a struggle for a designated goal. These struggles can be as innocuous as haggling over the price of a fish, or as dangerous as battling a fire breathing dragon. When confronted by threats of a mounting dramatic nature, characters risk permanent consequences. Death is the most obvious risk, but so is lasting physical or psychological scarring, the breaking of an item of critical lineage, and so forth.

Conflicts are like tennis matches; they are made up of constantly changing Momentum, with one side gaining advantage one volley only to lose it the next. Momentum in *Tower of Adamant* ebbs and flows in a similar manner. One participant may be close to defeat only to surge back again, perhaps by initiating a change in tactics, fighting defensively, or going for broke with a desperate attack.

BASIC MECHANICS
As explained at the beginning of this rulebook, tests are resolved by the player assembling a dice pool and rolling it. Every roll of 4, 5, or 6 counts as a Boon (or 'success', if you like) and every 1, 2, and 3 count as a Bane (or 'failure').

Most dice pools begin with a number of dice equal to a relevant Theme or Skill. A politician trying to convince the populace of his plan to raise taxes after a beloved temple was destroyed might test his Theme of 'Honest Face, Dishonest Heart'. A knight attempting to wound a giant with a spear could test his 'Order of the Red Shield' Theme.

A dice pool can be augmented by spending one or more Tokens. The most common augmentation comes from Virtues. Players can add 3d to their pool *for one roll* by spending a Token if they have a relevant Virtue*. A politician might use Opportunity to sway the crowd, while a knight might select Redemption to boost her spear attack against a foe that previously defeated her.

* If the Virtue is Sacrifice, the player may add 4d but must include an act of Sacrifice.

The pool is rolled and the number of Boons is counted on both sides. The Effect is found by subtracting the loser's Boon tally from the winner's Boon Tally. Three Boons versus one Boon has an Effect of 2, or e2. The winner reduces the opponent's Momentum by three times the Effect. Thus, the E2 above reduces the loser's Momentum by 6 points.

SELECTIVE CANCELATION
Rather than determining an Effect, the player has the option of considering each die result individually. In situations with static difficulties (i.e. non-opposed tests), compare the number of Boons rolled versus the difficulty. The player may accept each Boon as meaning 'something good happens', and each level of difficulty as 'something bad happens.' The latter is considered a Bane. The player may also selectively cancel some Banes by using Boons on a 1:1 basis.

In other words, a result of three Boons and a difficulty of 2 could mean three good things happen and two bad things happen, or that two good things happen against one bad thing, or that one good thing happened against no Banes. The nature of these good/bad results are determined by player and GM collaboration. See page xxx for more detail.

Paul wants to use Selective Cancelation for the tree climbing scene portrayed at the beginning of this book. He has four Boons against a difficulty of 2. The GM asks him what he wants to do with the four Boons. Paul suggests Palagius climbs the tree to safety (one Boon), fires off a crossbow bolt at a wolf (second Boon), and sees a clear escape route through a nearby swamp (third Boon). He decides to ignore the fourth Boon in favor of reducing the number of Banes from two to one. Taking the last Bane into account, the GM decides Palagius accidentally tears the letter, leaving part of it on the ground.

The same tactics may be used during opposed tests. The number of Banes considered equals the number of Boons rolled by the opposition. The player can even elect to follow this path if his opponent rolls better than he did.

Pelagius' next exchange with the bandit doesn't go so well. He rolls 2 Boons while the bandit rolls 3. This would normally mean a 1e victory for the bandit (3 damage), but Pelagius wants to use

his two Boons. He accepts all three Banes from the bandit for 9 damage, and punishes the foe for 6 damage. Pelagius is now at 4 Momentum and the bandit is at 3.

UNSKILLED TESTS

There will inevitably be times when a player does not possess a Theme/Skill relevant to his intent. A character who intends to shoot an arrow but does not have any sort of Theme/Shooting that would indicate a knowledge of archery is in a bit of a quandary. In these cases, the player rolls 1d. He may still augment his dice pool by spending a Token, including the addition of 3d from a Virtue.

MOMENTUM

Momentum is a measure of who has the upper hand in a conflict. It is built upon a foundation of skill, luck, and circumstance. Losing Momentum brings a combatant closer to defeat.

Momentum is initially established by gauging each participant's degree of readiness.

• **Prepared:** Much of the time, each challenger is aware of the opposition and is prepared physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Any tools required are also at ready disposal. When a contender can be said to be fully prepared, he begins with a Momentum of 15. Two fighters meeting in an arena are more than likely fully prepared. A debate on a senate floor will usually involve sides of equal knowledge and readiness.

• **Aware**: In cases where a challenger is mostly prepared, but lacking in some fundamental area such as confidence, a vital tool, or a piece of critical information, Momentum begins at 10. Imagine running across some bear cubs; you know the mother is bound to be near even if you don't see her. You prepare your sword and make a plan, but you still don't know where she might be. Or perhaps a character competing in an archery contest loses his nerve when he sees he is going against Robin Hood. In the former example, the reduced Momentum comes from being unsure of one element of the encounter, while in\ the latter example, the once confident archer feels his edge slip away when he realizes who he is competing against.

• **Surprised:** For participants caught entirely off-guard, Momentum starts at 5. Being surprised indicates the actor is not expecting the challenge at all. Getting ambushed on the road, or being blindsided by a paramour who tells you she just got married to someone else that morning are clear examples of getting caught off-guard.

Declaring Advantage or Disadvantage

During any conflict, a player may declare his character has an Advantage or a Disadvantage. An advantage must be a clearly visible or understandable circumstance; fighting with a longer weapon, possessing the high ground, holding a critical missive from the king, enjoying a beneficial social environment, being famous across the land for beauty, possessing a Trait that would come in handy, or holding critical knowledge of the opponent.

If the GM agrees that the player can declare an Advantage, she may allow the player to spend a Token and add 5 points to his Momentum. If the GM is feeling especially generous, she may allow multiple Advantages (each one costing a Token to bring to bear).

A player may also declare a Disadvantage and gain a Token *for his own use later in the struggle*. Disadvantages are exactly the same as Advantages, except they benefit the opponent. Thus, an opponent wielding a longer weapon, possessing the high ground, using an important Trait, etc. A Disadvantage reduces the player-character's Momentum by 5 points. A character can actually begin a conflict with 0 Momentum; any injury will force defeat or acceptance of a Complication. The GM may elect to offer the player a Token in return for accepting a Disadvantage. The latter often occurs when the GM wishes to ramp up the drama, allowing the character the chance to imitate literary or film scenes where the hero begins by courting defeat only to rise to the occasion and triumph.

TOKENS AND MOMENTUM

Players may use Tokens to increase their Momentum *during* a conflict. Doing so reflects the fictional 'reality' of a character's important themes coming to the fore at dramatic moments. Themes, Virtues, and Traits may all be used in this manner.

A character may only use this rule *after* taking damage from at least one attack.

• **A Virtue.** A player can add 5 to his current Momentum if the situation fits one of his Virtues. The Virtue used is dependent on the nature of the character's action. For

most social conflicts, the Quality is Resolve. Opportunity may be appropriate for many scenes where the GM notes a pause in the enemy's attack (such as Gregor Clegane taking advantage of Oberyn Martell's unfortunate decision to put his foot on the former's chest in *A Storm of Swords*). Timeliness can be used to withdraw from one conflict in order to save an ally in another conflict, and so on. The player needs to make his case to the GM as to why the chosen Quality is relevant.

• **A Different Theme**. The player can change his strategy and use a different Theme to help in his struggle. The Theme invoked must be different than the Theme the participant was previously using for dice rolls in the conflict. The increase in Momentum is 5 points and the player must now use the new Theme in the struggle. If he changes Themes again during the scene, the Momentum increase is only 3 points. The next time it is only 1 point.

Pelagius' use of 'Sailor on the Seas of Gold' has so far failed to win the approval of a ship captain to give him a position on his ship. The captain is more interested in someone who can fight. Pelagius' Momentum is down to 6. He spends a Token to boost his Momentum with 'Rakish Swashbuckler" after showing off his skill with a rapier. Pelagius Momentum increases by 5 points.

A character can also use a new Theme to gain Momentum *without* a spending a Token. Successful use of the new Theme generates Momentum for the character equal to the number of Boons rolled *plus* the number of Banes rolled by the opponent. This assumes the character has achieved a higher effect than the opponent. The opponent does not lose any Momentum, regardless of the outcome. If the PC loses the exchange, his Momentum drops as normal.

The new Theme must indicate a distinct change in tactics from the previous Theme. For example, changing from an aggressive interrogating technique to a more sympathetic one is a good use of the rule.

Pelagius is attempting to glean information from a former madame. He has been using his 'Rakish Swashbuckler' Theme to win her trust, but her constant rebuffing of his advances has left him with only 4 Momentum. Seeing she is not impressed by his jaunty disposition, he elects to use his 'Thief From a Manifest Brothel' Theme, hoping that his sympathetic nature toward women of the night will be more successful. He manages to roll

2 Boons, while the lady manages 1 Boon and 2 Banes; Pelagius adds 4 to his Momentum (2 for his Boons and 2 for her Banes).

• **Traits**. A Trait may be added to the mix by spending a Token. Doing so adds 5 points to Momentum. A prideful character may refuse to yield to an opponent with a superior argument, for example. Valor can benefit a character determined to defend an ally, and so on. Traits do not have to be invoked at the scene's onset; they may be added to the character's Momentum any time during the scene as long as the player burns a Token.

DEFEAT
Momentum will ebb and flow as the scene develops. When a challenger's Momentum has been reduced to zero, he has been defeated. Characters may elect to keep fighting even when their Momentum is zero, but they risk great injury.

FIGHTING AGGRESSIVELY
Fighting aggressively results in an exchange of Momentum, where the winner of the round gains Momentum equal to the effect generated.

Returning to the fight with the bandit, Pelagius decides he wants to fight aggressively. His attack results in 3 Boons, while the bandit scores 1. That's an e2 victory for Pelagius. The bandit suffers 6 damage and Pelagius gains 2 Momentum. Had the bandit's attack scored 3 Boons and Pelagius only 1, the bandit would have gained 2 Momentum and Pelagius would have lost 6.

FIGHTING DEFENSIVELY
Fighting defensively allows the defensive combatant to gain back Momentum if he wins the exchange, rather than inflicting its loss upon his foe. The amount of Momentum gained is equal to *twice* the amount of the victory's Effect. The second consecutive round this technique is employed, the Momentum gain is equal to the Effect. After that, any defensive fighting enjoys an extra die bonus but merely denies the opponent's attack if the roll exceeds that of the foe.

Despite his aggressive tactics — or perhaps because of them — Pelagius finds his Momentum reduced to 3. He elects to fight defensively for a couple of rounds. During the first round, he manages an e3 victory and restores 6 points of Momentum. The next round, he scores an e4 victory but, because this is the second round of this new tactic, he restores only 4 points of

Momentum.

COMPLICATIONS
Characters can elect to keep struggling even when reduced to 0 Momentum or lower by accepting a *Complication*. Complications are dramatic 'trade-offs'; the character gets to keep going at the expense of an injury, a broken tool, bruised pride, etc. The default Complication is accepting Disadvantage on tests related to the cause of the injury. Alternately, the player may select from the sample lists below or propose something to the GM.

The first time a character takes a Complication, the cost is fairly minor. Most problems may be dealt with during the scene or have little lasting effect.

Initial Complications	
Physical	Social
Damaged tool or armor	Crowd doesn't like you
Backed against a wall	Mistakenly let a name slip
Lose an action	Etiquette faux pas
Make loud noise	Misunderstood
Foot stuck	Speechless for one round
Disadvantage to actions for remainder of scene	
Effects on next attack generate only 2 damage	

The second Complication taken in the same scene is more potent than the one that preceded it. It is called an Aggragate Complication, as it may aggravate the previous Complication. Damaged armor becomes destroyed armor. A suspicious NPC becomes an angry NPC. A Complication that lasts for one scene may last for the entire day.

Aggravated Complications	
Physical	Social
Destroyed tool or armor	Crowd wants you in jail
Surrounded	Reveal an entire secret
Disarmed	Humiliated
Trip and fall	Hated
Effects on attacks generate only 2 damage for the remainder of the scene	
Disadvantage on related actions for 24 hours.	

A third Complication is a Dire Complication. These has permanent, grievous effects on the character., *and are only available during Climactic Action* (see page xxx). When a character chooses to receive a Dire Complication, he experiences a surge of dramatic power. He immediately refreshes his Momentum to 10 points (15 points in a Climactic Scene). He may invoke a Spotlight Moment for only one Token. For the next three rounds, he enjoys Advantage on all tests. After the third round, the effects of the Dire Complication take their toll and Momentum drops back to zero, if it hasn't already. The character is done for the scene.

Dire Consequences	
Physical	Social
Hand or foot severed	Sentenced to execution
Eye crushed	Declared an outlaw
Heirloom destroyed	Forehead branded
Larynx severed	Ostracized by an ally
Deafened	Betrayed by lover

When a character takes a third Dire Complication in his lifetime, he is done as a playable character once the scene is over. He dies in combat, exiles himself and is never found, commits suicide, or any other permanent end that seems appropriate to the character's arc.

The rule for a third Dire Complication may seem bizarre – why would anyone *choose* to have their character die? There are a few immediate answers to that question:
- Having three Dire Complications is punishing for even the mightiest character and is likely to be very little fun to play.
- Characters should meet meaningful ends. The rules for Dire Complications allow the character to go out in a blaze of glory, and on their own terms
- Characters leaving play after a third Dire Complication leave behind a Legacy (see page xxx).

ONSET
Tower of Adamant does not portray contests in a blow-by-blow manner. Each roll of the dice indicates the result of a handful of physical or communicative maneuvers. Therefore, there is no need to determine 'initiative' or any other measure of turn-based exchanges between enemies.

However, it is sometimes important to determine which conflict initiates before another. For example, if one character's action depends on the success or failure of another's, then clearly the former conflict must resolve

before that latter.

Which conflict begins first is generally a matter of which player expresses himself first. If the GM describes a room of threatening raiders, the player who shouts "I rush in and attack!" first gets to do so before his companions. Depending on other circumstances – unique terrain or long distance for example – the GM may muddy the waters for the fast-acting player by introducing complications to the attempt. The GM is also free to claim the NPCs begin the conflict, as long as she has described the scene and given the players adequate time to respond. The player to act second is the one who expresses himself second, and so on. Remember, elements such as surprise are reflected by initial Momentum ratings rather than a 'free attack.'

CLASH

Once Momentum has been determined, it's time to roll some dice! Clashes follow this order:

1. The active player announces his intent.
> *"From my tree branch, I drop a rope around the brigand's neck!"*
> *"I try to rattle the innkeep by accusing him of fronting a slave trading operation. I'm arguing aggressively."*
> *"I swing my sword at the snow giant."*
> *"I forcefully refute the mayor's accusation. I'm fighting defensively."*

2. The GM announces her intent.
> *"The brigand tries to grab the rope and pull you out of the tree."*
> *"The inkeep talks loudly over you, pretending he doesn't hear you."*
> *"The snow giant tries to crush you with its maul."*
> *"The mayor demands your immediate apprehension."*

3. The player tells the GM what Theme he will use to carry out his intent.
> *"I will use Mariner on the Seas of Gold to lasso the brigand."*
> *"I'll rattle the innkeep with... I don't actually know."*
> *"I will attack the Snow Giant with Rakish Swashbucler."*
> *"I will refute the mayor's accusation by using Must Kill the Duke."*

4. The GM responds to the player's suggested Themes.

> *"Being a mariner no doubt means you're good with ropes. Your use of this Theme is a good one!"*

> *"You don't really have any Themes that speak to intimidating an innkeep, so you roll 1d."*

> *"Rakish Swashbuckler is your fallback combat Theme, so it works here just fine."*

> *"I have no idea why Must Kill the Duke is relevant here." (The player then points out that the mayor is a confidante of the Duke, so he must hate the mayor by proxy). "Okay... that's a stretch, but I'll allow it. You buy the pizza next game."*

5. The GM assesses the NPC's options and selects what skills they will use against the character.
> *"Athletics for the Brigand."*
> *"Guile for the Innkeep."*
> *"Fighting for the giant."*
> *"Diplomacy for the mayor."*

6. The GM asks the player if he will be spending any Tokens to augment the test roll or use an item's special quality.

> *"I'll spend a Token and add 3 dice to my pool based on my Opportunity Virtue. Glad to see you guys agree.*

> *"There aren't any Tokens in the pool for me to use one on this scene."*

> *"Not yet, but if the giant hits me good, I'm going to ask to use a Token to invoke my armor."*

> *"I don't need any Tokens to beat this chump."*

7. The player and GM roll their test dice. The winner is the combatant with the higher number of Boons, the difference between which determines the Effect. The winner subtracts an amount of Momentum from the loser equal to thrice the Effect, unless otherwise noted.

The winner then narrates the result in a manner reflective of his/her initial intent.

> *Tree Leaper 3 Boons, Brigand 1 Boon (player wins, e2)*

"I leap out of the tree onto his back and knock him to the ground. That drops the brigand's Momentum by 6 points."

Instigator 4 Boons, Innkeep 3 Boons (player wins, e1 aggressive)
"I tell him I've met one of his escapees and know of more. I'm pleased, if not thrilled, by his reaction. The inkeep loses 3 Momentum points and I gain back 1 point."

Swashbuckler 0 Boons, Giant 3 Boons (GM wins, e3)
"The giant hammers you across the tundra! Your Momentum drops by 9 points!"

Accused 4 Boons, Mayor 1 Boon (player wins, e3 defensive)
"I proclaim my innocence in a manner worthy of Henry V at Agincourt. I gain 6 Momentum points!"

8. The loser describes his/her reaction. The GM adds in any necessary extra elements, such as the backlash or encouragement of a witnessing audience.

"The brigand is stunned by your attack; he never saw it coming. He lashes out wildly in a vain attempt to knock you off him. He's going to attempt to slip out from under you."

"The inkeep betrays a nervous twitch and suggests you have had too much to drink. He retreats into the larder under the pretense of getting something needed for a meal."

"I'm spending a Token and using my armor to reduce the giant's blow by e2. I only lose 3 points of Momentum instead of 9."

"The crowd watching the exchange between you and the mayor reacts positively to your claims. The mayor looks nervous."

The Meatshield Save

You know these moments: a split second before the hero receives a nasty blow, someone unintentionally steps in his way and takes the damage instead. Or perhaps the character instinctively ducks behind an unsuspecting villager before the proverbial hammer falls.

Characters can spend a Token to invoke the mighty meatshield as long as the GM determines there is an NPC or creature close by to fulfill the obvious requirement. Meatshield may be declared *after* the character has been struck, retroactively denying the hit on the PC at the expense of an unfortunate NPC. This is most easily done in crowded rooms, city squares, festivals, and other situations where large numbers of people congregate.

The meatshield automatically kills a no-name NPC or minion. A named NPC or significant creature takes the actual damage the attack would have caused to the character.

Characters may also elect to invoke meatshield on an ally, but the ally *always* notices he has been used; not very good for party unity!

CLIMACTIC ACTION

When the dramatic value of a scene hits a crescendo, the GM can declare the onset of Climactic Action. Climactic Action is like those cutscenes in video games or slow-motion shots in action movies. The stakes are higher and the rewards greater.

Several things change during Climactic Scenes:
- Characters can accept a Dire Complication during a struggle
- Characters can use a Spotlight Action (below)
- The standard fixed value of 3 points of damage per Effect can change to a random value if the player wishes. This random value is a d6 per Effect.

GMs might want to make a list of events that must occur during a given scene for it to become Climactic. Some standard requirements might involve any of the following:
- half of the party is knocked out of the fight
- a major antagonist enters the fray and is willing to

fight to the death

- a significant plot development is revealed
- a major NPC, party member, or ally is captured
- every member of the party is suffering from one or more Complications
- a vitally important NPC is about to be killed
- a character has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to accomplish something amazing

The latter example brings up another possibility. The GM can rule that a single player, rather than the entire party, can act as if in a climactic scene *even in a standard scene*. In general, these exceptions should last only one or two rounds, unless the PC is alone.

THE SPOTLIGHT ACTION

The Spotlight Action is the everything-else-stops bit in big action film where the hero accomplishes a jaw-dropping series of moves. Nero pivots around a staff while kicking dozens of Agent Smiths in the face. Black Widow jumps onto a flying alien chariot with a boost off Captain America's shield, cuts the gunner's chains, throws him off, and takes the vehicle over by killing the cyberlinked pilot. Legolas mounts an oliphaunt, slices the howdah off the beast's back (sending several soldiers to their death) and then kills the great beast with three arrows.

Each character is limited to one Spotlight Moment per Climactic Scene.

The player whose character is in the Spotlight first proposes a complex physical or social maneuver. The cost of the Spotlight Moment depends on how many Complications the character is *currently* suffering:

Current # Complications	Token Cost
0	3
1	2
2	1
3	0

He can take either three or five actions depending on whether the intent reflects a possessed Virtue (5 actions) or not (3 actions). The character must also have a Theme appropriate to the attempt of at least rank 3. The actions *automatically* succeed. If an action's goal is to inflict damage, reduce the opponent's Momentum by an amount equal to the Theme's rank *per action*. If

there are static obstacles, such as a log to jump over, the action succeeds as long as the Theme's rank is equal to or greater than the difficulty. If not, the action still succeeds but at the cost of an extra action.

The Spotlight Moment doesn't end until the final action is taken. Enemies and allies shouldn't be able to attack or react to the actions until then; they are effectively 'frozen in the background.'

Example 1: Estia has found a trader she is certain knows the fate of her father. The trader is being evasive. Estia realizes this might be her best chance to realize her goal of finding her father, so she asks to spend 2 Tokens to take a Spotlight Moment (she is currently suffering from one social Complication). The group readily approves her request. She suggests basing her Spotlight Moment on the Opportunity Virtue (which she has), since this is perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime chance. She further suggests that 'Must Find My Father' (at rank 4) clearly demonstrates a relevant Theme for the scene. The GM agrees to both the Virtue and the Theme. She issues a series of accusations and demands in rapid-fire succession at the trader, insisting he reveal his knowledge. She takes five actions, verbally pummeling the trader for 20 Momentum (Must Find My Father 4 x 5 actions = 20)!

Example 2: Pelagius crouches behind a tree on a knoll overlooking a mystical vernal pool. His companions have been poisoned and lie dying in a grove one mile away. The healing properties of the pool's water is their last hope. Unfortunately, the water is being guarded by some enemy archers and a pair of slimewyrms. Pelagius knows he cannot hope to defeat the creatures in open combat, but a Spotlight Moment might be what he needs to swoop in and scoop up his prize.

Pelagius announces his plan. His first action will be to throw a grappling hook into the upper branches of a tree on the opposite side of the pool. He will then swing down upon the scene like Tarzan, strike a slimewyrm along the way, scoop up the water in a flask, and land on the bank. That's five actions.

The GM declares the Virtue best suited to this scene is Timeliness (Paul was hoping for Spectacle, but there's really no one here to witness it), since he has to get the healing water back quickly, while the Theme is certainly Rakish Swashbuckler (4). He doesn't

Invoking Advantages with Weapons & Armor

Tower of Adamant is a game designed to mimic the dramatic and narrative traditions of fantasy literature. It is not, in any way, a 'realistic' game. To wit, it doesn't recognize differences – or even basic properties – in weapons and armor in a conflict until it makes dramatic sense to do so.

When a player spends a Token, he may benefit from the dramatic edge the item offers. This benefit commonly takes the form of weapons gaining Advantage dice and armor absorbing damage from a single blow. The Advantage a weapon enjoys lingers until the narrative dictates otherwise. For example, a spear's reach advantage goes away if the spear is broken in half. Some of the advantages listed below do not provide dice benefits. For example, the flail's 'wrap around weapons' advantage would mean the opponent's weapon has been yanked from its grasp, while spending a Token when using a battle axe can destroy an enemy's shield.

Armor has a column called 'Disadvantage' and indicates complications a character can accept in return for gaining a Token.

Weapon	Sample Advantages
Dagger	Advantage in enclosed spaces vs larger weapons, hide from searches
Sword	Advantage vs bare skin, Advantage when fighting defensively
Mace	Advantage vs all armor
War hammer	Advantage vs plate, stun opponent for one exchange (opponent cannot roll any dice)
Battle Axe	Destroy shield, Advantage when fighting offensively
Greatsword	Advantage when fighting offensively, Break parrying weapon
Spear	Advantage vs shorter weapons in open space, Advantage vs mail
Poleaxe	Advantage vs shorter weapons in open space, trip opponent
Flail	Ignore shields, wrap around weapons
Bow	Advantage vs leather & mail, attack first

Armor	Damage Absorbed by Spending a Token	Disadvantage (gain a Token)
Leather	6 points	armor damaged (absorbing ability drops by 3 points)
Mail	9 points	armor damaged (as above), athletic attempt fails
Plate	12 points	armor damaged (as above), athletic attempt fails, run slow
Shield	6 points (also add to armor by spending another Token)	shield destroyed, athletic attempt fails

have Timeliness as a Virtue so he can only gain auto success with three actions. Therefore, his final two actions (scoop up water and land on the bank) will have to be standard tests during which his opponents can react.

His Rakish Swashbuckler 4 is easily enough to exceed the difficulty of both throwing the grapple and swinging down (both assessed at difficulty 1 by the GM), so he succeeds at those. Striking a slimewyrm automatically delivers damage of 4 points (his Theme's rank). This leaves two more actions to accomplish the old fashioned way: he will have to test Rakish Swashbuckler to scoop the water and land on the bank. The GM again announces the difficulty of both to be 2. Since his enemies will be trying to

stop him, he will also need to achieve a higher Effect than their attempts at biting, shooting, running, or however they react to this surprise intrusion. Good luck Pelagius!

Why didn't the archers get a chance to shoot Pelagius as he made the first three actions? Normally, they would have surely noticed him when the grappling hook landed in the tree. At the very least, the GM would allow them to make missile attacks when Pelagius started his swing. *The reason none of that happened is because this is a Spotlight Moment.* It's all about Pelagius. The camera focuses on him alone, leaving the archers and the slimewyrms as mere window dressing.

SCALE

Tower of Adamant does not describe distance in terms of feet or yards. Rather, distances are expressed as *zones*. Each zone represents a different geographic area. Usually the area is delineated by its most obvious features, such as a forest clearing or a small pond. Characters may move freely within a given zone without needing to make some type of athletics/movement roll unless the zone is marked by difficult terrain. Crossing into another zone may require also such a test if the new zone is described by uniquely different features, such as a meadow that gives way to a deep depression in the earth.

While there is no consistent standard for the size of a zone, a general rule of thumb is that a character could lob a rock from one end to the other (perhaps 50 feet).

COLLABORATION: RISK AND REWARD

While most conflict exchanges will be described by attack and damage, there will be times when the player and GM wish to collaborate on an exchange and eschew the normal methods of resolution. In these cases, GM-player collaboration is your best bet.

Here's how it works. The player devises what he believes is a suitably dramatic moment. He then describes an equally dramatic consequence for himself. The GM considers the proposal and can either accept, reject, or revise the suggestion. There can be reduced dice rolling or none at all. Here is an example.

After several rounds of fighting, the evil nemesis Rathbind and his minions have devastated the PCs at the end of a week-long pursuit. Three of the characters are dying, and only a warrior named Enton is still left standing against Rathbind and two minions. He has already used a Spotlight Moment earlier in the fight and there are no Tokens left in the pool. Enton is down to 3 Momentum and has taken two Complications. He knows the story will come to an end if Rathbind lands another blow. Enton's player, Mark, realizes the only way out of this is to propose a collaboration with the GM, named Beth.

Mark: I can't let this end in such a tragic manner. I'm going to propose a deal.

Beth: Let's hear it.

Mark: Here is how I see this unfolding. Enton, almost hobbled by his injuries, realizes he has one last chance. I would like

to use a variation on Enton's 'Don't Count Me Out' Theme. Rather than defend Rathbind's attack, he will swing away and ignore his own safety.

Beth: So he's leaving himself completely open?

Mark: Yes. His swing and that of Rathbind land simultaneously. Rathbind's vicious stroke severs Enton's shield arm, while my swing catches Rathbind in the neck. The villain falls to the ground, spurting blood and clutching his throat in his final throes.

Beth: what about the two remaining minions?

Mark; Hmmmm... they run off when they see their leader has been killed. Enton falls unconscious. The party wakes up an hour later, bloodied and bruised.

Beth: So you're basically trading Enton's shield arm for Rathbind's demise?

Mark. Yep.

Beth: That's a bit too much in your favor, I think. Rathbind is a major antagonist, not just some mook. What if the minions take your unconscious bodies and strip them of possessions? You all wake up in a cell hours later. Your arm stump has been crudely bound and cauterized. And you're not entirely certain that Rathbind is dead.

Mark: Oh, man. We're naked, injured, and held in a foul dungeon?

Beth: Either that, or you can take your chances with the dice in combat with Rathbind.

Mark: So, how big is this cell?

Such examples of compromise needn't involve such severe consequences. Players can suggest lesser results or make 'bets.' The player highlights a feat he would like to accomplish, one he doesn't think he will qualify for, or a supersized version of a normal feat. He then 'bets' the GM he can obtain a specific result, such as an Effect of e2 or better. If he succeeds on the risk, the feat succeeds and he obtains a desired result. The trade-off is, if the bet fails, the character suffers an equally dire consequence. The player and GM must agree on the specifics of both success and failure before any dice are rolled.

MAGIC

There are countless disparate portrayals of magic in epic fantasy literature. From the subtle magic of Tolkien's trilogy, to Ursula LeGuin's scholarly magic, to the earth shattering magic of Stephen R Donaldson, magic would seem to be largely inconsistent in epic fantasy. Yet there are two traditions we can call out in general terms, and Tower of Adamant uses those as a starting point:

1) 'Daily' magic is understated and generally not going to be noticed by average people.

2) The most powerful magic is used at moments of greatest need and desperation, and often has undesired or surprising consequences.

Keeping those standards in mind, magic systems in Tower of Adamant are largely designed by the GM.

This chapter presents general guidelines to aid in the development of a system of arcana, and presents three sample systems for your consideration.

FRAMEWORKS

Before beginning any campaign, the GM must create a basic framework for her system of magic. Since *Tower of Adamant* doesn't require pre-written spells, some standards of what magic can – and cannot – accomplish must be drawn up. Establishing at least a skeleton framework will go a long way toward reaching a common understanding. By defining concrete limits on what each rank can achieve, the GM is able to allow her players the latitude to invent unique effects on the fly without breaking the game.

When developing magic systems, the GM can create guidelines by addressing the following aspects:

Origin: where does the power for this magic system derive? Common origins include:

- The Land: magic is power usurped from nature. The ability to work arcana is dependent on the life force of the caster's immediate surroundings. Using magic may drain plants of life, for example.

- The Aether: magic is a force that courses through the very air. It ebbs and flows in varying amounts,

much like a river in a drought or rain storm. A mage's ability to work his craft is affected by the strength of the aether in a given location.

- Birthright: magic is not learned or granted, but rather a product of ancient blood coursing through the character's veins. The initial source of the talent is probably long forgotten. Birthright mages generally discover their talents at an early age, lighting something on fire with a touch, reading thoughts, or withering a plant by breathing on it. They are often outcasts as a result, feared by their neighbors and even parents. Birthright magic continues to develop as the character ages.

- Runes: runes are symbols holding great power. Each symbol must be graven on a tangible surface, such as wood, stone, iron, or flesh. Rune power affects the object on which it is carved, and hence cannot usually be cast outwardly to affect something at range.

Development: The manner in which the character learns or achieves his power in game terms. Most systems will adopt the standard Theme method, where magic is a skill as any other. Still others will require the character discover a source of magic in-game, be it from a book or a source of power such as a rune. Some methods of development include:

- Learned as a Theme: the character is tutored or self-taught in magic. The Theme is developed as any other Theme during the character generation process. Each type of magic lore may need to be developed individually, such as 'Flame Wizard of the Andish Mountains' or 'Nebbish Mind Seeker.' Casting a spell is done by rolling test dice versus a Diffifculty.
- Activated: Magic is conjured by activating magic items. Reading the invocation off an ancient parchment or pushing a button on a wand are examples. Characters need to find these items in order to release magical effects. They may also need to learn how to use them, which may be a Theme unto itself.

Methods of Casting: Each style of magic has its own unique way of unleashing its power. Whether through words, gestures, dance, or thought, every

system may be unique not only to its form but its culture as well. Some methods include:

- Recitation: words read aloud from memory or books manifest the arcana. Any interruption or incorrect rendering of the words will cause the spell to fail or even backfire.
- Gestures: precise arm, hand, and finger motions performed in a specific order bring the spell to life. As with recitation, any mistakes can be dangerous.
- Tracing: running finger(s) over a graven symbol releases its power. Tracing ancient symbols bearing this power can be tricky, as the path that must be traced is sometimes obscured by the wear of time.
- Dance: exaggerated or graceful whole body movements, perhaps accompanied with music, cause a swirling of arcana to manifest around the caster.
- Ritual: a combination of many methods is usually employed to perform the most complex of magical arts. Often simultaneous and repeated dance, recitation, and gestures are necessary for the ritual to be completed. Performing rituals can be exhausting, as many of these ceremonies take several hours.
- Thought: by concentrating with intense precision, the mage can bring forth magical energy from his own mind. Thought magic can be terrifying for watchers and painful for the caster. Interruption of the process can stun or even knock the wizard unconscious.
- Talismans: a wizard's magic is focused in a single object, often a staff, wand, necklace, or ring. If the object is broken or lost, the mage is no longer able to harness its energy.
- Alchemy: magic is created, not unleashed. By carefully combining different ingredients, the alchemist forms liquids and objects of great power. The most powerful of these must sit for weeks, months, or years in order to mature. Some may require a sacrifice of sorts, such as drops of blood from a powerful line of kings.
- Anima: the darkest of all magics, soul magic is based on the caster surrenduring part of his mortal being each time he casts a spell. Anima wizards pay a heavy price for their art (see 'costs & limitations', below).
- Spirits: the world is filled with the unseen spirits of dead ancestors. Communicating with them and binding their power to him is the spirit wizard. The power taken from any spirit relates to the spirit's essence; that most important part of its character when it was alive. A warrior spirit may grant prowess in battle, while a farmer spirit could lend great will and perseverance.

Costs & Limitations: Magic in epic fantasy tends to exact a price. The most common price is physical; the caster becomes tired and must rest. Likewise, there must be limits place on what the wizard can achieve. Here are some examples:

- Fatigue: casting a spell is tiring. Rank 1 spells may necessitate a small rest after using a small handful. Rank 2 spells might require a rest after each spell cast, and rank 3 spells will drain the caster to the point of collapse.
- Blood Sacrifice: divine sources may demand a blood sacrifice for spells cast by their worshippers. Lesser spells probably need only a drop or two, while inordinately powerful ones would demand the life of a human being.
- Memorization: the mage memorizes the formula for each spell. Once cast, the spell is purged from his mind and must be memorized again, usually from a book of spells. The limits of how many spells may be memorized at once is determined by the GM; the resolve trait or the magic skill's rank are common determinants.
- Ruptured Soul: a sorcerer who uses his own Anima to power his magic (see above) is risking his eternal soul. Spells are discharged by the caster willingly sacrificing part of his life's spark, to be replaced by a remnant of shadow. Soul magic is thus corrupting and damning, but immensely powerful; the potency of any spell is directly proportionate to how much of his anima the wizard is willing to let go of. Eventually, the wizard's soul will turn entirely black, and he will become a shade.
- Deformity: magic will physically deform the caster over time. The changes are at first subtle; a lazy eye, a nervous tick, a lock of white hair. After years of exposure to magic, the wizard develops hideous mutations; necrotic flesh, a bulging eye that oozes pus, a twisted skeleton.
- Unwanted Attention: the use of any magic causes changes to the aether. While commoners may not notice anything more than a chill in the air, more learned folk are bound to be aware. Wizards using magic thus risk being discovered when wishing to remain anonymous.
- Limited Range: magic in some campaigns may be

limited to shorter distances, such as the range the caster could throw a stone. It may even require the magic user to touch the subject of the spell.

SAMPLE FRAMEWORKS

Here are three example magical frameworks. Feel free to use these in your campaign and alter them as see fit. Please note that none of these should be considered complete. The spells listed are examples of what may be attempted. They should not be taken as the only spells that exist within each framework.

WIZARDRY

Origin: Wizardry comes from studying ancient texts, where learning simple techniques and philosophies of magic lead the student to graduate to more complex and dangerous forms. Wizards consider their art a matter of arcane science. Being able to manifest a flame in one's hand is no different than learning how to fashion a mortise & tenon joint; its manufacture needs to be understood, studied, practiced, and finally mastered.

Development: Characters gain the ability to cast spells by taking magic-based themes. Each theme is assumed to cover one kind of magic theory: for example, weather, fire, flora, fauna, healing, or communication. Characters rate their ability with the Theme's magic with assigned skill ranks. Learning further magical Themes allow more types of spells to be cast.

Methods of Casting: spells cast by the wizard are issued through words and focused through an object such as a staff, ring, or wand. Practitioners utter words of ancient tongues while grasping the object. Basic spells require little more than two or three words and menial gesticulation with the item. Only observant folk would notice their invocation. More advanced spells require more recitation and loudness of voice and are more likely to be noticed. A wizard with his mouth bound or his focus item missing is unable to ply his art.

When a wizard attempts to cast a spell, he assembles a dice pool using his Theme's rank as the base. Every spell is defined by three ranks of power: Utility, Adept, and Epic. The difficulty of each rank are as follows:

Spell Rank	Difficulty
Utility	0
Adept	1
Epic	2

If he achieves a number of Boons greater than the difficulty of the spell being attempted, he has unleashed the spell as desired. Any attempts at damaging an opponent are based on a loss of 3 Momentum per level of Effect.

Failure to cast a spell results in fatigue to the tune of losing 3 points of Momentum per negative Effect. This lasts for a number of hours equal to the negative Effect. (eg. a -e3 roll costs the caster 9 Momentum over the next 3 hours). Negative Momentum either knocks the character out or accrues a Complication, the choice of which is up to the player.

Even when a spell is successful, the wizard incurs a level of fatigue for all but Utility spells. Fatigue takes the form of a penalty to Momentum for *physical* contests for a number of hours equal to the Difficulty of the spell cast. The penalty also equals the Difficulty, and may be accrued by further castings.

Enduradon has a Theme of 'Wizard of Darkwood' at rank 5. He is attempting to cast an Epic spell. Rolling his 5 dice, he accomplishes 3 Boons. The spell is cast successfully, but his Momentum begins 2 points lower for any physical contests within the 2 hours.

Costs & Limitations:

Wizardry spells of all three levels bear one common limitation: touch. The caster must touch a relevant object his focus (staff, orb, etc.) unless the result is manifested within his own hands (such as producing flame). Thus to break a stone wall, the wizard Flip the Magnificent must touch the wall with his staff. To spur the massive and immediate growth of a tree, Beatrice the Beneficent he must touch the sapling with her pendant.

> **Utility Spells:** A utility spell is achievable by every wizard. As these spells are easy to invoke, they are somewhat mundane in their effects. The restrictions placed on Utility spells are simple: they are limited to mimicking anything achievable by a normal person using mundane tools or abilities. For

example, anyone can start a fire. A magician can start a fire without flint & tinder. Anyone can close a small wound with needle & thread. A magician can close a small wound merely by touching it.

As usual, the spell must be cast by touching the affected object. Lighting a stick on fire means touching the stick, while healing a wound means touching the wound itself.

If there is any doubt regarding a Utility spell's capabilities, simply ask yourself if the desired effect could be achieved by an average person using simple tools. The effect's duration and time needed to produce the finished result are no different than if attempted by mundane methods. A spell-user could carve a statue with his hands, but it would take just as long as it would take a master sculptor.

Adept: Spells of this magnitude can produce results that take a fraction of the normal time. If we assume seven increments of time, namely a year, a month, a week, a day, an hour, a minute, and a second, Adept spells cut the time down by two increments. A plant that would take a week to grow bursts out of the ground and blossoms in one hour. A wound that would take a month to heal does so in a single day. Adept spells cannot increase the rate of movement of a living creature.

Adept spells can also accomplish things that would normally require two or three people. Bringing down a large oak tree may normally take a pair of stout axesmen many hours; the wizard may enchant an axe that allows the felling of the tree in a matter of minutes – by a single person. The light of a single torch burns as brightly and hotly as three torches. The roar of one warrior becomes as powerful and loud as that of three.

Spells are still limited to 'reality' based results. If the spell produces an effect that is not possible in nature, such as creating a talking tree, it cannot be an Adept spell.

All effects, such as the charm laid upon the axe described above, disappear after their intended purpose is accomplished (such as chopping down the great tree).

Epic: Spells of the Epic rank may only be cast by spending a Token as well as making a successful casting roll. Epic spells break any illusion of reality. While both Utility and Adept spells may be able to pass as incredible incidents rather than sorcerous manipulations, Epic spells bear no such anonymity. Anyone within range of the casting of an Epic spell will know that magic has been used.

These spells occur on a grand scale. The rule of thumb is this: Epic spells may accomplish feats that would normally require up to one or two dozen men with tools. It make require several men to load and launch a great stone from a trebuchet, but the wizard can hurl the giant rock by touching it with his staff and commanding it with words of power. Diverting the course of a river involves weeks of work by many men, but a wizard may draw the new course on the ground, cracking open the earth as he does.

Rather than use a Token, a character may cast an Epic spell at a price. A magician loosing a spell of this magnitude makes a deal with fate, the effects of which may occur immediately or at an unknown time. The nature of the exaction is an opportunity for the GM and player to collaborate. Any time the player announces his intention to cast an Epic spell without using a Token, he must offer up some sort of personal sacrifice. The more powerful the spell, the more dire the consequence. Specifically, the price should reflect the nature of the spell. Here are some examples:

• Burning down an entire forest inflicts horrible burn wounds on the character. The scars only heal when the forest itself has begun to show signs of restoration and growth, with animals returning and trees sprouting (a year, perhaps).
• Changing the shape, voice, and manner of a knight to that of a noblewoman's husband, so that the knight may lie with the noblewoman and conceive an heir with her, requires the wizard to sleep for nine months ('Excalibur' again...).
• Bringing a defiled corpse back to life in order to ask it a few questions causes the magician's hand to whither and become brittle. The affliction lasts until the corpse is laid to rest with full respect for its culture and religion.
• Creating a great barrier of poisonous thorns to

SAMPLE WIZARDRY FIELDS OF STUDY & POSSIBLE USES			
Field of Study	Utility	Adept	Epic
Fire	• Create a strong spark • Keep a campfire going in the rain	• Triple the size and/or heat of a fire • Hurl a ball of fire within a zone	• Cause all dry wood within clear sight to burst into flame
Restrictions	• Cannot burn non-flammable objects	• Cannot burn non-flammable objects	• Cannot elect to turn the fire 'off'
Healing	• Close a small wound • Stabilize a broken leg as if it were splinted	• Reduce healing time by two increments • Stop massive bleeding	• Immediately heal any affliction
Restrictions	• Must be touching the patient	• Must be touching the patient	• Must be touching the patient/victim
Flora	• Fertilize soil by mere touch	• Cause a flower to bloom • Change color and/or smell of a grove or meadow	• Command roots to break from the earth and shackle an attacking party • Bring a mighty oak to sentient, active life, much like an ent
Restrictions	• Effect can be undone by drought and other conditions	• High test Effects (e3 or higher) can cause the result to be overpowering (flowers smell too much, color is too vivid, etc)	• Flora affected do not change back once the spell is ended; roots stay entwined around the shape of the enemy, sentient trees remain to walk the earth, etc.
Fauna	• Ride a horse bareback, controlling it as if with a harness and saddle • Issue commands to a domesticated or farm animal by touching at it	• Halt an attack by an animal for one round by touching it with the wizard's focus.	• Subdue a great animal (bear, elephant, etc) and order it to bear you at your command. Again, touch with the wizard's focus is required.
Restrictions	• Animals can refuse orders	• Cannot command attacks	• Herds may stampede
Earth & Stone	• Dig a hole by touching the ground	• Crack a boulder by striking it	• Divert the course of a river by tracing the ground
Restrictions	• The hole takes as long to form as if dug by one person using a shovel	• One strike is worth the effort of three stoneworkers	• The spell does not cause roots to move out of the way.
Water	• Purify water as if boiled for several minutes	• Walk across deep water as if crossing a ford	• Block a small body of water as if dammed.
Restrictions	• Any debris or cloudiness in the water still remains, although it is safe to drink	• Water must be relatively calm	• May cause flooding as the water tries to find a new route

halt the advancement of an evil army marching toward a small village inflicts weeping sores on the mage. The sores will not heal until the thorn barrier is burned.

MAGIC: REVISITING FAILURE

Earlier in the rules, the possibility of changing a failed test roll into a successful test accompanied by repercussions was discussed. ('Selective Cancellation', page xxx). The Conflict chapter also brought up collaboration between the GM and player as an alternate to hewing entirely to the rules ('Collaboration: Risk & Reward', page xxx). When combined, these concepts work especially well with wizardry spell casting, especially when casting Epic spells.

An Epic spell's Difficulty level of 2 presents the very real possibility of failure at a critical juncture. While failure can often be exciting and dramatic, it can also be anti-climactic. Not wishing to let slip the potential drama of the moment, a player can decide to count his die rolls individually: one or more 'good things' happen as well as two or more 'bad things.'

Enduradon and his friends are racing down a mountain slope, pursued by dozens of cannibal cultists. They cannot hope to defeat the pursuers and cannot match their speed. Realizing this is 'do or die,' he tells the GM he wants to cast an Epic spell that will cause an avalanche to scatter or bury the cultists. Needing the spell to involve touch of some sort, his plan is to hurl a boulder over the heads of the pursuers, sending it crashing into a group of other boulders. His casting roll results in two Boons and three Banes. The two Boons do not exceed the standard Difficulty of 2 for Epic spells, but failure would really suck at this moment! He tells the GM he wants to count each die result individually, breaking them down thusly:

Two 'Good Things': the boulder is launched, smashing into the other rocks and causing a small avalanche (1), scattering the cannibals and allowing the party to escape (2).

Three 'Bad Things': the mini avalanche also tumbles down toward the heroes (1), forcing them to leap off a cliff into a river 60 feet below (2) where they are swept downstream miles away from their intended destination (3).

As this example illustrates, as long as the bad things and good things are commensurate, the GM shouldn't feel the need to restrict the play as to what may be accomplished. In other words, normally a single Boon is worth inflicting the loss of 3 Momentum. In a moment as epic as this example, the loss of 3 Momentum is dull and uninspiring. The GM should let the player describe what he wants to achieve and, as long as the repercussions are similar in scale, allow it. Always remember, think in terms of writing a story rather than hewing to the limitations of game balance.

RUNE GRAVING

Origin: buried in the ruins of the ancient world lie small stones graven with strange symbols. These stones, called *glyphs*, were created in ages past using skills now lost to civilization. The original purpose of the glyphs is unknown, but a scant number of 'uncivilized' cultures have discovered that they may be used in conjunction with one another to create powerful magic. Combining two or more glyphs forms a complete *rune*. When a rune is graven upon a surface – be it stone, iron, wood, or even flesh – it imbues the material with power. Most graven runes do not last for more than a handful of uses, then fade away. One stone, the rare Permanence Glyph, creates a rune that lasts forever.

Development: Runegraving is not an art that is so widespread that schools of study exist to further its understanding. Runegraving is based on knowledge passed down from cultures that many would consider primitive or coarse. The seeking and combining of glyphs may form the basis of an entire tribe or clan. Since seeking glyphs involves exploring ruins buried in the wilds, urban runegravers are virtually unheard of. Only by earning the trust of a tribe or clan with this tradition may anyone else learn the art. The process takes years.

Characters become rune gravers by selecting it as part of a Theme. They must come from isolated cultures or at least spend two entire stages living with a rune clan. Once taken, the rune Theme allows the character to make tests to identify gyphs, combine glyphs into runes, and burn runes onto various surfaces. Characters not learned in rune graving do not possess the knowledge to even identify the meanings of glyphs. At best, they may be able to recognize a stone as being a glyph, as opposed to a stone fragment with mundane symbols

etched on its surface. Characters with Themes indicating contact with rune tribes may make a test to tell whether a stone is a glyph. The dice pool used to make such identifications is based on the Theme, but are made at Disadvantage (only 5s and 6s count as Boons).

A character beginning his adventures is assumed to have a number of runes equal to their rune Theme. The runes may be burned onto any surface. More common surfaces are runes burned on the character's body and ones on his weapons and armor. The character also bears a random selection of glyphs that he has not yet combined into a rune. Roll 3d6 and add the results together, then consult the table below to determine which glyphs the character carries. Do this a number of times equal to the character's rune Theme.

3d6 result	Glyph
3	Destroy (function)
4	Flesh (surface)
5	Cold (method)
6	Imbue (function)
7	Speed (method)
8	Strength (method)
9	Metal (surface)
10	Fire/Heat (method)
11	Wood (surface)
12	Stone (surface)
13	Leather/hide (surface)
14	Shaping (function)
15	Touch (method)
16	Heal (function)
17	Flesh (surface)
18	Destroy (function)

As may be noted, there are three types of glyph: Function glyphs, Power glyphs, and Surface glyphs.

Function glyphs determine the purpose of the completed rune as a whole:
• to destroy
• to repair
• to imbue
• to shape

Method glyphs determine the specific means the rune will use to achieve its Function. Examples include, but

are not limited to:
• with heat
• with cold
• with speed
• with touch
• with strength

Surface glyphs determine where the rune will be placed. Examples include, but are not limited to:
• on flesh
• on stone
• on metal
• on leather/hide
• on wood

Method of Casting: Runes are not 'cast' in the traditional sense. They are burned onto a surface, which then harbors power based on the individual glyphs that formed the rune.

Once a rune is formed, the runegraver makes a test roll based on his Theme against a standard difficulty of 1. The Effect determines how powerful the rune is. An Effect of 0 means the rune is a failure; these three glyphs don't seem to want to work together. The character will have to try a different combination of glyphs. If the Effect is -1 or worse, the glyphs disintegrate.

Assuming an Effect of 1 or better, the rune is a success. The Power of the rune grants either bonus dice to future related test rolls or a unique result as agreed upon by GM and player. Whatever the rune is used for, its Power number must be the deciding factor for determining what it can affect and to what degree. For example:

Rune	Sample Power
Destroy/Flesh/ Touch Power 2	Touch the flesh of a victim, who loses Momentum equal to the power of the rune x3. In this example, every touch would drop the victim's Momentum by 6 (rune power of 2 multiplied by 3 equals 6).
Repair/Flesh/Speed Power 3	Add 3 bonus dice to healing tests

Imbue/Metal/Fire Power 1	Create a weapon that flames on command, adding 1d extra attack dice to combat tests.
Shape/Wood/Touch Power 4	Bend tree branches, up to 4'' in diameter, without breaking them
Imbue/Flesh/ Strength Power 3	Add 3d to any test involving the Prowess Quality.
Repair/Metal/Touch Power 2	Repair 2 points in a damaged suit/piece of metal armor.
Imbue/Wood/ Speed Power 1	Make an arrow fly faster, reducing defender's dodging test by 1d.
Imbue/Leather/ Strength Power 2	Add 2 points to leather armor's defense value when burning a Token.

Costs & Limitations: Runes generally allow for a finite number of uses. Each time a rune is invoked, the runegraver makes a test roll, based on his Theme, against a difficulty equivalent to the rune's Power. A positive Effect indicates the rune keeps functioning, while a negative effect means the rune has faded away. An Effect of 0 means the rune remains but its Power is reduced by 1.

Runes containing a Glyph of Permanence are the exception. These exceedingly rare creations cease functioning only when the surface upon which they are graven is destroyed or killed. Runes created in this manner are formed with four glyphs: Function glyphs, Method glyphs, Surface glyphs, and a Glyph of Permanence.

When a character burns a rune on his exposed flesh, he is immediately identifiable as a runegraver. Even after runes fade, they still leave subtle marks. A character with many runes on his flesh, faded or active, will acquire a new Theme determined by the player and GM. The Theme should be relevant to the character's appearance, such as:
• Grotesque Visage
• Skin Like Leather
• Face Looks Burned

SHAMANISM

Origin: every aspect of nature possesses its own spirit, from the mightiest oak to the most humble flower. Shamans can communicate with spirits of nature to cajole, bargain, beguile, or force them to lend their unique characteristics to the character. Every spirit is different in its power and temperament. Spirits reside in individual forms, such as a bush of thorns, and in collective forms, such as a grove of pine trees. Collective spirits are more powerful but more difficult to manage than individual forms.

Development: shamanism is a learned art. Any player who wishes for his character to practice it must develop a Theme during character generation that includes the culture the art was learned from. Most characters will hail from that culture, but some may be embraced and taught by a people not his own. Characters wishing to learn shamanism at a later stage must develop it through gameplay, earning a new Theme when the GM is satisfied the character has put in the requisite time to learn the craft. This can occur during actual gameplay, or described as an "off-camera" activity the character is pursuing between adventures. A good rule of thumb is to award a Theme rating of 2 if the character has been learning for at least six months.

Method of Casting: The character must first detach his own spirit from his body in an attempt to enter the spirit world. He tests his shaman Theme against a difficulty based on the circumstances surrounding the attempt:

Circumstance	Difficulty
Calm (minimal noise and stress)	1
Restless (pressed for time, approaching threat)	2
Turbulent (in the midst of battle, violent weather)	3

If he achieves a positive Effect, he has entered the spirit world and may attempt to communicate with the desired nature spirit. An Effect of 0 is a failure, but allows the shaman to try again, albeit with one fewer die. A negative Effect indicates the attempt has failed and may not be tried again for a number of hours

equal to the inverse of the Effect. In other words, if the Effect is -2, the shaman may not attempt to visit the spirit world for two hours.

Once inside the spirit world, the character is free to communicate with the nature spirit. He must first tell the GM what spirit he is attempting to contact. The GM then secretly assigns a difficulty rating to the attempt depending on the nature of the spirit and the manner of approach the character decides to take (guile, command, or diplomacy). A raging river, for example, may not be easily overcome by a shaman trying to ply it with diplomacy.

If using skills, the shaman uses whatever his rank in Guile, Command, or Diplomacy is. If not using skills, the player must express what Theme best represents one of the three approaches.

Guile is used when the character believes the spirit may be tricked.

Diplomacy is used when the character believes the spirit may be bargained with.

Command is used when the character believes the spirit may be ordered to obey.

If one approach fails, another may be attempted at a difficulty one level higher than normal. For example, the spirit of an owl is normally overcome using Guile by generating more than two boons, Diplomacy by generating more than one boon, and Command by generating more than two boons. If a shaman fails in his Diplomacy test, he may attempt again by using Guile or Command at a difficulty of 3.

The following are some examples the GM may take as a guide to determining the difficulty, along with keywords associated with various spirits:

Nature Spirit	Difficulty	Keywords
Large Oak Tree	Guile 2 Diplomacy 1 Command 3	Immovable, wise
Field of wheat	Guile 1 Diplomacy 2 Command 1	Flexible, soothing

Big boulder	Guile 2 Diplomacy 2 Command 3	Hard
Babbling brook	Guile 0 Diplomacy 1 Command 2	Playful, chattering
Stiff winter wind	Guile 2 Diplomacy 2 Command 2	Cold, stinging
Raging River	Guile 2 Diplomacy 2 Command 3	Loud, irresistible
Squirrel	Guile 0 Diplomacy 1 Command 1	Quick, stealthy
Grizzly Bear	Guile 1 Diplomacy 1 Command 2	Angry, ferocious
Badger	Guile 1 Diplomacy 1 Command 1	Determined, fearless
Trout	Guile 0 Diplomacy 1 Command 2	Slippery, darting
Cool Breeze	Guile 0 Diplomacy 0 Command 1	Calming, invigorating
Downpour	Guile 2 Diplomacy 1 Command 2	Miserable, loud
Owl	Guile 2 Diplomacy 1 Command 2	Observant, patient
Bog	Guile 2 Diplomacy 2 Command 2	Reeking, hindering
Camel	Guile 1 Diplomacy 1 Command 2	Hardy, unpredictable

The benefit granted by the spirit is dependent on what the character asks of it. Use the keywords in the table above as a guideline. The Effect the character achieves in his interaction, as well as the inherent power of the spirit, gives an idea of what may be granted. This is largely a matter of fiat and improvisation on the GM and player's parts. Here are some examples:

Spirit	Effect	Granted Power
Large Oak Tree	1 2 3	Advantage on Diplomacy test Deny 2 damage/attack Ignore effects of weather
Field of wheat	1 2 3	Adv. on tests involving flexibility Sooth mundane animal Auto success to hide
Big boulder	1 2 3	Advantage on punching attacks Knock enemy down Break enemy's leg
Babbling brook	1 2 3	Raise spirits by 1 rank Advantage on Guile test Send far-away message
Stiff winter wind	1 2 3	Sting enemy for 1 point/round Foe can move only every 2 rnds Foe can act only every 2 rnds
Raging River	1 2 3	Deafen one enemy Deafen all enemies Knock all enemies down
Squirrel	1 2 3	Advantage on stealth test Auto success on one stealth test Opponent gets 0e on one attack
Grizzly Bear	1 2 3	Advantage on Command test 5 damage/Effect (one scene) Opponent flees
Badger	1 2 3	Spirit never below Grim (1 day) Ignore one Initial Complication Ignore one Aggr. Complication
Trout	1 2 3	Advantage on swim test Cross raging river without test Deny one hit and then escape
Cool Breeze	1 2 3	Raise own spirit by one level Raise all ally spirits by one level Advantage on all tests (1 scene)
Down-pour	1 2 3	Disadv. on enemy's perception Deafen enemy One enemy at Disadvantage for everything (1 scene)
Owl	1 2 3	Advantage on Perception test Advantage on Stealth test Free Edit based on Perception
Bog	1 2 3	Enemy at Disadv. on movement Enemy feels sick Enemy keeps vomiting
Camel	1 2 3	Carry double weight Blind enemy with spit attack Cannot be moved

Costs & Limitations: the costs and limitations have essentially been detailed previously. The power given is limited by the nature of the spirit itself and the Effect the Shaman is able to manage when treating with it. Shamans failing to enter the spirit world cannot attempt it again for at least one hour.

If the shaman fails in his communication with the nature spirit, he may incur its wrath. Use the previous table as a guide, but *reverse* the granted power. In other words, if failing to treat with a babbling brook to the tune of -1e, the character lowers his spirit by one rank. If a winter wind refuses the shaman's requests at -2e, his movement is halved for a scene.

WOOD, SWAMP, AND MOUNTAIN: JOURNEYS THROUGH THE WILD

Epic fantasy is frequently highlighted by scenes where characters trek through fantastic terrain. Reading about these journeys can be enthralling, but playing out travel can be drudgery. I often handwave the journey of one place to another with a simple "You travel for days and eventually arrive hungry and worn from your expedition." This is perfectly fine for most scenarios, but it doesn't seem completely satisfying if you're trying to emulate the fiction of authors like Tolkien or Donaldson. The rules that follow allow for an interesting portrayal of journeying through the wilds of a fantasy world.

THE MAP

Before any travel can be attempted, the GM needs to provide the players with at least a rough map of the area, including the characters current location and their intended destination. There should be a scale to the map; I frequently 'zoom in' on an area and consider 1" to equal 2 miles.

Each day of travel is called a Leg. In other words, "This Leg of the trip should take you one day, barring bad weather." The GM may find it helpful to draw a circle around each day's planned Leg. Once the day's journey is finished, she can illustrate just how far the company has progressed. Then it's time to draw a circle around the next day's Leg.

Here is a guide for how much travel can be accomplished in a 10-hour day of trekking, assuming a lack of major incidents.

Terrain	Miles/day
Easy terrain	20
Moderate terrain	12
Difficult terrain	6
Dangerous terrain	2

Easy terrain indicates flat open plain with a minimum of obstruction, possibly with a road
Moderate terrain indicates a combination of flat ground, rolling hills, deciduous woods, and so on.
Difficult terrain includes elements such as rocky ground, high elevation, thick forest, and snow.
Dangerous terrain can be anything from swamps, steep mountains, jagged rocks, forests of tall thorn bushes, and snow-covered mountains with an immediate threat of avalanches.

The players should discuss their planned route each day, specifying any terrain features they wish to avoid or take advantage of. An appointed player then draws the route on the map. The GM then circles the journey's first Leg.

When circling a day's Leg, the GM should consider whether the terrain is consistent – all easy, all moderate, etc – or of mixed variety, such as half moderate and half difficult. Such variations should modify the GM's assessment of each Leg's size. In order to keep things moving, this needn't be precise.

Riding horses is possible on easy and moderate terrain. Travel on horses in those terrains can achieve a Leg in half the time, meaning two Legs in one day. Horses must be lead through difficult terrain and cannot pass through dangerous terrain at all.

Traveling downstream by boat is generally considered easy terrain, while traveling against a current is either impossible (if on a strong river), or difficult terrain. A strong river that runs in a mostly straight line will allow for speedier travel, although any rapids will present a distinct threat (see below). If the former, an Easy route can achieve 30 miles in one day.

If the day's travel involves an equal amount of different types of terrain, the GM should estimate a happy middle ground. Thus, a Leg of moderate and difficult terrain would average out to 9 miles in a day, barring incident. If the day's travel involves a small amount of one type of terrain and a large amount of another, either ignore the terrain that constitutes the smaller degree of the day's trek, or subtract one or two miles from the larger portion's expected distance.

ROUTE ASPECTS

Unexpected things happen in a fantasy landscape. Characters may be discovered by enemies, become lost, or suffer injury. Even the best laid plans of elf and dwarf may come to unfortunate ends. Each Leg of travel must be rated by the GM for a handful of elements, including:
- difficulty of the route
- supplies
- threats

- tidings and rumors
- discovery

Difficulty of the Route

The arduousness of a route, as previously described, are considered either easy, moderate, difficult, or dangerous. The Difficulty rankings are:

Route	Difficulty
Easy	0
Moderate	1
Difficult	2
Dangerous	3

To determine how well the company manages their current Leg, the character designated as the Guide must make a Theme/Survival roll against the route's Difficulty. The Effect acts as a modifier to the distance traversed:

Effect (Guide)	Distance Modifier
-3	-4 miles
-2	-3 miles
-1	-2 miles
0	-1 mile
+1	--
+2	+2 miles
+3	+4 miles

A good Leader can influence the company's progress as well by encouraging his companions to work harder. The Leader can make a Theme/Command roll versus the route's Difficulty and further modify the distance traversed.

Effect (Leader)	Distance Modifier
-3	-3 miles
-2	-2 miles
-1	-1 mile
0	--
+1	--
+2	+1 mile
+3	+2 miles

If both the Guide and Leader's rolls result in *negative* Effects, the group has become lost. The GM rolls a single die to determine the direction of their errant travel.

Die Roll	Misdirection
1	West
2	East
3	Southeast
4	Southwest
5-6	Hopelessly lost

The party travels a distance off track equal to the inverse sum of the Guide and Leader's miscalculation.

Nadezhda (Leader) and Drustan (Guide) combine failed rolls for a total of -4 miles. The GM rolls a 3 on the misdirection table (southeast). The party ends the day 4 miles southeast of their intended destination.

A party that is hopelessly lost (a roll of 5 or 6) doesn't know where they are. The GM rolls the die again, re-rolling any result of 5 or 6. She keeps the result secret from the players. The following day involves spending several hours getting back on course. The GM reveals where they are, allowing the Leader to plot another course. The distance that may be traveled is reduced by the number of miles they went off course for that day, to a minimum of one mile.

Four days later, Nadezhda and Drustan have once again lead their company astray, this time off target for 2 miles in Difficult terrain. Worse, the misdirection roll is a 6 -- Completely Lost! The GM rolls a 1 on the misdirection table, learning that the party has traveled too far west. She tells the players that they toil away for several hours the next day before getting back on course. The normal travel distance for Difficulty terrain is 6 miles per day, but the best they can manage today is 4 miles.

Supplies

Most companies head out into the wild with a decent supply of provisions. Unless circumstances (ie, the GM) instruct the contrary, assume the party has enough provisions to last them for four days. After that, they need to hunt for food, forage for water, or trade or buy more stuff.

A good rule of thumb is that every day water needs to be foraged for, while food may be hunted every other day. This means that on days where hunting is

required, so is water. That's two rolls in one day – one for hunting and one for foraging.

Based on the terrain and general environs, the GM will rate the Difficulty of the task from 0 to 3. Before trekking off, the group's Leader must designate a hunter, forager, and trader to deal with these prospects. Each level of positive Effect grants another day of food and/ or water. Failed attempts reduce the day's travel by a number of miles equal to the inverse of the Effect (e-2 equates to a loss of 2 miles). The loss of miles accrues each day until the party cannot move without finding more food/water.

On the sixth day of their journey, Palagius and his companions must hunt for food and forage for water. The previous day they foraged for water and found enough to last a day (e1). Palagius nominates Dristan as hunter and Nadezhda as forager. Dristan's hunting attempt gets an e1 while Nadezhda fails miserably at finding water (e-2). That's a net effect of e-1, meaning they lose a mile of travel this day. Tomorrow they will have to look for water again, but not food.

Threats

Each Leg is rated on its threat level. A threat could include anything from aggressive wolves to poisonous plants or hazardous rapids. To keep things simple, I suggest limiting each leg to one threat. Regardless of the type of threat, each is ranked on a difficulty scale of 0 to 4. A threat is overcome by characters making Theme/Skill tests. Here are some examples:

Threat	Difficulty	Failure Consequences
Wolves	1 (avoid)	Battle using second best fighter's skill
	2 (battle)	One aggregate consequence to one character, 1 mile lost
Treacherous Rapids	2	Leg travel slowed by 1/3, one aggregate consequence to one character
Road bandits	2 (parlay)	Battle begins using second best fighter's skill
	2 (battle)	Lose all wealth or loss of one Item of Quality

Avalanche	1 (avoid triggering)	Avalanche occurs, characters must dodge
	3 (dodge)	Leg travel cut in half, one character helpless for remainder of journey
Infection from swamp hazards	1 (avoid)	Characters are sick for 1d6 days. All rolls are at disadvantage for sickness' duration.
Giant spiders	2 (avoid)	Battle begins using second best fighter's skill
	2 (battle)	Characters lose a full day of travel, and are sick for 1d6 days (as for infection, above)

The Theme/Skill used to address the threat is a matter for discussion between the players and GM. The players, through the voice of the Leader, express how they plan to avoid, confront, or otherwise deal with the threat. The GM then requests a single roll be made by the player whose character most possesses the ability to deal with the situation or, in rare cases, the character who is *least* capable of dealing with it. As long as the Effect beats the Difficulty, the threat is overcome. Failure results in a Consequence determined by the GM. Here are a handful of examples.

1. Pelagius' party spies a pack of wolves across a field. The party elects to avoid them (Difficulty 1). The GM sees this as a situation requiring stealth. She feels any attempt to sneak past wolves is limited by the least stealthy member of the party. That's Baldigar the Heavyset, with no talent for stealth at all. Baldigar's player will roll one die (the default for any unskilled test), meaning he cannot beat the Difficulty. Baldigar's player spends a Token to Edit the scene and declares the wind is blowing loud enough to help conceal their attempt, allowing them to succeed. The GM agrees.

2. Later, the party trudges through a sickly swamp. The GM tells them they may catch some festering swampy disease and instructs the Guide character to make a Theme/Survival roll against a Difficulty of 1. Failure will result in the group contracting the illness.

3. Bad luck seems to follow this company as they are surprised by road bandits! Feeling royally pissed off, they are in no mood to parlay with a bunch of ne'er do wells. They will fight! The Difficulty is 2. The GM tells the player with the best combat skill to roll a Theme/Melee test.

Tidings and Rumors

It is inevitable that characters will meet others on their travels. Interacting with NPCs is a great way to receive tidings of the wider world. The GM should rate each Leg of travel based on the density of its population. Of course, the characters may be trying to *avoid* NPCs, so any interaction is ultimately up to the characters. The GM or a player may roll a d6 to see if they encounter NPCs willing to speak with them.

Density of Population	Chance of Interaction
Heavy (village, town)	automatic
Moderate (clannish lands)	3, 4, 5, 6
Sparse (frontier homes)	5, 6
Negligible (the wilds)	6

If the roll is successful, the party needs to elect one of its members to act as diplomat in order to glean any tidings. That character makes a Theme/(Guile, Diplomacy, or Command)) test roll versus a Difficulty ranging from 1 to 3. The Difficulty ranking is dependent on the nature of the culture being interacted with. This is up to the GM. In general, civilized rural folk will be easier to speak with, while a small clan of suspicious barbarians will be less forthcoming. Some may even lie.

The Effect generated by the character's interaction tells how many rumors and tidings he is told. The veracity of the information is once again in the GM's hands, based on how the character approaches the situation. Some NPCs will respond better to a diplomatic approach than a smooth-talking approach, while others may respect the character more if he is forceful in his dealings.

Nadezhda and her companions encounter an isolated clan of sheep herders. She has been elected to speak with them in the hope of finding out if any other travelers have passed through recently. The GM decides the sheep herders will respond positively to bribery (Guile), as they greatly covet items from the civilized

world. Nadezhda, however, decides to use formal diplomatic language, hoping to show respect. Her interaction results in an Effect of 1, meaning the clan tells her one thing. The GM doesn't think they would lie to her, but won't be terribly forthcoming. The tribe tells her they heard rumor of some travelers passing through the region a few days ago. There were four on foot and one rider. This is a partial truth; not only were their travelers passing through, but the clan met with them and can tell where they were going. Had Nadezhda dealt with the clan by offering some trinkets or exotic foods, they would have been more forthcoming.

Unless the GM decides otherwise, negative Effects simply mean the party gleans no useful information. If she is feeling particularly devious, she can have the characters attacked, robbed, chased out of town, etc.

Discovery

Every journey has its unexpected moments of discovery. Maybe the company spies an army on the march, or a body hidden in some bushes. Perhaps they notice an ominous shape in the clouds, foreboding the death of a key NPC. The GM may want to skip this element of traveling since it adds more complication to the process, and may indeed lead characters off on jaunts that have little to do with the larger quest. To avoid that possibility, I suggest keeping any discovery germane to the story. That marching army might indicate the city the PCs are making for is about to be attacked. The body in the bushes could be that of an emissary to the king; the same emissary the PCs were hoping to intercept. Maybe the portentous cloud heralded his demise.

If the GM needs the players to discover something, she should just tell them they do. She can open it up to a normal roleplaying scene or inform them of the incident in passing.

If random chance is more enjoyable, the GM can ask the player with the most experience in the particular environment or most acute senses to make a test roll. The Difficulty is determined by GM fiat, with the normal being 1 or 2.

Drustan is the party's resident hunter, the character most capable of discovering something in a woodland environment. On one Leg of a journey, he makes a test roll to see if he perceives

anything of interest. The GM had decided previously that a small home in the area was burned to the ground. Drustan discovers it, perhaps suggesting the inhabitants were thought to be witches. Given that Drustan was seeking a notorious witch-hunter, this is an ominous development...

SPIRIT

Like real people, characters in Tower of Adamant experience emotional highs and lows. Undertaking long and arduous quests inevitably tests the heart and resolve of even the most experienced hero. As characters triumph and fail, their spirits rise and fall, affecting their ability to perform heroically.

There are seven states of Spirit: Downcast, Forlorn, Despairing, Grim, Hopeful, Glad, and Blessed. The normal state is Grim. Grim characters are determined but realistic in their outlook. They do not enjoy any special benefits nor do they suffer any drawbacks.

Despairing: The character has given up hope. He sees the quest as doomed to failure, and his efforts as bound to end in ruin. The despairing character cannot use or recover Tokens. He will act only when necessary, such as when attacked.

Forlorn: The character is noticeably depressed about his chances of achieving a goal. He is probably not in the mood to talk, except to express feelings of failure. Forlorn characters cannot recover Tokens, and must pass a difficulty 1 test using the Leader's Theme/Command to use a Token (the Token is lost even in failure). If the character has Resolve as a Virtue, they have Advantage on this roll.

Downcast: The character is frustrated and slightly pessimistic. Downcast characters cannot recover Tokens once spent.

Hopeful: The character is optimistic, albeit not unrealistically so. He will often sing while traveling, and offer playful jests aimed at his companions. Hopeful characters have Advantage on every first action in a struggle.

Glad: The character is beaming with optimism, even in the face of powerful odds. Glad characters have Advantage on every first action in a struggle and get free use of a Token if they succeed on a difficulty 1 check using the Leader's Theme/Command. They may gain the free Token once per day.

Blessed: the character feels as if they are an agent of fate or being guided by a higher power. Blessed characters have Advantage on every first action in a struggle and get a free use of a Token once per day. Blessed characters start every struggle with Momentum 5 points higher than usual.

CHANGING SPIRIT

With changes in weather and landscape, characters experience a flux in their spirits. So too does spirit change with victories and defeats, as well as portents both optimistic and ominous. In general, the GM doesn't need to address this issue unless the scenario sees significant changes in tone. When that happens, she will ask for a Spirit roll. This is a dice roll that determines if the character's Spirit improves or suffers.

With any Spirit check, the GM may forego the roll and assign a new level if circumstances make it obvious - or impossible - that the character could not be affected by a new circumstance. In some situations, a change of more than one level is realistic; a Hopeful character who witnesses the kidnapping of his family is going to see his Spirits fall immediately, probably to Downcast at least. If the loss of more than one level of Spirit seems likely, I suggest assigning a new level without rolling and then have the character roll for/against another level. For example, if the character witnessing his family's kidnapping is assigned a new level of Forlorn, the GM could then ask him to make a roll based on the Leader's Theme/Command to avoid falling to Despairing. If the character has Resolve as a Virtue, he enjoys Advantage for this roll.

Improving Spirit

When something happens that benefits the characters, or at the least signals some coming improvement in their fortune, the GM may allow the players to roll a die to bring their spirit up by one step, from Grim to Hopeful, and so on.

When such a situation unfolds, each player rolls a single die. Depending on the next level of Spirit they are trying to achieve, the results needed are as follows:

Spirit Bump	Roll Required
Any 'negative' Spirit level to a higher level	3,4,5, or 6
Grim to Hopeful	4, 5, or 6
Hopeful to Glad	5 or 6
Glad to Blessed	6

There is no concrete list for when a Spirit check is needed. The GM and players should come to an 'organic' agreement as to when something has occurred that could reasonably boost the company's Spirits. Some instances could exempt the roll altogether, instead granting an improvement in Spirit automatically. With that in mind, here are some examples:

- A bright, clear day after a week of rain
- Witnessing a dance of faeries under a full moon
- Arriving at a haven after an arduous journey
- Surviving a dangerous journey down some rapids
- Defeating a dangerous foe without any serious injuries to the company
- A single ray of sun piercing a sky of dark clouds
- The reappearance of an ally thought to be dead
- Witnessing a great lord perform a heroic act
- Seeing a great white stag
- Being fed an abundant meal in a warm house during a snowstorm
- Basking in the light of the Three Great Jewels

Declining Spirit

Just as Spirit can wax, so too can it wane. A life of quest and adventure is fraught with peril, disaster, and sadness. When fortune turns against the heroes, the GM may require each player to make a test based on the Leader's Theme/Command to resist encroaching despair. Any character with Resolve as a Virtue makes the roll with Advantage. Failure results in the character's Spirit dropping one level.

The check is made against a difficulty ranging from 0 to 4. As with all tests, the players must roll *higher* than the difficulty level.

Spirit Bump	Difficulty
Any 'positive' Spirit level to a lower level	3
Grim to Downcast	2
Downcast to Forlorn	1
Forlorn to Despairing	0

Here are some examples of scenes that might incur a loss of Spirit or at least necessitate a check:

- A downpour that lasts for many days
- Encountering a white stag suffering its last breath
- Seeing the burning of a haven
- The death or serious wounding of a companion
- Having a vital Token or missive stolen
- The death of an animal companion
- Coming across the slaughter of a entire village
- A dream that suggests a specific doom
- No food for a week
- Walking for several days in a wasteland